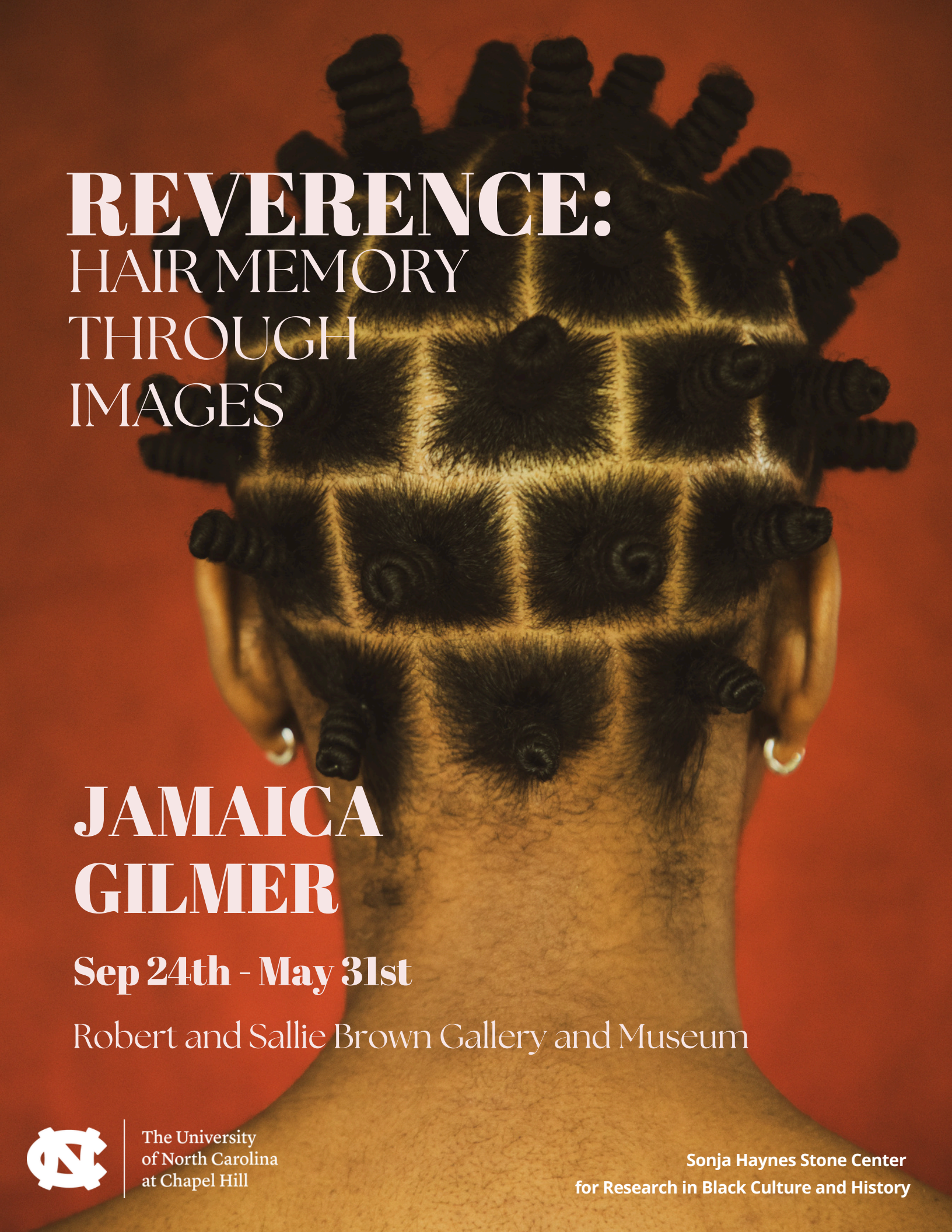


REVERENCE:
HAIR MEMORY THROUGH IMAGES

JAMAICA GILMER

Sep 24th - May 31st

Robert and Sallie Brown Gallery and Museum

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Sonja Haynes Stone Center for Research in Black Culture and History

ABOUT THE

ARTIST

Jamaica Gilmer is a relentless hope-architect, multifaceted artist, and curator working across photography, ceramics, and film. Her most recent series, *We are the Sun: A Photographic Tribute to Black Community*, celebrates the intergenerational wisdom of ThirdSpace Action Lab in Cleveland, Ohio. She is the founder of The Beautiful Project (TBP) and the lead curator of TBP's past exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Uris Center for Education, Pen, Lens, and Soul: The Story of The Beautiful Project. Her work is featured in Kleaver Cruz's recent book, *The Black Joy Project: A Literary and Visual Love Letter to How We Thrive*. Jamaica is the recipient of the 2026 Pamela Nicole Cummings Visiting Artist Fellowship at the Sonja Haynes Stone Center for Research in Black Culture and History at UNC-Chapel Hill. At the core of her organizing practice, Jamaica is committed to telling sacred stories of possibility through interdisciplinary making.

jamaicagilmer.com

Cover Page Image
CENTURIES
muse: Lorraine
hair artist: Deanna Bright/The Brooklyn Brownstone Hair Studio

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

Reverence: Hair Memory Through Images by Jamaica Gilmer is a photographic testament to Black hair. Here, stylists and barbers become the hair artists, and the Black people who sit in their chairs become the muse. This exhibition celebrates the long-held tradition of being immersed in images while you wait for your turn in the chair. Look-books filled with style options, walls adorned with even more—our global histories presented as sacred exhibitions in everyday spaces.

PROCESS

muse: Joshua
hair artist:
Lorraine James/Uhuru Natural Hair Studio

ARTIST STATEMENT

JAMAICA GILMER

My art practice is an invitation to witness and imagine power, hope, and joy. In *Reverence*, the images and scale capture the core of my practice, surrounding viewers with life-sized portraits of Black hair that evoke personal reflection and collective memory. *Reverence: Hair Memory Through Images* is a photographic testament to Black hair. Here, stylists and barbers become the hair artists, and the Black people who sit in their chairs become the muse. Comprised of 27 artworks, *Reverence* features a contemplative short film and vibrant large-scale portraits that center our global histories, presented as sacred exhibitions in everyday spaces.

We are currently navigating a volatile political landscape that is systematically targeting the rights and freedoms of Black and Brown people throughout the country. Dr. Jasmine Cobb, author of *New Growth: The Art and Texture of Black Hair*, writes "Black hair has long been a battleground for liberation." What does it mean to exist as a person whose hair is a daily site for potential tyranny, confinement, or control?

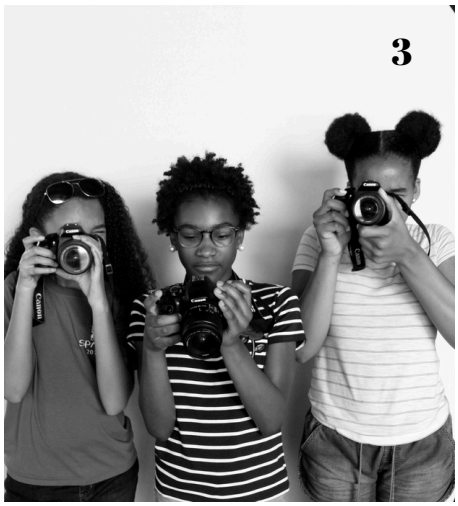
What spaces create daily revolutionary responses to this reality? How do non-Black people co-exist with this subconsciously political expression of power and autonomy with permission? How does our collective memory impact our contemporary experience of Black hair in daily life? Both the content of this exhibit and the accompanying programming allows audiences to interrogate their experience of the past and present through the lens of Black hair.

The truth of Black people's history and contemporary experience of systemic violence is a universal haunting. In my curatorial practice, I use artwork to give Black people a moment of relief in the midst of it all. The images and reflections bring people back to their own possibilities, their own memories of joy, community, and peace. Delight becomes an invitation extended to every visitor who encounters my work. For this exhibition, I take an interdisciplinary approach that contextualizes the global history of Black hair and who gets to form and witness it. *Reverence* celebrates those we give permission to — and the homes, salons, and barbershops we inhabit.

1. BIG CUZ
   muse: Zoey
   hair artist: the Mama/Jasmine

2. REHEARSAL
   The Amazing Adventures of Grace May B. Brown:
   Choreographed by Andrea E. Woods Valdés, 2014

3. WE ARE THE APERTURE
   c/o The Beautiful Project, 2017



4. MAMA TONI & SAKARAH
c/o The Beautiful Project, 2018

5. VISION
The Amazing Adventures of Grace May B. Brown:
Choreographed by Andrea E. Woods Valdés, 2014

6. PRECISION
muse: Kai
hair artist: Borders Barbershop/Tony

7. FREESTYLE
muse: Max
hair artist: Borders Barbershop/Tony

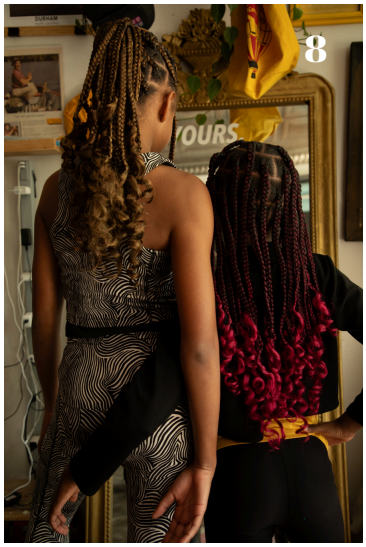
8. SISTERS
muses: Victora & Bella
hair artist: Alissa Drumgold

9. ODE TO MAXINE
muse: Alexandra
hair artist: Mary

10. FRESH CUT
muse: Jaki Shelton Green
hair artist: Just in Case Barber Shop/Jamal Miller

11. BLACK BOY JOY
muse: DR
hair artist: the Mama/Keisha Kersey

12. WATERFALL
muse: Britney Symone
hair artist: D Beauty Bar/Daphne Philippe



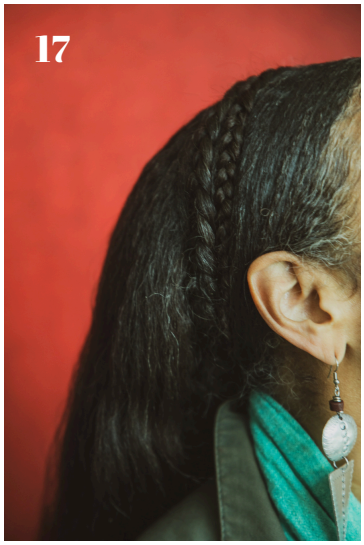
13. CORONATION CEREMONY
muse: Chan
hair artist: Taji Shabu Jones/Taji Natural Hair Salon

14. PEACE
muse: Drá
hair artist: Lorraine James/Uhuru Natural Hair Studio

15. QUEEN
muse: Denetra
hair artist: Prophetic Hair Salon & Spa/Brittany Wall

16. BABYGIRL
muse: T
hair artist: the Mama/Joy

17. CROWN
muse: Angela
hair artist: Self-styled



18. IN THE QUIET
muse: Britney Symone
hair artist: D Beauty Bar/Daphne Philippe

19. BROTHERS
muses: Cy & Vale
hair artist: Shailese “Yayo” Hardy & the Mama/Dr. Rhon

20. TWO STRAND TWISTS
muse: Joshua
hair artist:
Lorraine James/Uhuru Natural Hair Studio

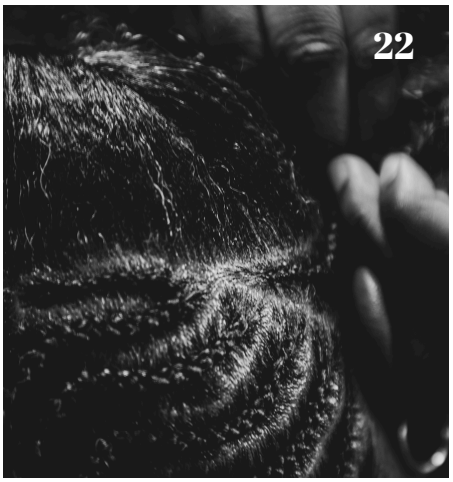
21. SMOKE
muse: Naketa
hair artist: Prophetic Hair Salon & Spa/Brittany Wall

22. SEEDS
muse: Denetra
hair artist: Prophetic Hair Salon & Spa/Brittany Wall

23. TECHNIQUE
muse: Jaki Shelton Green
hair artist: Just in Case Barber Shop/Jamal Miller

24. MARLEY TWISTS
muse: Madylin
hair artist: Self-styled

25. HOLD STILL
muse: DR
hair artist: the Mama/Keisha Kersey



About the Robert and Sallie Brown Gallery and Museum

The Robert and Sallie Brown Gallery and Museum at the Sonja Haynes Stone Center is dedicated to the enrichment of visual culture on campus and in the community. The Brown Gallery supports the Stone Center's commitment to the critical examination of all dimensions of African-American and African diaspora cultures through formal exhibition of works of art, artifacts and material culture.

History and Overview of the Stone Center

The Sonja Haynes Stone Center is part of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. As an academic and community engagement unit with the Provost's Office, we play a central role in supporting the academic mission of the University. We have a commitment to broaden the range of intellectual discourse about African Americans and to encourage a better understanding of the peoples of Africa and the African diaspora and their perspectives on important social and cultural issues.

This Exhibit is Supported by the Generous Contributions of
the Tiger Baron Foundation, and the Friends of the Robert and Sallie Brown Gallery and Museum,
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Share this Brochure

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https://go.unc.edu/ReverenceSoundTrack