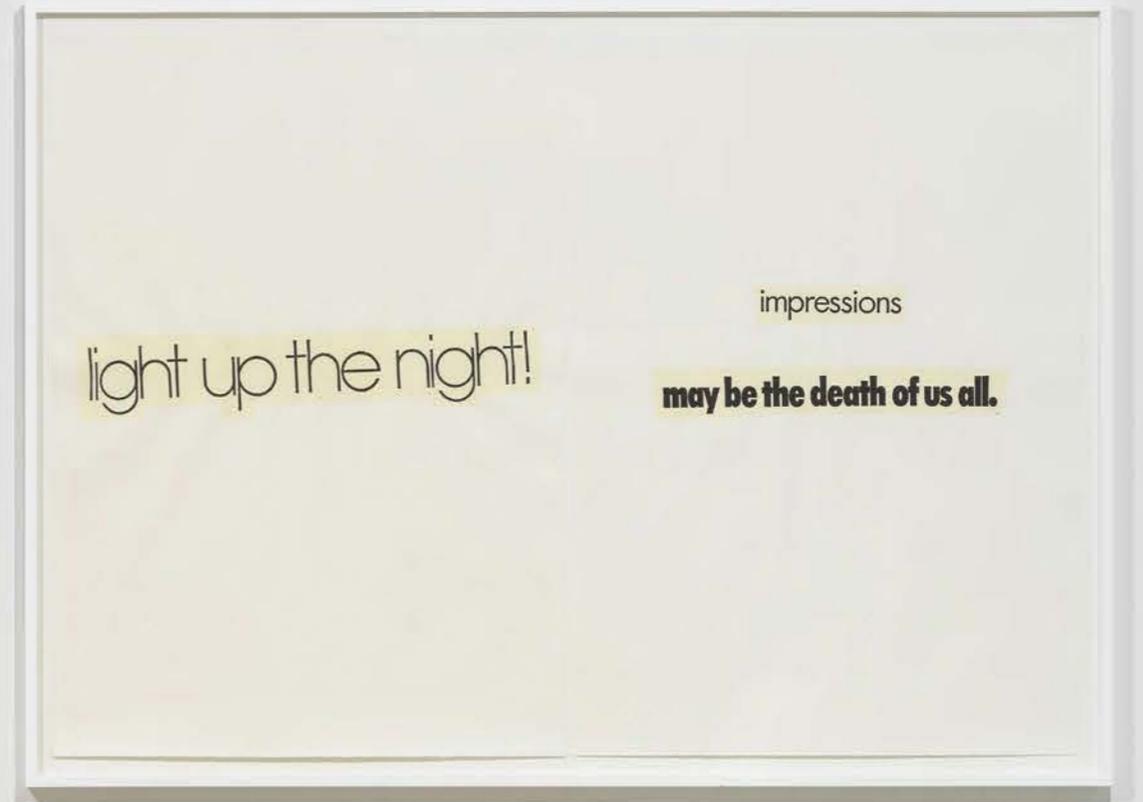


Lorraine O'Grady: Cutting Out CONYT



Lorraine O'Grady
Cutting Out CONYT

Alexander Gray Associates

Lorraine O'Grady: *Cutting Out CONYT*

October 25 – December 15, 2018

Alexander Gray Associates



Installation view, Alexander Gray Associates, New York, 2018

This Could Be The Permanent Rebellion

by Carly Fischer

In 1980, with her performance *Mlle Bourgeoise Noire*, Lorraine O'Grady formalized what in retrospect seems a lifelong rebellion by entering the community of artists and arts professionals in downtown New York. This act followed her study of economics, Spanish literature and creative writing, and a varied career, first as an analyst for the United States Government, later as a translator and owner of her own translation agency, then as a rock critic for the *Village Voice* and *Rolling Stone*, finally landing as a professor of humanities at the School of Visual Arts.



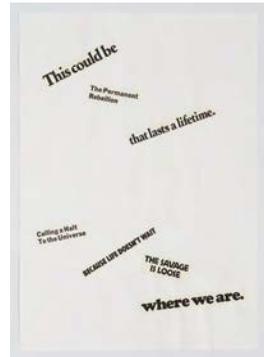
Untitled (*Mlle Bourgeoise Noire Shouts Out Her Poem*), 1980–83/2009

But before creating and executing that first performance work, O'Grady had, three years earlier — every Sunday from June 5 to November 20, 1977 — cut out text in various fonts, sizes, and formats from the Sunday *New York Times*. Each Sunday, she created a single multi-panel poem collaged from that day's cuttings onto sheets of 11h x 8.5w inch white rag paper, resulting in 26 completed poems. She would position the scraps of text at unexpected angles with large portions of the white paper left visible, prompting the viewer to read them rhythmically, their eyes darting, often energetically, across the pages. This series, *Cutting Out the New York Times* (CONYT), represented a vital moment of transition in O'Grady's life and career. Although she had

studied Spanish literature as an undergraduate at Wellesley College and Fiction at the Iowa Writers Workshop, she began CONYT, in her words, "as a writer but ended it as more of a visual artist."^{1,2} The course she was teaching at SVA, "Futurist, Dada and Surrealist Literature," had informed her characterization of one of CONYT's goals as the establishment of a "counter-confessional poetry."³ Though its poems have been shown sporadically since 2006, O'Grady has insisted that the series is a failure in that "[it] had been overwhelmed by process."⁴ She felt the self-inflicted rules she'd created and followed in order to make them had stifled her poetic input.

Despite her perception of failure, the 1977 series serves, if not as her most resolved body of work, as a lexicon for understanding her larger oeuvre, and more importantly her conceptual framework. Key motifs and processes including: poetry and prose, hybridity and diaspora, the intersection of public and private realms, and appropriation and pastiche are all hallmarks of this work which reappear in virtually every series she has completed since. Additionally, as a result of the "counter-confessional" nature of her *Cutting Out The New York Times* poems, O'Grady's identity as the Boston-raised, black bohemian daughter of colonial Caribbean

parents permeates her voice. This self-framing has, to some degree, become the origin from which she derives all of her narrative constructs as well as the centering of black female subjectivity, among the more important of the themes she examines through her work.



Cutting Out CONYT 26, 1977/2017

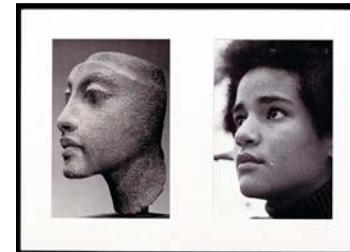
Forty years after first conceiving of *CONYT*, in an attempt to resolve that which had felt incomplete or ineffective in the original poems, O’Grady would produce, from late July to mid-August 2017, the new work *Cutting Out CONYT*, a series of 25 “haiku-like” diptychs plus a single panel that serves as a “statement” for the entire suite. These new poems are comprised of replicas of radically selected and rearranged pages from her 1977 poems now printed at 41.75h x 30w inches, still cut and collaged by hand.⁵ Through the examination of these two bodies of work, bookends of her practice thus far, one can trace the culmination of key elements of her artistic development, the consistency of her pursuit, and the growth and precision she has refined in

the intervening years. Produced in the 40 years between the 1977 and 2017 series has been a body of works addressing the historic and contemporary absence of narratives like her own in the spaces of high art—and constituting an effort by the artist “to make the invisible visible.” Emblematic of her clarity of purpose and her uniquely cultural-critical voice are the first lines of the standalone *Statement Panel 26* in which O’Grady aptly proclaims, “This could be/ The Permanent Rebellion/ that lasts a lifetime.”⁶

Given her roots in the literary word, it is unsurprising that she would embark on a career in visual art with language at the center of her practice. While *CONYT* and *Cutting Out CONYT* are the only series of hers in which text is the literal visual mechanism, her acuity with syntax runs throughout. As she has explained, “sometimes you have to tell your own stories, not just to understand yourself but to understand the world, to find the space between their stories and yours, to learn what’s really going on.”⁷ Where text is not literal, her voice is always present. When she assembled her *CONYT* poems, she had not yet immersed herself in community of visual artists, and thus the arguments in those poems are inward facing, a means of learning what was going on. After fully incorporating herself into that environment, she began employing that voice to call attention to the inequities that she witnessed, to tell her story to the larger world as a means of holding up a mirror to the community at large.

Despite common perceptions that the “art world” is a more liberal cultural arena than most, O’Grady experienced more obvious bigotry as an artist than at any

previous point in her adult life. As she explains, “in general [I had] avoided the most egregious forms of discrimination—perhaps due to how I looked (I was fair-skinned and still straightened my hair) . . . [and perhaps also because, in my previous worlds, there were more objective measurements of achievement which I met easily].⁸ The art world was the first place I’d felt [unfairly] “cornered” that way.”⁹ It is against that backdrop that her emblematic *Mlle Bourgeoise Noire* (1980-83) entered arts institutions to exclaim her poem aloud.¹⁰ Similarly influenced by literature, her photographic series *Miscegenated Family Album* (1980/94) and the



Miscegenated Family Album (Sisters II), L: Nefer-titi’s daughter Merytaten; R: Devonia’s daughter, 1980/1994

photo-documentation series made from her Central Park performance *Rivers, First Draft* are structured as visual novels in space, and *The First and Last of the Modernists* (2010) is comprised of diptychs comparing and conflating the cultural significance of Michael Jackson and the 19th century French poet Charles Baudelaire. Each set of images in a single series is for O’Grady like a chapter in a book, and in the case of the *Mlle Bourgeoise Noire* and *Art Is...* performances and O’Grady’s conceptually curated exhibit, 1983’s *The Black and White Show*, three seemingly distinct projects function as a trilogy.



The First and Last of the Modernists, Diptych 3 Blue (Charles and Michael), 2010

In an invocation of literature, the diptychs that comprise *Cutting Out CONYT* are each presented in a single frame, with its two panels just 3/8 inch apart and meant to look like an open book. Beyond a formal unity across the series, the constraints of the diptych also enforce brevity of text. With this came her decision to describe the poems as “haiku-like objects,” haiku being the most condensed form of poetry.¹¹ The mechanics employed in successful haiku rely on a “turn” in the second half of the poem where a new element is

introduced. As Dr. Cora Agatucci, professor of English, explains, “a haiku presents a pair of contrasting images, one suggestive of time and place, the other a vivid but fleeting observation. Working together, they evoke mood and emotion. The poet does not comment on the connection but leaves the synthesis of the two images for the reader to perceive.”¹² In O’Grady’s haiku, the 3/8 inch space between the panels of the diptych serve as the de facto “turn.” The text on the two “pages” is not in a competitive hierarchy but in a circular exchange where each informs and shifts our perception of the other. One such example is O’Grady’s *Haiku Diptych 15*;¹³ the panels read: “In the Amber Glow of/ August skin/ there is no escape from terror” | “The Sun Also Rises/ on New Tracks– Without a Railroad.” She first melodically evokes and then forlornly accepts the inevitability of aging in its physical manifestation– the terror of the first page is both explained and soothed by the notion

of progress in a future without prescribed tracks on which to rely. For O’Grady, age in her work goes beyond the abstract; aging is not only a theme in these poems but also a condition in her making them. The artist began *CONYT* just after a hospital stay when she was in her early 40s at a moment when aging felt to her, “[not like a] precursor to death but a precursor to a loss of [feminine sexual] power... I was gradually losing the kind of power that I had been able to count on. The power of response.”¹⁴ At the outset of *Cutting Out CONYT* she was in her early 80s, and thus



Cutting Out CONYT 15, 1977/2017

meditations on aging became both more and less urgent than in her earlier series. Given her age difference while making *CONYT* and *Cutting Out CONYT*, O’Grady’s focus on differing themes in each series is inevitable and indicative of her own growth in the intervening years. Conversely, her ability to find poignancy in the same source material across decades indicates a consistency in both her modes and topics of concern. Through this repurposing of her first poems, she enables both the pages and the individual elements of text to take on new meanings while remaining

inextricable from their source. In this way, the series *Cutting Out CONYT*, taken holistically, performs a “turn” where the first element of the proverbial haiku is the original 1977 *CONYT* and the second element is the new series, her identities at each age imbuing the “turn” with humor and interest.

The Japanese origin of the haiku has a clear relationship to O’Grady’s own “both/and” philosophy, a rebuke of Western dualism. She found in Eastern philosophy not necessarily a guide into spirituality informed by Zen Buddhism, but rather a strong echo that justifies her own thoughts on hybridized identity. This phrasing and theory, “both/and,” is not only central to her choice of poetic form, but also to the physical form of the diptych, a conceptual cornerstone of her practice. In her view, two images, when placed side-by-side are in conversation with one another but not compared hierarchically as they would inherently be under the Western binary, whose condemnation is rooted in the simultaneous irresolution and fluidity of living her Jamaican heritage and New England upbringing.¹⁵ As O’Grady explains, “art is a part of my project of finding equilibrium. Of becoming whole. Like many bi- or tri- cultural artists, I have been drawn to the diptych or multiple, where much of the information happens in the space between.”¹⁶ She has expanded on her fascination with these interstices as a critical and necessary lack of resolution. In her words, “with the diptych there’s no being saved, no before and after, no either/or; it’s both/and, at the same time. With no resolution, you just have to stand there and deal.”¹⁷ In addition to the interplay of psychological and other differences, O’Grady uses the panels of the diptych to signal historic absence – from the canon, from prevailing



Lorraine O’Grady: *Aproximación Inicial*, installation view, Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo (2017)

power structures – and in the space between them the viewer is left to contemplate the consequences of making visible those fault lines.

Hybridity in various forms recurs in her work, and is in part a product of tension between personal and political narratives, aesthetics, and relationships. As she explains, “we do not look at or produce art with aesthetics and philosophy over here, and politics and economics over there;”¹⁸ art can never be extricated from the world in which it emerges or the subjectivity of the artist who produces it. In the case of *CONYT*, O’Grady entered the project with a desire to navigate her own relationship to the zeitgeist, conceived of as a reversal of the style of confessional poets like Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton whose poetry was popular in academic circles during the 1970s. On the distinction between those writers’ conceit to share their most intimate secrets with the populace and her own approach, O’Grady remarks, “I felt that my poetry was going from the outside in and they were going from the inside out.”¹⁹ By this O’Grady meant that she was looking to answer the question, “what would I discover about the culture and about myself?”²⁰ in the poetry’s making.

One poem in particular, *Haiku Diptych 10*,²¹ makes clear O’Grady’s consideration of her process of culling from the culture to better understand herself: “For years/you’ve written the hard way./ Are you capable/ of selecting” | “The Loose, Drifting Material of/ Plagues.” Not only does she make a meta query about the outcome of the poem she is creating, but also about her work as an artist who appropriates text and image to construct narratives and paradigms positioning black female subjective

agency at their centers. While *The New York Times* may seem removed from the personal, her ability to be “counter-confessional” with widely available text is not incidental. The day’s events, advertisements, and criticism all shape and reflect the lived experiences of individuals within a culture and yet O’Grady intentionally removes them from that context and treats them as raw material free of association. Further, popular media in 1977 centered very few stories about black women and even fewer written by them, yet O’Grady claims the text as her own and does so boldly, confidently, as if she does not doubt her own entitlement to see herself in those pages, in itself an act of reclaiming a space of historic invisibility. Her own prior professional experiences and academic excellence had ingrained in her a clarity of her own merits that confirmed her entitlement to language in all its forms, giving way to her desire to apply the public text to her own private expression. In fact, by removing them from the newspaper as a whole she allows the viewer to consume her poems completely apart from the events documented in the paper and to focus solely on the visuality of the mismatched fonts and the lyricism and syntax in which she is more interested. She invokes race only a few times in her 2017 poems, and yet her identity and concerns are embedded because they influence her selection and pairing of panels. For O’Grady, this junction, “that complex point where the personal intersects with the historic and the cultural”²² is eminently fruitful and has encouraged her to mine cultural output in various projects since *CONYT*. In the case of one of her best-known series, *Miscegenated Family Album*, O’Grady aligns personal family portraits with art historical images of Nefertiti and the Egyptian queen’s sister; a literal juxtaposition of personal and communal histories. In collaging



Cutting Out CONYT 03, 1977/2017

poems excerpted from “the paper of record” O’Grady was similarly extracting, for proof to disinterested others of her complex identity, evidence of her place in its world. In the process of creating *Cutting Out CONYT*, however, O’Grady now appropriates from her own work, using *CONYT* as raw material from which she might better understand herself. Interestingly, she focuses on the process of artmaking or on the responsibility of the artist in a number of the resulting diptychs. Back in 1977, when she began her series, it was with an inkling that she’d like to become a visual artist; she created the entirety of the 2017 works knowing for certain she is one. It is with that clarity and four decades of experience that she prescribes in *Haiku Diptych 03*²³ what her goals as an artist must be: “The modern artist, / finding himself with/ no shared/ foundation, has/ begun to build on/ Reckless Storytelling/ STAR WORDS” | “The Deluxe Almost-Everything-Included/ WORK/ OF ART.” Her focus on art making as subject is in many ways a result of the “bookending” phenomenon that *CONYT* and *Cutting Out CONYT* represents. O’Grady posited ideas in the first series that have



Cutting Out the New York Times, Just the Two of Us, 1977/2010

guided her practice ever since, and to some extent, in making *Cutting Out CONYT*, she has reclaimed and revised the very thoughts that propelled her to become an artist.

“The deluxe almost-everything-included work of art” is in many ways a description of her own ability to embed layered, complex content in surprisingly sparse images. In her transition from her earliest series to her most recent, O’Grady proves her increasing sophistication not just of message, but also her heightened ability to convey more substance with less literal information on the surface. Visual sparseness, a kind of concision, is paramount for O’Grady and has become even more so over time. Already in *Cutting Out The New York Times* she was leaving swathes of white space in which the viewer might project themselves, and yet then, by using as many pages of text as she did, she provided information with which that same viewer could navigate the work. Over time, she has condensed further, so much so that she has downsized to just two panels of text and has removed the titles, favoring numbers instead to reflect the traditional titling of haiku. Beyond that visual economy, her redress of critical absence is another example of what it means for art to be “almost-everything-included;” she acknowledges those and that which has been so conspicuously missing from dominant art practices, from our cultural institutions, and from theory, and centers the absent, including them as she had not been included by artists who came before.

While O’Grady might consider her early poems a failure from a literary perspective, they were clearly a counter-confessional success in which she honed her viewpoint and thematic focuses. In revisiting those works to make *Cutting Out CONYT* with the clarity of editing honed over the past four decades, her concerns come through more resolutely, most of all her ability to center black female subjectivity through cultural critique. Over the intervening years that separate *CONYT* and *Cutting Out CONYT*, the art world has itself been the subject and object of much of O’Grady’s address. It is through her return to text as medium that she is most literally able to make demands of her viewers and peers alike. In transitioning from her multi-page poems to her diptychs, the interstices that are so thematically critical to her critique

of a Western binary are made literal, and her viewers are pushed to contemplate those spaces, and their own assumptions about critical resolution. It is through these two bodies of work that O'Grady has both opened and closed a chapter in her career dedicated to demanding from the art world that they investigate further their own assumptions about who and what constitutes narratives of note.

Notes

- 1 Interviewed by the author, New York, November 9, 2017.
- 2 B.A. received 1956. M.F.A. Candidate 1965-76.
- 3 Still point of popularity in 1977 for confessional poets including: Robert Lowell, Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton.
- 4 Interviewed by the author, New York, July 12, 2018.
- 5 Letterpress printing on Japanese paper, cut-out, collage on laid paper. Printed in collaboration with RENÉ SCHMITT DRUCKGRAPHIK, Westoverledingen, Germany.
- 6 Original page from *The Renaissance Man is Back in Business*, Sunday, September 25, 1977.
- 7 O'Grady, Lorraine, "This Will Have Been: My 1980s." *Art Journal* 71, no. 2, Summer 2012.
- 8 Comments added to quote in conversation with the author, New York, October 4, 2018.
- 9 O'Grady, Lorraine, "Email Q & A w *Artforum* Editor." Unpublished email exchange, 2009.
- 10 Original poems can be accessed here: http://lorraineogrady.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Lorraine-OGrady_Mlle-Bourgeoise-Noire-Performance-Synopsis_moca-org.pdf.
- 11 True Haiku must be 17 syllables: in English translations the result is three unrhymed lines of 5, 7, 5 syllables.
- 12 Cora Agatucci. "Haiku." Accessed April 25, 2018. <http://web.cocc.edu/cagatucci/classes/hum210/coursepack/haiku.htm>.
- 13 Original pages from *A Heroic Return*, Sunday, August 28, 1977.
- 14 In conversation with the author, New York, August 30, 2018.
- 15 Born in 1934 in Boston, MA to West Indian parents.
- 16 O'Grady, Lorraine, "Thoughts on Diaspora and Hybridity." Unpublished lecture at Wellesley College, 1994.
- 17 O'Grady, Lorraine, ""The Diptych vs. the Triptych." Unpublished artist statement, 1991.
- 18 O'Grady, Lorraine, "Thoughts on Diaspora and Hybridity." Unpublished lecture at Wellesley College, 1994.
- 19 Interviewed by the author, New York, July 12, 2018.
- 20 O'Grady, Lorraine, "Re: Cutting Out The New York Times, 1977." Unpublished artist statement, 2006.
- 21 Original pages from *Those Missing the Boat Can Catch It in Classes*, Sunday, October 2, 1977.
- 22 O'Grady, Lorraine, "Thoughts on Diaspora and Hybridity." Unpublished lecture at Wellesley College, 1994.
- 23 Original pages from *The Renaissance Man is Back in Business*, Sunday, September 25, 1977.



Installation view, Alexander Gray Associates, New York, 2018

A Little
Night Myopia

Brings New Life to

Becoming an Extinct Species

Do
Something
about
the weather.

twice a day

Chase the
Wind

Installation view, Alexander Gray Associates, New York, 2018

Prophetic Vision

and the Living Is Easy...

Soft Cover, Hard Cash

at

The House
in the Hill

We wrote the book on

The Danger of Blurring
Fact and Fantasy

**How to get the one thing
everyone wants most in life**

Good morning. Good afternoon.

Are you thinking about plastic surgery?

Soft in message. Subtle in tone.

'The modern artist,
finding himself with
no shared
foundation, has
begun to build on

Reckless Storytelling

STAR WORDS

and

The Deluxe Almost-Everything-Included

**WORK
OF ART**

DRACULA IS

**When read
you are**



Installation view, SCAD Museum of Art, 2018

In The Beginning

**Crazy
Love**

Tomorrow

Personal Landmarks

but Crisis Continues

Pleasant Surprises

Just Aren't Getting Along

The Salton Hot Basket.

And only one woman
could have created it.

Perfection has its price.

The "Good Life" Has Found a Limit

**If you stay in a different
Ramada Inn every night, you
won't get home
for nearly two years.**

**A Little
Night Myopia**

Brings New Life to

Becoming an Extinct Species

**Do
Something
about
the weather.**

twice a day

**Chase the
Wind**

Icarus Redux
Wings in
Flight Toward Jupiter and Saturn

The Man With the Perfect Ear

**never
sleeps**

a

Never-Ending

Happy Ending

Some people go

IN SEARCH OF

The Trauma of

PRIVACY

Uptown, Downtown-they're free

Here Come
the Brilliant Days of Autumn

discover
the center and
rediscover yourself

Old Energy in New Bottles
Sounding New Alarms

SUMMER IS BEING
HELD OVER

UNTIL THE
SUN DIES

The Best of All Things
Common Things That
Move the Imagination

x. You can't be
aged by a
year.

White and Black as
**THE SOUND
THAT SHOOK
HOLLYWOOD**

The Crisis Deceit
Theater

analyze
the colder day
when going

reveling in

Sexy
Economics

go wild with

Behind Kubrick's
Masks and Screens

Psychology Lessons

BETTE & JOAN

Installation view, SCAD Museum of Art, 2018

**For years
you've written the hard way.**

**Are you capable
of selecting**

The Loose, Drifting Material of

Plagues

WANT

The Effects of Ice on

Moorish Delight

Taste

Ideas From Moving Water

**Build
Yourself a**

Home That Fits

**Come out, come out,
wherever you are.**

**Relax. You can't be
replaced by a
machine.**

**I HAD WILD JACK
FOR A LOVER**

Lip-Licking, Leg-Crossing

HEART OF ICE

the Parent

That Refused to Die

Come of Age

go to sleep

Turn-of-the-Century America

**TIMELESS SUMMERS IN
OLD-TIME MAINE**

The Dilemma of

the ideal way

Is Baseball Too Slow? Or Is It Supposed

to Be That Way

revelling in
Sexy
Economics
Behind Kabuki's
Masks and Screens
BETTE & JOAN
go wild with
Psychological Anagnorsis

light up the night!
impressions
may be the death of us all.

Mantle Makers
to Country a Change
Have found what
is in the country
and more than
that they
are the country

White and Black and
**THE SOUND
THAT SHOOK
HOLLYWOOD**
You're the artist
Have we found the
beginning of existence -
or the end of it?
The Crisis Deepens in
Theatrical Détente

In the Amber Glow of

August skin

there is no escape from terror

The Sun Also Rises

on New Tracks—Without a Railroad

**It's been said that gold isn't
But in fact it often is.**

***The Best of All Gifts:
Common Things That
Move the Imagination***

A FEELING
AS WELL AS
A LOOK

**One Word Led
To Another**

Riding With the Fates

Spinning Around the World

ON A MISSION

YOU WON'T GIVE UP

IN TEN MINUTES.

**YOU'VE GOT SO MUCH
GOING FOR YOU**

—on your way to Rio.

Several Murders Later,

Facing the Unknown

BEGIN

**THE
LONG NAKED
DESCENT
INTO BOSTON**

Ekaterina, Not Nymphodora

Options Limited

FINALLY COMES HOME

**One of us One of us
excites delights
you. you.**

Is It Déjà Vu?

Here Come

the Brilliant Days of Autumn

Old Energy in New Bottles

Sounding New Alarms

discover
the center and
rediscover yourself

**SUMMER IS BEING
HELD OVER**

**UNTIL THE
SUN DIES**

How to get the one thing
that you want most in life

Are you thinking about plastic surgery?

Plastic Surgery

Will You Be Going Along?

Plastic Surgery

Plastic Surgery

For years
you've written the ha...

The Salton Hot Basket.

And only one woman
could have created it.

Perfection has its price.
The "Good Life" Has Found a Limit

If you stay in a different
Ramada Inn every night, you
won't get home
for nearly two years.

As the world, you know? Or is it supposed?

to be than what

mouth of us all.

Installation view, SCAD Museum of Art, 2018

White and Black and

**THE SOUND
THAT SHOOK
HOLLYWOOD**

The Crisis Deepens in

Theatrical Détente

You're the artist

**Have we found the
beginning of existence—
or the end of it?**

Crime Pays

on a Dreamboat.

Economic Man Acquires a Soul

AT the club

with no time limit

**WE'LL
GIVE YOU THE
WHOLE WORLD**

light up the night!

impressions

may be the death of us all.

Only one

Connecting Flight

Leads from

Perseid Shower Delights

to

A Lost World

**Staking
Claims**

somehow
the coldest day
seems gentle.

revelling in

Sexy
Economics

Behind Kabuki's
Masks and Screens

BETTE & JOAN

go wild with

Psychological Autopsies:

Marathon Mother

Is Considering a Change

'Guten Abend,' said a voice as the massive door swung open. 'We've been expecting you.'

But the wind kept blowing harder.

This could be

**The Permanent
Rebellion**

that lasts a lifetime.

**Calling a Halt
To the Universe**

BECAUSE LIFE DOESN'T WAIT

**THE SAVAGE
IS LOOSE**

where we are.

Illustrated Checklist

From *Cutting Out CONYT*, 1977/2017
 All works: Letterpress printing on Japanese paper, cut-out, collage on laid paper.
 Diptych: Each: 41.75h x 30w in,
 overall: 41.75h x 60w in
 Edition of 12 with 1 AP



Cutting Out CONYT 01



Cutting Out CONYT 02



Cutting Out CONYT 03



Cutting Out CONYT 04



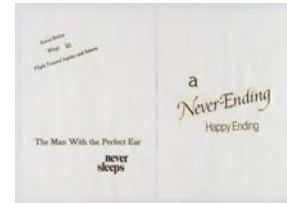
Cutting Out CONYT 05



Cutting Out CONYT 06



Cutting Out CONYT 07



Cutting Out CONYT 08



Cutting Out CONYT 09



Cutting Out CONYT 10



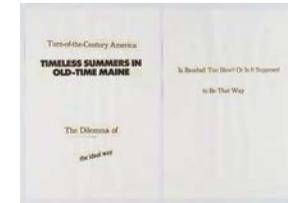
Cutting Out CONYT 11



Cutting Out CONYT 12



Cutting Out CONYT 13



Cutting Out CONYT 14



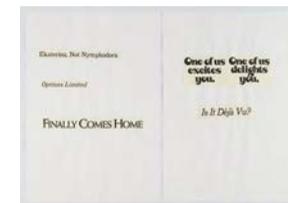
Cutting Out CONYT 15



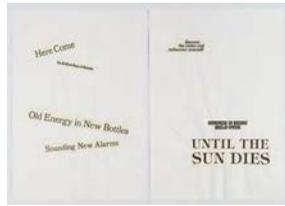
Cutting Out CONYT 16



Cutting Out CONYT 17



Cutting Out CONYT 18



Cutting Out CONYT 19



Cutting Out CONYT 25



Cutting Out CONYT 20



Cutting Out CONYT 26



Cutting Out CONYT 21



Cutting Out CONYT 22



Cutting Out CONYT 23



Cutting Out CONYT 24

Other Illustrated Works

Cutting Out The New York Times, 1977
Toner ink on adhesive paper
11.02h x 7.88w in (27.99h x 20w cm)

Miscegenated Family Album (Sisters III), L:
Nefertiti's daughter, Maketaten; R: *Devonia's*
daughter, Kimberley, 1980/1994
Cibachrome print
26h x 37w in (66.04h x 93.98w cm)
Edition of 8 + 1 AP

The First and the Last of the Modernists,
Diptych 3 Blue (Charles and Michael), 2010
Fujiflex print
46.80h x 37.40w in (118.87h x 95w cm)
Edition of 8 + 2 AP

Cutting Out the New York Times, Just the Two
of Us, 1977/2010
Toner ink on adhesive paper
88.19h x 7.88w in (224h x 20w cm), in 8 parts
Edition of 8 + 1 AP

Lorraine O'Grady, 2018. Photo: Ross Collab.



Lorraine O’Grady (b.1934) combines strategies related to humanist studies on gender, the politics of diaspora and identity, and reflections on aesthetics by using a variety of mediums that include performance, photo installation, moving media, and photomontage. A native of Boston, MA, her work involves her heritage as a New Englander of Caribbean immigrant parents. After she graduated from Wellesley College in 1956 with a degree in economics and Spanish literature, she served as an intelligence analyst for the United States government, a literary and commercial translator, and a rock music critic. Turning to visual arts in the late 1970s, O’Grady became an active voice within the alternative New York art world of the time. In addition to addressing feminist concerns, her work tackled cultural perspectives that had been underrepresented during the Feminist movements of the early 1970s.

In the 1980s, O’Grady created two of her most recognized bodies of work, *Mille Bourgeoise Noire* (1980–83), a guerilla performance taking place in the heart of New York City’s downtown art scene, and *Art Is . . .* (1983), a joyful performance in Harlem’s African-American Day Parade. In *Mille Bourgeoise Noire*, O’Grady’s extravagant persona responded to the Futurist dictum that art has the power to change the world and was in part a critique of the racial apartheid still prevailing in the mainstream art world. Wearing a costume made of 180 pairs of white gloves from thrift shops and carrying a white cat-o-nine-tails of sail rope from a seaport store that she had studded with white chrysanthemums, *Mille Bourgeoise Noire* (Miss Black Middle-Class) was an equal-opportunity critic. She gave both timid black artists and thoughtless white institutions a “piece of her mind.”

Art Is . . . embodied O’Grady’s desire to fully connect with the audience. The performance was undertaken in a spirit of elation which carried over through the day; unlike previous works which had critiqued the art world from within, this piece went outside to be about life and art. O’Grady used a 9 by 15 foot antique-styled gold frame mounted on a gold-skirted parade float that moved slowly up Adam Clayton Powell Boulevard, framing everything it passed as art. Today, the work is a compelling reminder of the politics and power of art making, as well as the joy of experiencing art.

Concerned with the lack of African-American and other representation in the Feminist movement of the 1970s, O’Grady critiqued the effort’s inability to “make itself meaningful to working-class white women and to non-white women of all classes.” O’Grady has continued an ongoing commitment to articulating “hybrid” subjective positions that span a range of races, classes and social identities.

Lorraine O’Grady’s work has been the subject of numerous one-persons exhibitions, including *From Me to Them to Me Again*, Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) Museum of Art, GA (2018); *Family Gained*, Museum of Fine Arts (MFA), Boston, MA (2018); *Lorraine O’Grady: Initial Recognition*, Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo, Monastery de Santa María de las Cuevas, Sevilla, Spain (2016); and *Lorraine O’Grady: When Margins Become Centers*, Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA (2015). Her work has been included in countless group exhibitions, including *Michael Jackson: On the Wall*, National Portrait Gallery, London, United Kingdom (2018), traveled to Grand Palais, Paris, France (2018), The Bundeskunsthalle, Bonn, Germany (2019), and Espoo Museum of Modern Art, Finland (2019); *Soul of a Nation: Art in the Age of Black Power*, Tate Modern, London, United Kingdom (2017), traveled to Crystal Bridges Museum of American, Bentonville, AK (2018), Brooklyn Museum, NY (2018), and The Broad, Los Angeles, CA (2019); and *We Wanted a Revolution: Black Radical Women 1965–85*, Brooklyn Museum, NY (2017), traveled to California African American Museum, Los Angeles, CA (2017), Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY (2018), and Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA), Boston, MA (2018). Her work is represented in innumerable public collections, including the Art Institute of Chicago, IL; Brooklyn Museum, NY; Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, PA; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, CA; Museum of Fine Arts (MFA), Boston, MA; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; and Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN. She has been a resident artist at Artpace San Antonio, TX, and has received numerous other awards, including a 2015 Creative Capital Award in Visual Art, a Creative Capital Grant, the CAA Distinguished Feminist Award, a Life Time Achievement Award from Howard University, an Art Matters grant, and the Anonymous Was A Woman award, as well as being named a United States Artists Rockefeller Fellow. Most recently, she was honored with a 2017 Francis J. Greenburger award. In addition to her work as a visual artist, she has also made innovative contributions to cultural criticism with her writings, including the now canonical article, “Olympia’s Maid: Reclaiming Black Female Subjectivity.”

Published by Alexander Gray Associates on the occasion of the exhibition

Lorraine O'Grady: *Cutting Out CONYT*

October 25 – December 15, 2018

Publication © 2018 Alexander Gray Associates, LLC

Artwork © 2018 Lorraine O'Grady/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, or stored in any retrieval system of any nature without prior written permission of the copyright holders. Alexander Gray Associates made every effort to contact copyright holders for images. Please address any inquiries to the publisher.

ISBN: 0-578-41280-2

Cover image: *Cutting Out CONYT*, installation view, Alexander Gray Associates, New York (2018).

Contributors: Carly Fischer and Page Benkowski

Editor: Alejandro Jassan

Design: Alejandro Jassan

Printing: Bedwick & Jones Printing, Inc.

Photography Credits:

pp. 2–3, 6, 8, 10, 11, 15–35, 38–59, 62–73, cover: Jeffrey Sturges.

pp. 13, 36–37, 60–61: Courtesy Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) Museum. p.

9: Photo: Guillermo Mendo. Courtesy Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo (CAAC).

pp. 5, 7: Lorraine O'Grady studio.

p. 75: Ross Collab.

Alexander Gray Associates:

Alexander Gray, David Cabrera, John Kunemund, Victoria Pratt, Alejandro Jassan, Page Benkowski, Alex Santana, Margaret Ewing, Edward Cabral, Gena Beam, Hannah Cirone, Ariel De Sal, Gabriel Alexander, Clarence Johns

Intern: Kayla William

Special thanks to René Schmitt, Storm Janse Van Rensburg, Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) team, Sur Rodney Sur, Laura Lappi.

Through exhibitions, research, and artist representation, Alexander Gray Associates spotlights artistic movements and artists who emerged in the mid- to late-Twentieth Century. Influential in cultural, social, and political spheres, these artists are notable for creating work that crosses geographic borders, generational contexts and artistic disciplines. Alexander Gray Associates is a member of the Art Dealers Association of America.

Alexander Gray Associates

510 West 26 Street

New York NY 10001

United States

Tel: +1 212 399 2636

www.alexandergray.com