



Cutting Out CONYT 03, 1977/2017, letterpress printing on Japanese paper, cut-out, collage on laid paper, overall: 41.75h x 60w in

Lorraine O'Grady: *Cutting Out CONYT*

October 25 – December 15, 2018

Alexander Gray Associates presents *Cutting Out CONYT*, an exhibition of new work by **Lorraine O'Grady** (b.1934). Featuring a selection of prints from *Cutting Out CONYT* (1977/2017), in O'Grady's words, the show reveals her ongoing commitment to "establishing the diptych as a ceaseless conversation of difference."

Cutting Out CONYT returns to O'Grady's 1977 work, *Cutting Out The New York Times (CONYT)*, which consists of 26 found newspaper poems made between June 5 and November 20, 1977 from successive editions of the *Sunday Times*. Building on the 1977 series' successful transformation of public language into private, in *Cutting Out CONYT*, O'Grady repurposes the collages to achieve a failed goal of the original work: the creation of what she terms "counter-confessional" poetry. *Cutting Out CONYT* culls the poems and reshapes the remains into 26 new works that adopt a form the artist refers to as "haiku diptychs." Each of the haiku takes as its source a single 1977 poem. By concentrating and refining the original series' voice, *Cutting Out CONYT* serves as a bridge between O'Grady's early and later works. As she explains, "Making it has allowed me to maintain the tensions between my more explicit voice and my less explicit voice in a way that feels fruitful to me."

These two voices, which O'Grady has alternately identified as "narrative/political," "expressive/argumentative," "inner-directed/outer-directed," and "post-black/black," inform all of her work. With the quip, "I was 'post-black' before I was 'black,'" she characterizes her artistic trajectory from the 1970s into the 1980s as an evolution from producing deeply personal works imbued with her identity to more overtly politically motivated ones. As a result, like its *CONYT* source material, *Cutting Out CONYT* references what O'Grady describes as "a diaspora mind, a diaspora experience." Like other diasporic "new world" artworks, including *Rivers, First Draft* (1982/2015) and *Landscape (Western Hemisphere)* (2010/2011), this series is implicitly political. O'Grady expands, "Produced with 40 more years of life and aesthetic experience, I feel that it [*Cutting Out CONYT*] embraces the mysterious intertwinings of narrative and politics, post-blackness and blackness in a way that *Cutting Out The New York Times* could not accomplish or even imagine."

At the same time, *Cutting Out CONYT* engages with the counter-confessionalism of O'Grady's 1977 poems and transforms it via its diptych format into something distinctly other. Refuting hierarchical binaries through its two-panel presentation, the series insists on both/and rather than either/or. Its structure allows O'Grady to question apparent oppositions between her voices while maintaining their productive tensions, siting her work in the interstitial space between personal and political, inner and outer, and post-black and black. Ultimately, as she summarizes, "There was no extrication of the personal from the political, because these qualities were not opposites but obverse and reverse of the same coin."

Lorraine O'Grady's work is currently on view in the solo exhibitions *From Me to Them to Me Again* at the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) Museum of Art, GA and *Family Gained* at the Museum of Fine Arts (MFA), Boston, MA, as well as the group exhibitions *Soul of a Nation: Art in the Age of Black Power*, Brooklyn Museum of Art, NY; *We Wanted a Revolution: Black Radical Women 1965–85*, The Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA), Boston, MA; *Family Pictures*, Milwaukee Art Museum, WI; and *Michael Jackson: On the Wall*, National Portrait Gallery, London, United

Kingdom. In addition, her work has been exhibited at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY (2018); Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia, PA (2018); Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, AR (2018); Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN (2017 and 2014); Tate Modern, London, United Kingdom (2017); Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo, Seville, Spain (2016); Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA (2015); Studio Museum in Harlem, New York (2015, 2013, and 2012); MoMA PS1, Long Island City, New York (2014); 1a Bienal Internacional de Arte Contemporáneo, Cartagena, Colombia (2014); Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL (2012); Whitney Biennial, New York (2012 and 2010); La Triennale Paris 2012, France (2012); Manifesta 8, Murcia, Spain (2010); The Museum of Modern Art, New York (2008); Art Institute of Chicago, IL (2008); and Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA (2007). Her work is represented in countless 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, 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."