

MEDIA CONTACT

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Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts’ 2021–2022 research season is informed and inspired by the work of artist and writer Lorraine O’Grady

The yearlong research season, *Lorraine O’Grady is on our mind*, uses the work of artist Lorraine O’Grady as a lens to think about our contemporary moment through a series of public lectures, screenings, performances, and other events



Lorraine O’Grady, *Art Is... (Troupe Front)*, 1983/2009. C-print in 40 parts, 16 x 20 in (40.64 x 50.8 cm). Edition of 8 + 1 AP. Courtesy the artist and Alexander Gray Associates, New York. © 2021 Lorraine O’Grady / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

San Francisco, CA—September 21, 2021—Artist **Lorraine O’Grady** is the subject of the Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts’ 2021–2022 research season, [*Lorraine O’Grady is on our mind*](#).

Throughout the year-long research season, which runs from September 2021 through July 2022, the Wattis will use O’Grady’s work as a point of departure—exploring various questions and themes connecting other artists and ideas to O’Grady’s work—for a series of public lectures, performances, screenings, and other events featuring prominent artists and thinkers.

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Those events begin [Tuesday, September 21](#), with a free online lecture by **Catherine Morris**, Sackler senior curator at the Brooklyn Museum. With Aruna D'Souza, Morris is curator of O'Grady's *Both/And*, the artist's first monographic exhibition which was on view at the Brooklyn Museum from March through July 2021. Beginning with her intersectional engagement with art world feminism in the early 1980s, the lecture is structured around a discussion of O'Grady's critical interventions into the western art historical canon, culminating in her most recent project *Announcement of a New Persona (Performances to Come!)*.

Additional events—including a November 18 lecture by **Franklin Sirmans** on the influence of the New York gallery Just Above Midtown (1974–1986) and its founder Linda Goode Bryant; virtual musical performances reflecting on Lorraine O'Grady's work as a music collaborator and critic for *The Village Voice* and *Rolling Stone* (1960–1970s); and a conversation between **Lorraine O'Grady** and artist **Sam Vernon** in February 2021—will be announced on the newly redesigned wattis.org. [Click here to be notified of upcoming events](#).

Running alongside but separate from the Wattis Institute's exhibition programming, each of the Wattis' year-long research "seasons" creates a community around a broad set of themes and subjects as they relate to the work of a single artist. *Lorraine O'Grady is on our mind* is Wattis Institute's eighth research season; past seasons featured Joan Jonas (2014–2015), Andrea Fraser (2015–2016), David Hammons (2016–2017), Seth Price (2017–2018), Dodie Bellamy (2018–2019), Trinh T. Minh-ha (2019–2020), and Cecilia Vicuña (2020–2021).

At the culmination of this year's research season, the Wattis will release two publications: a book conceived with O'Grady and the fourth issue of the Wattis' new annual reader, [A Series of Open Questions](#).

Lorraine O'Grady is on our mind is co-curated by Jeanne Gerrity and Kim Nguyen. Special thanks to Lorraine O'Grady, Ursula Davila, and Page Benkowski. The CCA faculty group who collaborated on this research includes Kota Ezawa, Jeanne Finley, Jacqueline Francis, Jeanne Gerrity, Becca Imrich, Michelle Murillo, Kim Nguyen, Peter Simensky, Sam Vernon, Leila Weefur, and Allison Yasukawa, with assistance by Zalika Azim and Selam Bekele.

About Lorraine O'Grady

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, and daughter of Caribbean immigrant parents. After she graduated from Wellesley College in 1956 studying economics and Spanish literature, she served as an intelligence analyst for the United States government, a literary and commercial translator, and 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.

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In the 1980s, O’Grady created two of her most currently recognized bodies of work, *Mlle Bourgeoise Noire* (1980–83), a guerrilla 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 *Mlle 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.

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. 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.”

Lorraine O’Grady’s work has been the subject of numerous one-person exhibitions, and Brooklyn Museum organized a retrospective of her work, *Lorraine O’Grady: Both/And*, that opened in the spring of 2021. Other solo shows include *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, Seville, 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 *Soul of a Nation: Art in the Age of Black Power*, Tate Modern, London, United Kingdom (2017), traveled to Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, AK (2018), Brooklyn Museum, NY (2018), The Broad, Los Angeles, CA (2019), de Young Museum, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, CA (2019), and The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX (2020); 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, 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, 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 Skowhegan Medal (2019) and the Francis J. Greenburger award (2017). In addition to her work as a visual artist, she has also made innovative

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contributions to cultural criticism with her writings. A book of her collected writings, *Lorraine O'Grady: Writing in Space*, was published by Duke University Press in fall 2020.

About CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts

Founded in 1998 at California College of the Arts in San Francisco and located a few blocks from its campus, CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts is a nonprofit exhibition venue and research institute dedicated to contemporary art and ideas. As an exhibition space, it commissions and shows new work by emerging and established artists from around the world. Recent solo exhibitions include Maia Cruz Palileo: *Long Kwento* (which travels to the Kimball Art Center, Park City, Utah in 2022); Jeffrey Gibson: *Nothing Is Eternal*; Lydia Ourahmane: *صرخة شمسية Solar Cry*; Cinthia Marcelle: *A morta*; Vincent Fecteau; Abbas Akhavan: *cast for a folly*; Akosua Adoma Owusu: *Welcome to the Jungle* (which traveled to the Contemporary Arts Center of New Orleans); *Diamond Stingily: Doing the Best I Can*; Rosha Yaghmai: *Miraclegrow*; and Adam Linder: *Full Service* (which traveled to Mudam Luxembourg). A recent group exhibition, *Mechanisms*, traveled to Secession in Vienna in an expanded form entitled *Other Mechanisms*.

As a research institute, the Wattis dedicates an entire year to reflect on the work of a single artist, which informs a regular series of public programs and publications involving the field's most prominent artists and thinkers. The 2021–2022 season is dedicated to the artist Lorraine O'Grady; past seasons featured Joan Jonas, Andrea Fraser, David Hammons, Seth Price, Dodie Bellamy, Trinh T. Minh-ha, and Cecilia Vicuña.

The Wattis also hosts an annual Capp Street Artist-in-Residence, one of the earliest and longest-running artist-in-residence programs in the country, founded in 1983 by Ann Hatch as Capp Street Project, and incorporated into the Wattis Institute in 1998. Each year, an artist comes to live and work in San Francisco for a semester, teaches a graduate seminar at CCA, and develops a new body of work or research. Recent participants include Raven Chacon (2020–2021), Hồng-An Trương (2019–2020), Abbas Akhavan (2018–2019), contemporary (2017–2018), Melanie Gilligan (2016–2017), Carissa Rodriguez (2015–2016), and Nairy Baghramian (2014–2015). For more information, visit wattis.org.

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