

Brief Bio

Lorraine O'Grady is an artist and critic whose installations, performances and texts address issues of diaspora, hybridity and black female subjectivity, with special reference to the role these have played in the history of modernism. The *New York Times* in 2006 called O'Grady "one of the most interesting American conceptual artists around." And in 2007 *Mlle Bourgeoise Noire*, her landmark 1980 performance initiated 5 years before the founding of the Guerrilla Girls, was made an entry point to "WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution," the first major museum exhibition of this groundbreaking art movement. Since then, O'Grady's career has expanded exponentially — with inclusions in such significant group shows as the Whitney Biennial (2010), the Paris Triennale (2012), "This Will have Been: Art Love and Politics in the 1980s" (MCA Chicago, 2012), "Radical Presence: Black Performance in Contemporary Art" (CAM Houston, 2012), and "En Mas': Carnival and Performance Art of the Caribbean" (CAC New Orleans, 2015), and with acquisitions by the Museum of Modern Art, NY; the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN; and the Art Institute of Chicago, IL, among many others.

Born in Boston in 1934 to West Indian parents, O'Grady came to art late. *Mlle Bourgeoise Noire* and *Nefertiti/Devonia Evangeline* in 1980 were her first public art works. After majoring in economics and Spanish literature at Wellesley, she studied in the fiction program of the Iowa Writers Workshop and had several careers: as an intelligence analyst for the U.S. government, a literary and commercial translator with her own agency, and for a time as a rock critic for *The Village Voice* and *Rolling Stone*. Ultimately, this broad background contributed to a distanced and critical view of the art world when she entered it and to an unusually eclectic attitude toward art-making. In O'Grady's work, the idea tends to come first, and then a medium is employed to best execute it. The work's intellectual content is rigorous and political, but its form is often characterized by heightened beauty and elegance.