

A Permanent Rebellion



Sisters from the Miscegenated Family Album, by Lorraine O'Grady '55, silver-dye bleach print (Cibachrome), 19¹/₁₀ by 15¹⁵/₁₀ in., Davis Museum purchase.

IN ONE OF HER EARLY WORKS, *Cutting Out the New York Times*, writer and artist Lorraine O'Grady '55 sought to find meaning in the random by piecing together clippings from the *Sunday Times* into poems that reflected her personal sensibility. "This could be/ The Permanent Rebellion/ that lasts a lifetime," declares one of the poems in bold, inky newsprint.

Now that O'Grady has given her papers to the Wellesley College Archives, a record of her rebellion will last many lifetimes. O'Grady's papers are the first major alumnae archives to come to Wellesley and include correspondence, exhibition records, drafts of writing, notes, journals, interviews, and audiovisual materials.

"We have great resources in Special Collections with their old manuscripts, and we have wonderful resources about the institution, but we just realized that there's a huge hole in between those that would really help scholars, as well as the Wellesley community, in their research," says Jane Callahan, assistant archivist.

O'Grady, who was born in Boston to Jamaican immigrants, had a wide-ranging career before finding her calling. She worked as an intelligence analyst, a translator, and a rock critic before discovering the conceptual and performance art world in New York City. She realized that this kind of art is "a way I can understand my life, I can understand my world," she says.

O'Grady's introduction to the New York art scene was as her persona "Mlle Bourgeoise Noire" (Miss Black Middle Class) in 1980, through which she urged black artists to take more risks in their work. The Davis Museum's recent exhibit *A Generous Medium: Photography at Wellesley 1972–2012* included these two photographs from "Sisters I–IV" (above), which strikingly juxtapose a portrait of O'Grady's sister Devonia with an image of a sculpture of Nefertiti. The artist's work has also been in such exhibits as the Whitney Biennial and the Triennale de Paris.

O'Grady hopes that through the archives, Wellesley students will see "that there are different ways of being a Wellesley woman ... I wanted to say, 'I'm here, too.'"

—Lisa Scanlon '99