

Wall Text, Beyond/In Western New York, 2010*

by Carolyn Tennant, for Anderson Gallery, Univ. at Buffalo

Two complementary pieces, *The Clearing*, 1991, and *Landscape (Western Hemisphere)*, 2010, were connected via the concept of the bridge, both in music and in O'Grady's phrase, "Wherever I stand, I find I have to build a bridge to some other place."

"Wherever I stand, I find I have to build a bridge to some other place." *Lorraine O'Grady*

By presenting a video installation newly created for Beyond/In Western New York with a twenty-year-old photomontage diptych, Lorraine O'Grady creates a bridge for herself and for viewers, not simply to link two works but as a strategy that (re)engages with each work's concepts. In music, *the bridge* serves as a section in the score that, in contrast with the chorus and the verse, prepares the listener for the approaching climax. Her new video *Landscape (Western Hemisphere)* responds to *The Clearing* (1991), a work that has not been recuperated by scholars and curators as have many of O'Grady's other radical works, so as to encourage reconsideration of the earlier work. The new video emerged from a recent dialog with York University Associate Professor Andil Gosine, in which the artist spoke of her artistic intentions for *The Clearing* and described the work's original reception, one of silencing and censure. The surrealistic photomontage depicts what filmmaker John Waters calls "the last taboo": black and white sexual unions which O'Grady depicts as both born from desire and in service to power.

Landscape (Western Hemisphere) presents The Body as a landscape, harmoniously addressing many of the conceptual themes of the original diptych, later re-titled by the artist as *The Clearing: or Cortez and La Malinche, Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings, N. and Me*. When the two works are presented together, a new space is created—one where intertextuality and intersubjectivity can coexist. Just as the distinct panels of the diptych both function in contrast yet are seen together, the video and the diptych forge a "space between," allowing the viewer greater access to the silenced work. O'Grady takes us to the bridge.

* Wall text by Carolyn Tennant, *Alternating Currents: Beyond/In Western New York*, Buffalo, NY, 2010. For O'Grady's two-part installation of the video *Landscape (Western Hemisphere)* and the photomontage diptych *The Clearing: or Cortez and La Malinche, Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings, N. and Me.* Multi-sited biennial sponsored by the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, installation at University at Buffalo Anderson Gallery.