

Renowned artist and Wellesley College alumna Lorraine O'Grady '55 brings critically acclaimed *Both/And* exhibit to the Davis Museum

Exhibition opens to the public on February 8 through June 2, 2024



Lorraine O'Grady (American, born 1934). *Art Is . . . (Girl Pointing)*, 1983/2009. Chromogenic photograph in 40 parts, 20 × 16 in. (50.8 × 40.64 cm). Edition of 8 plus 1 artist's proof. © 2023 Lorraine O'Grady/Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York

WELLESLEY, MASS. (December 19, 2023) – [Lorraine O'Grady '55](#), a critically acclaimed contemporary artist and cultural critic, returns to the Boston area with her retrospective exhibition [Lorraine O'Grady: *Both/And*](#). This landmark exhibition will coincide with a performance art series, both of which are free and open to the public. *Both/And* will be on view at [the Davis Museum at Wellesley College](#) from February 8 to June 2, 2024.

Lorraine O'Grady: Both/And is the first major career survey of the renowned conceptual artist whose work has long challenged prevailing understandings around gender, race, and class. Originally organized by the Brooklyn Museum in March 2021, the exhibition charts the development of O'Grady's artistic oeuvre, which spans collage, photo-installation, performance, and video. It brings focus to the artist's skillful subversion of the "either/or" logic inherent in the Western philosophical canon, and explores her longstanding commitment to the reasoning of "both/and."

O'Grady's work deals with a range of overlapping themes: Black female subjectivity in Western modernity and artistic modernism; hybridity and diasporic experience; multiplicity and selfhood; colonialism and slavery; and intersectional feminist theory and praxis. Through her deployment of the diptych as both an artistic and conceptual strategy, O'Grady calls for an anti-hierarchical approach to difference within the categories of Black and white, self, and other, West and non-West, and past and present. Through spring, the Davis Museum will offer an opportunity for visitors to experience O'Grady's work and to participate in free public programs. *Taking the White Gloves Off: A Performance Art Series in Honor of Lorraine O'Grady '55* premieres on February 8, in collaboration with the Lunder Institute for American Art at Colby College Museum of Art. Details are forthcoming.

"This is an extraordinary opportunity for us to open the Davis Museum and welcome Lorraine O'Grady back to campus with her triumphant exhibition, *Both/And*," said Dr. Lisa Fischman, the Ruth Gordon Shapiro '37 Director of the Davis Museum. "Her bold artistic practice is stunning visually and conceptually and has been for decades. It's no surprise that she is especially appealing to younger audiences on today's cultural landscape and inspires them with her critical perspectives on race, femininity, inequity, and identity."

As a Black woman, a native New Englander and child of Caribbean parents, O'Grady has made art as a means of self-exploration as well as cultural critique. Born in Boston to Jamaican parents, she was educated at the Girls Latin School before studying economics and Spanish literature at Wellesley College (class of 1955). O'Grady became the first Wellesley graduate to pass the U.S. Federal Management intern exam, after which she received a coveted job at the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Turning to artmaking in the 1970s, she first exhibited her work at Wellesley in 1994 as part of the *Body as Measure* exhibition. The Davis Museum acquired her "Sisters" quadriptych from that show.

Among the works created by O'Grady between 1977 and 2021 that will be on view at the Davis Museum are her photo-installation of *Rivers, First Draft*, a one-time only performance that she staged in New York's Central Park in 1982, featuring multiple overlapping narratives, and her performance *Art Is...*, a joyful intervention into Harlem's 1983 African-American Day Parade, that engaged with both avant-garde ideas and conceptual art. The exhibition also includes pieces from O'Grady's more recent (2020) body of work, revolving around the artist's latest artistic persona known as the Knight, or Lancela Palm-and-Steel. The Knight wears a 40-pound suit of custom-forged, plated steel armor in the Late Renaissance style of the conquistadors but topped with Caribbean headdresses emblematic of the Global South. The [New York Times](#) referenced the works in a laudatory February 2021 "Sunday Arts" cover story of O'Grady, noting "Gradually, the art world has inscribed O'Grady into the canon."



Lorraine O'Grady (American, born 1934). *Family Portrait 1 (Formal, Composed)*, 2020. Fujiflex print, 60 × 48 in. (152.4 × 121.9 cm). Edition of 10 plus 3 artist's proofs. © 2023 Lorraine O'Grady/Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York

In 2010, O'Grady donated her paper archives to the Wellesley College Library. Her work was featured in the Davis Museum's 2016 exhibition, *A Generous Medium: Photography at Wellesley, 1972–2012* and, in 2017, she was honored with the Wellesley College Alumnae Achievement Award.

During the exhibition of *Lorraine O'Grady: Both/And*, faculty, staff, and students from across the Wellesley campus will be studying and discussing the works in several departments including Africana Studies, American Studies, Anthropology, Art, Cinema and Media Studies, Classical Studies, English, History, Philosophy, Physical Education, Recreation and Athletics, Women's and Gender Studies, and Writing. A major symposium is planned for February 9, 2024, with details to come.

Lorraine O'Grady: Both/And was organized originally for the Brooklyn Museum by Catherine Morris, Sackler Senior Curator, Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art, Brooklyn Museum, and writer Aruna D'Souza with Jenée-Daria Strand, Curatorial Assistant, Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art, Brooklyn Museum.

Leadership support for this exhibition is provided by the Henry Luce Foundation.

Organized for the Davis Museum by Amanda Gilvin, Sonja Novak Koerner '51 Senior Curator of Collections and Assistant Director of Curatorial Affairs, the exhibition is presented at the Davis with generous support from the Mildred Cooper Glimcher '61 Endowed Fund, the Anonymous '70 Endowed Museum Program Fund, Wellesley College Friends of Art at the Davis, and the Alice G. Spink Art Fund.

ABOUT THE DAVIS MUSEUM

A vital resource for communities on the Wellesley College campus and beyond, the Davis Museum is one of the oldest and most acclaimed academic fine art museums in the United States. Its signature Rafael Moneo building houses collections that span the history of art worldwide, from antiquity to the present. Guided by commitments to diversity and inclusion, excellence and innovation, and access for all, the Davis is at the core of Wellesley's liberal arts mission of educating women to make a difference in the world. With exceptional encyclopedic holdings, rotating special exhibitions, and enriching public programs, the Davis warmly welcomes all visitors, including scholars and students of all ages. For visitor information: <https://www.wellesley.edu/davismuseum/visit/directions>.

ABOUT WELLESLEY COLLEGE AND THE ARTS

The Wellesley College arts curriculum and the highly acclaimed Davis Museum are integral components of the College's liberal arts education. Departments and programs from across the campus enliven the community with world-class programming— classical and popular music, visual arts, theatre, dance, author readings, symposia, and lectures by some of today's leading artists and creative thinkers—most of which are free and open to the public.

Since 1875, Wellesley College has been a leader in providing an excellent liberal arts education for women who will make a difference in the world. Its 500-acre campus near Boston is home to some 2,400 undergraduate students from 49 states and 58 countries.

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High-resolution images and interviews available upon request.