



Lorraine O'Grady, *Mlle Bourgeoise Noire Celebrates with Friends*, 1980

Chicago's installation, this 'oppositional component' produces an act of live criticism, as if talking to the past from the present.

'I have to get my images out, so the contextualisation can begin,' continues O'Grady in a follow up letter to Laura Cottingham, writing one of the most indicting of statements on exclusion that 'Both/And' reveals. What this speaks to - whether this exhibition is overdue or not - is a simple truth: that O'Grady was denied the discourses that she actively wanted to engage with at the time of making her work. It is in this sense that 'Both/And' provides its own vital commentary, building into the exhibition the ways in which the artist was ignored (after all, it's well documented); as such, it is a crucial record of a history of erasure.

As if to further this point, several of O'Grady's artworks are also integrated within Brooklyn Museum's permanent collection, reinserting it into conversation with surrounding historical artefacts and tableaux of contestable notions of North American life. *Miscegenated Family Album*, 1980/1994, is found amongst Ancient Egyptian art, while the beautiful, ambient film of her hair moving in a breeze, *Landscape (Western Hemisphere)*, 2010/11, is projected between 19th-century landscape paintings by Thomas Cole and Frederic Edwin Church - chroniclers associated with the Hudson River School. Meanwhile, a new series of large photographic prints of O'Grady in a suit of armour, *Announcement of a New Persona (Performances To Come!)*, are hung between sculptures by Rodin and a court painting of Frances Stuart, aka the model for Britannia. As *Mlle Bourgeoise Noire* pens in another letter from 1984, this time to then *Art in America* editor Elisabeth Baker: 'History, however, is precisely one of the things at issue here.' Not only is this an important, necessary retrospective, 'Both/And' is both rooted and transcendent.

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## Sue Williamson: Testimony

Goodman Gallery, London, 11 March to 24 April

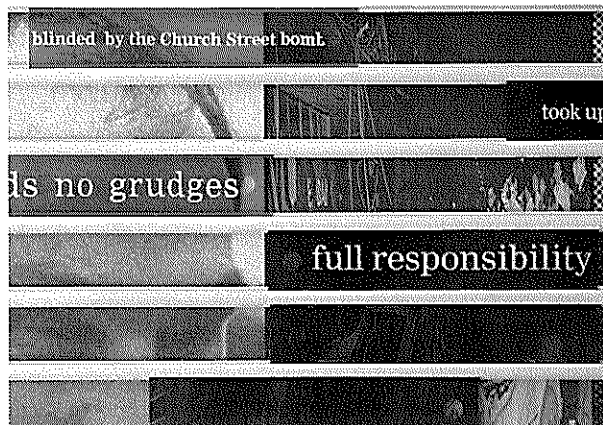
The viewing bench for Sue Williamson's film works is uncomfortably close to the twin screens. In *It's a pleasure to meet you*, 2016, and *That particular morning*, 2019 (co-authored with Siyah Ndawela Mgoduka), each screen frames one participant in a conversation. Obediently seated, we can't see both sides simultaneously, but must instead move our gaze back and forth, as though watching a tennis match.

This positioning is of a piece with Williamson's work. The veteran South African activist-artist always has the body in mind. In *A Tale of Two Cradocks*, 1994, pages from a tourist guide to the titular Eastern Cape town are arranged back to back, concertina fashion, with documentary material related to the 1985 murder of the 'Cradock Four'. Williamson compels us to take a physical position in relation to the work: from one end we see the tourist brochure spread out; from the other, the story of anti-apartheid activist Matthew Goniwe, as related by his widow, Nyameka. To engage, we must step in close, choose how to read, and how the two stories - one of a small town and its white population, the other of the brutal abduction and murder of four black men by the security police - relate to one another. Bringing the viewer's body tight into the story, Williamson undermines distancing strategies and suggests universal complicity: this is part of a shared history that we must all confront.

*A Tale of Two Cradocks* was made during South Africa's transition towards democracy, after the unbanning of liberation movements and release of political prisoners in 1990, ahead of Nelson Mandela's inauguration as president in May 1994. There is no evidence of black life in the Cradock tourist brochure. Part of Williamson's project in this transitional moment was a battle against forgetting: her work memorialises places, experiences, events, lives, pain at risk of slipping out of collective consciousness.

Part of another key work from this period - *District Six: Museum Case #1 Constitution St*, 1993 - occupies a discreet shelf. Suspended in 22 resin blocks are fragments gleaned from the rubble of District Six, a mixed neighbourhood razed during the apartheid era. There are scraps of lino and broken plates, strips of cloth, paper, a little plastic grille - archaeology of unstable recent history.

Williamson takes a long view of events she was involved in as an activist, revisiting them in artworks



Sue Williamson, *Truth Games: Neville Clarence - hold no grudge - Aboobaker Ismael*, 1998, detail

across decades. As a member of the Women's Movement for Peace, and the Friends of District Six, she knew Naz Gool-Ebrahim, one of the last residents to leave. In her earlier District Six work - *The Last Supper*, 1981 - Williamson positioned Gool-Ebrahim's kitchen chairs around rubble and debris, a sour echo of the Eid dinner she had shared after receiving a final eviction notice. Shown here is the map installation *The Lost District*, 2016-, which in turn recalls Williamson's disappeared 'views' of District Six made in 1997, etched in glass and positioned in steel window frames in situ, permitting a vision of buildings and street life long since destroyed.

Our bodies are brought into the picture again in the 1998 'Truth Games' series. Grainy newspaper photographs of high-profile cases heard by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) are positioned in threes: victim and perpetrator separated by the territory of the crime. Moveable acrylic slats etched with phrases spoken during the hearing lie across the surface, always obscuring part of the picture beneath. You choose what you see.

Made two decades later, Williamson's 'No more fairy tales' revisits the TRC hearings through a younger generation, indicating deep wounds that remain unhealed. The two films here question the limit of forgiveness, suggesting instead the possibility of what Pumlá Gobodo-Madikizela terms 'empathetic connection' or 'empathetic repair'.

*It's a pleasure to meet you* takes its title from the phrase that assassin Eugene de Kock used to greet each member of Candice Mama's family when they visited him in jail. Both Mama and Mgoduka grew up without a father thanks to de Kock. During this charged encounter with him as a child, Mama spontaneously embraced her father's murderer. Mgoduka questions the pressure to forgive in such moments and his fear of subsequent regret.

In *That particular morning*, Mgoduka asks his mother Doreen about the father he never knew, and they confront the enduring impact his murder had on their lives. Seated at intimate proximity to the screens, we must choose whether to observe speaker or listener during these emotional conversations. We will always miss something, Williamson's work reminds us - we see the story we position ourselves to see; there is no single complete view.

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## Lucy Gunning: In Passing

Palfrey, London, 14 April to 1 May

In his poem 'April and Silence', Tomas Tranströmer finds spring 'without reflections' desolate. 'The only thing that shines / is yellow flowers.' For many of us, this yellow has been especially intense this spring as we slowly venture out of lockdown (again) and a year of living and breathing differently. 'I am carried in my shadow,' Tranströmer goes on, 'like a violin / in its black box.'

Lucy Gunning's site-specific installation *In Passing* captures aspects of the black box of the pandemic, in which our only visitors have been the slow shift of daylight and night shadows on our walls and heightened neighbourhood sounds. The centrepiece is a 30-minute video, which plays on a monitor set to portrait orientation, resting on the floor. Like a pleat of life, Gunning films the sun, moon and streetlight entering the empty, darkened gallery through two portholes high in the gable walls. A circular pool of light crosses the floor and peels itself up the walls, traversing a collapsible table, a black bin and inching along the skirting board as if looking for the viewers, the invigilator and the beers at an opening that doesn't open. At times, the light is a spotlight or ovoid. At other times, it becomes a waning crescent moon thinning to a sharp wing of light. While shadow is a parasite that clings to objects in light, we have no name for the light forms that need darkness to be seen: sunspot? Moondrop? The piece recalls the light experiments of Nancy Holt or Anthony McCall, but has an everyday scale and simplicity that increases its intimacy and emotiveness, much like John Smith's *Leading Light*, 1975.

Gunning's video is a clock not only of time condensed from recent months, and a measure of how time loosened its rules, dragging hours and blurring days into interchangeable facelessness, but also a log of our strange, bored, hypervigilant relationship to interior space. Waiting coated everything and home became both a sanctuary and a cell. At times, the footage is speeded up so that the sunspot advances with a touch of menace, a spreading laser burn that climbs over a white plastic chair like an interrogation. It's a relief to watch a screen in a live, public setting, with material not designed for work or distraction, but to help us consider how we faced our shadow selves in the isolation of the pandemic. In beautiful moments of synchronicity, the sun illuminates a spot of brightness on the gallery floor, playing out what has passed on the screen, so that we are both watching and participating in the scene, as if viewer and artist are connected by an invisible ocular bridge. The success and poignancy of this work is its ability to suggest the wider universal positioning of the earth and our global shared consciousness, highlighted uniquely by the events of 2020.

In a building that was once a stable, a fruit and veg shop and then an artist's studio, there is a ghosting



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