

# Stephen Friedman Gallery

CultureType

International recognition: from America to Africa, Europe and Asia, museum exhibitions are celebrating Black female artists

Victoria L. Valentine

8 March 2021



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Choose To Challenge, the theme of this year's International Women's Day, in many ways represents the modus operandi of Black female artists. Achieving a certain level of success and recognition requires beating profound odds in a field where women, particularly women of color, are underrepresented and undervalued at nearly every turn—from exhibitions, gallery representation, and media coverage to representation in museum collections and primary and secondary market pricing. Black female artists often take on substantive challenges within their work as well, countering expectations of women, assumptions about race, and the narrow confines in terms of style, subject, and medium within which they are expected to create.

This season, artists young and old are presenting a spectrum of exhibitions around the world. Up-and-coming figures are having their first shows in the Europe and Asia. Lorraine O'Grady, 86, opened her first museum retrospective earlier this month at the Brooklyn Museum. In Paris, works by 16 African artists are on view at the Musée d'Art Moderne. Selected exhibitions include:

### **Kapwani Kiwanga. Plot @ Haus der Kunst, Munich, Germany | Oct. 9, 2020-April 25, 2021**

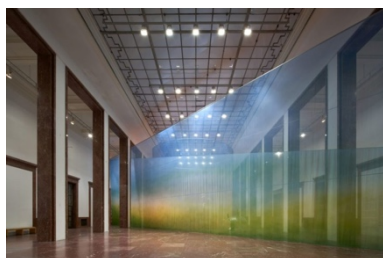


Image: Installation view of "Kapwani Kiwanga. Plot," Haus der Kunst, Munich, Germany, 2020-21. | Photo by Jens Weber, München

The practice of Kapwani Kiwanga spans installation, performance, and video and "traces the pervasive impact of power asymmetries by placing historic narratives in dialogue with contemporary realities, the archive, and tomorrow's possibilities." For the seventh edition of the museum's *Der Öffentlichkeit - Von den Freunden* Haus der Kunst public art series, she is staging a three-act artistic intervention, utilizing both interior and exterior spaces. Born in Canada, Kiwanga lives and works in Paris.

### **Jennifer Packer: The Eye is Not Satisfied With Seeing @ Serpentine Galleries, London, UK | Dec. 5, 2020-March 14, 2021**

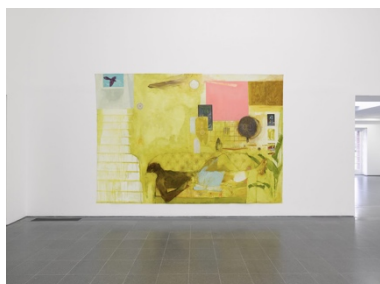


Image: Installation view of "Jennifer Packer: The Eye Is Not Satisfied With Seeing," Serpentine Galleries, London (Dec. 5, 2020-March 14, 2021). Shown, Jennifer Packer, "Blessed Are Those Who Mourn (Breonna! Breonna!)," 2020 (oil on canvas, 300 x 438 cm / 118 x 172.5 inches). | Photo by George Darrell, Serpentine Galleries

For her first exhibition at a European institution, Jennifer Packer is presenting 34 works, paintings and drawings produced over the last decade. Packer lives and works in New York. Her images are personal and political. She paints portraits of her friends and family members and images of flowers she describes as funerary bouquets and vessels of personal grief, rather than still lifes. The works are

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emotional and intimate, reflect memories, and respond to nationally televised police violence against Black people. (While Serpentine is currently closed due to COVID-19, the exhibition is fully documented online.)

“Representation and particularly, observation from life, are ways of bearing witness and sharing testimony.” – Jennifer Packer

## **Senzeni Marasela: Waiting for Gebane @ Zeitz Museum of Contemporary African Art, Cape Town, South Africa | Dec. 18, 2020-May 2, 2021**

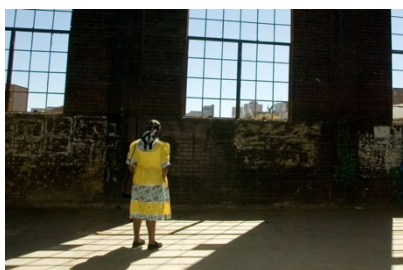


Image: Senzeni Marasela, “Theodorah in Johannesburg,” 2005. | © Senzeni Marasela. Image courtesy the artist and Afronova Gallery

This is the first solo museum exhibition of Senzeni Marasela. She works across photography, video, prints, textiles and embroidery, exploring history, memory, and personal narrative, with a focus on overlooked female figures. The exhibition presents a survey of the Marasela’s practice, with an emphasis on Theodorah Mthetyane, her fictional alter ego. After Theodorah’s husband leaves the Eastern Cape to work in Johannesburg and doesn’t return for years, she sets out to find him. The artist documents her experience of waiting (which represents the experience of countless South African women) in a series of photographs and textile works. Born in Thokoza, South Africa, Marasela is based in Soweto.

## **The Power of My Hands – Africa(s): Women Artists @ Musée d’Art Moderne de Paris, Paris, France | Jan. 22-May 30, 2021**



Image: Wura-Natasha Ogunji, “Will I still carry water when I am a dead woman?,” 2013 (video). | © Wura-Natasha Ogunji, Photo by Ema Edosio

Part of the programming for France’s Africa2020 Season, this exhibition includes works in a range of mediums by 16 artists: Stacey Gillian Abe, Njideka Akunyili Crosby, Gabrielle Goliath, Kudzanai-Violet Hwami, Keyezua, Lebohlang Kganye, Kapwani Kiwanga, Senzeni Marasela, Grace Ndiritu, Wura-Natasha Ogunji, Reinata Sadimba, Lerato Shadi, Ana Silva, Buhlebezwe Siwani, Billie Zangewa, Portia Zvavahera. In conjunction with this presentation, artist Wura-Natasha Ogunji is showing a trio of works at Threehouse, her art space in Lagos, Nigeria. (Posted exhibition dates may be influx.)

## **Deborah Roberts: I’m @ The Contemporary Austin, Austin, Texas | Jan. 23, 2021-Aug. 15, 2021**



Image: Deborah Roberts, “The duty of disobedience,” 2020 (mixed media collage on canvas, 72 x 100 inches). | © Deborah Roberts. Courtesy the artist; Vielmetter Los Angeles; and Stephen Friedman Gallery, London. Courtesy The Contemporary Austin, Photo by Paul Bardagjy

For her first solo exhibition in a Texas museum, Austin-based Deborah Roberts is presenting a selection of new paintings and works on paper. In addition to her mixed-media works, Roberts is showing two new interactive sound, text, and video sculptures and the museum commissioned her to create a mural on the museum’s exterior. (Originally scheduled to open in September 2020, the exhibition was delayed to late January due to the COVID-19 pandemic.)

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### Emma Amos: Color Odyssey @ Georgia Museum of Art at University of Georgia, Athens, Ga. | Jan. 30-April 25, 2021



Image: Emma Amos, "Equals," 1992 (acrylic on linen canvas with African fabric borders, 76 x 82 inches). | © Emma Amos, Private collection

A dynamic painter, who died last May, Emma Amos (1937-2020) explored and challenged race, class, and gender norms, both in her work and career. Her works reference color-field painting, employ photo transfer techniques, and are trimmed in African fabrics. An in-depth examination of her life and practice, this career-spanning traveling retrospective presents about 60 works, including paintings, prints, and woven works.

### Andrea Chung: Daughters Of Oshun And Yemeya @ centre (3), Hamilton, Ontario, Canada | Feb. 25-April 3, 2021



Image: From left, Andrea Chung, "Colostrum," 2020 (collage, rhinestones, glass beads, needles on paper, 16 x 20 inches) | © Andrea Chung; and "Midwives II," 2017 (collage and ink, 14 x 17 inches). | © Andrea Chung

Based in San Diego, Calif., Andrea Chung considers "the various impacts that colonization has had on both bodies and the landscape, particularly those located in and tied to the Caribbean." She expresses herself through collage, video, and installation. This online exhibition of works on paper presents three collage series: Midwives (2017), Vex (2020), and Colostrum (2020).

### Lorraine O'Grady: Both/And @ Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, N.Y. | March 5-July 18, 2021



Image: Lorraine O'Grady, (American, born 1934), "Rivers, First Draft: The Woman in White eats coconut and looks away from the action," 1982/2015 (digital chromogenic print from Kodachrome 35mm slides in 48 parts, 16 x 20 inches / 40.64 x 50.8 cm), Edition of 8 + 2 AP. | Courtesy Alexander Gray Associates, New York. © Lorraine O'Grady / Artists Rights

Long overdue, this is the first retrospective of Lorraine O'Grady, a singular artist working in conceptual, performance, and feminist art. O'Grady's website explains her work, which makes clear the origins of the exhibition title: "While she has consistently addressed issues of diaspora, hybridity and black female subjectivity and has emphasized the formative roles these have played in the history of modernism, O'Grady also uses the diptych's 'both/and thinking' to frame her themes as symptoms of a larger problematic, that of the divisive and hierarchical either/or categories underpinning Western philosophy...." Spanning New York-based O'Grady's four-decade career, more than a dozen projects and a newly created installation will be on view.

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### Christina Quarles: Dance by the Light of the Moon @ X Museum, Beijing, China | March 14 – May 30, 2021



Image: Christina Quarles, "Edge of Tomorrow," 2020 (acrylic on canvas, 182.9 x 152.4 x 5.1 cm / 72 x 60 x 2 inches). | © Christina Quarles, Courtesy the artist and Pilar Corrias

Fascinating and ambiguous, Christina Quarles's tangled and intertwined body portraits are meditations on race, gender, and queerness. Quarles lives and works in Los Angeles. Her first solo exhibition at a major museum in Asia presents paintings produced since 2015 and coincides with a major solo show at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago and a forthcoming presentation at South London Gallery in the UK.

### Bookshelf

Forthcoming later this month, "Lorraine O'Grady: Both/And" accompanies the artist's first museum retrospective at the Brooklyn Museum. Edited by Aruna D'Souza, "Writing in Space, 1973–2019," gathers the writings of Lorraine O'Grady. Newly published and fully illustrated, "Emma Amos: Color Odyssey" documents a major traveling exhibition of the artist's work, organized by the Georgia Museum of Art at the University of Georgia in Athens. Two volumes published in 2019 explore the work of Deborah Roberts. "Deborah Roberts: if they come" accompanied her first exhibition at Stephen Friedman Gallery in London. Recipient of the 2020 Mary Ellen LoPresti Art Publication Award, "Deborah Roberts: The Evolution of Mimi" documents her exhibition at Spelman College Museum of Fine Art. "Christina Quarles" was published on the occasion of the Los Angeles-based artist's survey, currently on view at MCA Chicago.