

Art World

Art Industry News: President-Elect Joe Biden Thanks America With a Stirring Video Inspired by Artist Lorraine O’Grady + Other Stories

Artnet News, November 9, 2020



Screen shot from Joe Biden's victory video via Instagram.

Biden Campaign Takes Inspiration from Lorraine O’Grady – A unifying message sent out by Joe Biden and Kamala Harris’s campaign takes inspiration from the artist Lorraine O’Grady’s series “Art Is...” (1983/2009). O’Grady first took to the streets of Harlem with an ornate gold frame in a 1983 performance for New York’s African American Day Parade, and the Biden campaign’s video reprises a similar frame to capture citizens across America. The campaign reached out to O’Grady’s gallery Alexander Gray Associates ahead of making the video to ask permission, and the artist says of the final product: “I gave to them and they gave to me.” (*Press release*)

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Lorraine O'Grady's "Art Is ... " (1983/2009) serves as the inspiration for Joe Biden and Kamala Harris' unifying message after winning the United States presidential election. Deploying ornate gold frames that pay tribute to O'Grady's joyful 1983 performance, which took place in Harlem during New York's African American Day Parade, the Biden campaign's video frames citizens and landscapes of the United States. Like the artist's earlier performance, the video focuses on individual Americans, uniting their experiences through the shared device of the frame. O'Grady has written that "Art Is ... " was "undertaken in a spirit of elation which carried over on the day;" this elation is echoed in Biden's video, which celebrates the indomitable freedom of expression. In an indication of their commitment to this principle, the Biden campaign reached out to the artist and the Gallery before creating the video. Watching the final piece, O'Grady concludes, "I gave to them and they gave to me." Find a link to the Biden campaign video and The New York Times feature in our bio.

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Still from Biden campaign video and Lorraine O'Grady, "Art Is ... " , 1983/2009, c-print in 40 parts, 16 x 20 in (40.64 x 50.8 cm), edition of 8 plus 1 AP. Courtesy Alexander Gray Associates, New York, © Lorraine O'Grady/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

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joebiden America the Beautiful

America, I'm honored that you have chosen me to lead our great country.

The work ahead of us will be hard, but I promise you this: I will be a President for all Americans — whether you voted for me or not.

I will keep the faith that you have placed in me.

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