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Speakers Series : Rujeko Hockley
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Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College
Annandale on Hudson, N.Y.

00:00:20:12 **ALISON KARASYK**: Hi, everyone. Hi. It is my great pleasure to introduce Rujeko Hockley for the CCS Fall 2017 Speaker Series. Ru joined the Whitney Museum of American Art as assistant curator last March. Prior, she was assistant curator of contemporary art at the Brooklyn Museum, where she curated numerous exhibitions, edited multiple publications, and worked on solo presentations of LaToya Ruby Frazier, Kehinde Wiley, and Tom Sachs, among others. Ru co-curated "Crossing Brooklyn: Art From Bushwick, Bed-Stuy and Beyond," which opened in October, 2014. Shortly thereafter, she dove into co-organizing the landmark exhibition "We Wanted a Revolution: Black Radical Women, 1965-'85," currently on view at the California African American Museum, and heading back to the East Coast, luckily for us, in February, to the Albright-Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo, and the ICA Boston after.

00:01:28:01 Ru co-produced two unique publications in conjunction with this exhibition. Prior to the exhibition, she wrote essays within and co-edited *We Wanted a Revolution: A Sourcebook*, made up of thirty-eight remarkable archival documents by artists, writers, and thinkers, such as bell hooks, the Combahee River Collective, and Linda Goode Bryant. During our office hour earlier, Ru described this publication to me as a way to transport the research materials that inspired the show into the world, instead of treating them as mere footnotes. The book is a powerful reminder of the ongoing curatorial necessity to move beyond the narratives that have already been written into art historical and feminist discourses. Ru's rigorous contribution and framing of these materials also opens up generous space for related scholarship to continue to develop around these sources and how we talk and write about artists, people of color, feminism, and institutional accountability.

00:02:31:06 The day that the exhibition opened last spring, two months after beginning at the Whitney, Ru co-led the "We Wanted a Revolution" symposium, which will result in a forthcoming publication titled *New Perspectives*, including images of the show and reflections, in the form of essays, from the symposium speakers. During this program, Ru led conversations with Dr. Kellie Jones, Alison Saar, and Lorna Simpson, among others.

00:03:00:11 Before Brooklyn, Ru was a curatorial assistant at the Studio Museum in Harlem. She is currently a doctoral candidate in art history, theory, and criticism, in the visual arts department at the University of California San Diego. Within her short time at the Whitney, Ru has already co-organized the poignant exhibitions "Toyin Ojih Odutola: To Wander Determined," and "An Incomplete History of Protest: Selections from the Whitney's Collection 1940-2017."

00:03:31:17 I had the pleasure and privilege of getting to know Ru during my time at the Brooklyn Museum, and was consistently inspired by the care she demonstrated for the artists and publics that she built lasting relationships with, in addition to the artworks in the collection. Her collaborative curatorial practice integrates critical thinking alongside concerns for intergenerational dialog and institutional accessibility. And I am thrilled that she is here with us today.

[APPLAUSE]

00:04:06:11 **RUJEKO HOCKLEY:** Thank you, Alison. That was like all, you know, *This is Your Life*. Thank you. And it's so nice for you to introduce me because as she said, we've known each other for a long time. Nobody sat in the front row, which like, is okay, but it makes me feel very alone up

here. So if anybody wants to move, that's okay. So thank you for having me. Thank you, Lauren, for inviting me. Thank you all for coming. It's really awesome to be here. I told two people this already and then said, "Don't tell anybody," but I've never been here before. So you guys are freed from not telling anybody. I've never been here before, which is crazy. Like, I feel like a delinquent person, actually, in my field, to not have been here before. So I'm really, really especially happy to be here right now.

00:04:49:20 So as Alison said, I am at the Whitney. I started there in March of— Ah, wait, no. Sorry. Pause. Full screen, not slide show. There we go. I started there in March, and a lot has happened since then. It's been a very busy however many months that is. But prior to that, I was at the Brooklyn Museum for four years, and did many, many things, of which Alison related some of. But the kind of, you know, primary thing is this show We Wanted a Revolution, which I say not to say that the other ones weren't important, but this is really my baby and means a lot to me. So in some ways, it is kind of— It felt like the culmination of not only the work that I did there, but also in some ways— I am a PhD candidate, but I might be a PhD candidate till I die, so I don't know where that's going to go. It's also the culmination of a lot of the work I did in grad school, so it's a really kind of special thing.

00:05:44:09 But also, I brought the *Sourcebook* in my bag because I'm a nerd and I'm a really proud of it. But maybe you've already seen it, so I will just leave it there. But if you'd like to see it, let me know. And as Alison said, this is the tour at the bottom of the slide here. And for the last two venues, the second publication, based on the symposium that she mentioned, will be coming out. So that is called *New Perspectives*, and it involves writing by the people who were involved in the symposium, as well as installation shots that you're about to see, as well as a checklist and a bibliography, because I hate having catalogs that don't have those three things in them. Which you usually do, because you try to finish it for the beginning of the show.

00:06:22:11 So I wrote something a while ago. I was kind of preparing for this presentation and looking through kind of my notes on my computer, and I found this thing that I'd written that I had forgotten about, because it ended up getting very much edited and changed for where it appeared. Which was essentially, a person reached out to Catherine and I—Catherine Morris, who's the co-curator of the show; she's still at the Brooklyn Museum, Sackler Senior Curator of the Elizabeth Sackler Center for Feminist Art—with a lot of, like, very pointed and also very kind of— A lot of questions about the show, in relation to kind of what it was doing, what it wasn't doing; who was in it, who wasn't in it. And instead of being like just an average, like, normal person, I just wrote like a long thing about all of the reasons why this person didn't quite understand the show. But what it did is kind of really clarify for me what the show did do. And so I'm going to read some of it, just to kind of give us a sense. Did anybody see the show in Brooklyn? Anyone? Well, as we learned, if you didn't see it in Brooklyn, you can see it in Buffalo or in Boston, or in L.A. It's all good. And that's a whole experience, also, making a show and then having it go to many different places, with many different people involved and different audiences. Really interesting and kind of amazing experience. So I'll give you this picture to look at so you're not just staring at some words.

00:07:47:20 "'We Wanted a Revolution: Black Radical Women 1965,' is an exhibition looking at the relationship between women of color and feminist political action in art history. It situates the arc and practices of black women artists within the larger context of art history and second wave feminism. Having been largely, and sometimes specifically, neglected by mainstream histories of twentieth century American art and feminism, the exhibition puts women of color in their rightful place as innovators, originators, and producers of American art and culture. It aims to redress their neglect through a tightly-focused exhibition of the years spanning from

the early sixties to the mid-eighties, a period in which critical and still influential shifts in American art and society were occurring. The artwork included ranges from figurative painting to abstract sculpture to modern dance to experimental film to vernacular photography, though that is by no means an exhaustive list. It is mounted in 2017 because until now, no exhibition has adequately situated these artists in either an art historical or sociohistorical context, while also not flattening their varying practices, priorities, and experiences, or presuming to speak for them."

00:08:51:02 So, as I'm reading this, the things that people have said often through this exhibition, the life of its run at the Brooklyn Museum and also the years prior, even continuing through to my time in graduate school, where many of the artists that I included in the show I was very interested in then, a lot of the things that I'm reading and will continue to read were in response to some of the questions that I got about, well, like why these artists? And why now? And don't we know these artists? And why is this important? And why is this history this history, not that history? And it's always a certain, like, we can say skepticism, perhaps, about the validity of both the arguments and the artists. And I think that, you know, you have to kind of call it what it is. I can only assume that there's a skepticism sometimes about the practices of artists who've been left out of narratives, the reasons why that may have happened. And then if that's happened, maybe it happened for a reason, as opposed to thinking in the other way, like: perhaps that happened for a reason, as opposed to putting it on the artist, putting it on the work, as if there is something less valuable about these people. I'm going to skip this next part; it's about Adrian Piper. She's not in the show. We can talk about that later.

00:10:06:00 "In both title and subject, 'We Wanted a Revolution' is focused purposely on the work and experiences of black women. However, it is not, in fact, a segregated exhibition. Featuring the work of both men and non-black women of color, it privileges intersectionality, a way to understand one's lived experience as produced by the interlocking axes of gender, race, class, sexuality, disability, et cetera, over essentialism, strategic or otherwise. Intersectionality, like essentialism, is an important part of the history of feminism, though not necessarily the dominant white-stream feminism of the second wave that We Wanted a Revolution confronts. Black women are the original theorizers of intersectionality, a now widely accepted reframing of the tenets of feminism. Ultimately, it is a framing that we find to be more useful, nuanced, and forward-thinking than essentialism." This person obviously asked me a lot of annoying questions about essentialism.

00:10:56:16 "'We Wanted a Revolution' is not a segregated exhibition, but it is a culturally and experientially specific one. So too are exhibitions on Minimalism, post-internet art, Impressionism, or social practice, to name a few examples at random. Culturally or experientially specific exhibitions, even, quote, 'segregated' ones, are not, to our mind, inherently reductive or lacking in nuance. That designation depends on many factors, specificity chief among them. The value of this approach is decided anew in each individual exhibition, and cannot be measured in blanket statements. 'We Wanted a Revolution' makes a specific argument about art history and feminism in the twentieth century, and offers a distinct corrective and revision to both, through the work and experiences and black women artists."

00:11:41:20 So in terms of thinking about what, you know, the work— Okay, I'm going to move all these liquids. In terms of thinking about the work that I do and have done as a curator and, I guess, yeah, kind of what drives me, in some ways, in terms of my practice—which I also [inaudible] think of my practice, what's my practice—but you know, the ways in which I try to do the work that I do, the ways in which I try to behave in the world, the ways in which I try to interact with artists, with the institutions that I work with, the institutions that I engage with in other ways,

the people that see the shows that I do, the people that I talk to about the work that I do, I would say I spoke— Julia, I don't know where you are, but she— There you are. When we talked earlier, she talked about the ethics and effects of curating and ethical questions in curating. This is something I think about a lot. The part I didn't read about Adrian Piper, something that I say is she's not in the show because she has a stance on what she calls segregated exhibitions. Which is that she doesn't participate in them. Are any of you familiar with Radical Presence and the kind of—? Exactly.

00:12:48:01 So we were trying to avoid, both from a kind of logistical— Like, it's a pain in the ass to have an artist come and take their work out of the wall and like, have to deal with that. Nobody likes that. But also like, it's her right, right? It's her prerogative as a thinker, as an artist, as a maker. If she doesn't wish to be in an exhibition for any reason, it is really not for me to say otherwise. I don't know better than her. I may have feelings that are different. I may have opinions. And I personally, in this case, think very much so that she belongs in a show like this. These are her peers, generationally as well as in time, in place, in trust—all of the things. Like, she knows all these people, she knew them all, she's in the archive with them. All that is true. She still doesn't need to be in the show if she doesn't want to be.

00:13:34:22 But there was this sense of like, well, did you not— Like, did you guys forget about her? Like this assumption, on some level, that we didn't know, that we didn't kind of do our own homework, if you will. And so that really aggravated me, I think. Because A, the assumption that we didn't know. Like, newsflash: we did know about that. But we've been working on this show for two years ago or more. Our whole life, for myself, on some level. That is annoying. But it's also, again, this idea that we would override what she has very publicly put into the world, which is that she doesn't wish to be discussed in what she perceives in this way. And whether or not I could make a case to her— I would love to, but so far that hasn't happened. I'm open to it. Whether or not we could make a case and she would accept it is really not the point.

00:14:25:11 And so that's something that I think about a lot, in terms of ethics, in terms of curatorial ethics, is our position as curators vis-à-vis artists, and who gets to say, right? Whether it's for me to say, whether it's for me to decide. Like, sometimes I don't know better. And that's okay. Or maybe I do, but I still don't get to decide because at the end of the day, that's her name on the wall, that's her work in the show. That's the end of it, on some level. So there's ethics in that sense. There's also, obviously, ethics in terms of the ways in which we interact with audiences, the kind of work that we do. I started at the Whitney on March 6th. The Whitney Biennial opened on March 13th. And that was a very interesting experience and I think about it a lot, actually, in terms of the question of ethics and what are the ethics of representation. And what are our responsibilities as people who engage with, obviously, the visual world, with objects, with stuff, but also with history, with emotions, with people's intimate kind of selves? And that the people who come to our museums are, on some level— We're asking them to engage in that way, too. And so what are our responsibilities about what we put into the world? And artists, I think, good artists, think about that. Artists that I think are good. Subjective; it's all very subjective. They think about that. And so I think I think about that. And I mean, it's always— It can go wrong. But I think it's important to consider it.

00:15:56:18 Something else that the show really brings up and that I really definitely hold very dearly is this idea of relationships, the kind of we. So what I describe, there's a lot of we. And when I say we, I'm talking about Catherine and I, who was my co-curator for the show, and who I spent, like, an ungodly amount of time with over the last two years. And still. I just talked to her today because the show is traveling; we're going to Buffalo at some point in December. And it's really amazing. It's really wonderful to have that kind of ongoing, long-running relationship. But I think

that there's obviously— There's often a very strong desire to be like a singular— Or for people to be presented as singular, like this brilliant individual curator did this all by themselves. And aside from the reality that you often do have a co-curator, or you can if you're really lucky to have a great collaborator, none of this would happen without the, like, literally hundreds of people that work at the Brooklyn Museum. And so I think that's— And all the other institutions. Especially with the traveling, it gets even more intense, because I don't even know these people, right? So at the museum, at least I have a relationship to the registrars, the conservators, the art handlers, educators, the front-of-house staff. But at the California African American Museum, I don't know those people. So again— But they're part of this kind of broader network who's really allowing the work that I've done, that otherwise would be very— You know, we would see it, maybe like a few people would see it; thousands of people have seen this show, and thousands more will see it. And it requires a huge infrastructure of people that I have never met and will never meet, to make it happen. And so I think about that a lot, in terms of, like, my practice as a curator and what's really important to me in the work that I do.

00:17:35:18 And then I have this, in quotes, "receipts." Something that somebody said when they came— They came to see the show and then I saw them, a friend of mine, and they were like, "You pulled out all the receipts." And then I asked them what they meant by that. They meant in some— literally, the kind of archival documents that we have in the *Sourcebook* and that were in the show. But I've been thinking about that a lot, actually, in terms of— You know, there's so many metaphors. Like when you're a kid in math class, you have to show your work, right? All that sort of stuff where, like, I really— It was very important to me in the show—and I think it's important to me; I've learned, kind of through the process of doing this—that it is important to me to kind of, A, obviously, be able to back it up, whatever you're saying, whatever claims you're making; but also to kind of bring people with you. And so in this show, the way— I'm going to go through these images in a minute. And they do mimic the layout at the Brooklyn Museum, which was both thematic and chronological, divided into kind of eight different sections. And Catherine and I have talked a lot about kind of the Venn diagram model, is kind of our— If I was really, like, computer savvy, I would make like a cute Venn diagram thing with all of the different sections interlocking. But we can visualize.

00:18:52:12 In thinking about— You know, art history is not linear, history is not linear, the development of an artist's career, interest—none of this is actually linear; but we are very much educated as if it is, and kind of trained as if it is. And so I think that that sort of training is what sometimes allows for artists who are in this show, who are in many other shows, to kind of not be included because they don't fit into that kind of linear narrative. Like if you weren't there at the moment at which, you know, Abstract Expressionism was invented, blah-blah-blah, then like, you weren't there. There was nothing else. And of course, we know that to be not true, that there are multiple streams of history, that there are intersecting streams of history, that there are kind of circular kind of recursive histories. But we really were thinking in this show about how do we create a physical environment and kind of an experience for a visitor that in some ways makes that the most obvious thing in the world? Because it is obvious. Like, we all know that from our own lives. Like, we all know that that's actually how life proceeds, whether you're an artist or a doctor or, you know, a janitor. Like, your life doesn't proceed perfectly linearly. It just doesn't. And so luckily, the Brooklyn Museum is really, like, weird and wily. Not luckily; that was very stressful, trying to figure out what to do with that. But it somehow, like, worked out, actually, in a weird way. Although I have no idea. People might've, like, missed a whole section of the exhibition. In my mind, it worked perfectly. But that's a whole other problem of this job is that you kind of don't really know sometimes exactly how it plays out.

00:20:29:09 But anyway, so we wanted to bring that into the exhibition design, we wanted to bring that into

the *Sourcebook* and into the *New Perspectives* volume that's coming out in February. And part of the reason that we wanted to do that is because, A, as I've said, it's kind of more honest to lived experience. But it also allowed for these really interesting things to happen. So as opposed to a kind of large group exhibition—there's forty-plus artists in this show—where, you know, you have one piece by one artist and, like, it shows up—okay, that's their moment and it's over—what we were allowed— And this happened, like very— I wish that we had been, like, so prescient and known that would produce all these interesting intersections. Like, we had no idea. We just were like, "Oh, yeah, like, that worked really well. Like, nice job." Like happenstance a little bit. So you see somebody—

00:21:17:13 This is a work in the front right here by Maren Hassinger called *Meaning*, from 1979. And this is Faith Ringgold's iconic *For the Woman's House*, a painting that she did in 1971. Faith and Maren both appear at different points, multiple points actually, in the exhibition. Because Faith Ringgold especially is, like, the Energizer Bunny of the art world. Like, she is everywhere in this period. This is a piece that she did working with CAPS, which is an acronym; I don't remember what it stands for right now. But which was kind of a city agency working with the arts, working-in-the-communities agency at this time period in the 1970s. She got a grant from them to work with kind of a community group of her choice, and she chose to work with incarcerated women at Rikers Island. Which at that time in New York, Rikers Island in the city, had a women's prison. It no longer does. And so she went there and she kind of went to the prison. And again, thinking about— You know, we don't present Faith Ringgold as like an early progenitor of social practice; but like, maybe we should. And what would it look like if we did? Because essentially, that's what she did. You know, she did what we now kind of deem to be working in communities as social practice. She went to Rikers, she spoke to the women incarcerated there, asked them kind of, "What do you want to see? Like, what should this painting be?" She worked collaboratively with them. Not literally in the making, but in the kind of conception of it. And did a series of interviews with them, went there multiple times. And the painting, in the end, it was for them. You know, she didn't make it with them and then take it out of that community. She made it with them, for them. And you know, the credit line from this painting is like, Rose. M. Singer Center, which is whatever the center is called, it's Rikers Island Correctional Facility. It belongs to the state. It belongs to the correctional institute.

00:23:08:10 So what they said is that wanted to see kind of women having kind of agency over their lives, women of all races, all ages, of all kind of class backgrounds, but having agency, kind of control over their lives. So you see kind of like a female police officer, construction worker, professional basketball player—because at the time, of course, there was no WNBA. But you'll notice, you know, she's a Knick; she's not actually some other team. So thinking about just, like, taking those teams and putting women on them. Here we have kind of a female political candidate, a bus driver, doctor, a woman giving her daughter away in marriage, a musician, and in a very interesting turn, because the correctional facility doesn't have—you know, maybe their framing standards are not exactly at the par—at the top here, the bus it driving, it says at the top, 2A—the number two and the letter A—Sojourner Truth Square. So it's kind of a play on words. The destination of the bus is Sojourner Truth Square. Because what they wanted to see was, quote, "a long road out of here." That's what they told her. In addition to kind of seeing these things. And she talks very interestingly about this painting because she talks about it— If any of you saw Soul of a Nation, the show that was at the Tate that's actually going to travel to the Brooklyn Museum maybe next year, or you've seen it at MoMA, the kind of really iconic Faith Ringgold work that they bought relatively—well, I don't know when; relatively recently; very recently—but that's in that show, that is an extremely— Kind of fragmented bodies, really kind of abstract rendering of kind of bodies in space, much more kind of innovative formally and aesthetically, in some ways. And she said about this work, "If it had been up to me, it would've been, like,

more radical." And I didn't think that this was actually a very radical painting, because of all—
00:26:46:12 You know, for her, it was kind of like, it's kind of cutesy, it's really nice; but it's again, thinking about ethics and thinking about how you interact with people, for her, she was like, "This isn't about me." And I think if you've ever met her or seen her speak in any way, shape, or form, you know that Faith Ringgold's ego is, like, could fill this room. Which she has earned. She deserves every bit of her self-regard. But so for her to say, "It's not about me," is like, kind of amazing.
HOCKLEY (Cont.): But just thinking again about ethics and thinking about the ways in which we interact with audiences, communities, and kind of be very specific about what we mean when we say audiences and communities. So but Faith, as I said, she appears in many different places in the show, as does Maren Hassinger.

00:25:51:16 So this was the opening of the show at the Brooklyn Museum. And we started here because we really wanted to, from the outset, disable and kind of deconstruct any assumptions about what type of work people were going to see aesthetically. So as I said, there is, in like the list that I read, figurative painting. I think that there's often a sense that this is going to be all figurative painting; and there certainly is a lot of figurative painting, but there's also a lot of material experimentation, abstraction, works kind of thinking about Minimalism. In the case of
00:28:26:15 Maren Hassinger, thinking also about land art, thinking about environmentalism, thinking about kind of dance, thinking about the kind of performative body. All of these many, many— As all were— all artists in this period. It's twenty years of art history; all these things are happening. So we really wanted the show to, you know, in my, like, really ideal world, this is— You know, I went to Columbia art history. Did my bachelor's at Columbia in art history. I took, you know, the survey class, whatever, the twentieth century. And in my mind, like my dream is like, that somebody teaches this show. And that's also why we did that catalog, on some levels, because it's very— It's a reader. You know, it's a reader. It's very easy. If you want to teach it as a class,
00:29:16:07 you really can. We made it very easy. Because I think that there's an argument to be made for thinking about, like, why isn't this what we teach when we teach twentieth century American art history? And again, this is America; it's not a— Obviously, like, this is a very specific context. This show is very New York-central, New York-heavy. Obviously, there are many different things you could do and I mean, I would love for people to do all those many different shows, because there are so many different shows contained within this one that need, hopefully, and will be done by other people. But so we wanted to kind of at the outset, really put these two things in dialog and really kind of disrupt any idea that you were going to see X type of work throughout the rest of the show.
00:27:47:04 HOCKLEY (Cont.): So the kind of first section is, in the earliest, looking Spiral and the Black Arts Movement. So thinking about the ways in which kind of art and politics very large, writ large in this period, had been intersecting. The Black Arts Movement is a very— In the connection, Spiral, the collective founded by Romare Bearden, Norman Lewis, and Hale Woodruff, other kind of black artists of an earlier generation, formed in the wake of the March on Washington in 1963, specifically to kind of mull over and come to some sort of resolution— they did not come to a resolution—over the question of, like, what can art and politics really
00:30:33:20 do, and what specifically is the particular responsibility of black artists in that conversation? So these are two works by Emma Amos on the right. Really amazing works by her. You can see, obviously, this one is here. So she's kind of making— This is from '65; this is from '72. So she's kind of having her own kind of self-referential moment. This is a work by Faith Ringgold. So Faith is already back. And you can't see what's in the case, but we have a lot of case work, to kind of show— Oh, look; you can see this in this case, just that I— So this is the case. Emma Amos is the only woman in Spiral, which is kind of why we wanted to think about that. So there are many collectives. Another thread that's really important, going back to this idea of relationships and the we, is the kind of collaborative and the collective. There are many collective entities in the show. Spiral is one of them; I mentioned Weusi, which was another Black Arts Movement

related, also predominantly male collective. Moving then into 1970's we'll talk about the "Where We At" collective, which Faith was a part of, co-founder, et cetera.

00:29:26:16 And then the right, we have works— This is a work by Jae Jarrell, her Urban Wall Suits. Many of these works are also in the Brooklyn Museum's collection. Which was kind of an amazing thing to be able to do, to be able to not only do a show that has a kind a broader resonance and makes a bigger argument, but also actually point to an institutional history of collecting that really allows you to do a show like this, whether that's because that meant that people felt like this was important or because it just meant that there was already a context for this work. This is the other side of the room. Black Arts Movement very interested in printmaking, very interested in kind of what they called the Kool-Aid colors. So you can see this kind of very bright aesthetic, bright colors being used very broadly. Thinking about very particularly, they had very kind of stringent ideas about how art and politics can intersect and kind of the responsibility of artists, specifically black artists, to their communities. In this case, primarily Chicago. But the Black Arts Movement obviously had a national presence. I'm going to keep going because I feel like we haven't gotten anywhere and I don't know what time I started, so— Awkward.

00:30:35:00 So this is a room looking at black feminism. So we wanted also to think about, you know, this idea of where were black women in this conversation between kind of black power, on the one hand, which in some ways, we can see in the art world as being exemplified on the black arts movement, and kind of mainstream feminism, second wave feminism. So where are black women in that conversation? And so Alice Walker, in 1982, coined a term that maybe you've heard before, womanism. And womanism and black feminism are kind of used interchangeably, don't I don't necessarily think that's accurate. We called this gallery Black Feminism because we didn't think people were going to know what we were talking about if we called it womanism, frankly. But she says, "Feminism is to womanism as purple is to lavender." And I love that because it's Alice Walker and it's incredibly poetic. And one of, like, the highlights of the show, just tangent, is that Alice Walker came and did a lecture at the Brooklyn Museum, which like, life highlight of forever. And she saw the show and we walked her through the show and, you know, we tried to do our little, like, song-and-dance tour that we've done extra special, obviously, for her. And she basically was like, "Uh-huh, I'm good." So we just, like, walked, you know, four steps behind her for an hour and we watched her look at the show. It was amazing. Again, like, you also have every right to— You don't need me to tell you; like, you were there. Literally. Don't need me to tell you.

00:32:09:12 So anyway, so this is a room thinking about that. So on the back wall back here are works by women who were involved with the "Where We At" Black Women— Wait. "Where We At" Black Women Artists. "Where We At" Black Women Artists, which is a collective that was founded in 1971 in Brooklyn by Faith Ringgold, Kay Brown, and other artists, but primarily the two of them. Kay Brown is no longer living, and these are all— She was kind of an amazing screenprint [maker] and collagist, and so these—this, this, and this—are all by her. Oops. What happened? Are all by her. And I just want to bring Kay Brown up very quickly. She's the only woman in Weusi, the collective I mentioned. And she died alone, with all of her stuff being thrown out of the care home that she was in, and there's very little of her work in the world. And she was an incredibly important figure in this time. And so I think something that has been both incredibly heartening, but also kind of heart-rending and really intense about doing a show like this is that, like, for every one of her that we know about, there's like, legion— You know, they have— There's a photo of them in the case—no, we don't have a picture of it. And looking at that, you know, they're like, "Oh, I wonder what happened to that person" or, "She died," or you know, "We never heard from her. She moved; we never heard from her again." Or, you know, "We've known each other for fifty years." You know, there's a variety of relationships. But we were able to— We borrowed— The Brooklyn Museum owns this piece, the Schomburg owns this piece. This one, we

were able to borrow from a couple who live in Harlem, an older couple who we were connected to through one of the artists in the show. And they had a couple of works of Kay's because they had been the people who, when she passed and the place where she was living, kind of an old folk's home, they were just, like, in her Rolodex and they called her. But they wouldn't let them take any of her possessions because they weren't family. And like, it's a whole really kind of brutal and terrible story because she had a lot of artwork, and now it's literally destroyed. And they were the kind of caretakers of the work. And so I think something that I thought about a lot in this show, and I think about a lot in general, so working in the archive is— So the Brooklyn Museum's archive is very present in this show. I worked on a show at the Whitney; the Whitney's archive is very present. Artists, you know, give their paper— We worked with the Fales Library at NYU, with artist's papers, the Downtown New York archive, all these archival bodies. But there are so many. And so many of the artists in the show kind of were their own archives. They kept their own archives, because there was not interest. And so see the amount of ephemera— Like, these people have, like, boxes that they've kept for forty years. And it's like that thing of, like, it's important and someone is going to know at some point; or they won't, but I'm still not throwing this away because that's how important it is, is a kind of incredible thing to see. So I think it's really important to always remember, when we see shows like this, when we see archives, when we visit the archive, to kind of think about all the things that we aren't seeing, on some level, because they were destroyed in the way that I mentioned with Kay Brown, or because people didn't think that these people were important. But they did. They knew they were important, they knew their peers were important, and they kept all their stuff.

00:35:30:14 Another really amazing story is this piece by Betye Saar called— Oh, my God, my brain. Don't remember. It'll come back to me. But in any case, there's a work that we wanted by Betye that was in "Soul of a Nation." So we built these shows very much simultaneously and we had, like, checklist wars. You know, in a nice way. It all worked out; everybody got everything they needed. *The Liberation of Aunt Jemima: Cocktail*, that's what it's called. So *The Liberation of Aunt Jemima* that is kind of the iconic one that belongs to the Berkeley Art Museum, the Tate got there first, so they had already loaned it. And so we had to go on, like, a sweeping, deep-dive mission. And Catherine was reading an article in *Feminist Art Journal* from 1972, a feminist publication, and saw this title. And we were like, "Oh, what is that? *Liberation of Aunt Jemima: Cocktail*. That sounds interesting." Betye is now working with Roberts Projects Gallery in L.A. They're doing a catalogue raisonné. Really an incredible project. They have an amazing person working on it. We emailed them and we're like, "Uhh. Shot in the dark." And this archivist was able, because Betye has kept unbelievably, and kept impeccable sales records from the 1950s to today, of her sales of her work, they were able to find this title, find the person who had— She traded it to a lawyer for legal services for her divorce, in 1972. And they found the person, they found the name. They still live in New York, on Broadway. Catherine and I went to see them. This is the lawyer, who's now in his nineties and suffers from dementia. But his wife, she wasn't his wife at the time, so she didn't really know all this backstory. But we were able to piece it together with the help of the gallery and this archivist. And they lent the work to the show. And the Brooklyn Museum just bought this work from her, so it now has, like, gone from literally just a reference in a magazine from forty years ago, with no picture, nothing ever, to being in a show that is kind of traveling around the country, and now kind of becoming a part of a collection in which there is a greater context for it, and will be seen by people. So it's like a really— I mean, it's kind of one of my favorite moments, and really a testament to the importance of being a nerd and, like, reading a lot of random musty things.

00:37:47:01 Elizabeth Catlett's really incredible work. Dindga McCannon on the back, who was a founder, with Faith, of "Where We At." And this is [inaudible] that's probably hardest to photograph. This is like the archive, really deep-dive archive room, the art world insider room, if you will. So this is

where we were really thinking about how artists engaged with—in this time period specifically—within the art world, with politics, and with organizing, thinking about The Judson Three, thinking about alternative spaces, the kind of alternative space movement—AIR Gallery, *Heresies* magazine, all of these things are covered. Kind of a controversy with Artists Space in the late seventies that produced a huge amount of furor, which bore not dissimilar resemblance to the Whitney's most recent furor. So these things are cyclical. Which is either, like, really depressing or some— I don't know what it is, but it's definitely true. And so we were able also— So this is Emma Amos, a lithograph that we saw in her studio, and it was in an issue of *Heresies* magazine, accompanying an article she wrote, which is called "Some Do's and Don'ts for Black Artists." And so we were able to kind of have these really interesting moments of seeing a work, which again, she just kept all this stuff. And Emma Amos is probably one of the most well-known artists, compared to some of the other people, but she still fundamentally was keeping things that no one was asking to see, or hadn't seen for like twenty years. So you know, it's kind of an amazing thing. Beverly Buchanan, another amazing artist.

00:39:13:06 And then moved into thinking about Just Above Midtown Gallery. So thinking again about those narrative stories that we don't necessarily hear, in terms of the alternative space movement. For example, we don't really talk about Just Above Midtown, though, like, I don't really know why. It's crazy, crazy to me that we really don't, because it is kind of one of the most iconic, founded by Linda Goode Bryant. Definitely, like, there would be no David Hammons at auction without Just Above Midtown and without Linda Goode Bryant. Like, I think personally that is 100% true. Lorraine O'Grady, which you'll see in a second, back here; Mlle Bourgeoise Noire, first performed at Just Above Midtown. Howardena Pindell, kind of a very early supporter of her, a close friend; Linda and her were close friends. So a lot of ways in which we kind of were trying to, again, insert some of these things into the broader stream. Lorraine's incredible piece, which I had never seen in person. And I think I chose this image because seeing it from the back, you see the thing that kind of blew me away when we unpacked it when we were installing, which is that when you see it like this from the front, which is how we see it most, it kind of looks— You know, it's like she's standing. But when you see it from the back, you can see that she's walking. So her heel is up, on her shoe back here. Which to me, thinking about, again, how do you preserve performance? How do you give a sense of something that happened one time forty years ago? Maybe the answer is you don't. But for me, in some way, that like, what it— Maybe it's just me, but that really, like, exemplified, in some way, this idea that it was actually a costume for a performance, and that this was an active thing. And it's not— You know, there's kind of nothing more static than a mannequin, but it's not a static enterprise.

00:40:59:01 And here, I just want to mention really quickly Blondell Cummings, who was an amazing dancer who performed at Just Above Midtown, who collaborated with Senga Nengudi and other artists in the show, who was part of kind of the downtown dance scene in this time, and is also no longer living. But really kind of one of, in some ways, the standouts of the show. I think a person that people really, outside of the dance world— Which if there's any world that's any more kind of less known than the art world, it's the dance world. So she really is not known outside of the dance world, and had not really been talked about, though she— You know, again, thinking about the kind of Venn diagram model, she knew all these people. It was a small community, it was a small world, they all knew each other. So it was kind of really amazing to put her back into this context. And this is a really amazing work called *Chicken Soup*, that I suggest you look up on the internet and watch all of it, if you haven't heard of it, because it's amazing. Camille Billops, the filmmaker, Senga Nengudi on the right.

00:41:57:12 And then at the end of the exhibition, moving into the 1980s. So moving into thinking about people like Lorna Simpson. We show these [inaudible] works by Lorna. This is kind of one of her

very earliest works, from 1986. And this is [inaudible] work. But I will say, I went to UCSD for grad school, and so did Lorna and so it Carrie Mae Weems, who's also in the show, which is amazing. But this piece, *Gestures and Reenactments*, was actually Lorna's MFA thesis piece, because she's like a child prodigy. And she did it— Now it's presented in this way, as photographs of the text underneath; but she actually initially, originally did it in a window display. She did it at a off-site gallery or space, whatever, that she found in downtown San Diego, and this was actually installed as window decals. Which I really tried to make that happen. I don't know, one way. But anyway, I just think it's really interesting to think about kind of the life of a piece and the way in which is— This is, I think, one of her most iconic works that people have seen, but I had never heard that; I didn't know that. And I had certainly had no idea that it was her MFA thesis project. And also, Carrie Mae Weems' piece in the show was also her MFA thesis project, because she's also a child prodigy. I don't know.

00:43:09:13 And then this is Lorraine O'Grady, *Rivers,* which we can talk about later. And then finally, one of the last collectives in the show is called Rodeo Caldonia, which was a collective founded in 1986, in Fort Green, in Brooklyn, by Lisa Jones, who is Kellie Jones' sister, Amiri Baraka's daughter; and Alva Rogers, who is an actor, singer, dancer, performer, who was in Spike Lee's School Daze. She was also in Julie Dash's Daughters of the Dust. And these, along with— This is kind of their crew right here. Lorna was a part of Rodeo Caldonia. She was their photographer. She took all of these photographs of them. This is Kellie Jones, like as a very young curator and critic.
And so this is kind of— And if you've seen the *Sourcebook*, you've seen this amazing photograph of them in *Interview* magazine, like at the height of their flyness. But they were the people who grew up steeped in kind of the Black Arts Movement, in the "Where We At" collective. Those were their parents, literally. Quite literally, some of them, those were those parents. But they had a very kind of different set of concerns, as kind of young women in the 1980s than they would have as young women in the 1960s. And so we wanted to kind of bring it— You know, there's a real— We stopped in '85 for a lot of different reasons. Capacity is one of them; but also because the nineties kind of become a different conversation. And we felt like then when do you end, if you kind of go into the question of the nineties and kind of multiculturalism in the art world, et cetera? You know, it felt like that would kind of open up a whole new conversation. Which again, I want somebody to do that.

00:44:45:10 And really quickly, these are all the scripts from Daughters of the Dust, which are in her papers at the Fales, which we were able to borrow, which is really incredible. And if any of you have seen Spike Lee's new *She's Gotta Have It,* I encourage you to read the piece in the *Sourcebook* by Lisa Jones, about Rodeo Caldonia, and then go back and think about that film in its original context, but also in its remake, and think about all the people Spike is not thinking [about] that he should be, on some level, because that's basically them. Like, all of that— And *She's Gotta Have It* is amazing. Not so much what's just happened. I mean, we can talk about that later. But the original film is an incredible work. But Lisa Jones was a writer on many of Spike's early films. They were friends, they were collaborators. We never hear about her. And so I think—again, this is like a constant refrain at this point, probably—but just this idea of like, we really never— We don't get the whole picture. And you don't get it unless you look for it. And there's no incentive to look for it, most of the time. Like, there's not— You know, and now Lisa, like out of doing this show, she's writing a script with Julie Dash, for— I just saw her the other day, and she's like, working in the film world again, in a way that she hasn't kind of since the early nineties. And it's not like, oh, yay, we did that. We didn't do that, but we put her name out into the world again, in a context which created an understanding of like, oh, well, if you liked Daughters of the Dust, if you felt like that was groundbreaking, if you thought that yeah, *She's Gotta Have It* or, you know, *School Daze*
00:41:57:12 or any of these kind of iconic films of the nineties, if you thought Malcolm X, Spike Lee's X, his biopic about Malcolm X was groundbreaking, like, Lisa was a writer on that film. And so if you can

kind of follow the threads back and kind of think more about this overlapping and kind of Venn diagram model of history, not only is it more interesting, but you actually produce all of these amazing people who are still alive and can continue to contribute and make amazing work. And then this is Carrie Mae Weems' installation. As I said, this was her thesis project at UCSD. This was also, if you saw her show at the Guggenheim, they had some of this. It's been seen a couple of times. But this is a small portion of it. There's also an audio component.

00:47:05:09 **A**nd then finally, this is the— At the end of the show, we had this quote. And the Combahee River Collective is a black lesbian feminist organization, collective founded in 1977 in Boston, not really intersecting with the art world, except for at this one random time, with Heresies magazine. But that's, like, a very long story. But this is an excerpt from their statement, "A Black Feminist Statement." And we ended here because I think in some ways, it says the most about what the show is about. Like, the last kind of section of it, "We reject pedestals, queenhood, and walking ten paces behind. To be recognized as human, levelly human, is enough." And so I think in thinking about kind of what are the stakes of a show like this, or kind of for me, what are the stakes of my practice in general, it's really thinking about something like— about, like, doing this. Like, in all the shows that I do, I'm kind of interested in trying to bring this kind of idea. Like, it's not about, like, this is an exceptional person. It's not about, this is the most amazing artist the world's ever seen—although some of them are. It's about, like, there is a context that we don't well enough to recognize, so we pick one person out of it. So we pick, like, David Hammons out of the story of the 1970s. And he's incredible, obviously. But we don't think as much about, like, Senga Nengudi or Houston Conwill or Howardena Pindell or Linda Goode Bryant, or all of the people—you know, Dawoud Bey, who did just win a MacArthur, though, so okay, he's doing okay. But you know, I just think that it's like one of those things where I really— I'm always perennially kind of trying to have this conversation about, like, we all are in our own— We have the [inaudible] that we have; we know what we know based on the experiences that we've had. But we have to always ourselves know that, like, I don't know anything about what this show might look like in Brazil. I don't know anything about what the show might look like in Australia. I don't know anything about what the show might look like even in, like, England. And I'm English, technically. I have an English passport. My dad is English. But just like that is [inaudible]; but I'm just saying that like, even in a place that feels quite similar in some ways, it has a specificity. Its context is particular. And in some ways, the work that we do as curators, especially when we start to make kind of broad— look at historical moments that we haven't personally lived through, especially ones where the people who have lived through them are alive, they're not playing at all. Like, they're very serious about the work that they did and they're very serious about how they're presented to the world. And you really need to—this is the receipts thing—you really need to, like, come correct, to be frank.

00:40:39:15 And so really quickly, because I think I've probably— I don't know what time [inaudible; inaudible voice] Good. Okay, not really quickly then. So I'm going to kind of leapfrog now because again, this is a historical show. Many of these artists are living, but not all of them are; but most of them— You know, Lorna Simpson is the youngest person in the show. She was born in 1960. And so a very particular type of working with living artists, compared to the show that I just opened at the Whitney, Toyin Ojih Odutola, which—let's see—it's on view right now. How do I do this? Slide won't start. [inaudible] Whitney slides. Very nerdy. So this just opened on the 20th, and it'll be up until February 25th. And so I think, like for me, I wanted to talk about both a historical show that I had worked on for like a million years. I had a ton of archival material that had incredible stakes and incredible, like, we really needed to get— Not that you don't need to get every show you do right, but it's different. Like, when you're working with somebody who's kind of your peer, your age peer, somebody who's also kind of starting out in their life and in their career, you're kind of doing it together in a different sort of way. And so that's really what

happened with [inaudible] show. And it came together very, very quickly. So really, like, polar opposite in many ways from "We Wanted a Revolution," but kind of a sharing some similar— For me, like, I'm still trying to do the same things with that show, in terms of my own practice, in terms of how I engage with the world and move through the world. And so I'm doing a little bit of, like— I'm doing the presentation that I did like 16,000 times at the Whitney to, like, get the show on the calendar. And I did that really particularly, instead of— A, because you can go see the show; it's up until February 25th. So there are a few installations shots. But I'm doing that also because I don't— I mean, I didn't come through a program like this and I don't know what the conversation is around, like, the reality of working in an institution and getting an exhibition on the calendar. It's like, both really boring and really interesting, depending on if you're invested in it or not, obviously. But I think it's interesting because you basically kind of start with like, oh, well, maybe this.

00:52:01:19 And maybe there's a relationship at the institution already; maybe not. Maybe there's an interest; maybe not. Maybe you have to, like, create the interest. In this case, there was an interest. I'll show you in a minute, but there had been an acquisition in 2015 of a work by Toyin at the Whitney. So there was an interest. But in terms of how you put together a show— And frankly, like, this kind of— It opened a month ago, and it wasn't on the calendar until like maybe mid-May. So this is like, in museum land, basically like one second it happened. So part of the reason it was possible is because she's someone that I've known for a long time. And she's someone that I've had a relationship to, and she lives in New York, and her gallery is like, you know, ten blocks from the Whitney, and it was works on paper. All these, like, things that are really just about logistics, that made it possible to kind of put together an exhibition in four months or less. She's also a very prolific worker, and so it also— There are artists who, if you say in May, like, "We want to have you— We'd love for you to do a show for us; it's going to open in October," they're not going to have any new work. And like, that's reasonable. That's totally reasonable, because that's a really short amount of time. We, on the other hand, like, made a whole show from May to September, essentially. There were three works in it that had been seen in a show previously, which I'll also show you some of; and then everything else was new that never been seen before. So this is like a very— She is a unicorn in that way. She is a unicorn in that way.

00:53:36:19 But I wanted to just start with some of her earlier work. I don't know if you're familiar with her or not. Because part of, I think, the difference between doing a show like "We Wanted a Revolution" and doing a show like this is that I hope to continue— You know, I have a relationship with the artists in We Wanted a Revolution; I hope to continue to work with them. But I'm not really, like, how is their work going to develop? Again, like, that's really not— You know, like say in your lane. Like, they're very well-developed. They, again, are not looking to me to give them critiques. And I'm terrified. I would not want to do that. But the relationship with someone who, as I said, is your peer and is somebody that you're kind of, for lack of a better word, kind of growing up with is very different. And so I've known Toyin's work since this time, actually, and I've known her probably since around the same time. Since, like, well before I ever had any thought that I would do any of the things that we've talked about or be in any of the institutions that I've worked at, except for the Studio Museum, because I had already worked there. But yeah, I think it's just interesting to think about how you continue to have a relationship with artists, whether you have an end goal or not. Like, neither of us really were like, and then one day we're going go— No. Like, I don't know.

00:54:54:08 So anyway, this is kind of the work that she started with, on a much smaller scale, fourteen by seventeen, eleven by fourteen, working in kind of what has become kind of her style, if you will, kind of recognizable style. And at this time, really thinking about, obviously, portraiture, but really looking at much more cropped. Either cropped in full bodies or kind of busts, and really no

context, no background; just like on a flat, white background. In kind of 2013, she started to kind of make these larger works and started to introduce these elements of context, in the sense of clothing, in the sense of color. I remember, like, seeing this in her studio, this piece specifically, and being completely blown away by it. And seeing it even at that moment as like, oh, you just did something that's going to be important for you in the kind of broad trajectory of our work as an artist. Continuing forward, now we start to see she's like— I think something that's so amazing about this piece is— Frankly, the most amazing thing to me is this shadow. Because if you think about somebody who starts working like this and then starts putting clothes on people, like, what is a shadow but the kind of reality of dimensional space, right? All of a sudden this is a body in space; it's not just, like, this kind of floating thing that's kind of detached from any context, kind of unmoored from specificity of location. This doesn't mean that this person's in a particular place. But for me, at least, something about that shadow makes it like, oh, like this is grounding, kind of quite literally.

00:56:30:06 This piece on the left is the piece that the Whitney purchased. This is from a series called "The Treatment," which she did in 2015. And she had a show of— I think there were twenty or thirty of these, and they were all these kind of very sketchy, you can see, like compared to these other ones, where the kind of line is very precise and there's really nothing sketchy about them. These kind of very sketchy drawings, where she hasn't really filled in a lot of the details, except for on the faces. And the idea here— These are called "The Treatment." And "The Treatment" is kind of the Toyin treatment, which is that she does this to their faces. But the kicker, if you will, is that these were all white men. And she didn't identify who they were. And so does anybody know who this person is on the left? [inaudible voice] No. [inaudible voice] That's correct. And so this is Picasso, but it was everything from artists to— You know, Prince Charles was one of them, musicians, et cetera. And so the Whitney bought this one. I'm assuming partly because it was Picasso, but I don't know; I wasn't there. But as I said, this is the piece that came into the collection and kind of was the first way of interacting with her institutionally. And so last year, she did a show at the Museum of the African Diaspora in San Francisco, called "A Matter of Fact." And so in these works, you can now see this, like, fully— I won't say fully because, you know, we don't know what the future holds, but like, more fully-fleshed thinking about context, about background, about pattern, about space and time, and also about narrative. So this show—and the show at the Whitney kind of picks this up as well—are based around her own conceit, in terms of a narrative. So she kind of created a narrative based around two Nigerian families—now there's two; this was one of them; the second one is at the Whitney—that's based around this couple at the front. So each exhibition is kind of thinking about one of these people's families. And so I didn't see this show, but I knew that it was happening and I kind of saw it, you know, as one does, on Instagram or something. I knew Toyin and she had talked about it a lot, but I wasn't able to see it during this time period; I didn't get to San Francisco. So when we wanted to do a show at the Whitney, I really wanted to include some of these works because I really wanted to—selfishly—I wanted to see them. And I thought that people in New York also might want to see them because they probably hadn't. But I also was interested in kind of creating some continuity between these two related narratives. So in some ways, I'm sure she will go on to have a third show which is the full second series. We didn't do all of it because she was still making it, and is still making it, actually. But that there would be kind of connective tissue, in some ways, between this show and the show that we're doing, because for her, they are kind of part of a broader— It's one big series. Eventually, it will be one big series. So this work right here, "The Bride," is in the show at the Whitney. These others are not, but are also lovely. These are also not. But here, I included these because you start to see she's thinking about, obviously, kind of different genres—thinking about still life, which is something that you see a lot in the work in the Whitney; thinking about mirrors, reflective surfaces, windows, kind of apertures, openings into other spaces. So here— Excuse me. Go back. In this one, you have kind of this open window. You have

the kind of Kerry James Marshall quotation. This is a Kerry James Marshall work she's quoting. But also kind of the painting within the painting, that sort of thing. You have kind of this spatial awareness and spatial recession. You have, obviously, now this very strong interest in kind of self-fashioning, in dress, in kind of a certain sort of self-presentation.

01:00:22:02 And now this is the show at the Whitney. So this is an installation shot from the show. So the show is in the lobby gallery, which is to your right when you come in, if you haven't been lately, on the first floor. And so these works, you can see already, the kind of palette is very different. There's kind of— The way that weorganized the show— It's a small show, sixteen or seventeen works, but we did want to try to create kind of sections. So this area, which you can't see the rest of, is all kind of thinking about landscape, thinking about people out in the world, thinking about the kind of figure out in the world. This section over here is more interiors. There's several still lifes. Actually, these two works right here are on this wall. So like, this is one wall, this is one wall, that's this wall—if that makes sense. So again, you see here a kind of landscape, kind of figures out in the world, not kind of within domestic space. This is the back wall of the exhibition, these three. I'm thinking about kind of putting together a floor plan. Obviously, once you kind of get to the show, different choices end up being made than what you thought was going to be, like, the layout at the beginning. But this actually was the one thing that stayed consistent from our, like, first little Foamcore model to the actual installation. Probably, you know, for obvious reasons, to anybody who's looking right now. They go together pretty well. And these are other works that are in the show, but not installation images. So this is kind of the work that greets you as you walk in. Obviously, in some ways, connected very strongly to this work, but different. We wanted to kind of think about groups. We wanted to think about, again, specificity of dress, of place, of style. These are all meant to be family members. We were also interested in thinking about the very prevalent, you know, unexceptional reality that people of color, their families are different colors. People who are related to each other by blood may not appear, quote/unquote, "exactly the same," in terms of tonality of their skin. So this is something that whereas I think in the past she's really been thinking about kind of, as she says, like blackness as a material, and not necessarily always connecting it to skin. Because when we think about these works, these earlier works, like, actually, there're very few people in the world who actually have skin that color. So kind of highlighting, in some ways, the ridiculousness of the language that we use. And even the kind of construct and context of, like, race as a way to describe people, because most people are varying tones of different colors. So this is something I think she's now starting to think through a little bit differently in this body of work, in these more recent works.

01:03:12:05 This is kind of one of my favorites. And so this is from— There's also, like, she's very interested, as I said, in this idea of narrative and the way of, like, kind of visual storytelling, thinking even about things like graphic novels, manga, film, the novel in general, thinking about the ways in which you can tell a story. Like, what do you need to get a story across? And she's really interested, though she has this very particular narrative— I should've said this right here is in the gallery, screenprinted on the wall, and it kind of outlines some of this narrative for the viewer. But again, in kind of very oblique, not quite totally clear terms. And she was very adamant about having that in the gallery, which like, was a whole thing. But she was right. But it also isn't that important to her that people know exactly who is who. It's not about, like, a family tree or about, like, well, this is the uncle and that's the mom and this is the son. I think people get overly— Like, people put an overly-literal read on it. And I think it's kind of quite an interesting thing to see. I think it's in our nature in some was as people, to try to parse out relationships, especially— Which is, of course, totally fine and understandable. But I think she's really interested in, like, well, what do you think it is? Like, what do you think these relationships are? What are the possible permutations? And the she also does a lot— She's very interested in language. The title of the

show, "To Wander Determined," was her title that she wanted, and I think it's a really beautiful and very evocative title. But the titles of many of her works are also equally beautiful and evocative. For example, this one is called "Years Later Her Scarf," which kind of immediately— Oh, yeah, you guys can't see it, sorry.

01:05:00:03 Which is kind of immediately thinking about, like, whose scarf? And you see he's holding the scarf in his hands, but kind of immediately starting your kind of imaginative, speculative juices flowing. Other ones, this one in the middle—or excuse me, on the left—is called "Pregnant," which is, you know, probably like the shortest and best short story ever, because immediately, you're like, everything is there. Who's pregnant? Who's the father? What happened? Who's the parent? All the things. So I think she's really interested— Oh, here it is, yeah. Pregnant. She's really interested in kind of using her titles as a secondary but really important device, in terms of creating a larger context for the work, in terms of getting her larger points across, in terms of getting people to really just, like, engage and to look closely and to think deeply. I really encourage you to come see the show because they do reproduce really well, they look beautiful, but they really have a lot more presence, I think, and a lot more kind of visceral kind of vibration and tactility in person that I think is really important to see and really kind of quite striking, I think. So yes, I encourage you to come see it.

01:06:14:20 This is the piece we saw earlier, which was in her show in San Francisco. This is another piece that is in the show that was in San Francisco, as well. And here, kind of thinking about art historical references, especially thinking about, like, trompe l'oeil, kind of Northern Renaissance painting, thinking about still life, et cetera—all of these different things that she's also very interested in. And then finally, this is the last slide, but also this is another piece in the show that I really love. Because again, she's thinking about— To think about kind of what she was doing five, six, seven years ago to now, just thinking about the creation of, like, recession in space, the kind of inter— Like putting in, like, these hands right here, or this kind of still life of a plant, kind of a weird portrait of a plant who— Like the hands at the bottom, it's in some ways— You know, this is like the wall at everyone's grandma's house with like, the portraits and the photographs of the family. But at the same time, the inclusion of this plant in the front and the hands almost makes it feel as if like, well, maybe— You know, you kind of become embedded and kind of a part of the piece, just by that insertion—as a viewer—just by the insertion of this potted plant. Yeah. That's all. You should come see it. It's up—did I say that?—February 25th. Up until February 25th.

01:07:37:23 And the other thing I will say, also, very quickly, is that if you— It's interesting to make a show in a vacuum, but then install it and have it be— I mean, of course, like, it's not like we were like, oh, God, we had no idea what was going to be on view. But like, it's amazing that Laura Owens is up at the same time as Toyin's show. And I think I kind of love thinking about them together. And of course, that's like a happenstance pairing because they happen to be in the building at the same time. Laura's show is also really incredible, so if you haven't seen that, you should come and see it. Jimmie Durham is also on view right now, which is another kind of interesting— That's a whole other complicated story, as well, in terms of thinking about how to put a show like that together, and thinking about ethics, thinking about artists and their desires versus institutional desires, or even curatorial desires. But all of those things are on view right now at the Whitney, so it's a really kind of— Like, that's kind of one of my favorite things about working in a museum sometimes, is that you get to have this like, oh, okay. This and this together. Great. Okay. That's all. Whoo.

[APPLAUSE]