

NIGHT GALLERY

2276 E. 16th Street, Los Angeles, California 90021

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Francesca Gavin, "Against all odds," *GQ Style*, May 2021

New renaissance

Kandis Williams

Age: 36

Location: Los Angeles

Career highlights: Solo exhibitions in 2020 at Night Gallery, Los Angeles; Kandis Williams: A Field at ICA VCU, Richmond VA; Made in LA 2020 at the Hammer Museum; Oracle at the Underground Museum, Los Angeles

Kandis Williams, best known for her collage work, was recently awarded a \$40,000 grant from the prestigious NYC non-profit organisation Foundation for Contemporary Arts, founded in 1963 by artists John Cage and Jasper Johns, and is currently having a prolific moment in her career, with numerous solo exhibitions across the world. She became a major name during the BLM protests of 2020, notably for her book imprint Cassandra Press, which publishes Black cultural history and theory.

'The experience of lockdown - the majority of which I spent in LA - gave me the opportunity to see the aesthetic and conceptual through-lines uniting several bodies of work that I was producing in succession. Pieces that normally would have been quick to leave the studio instead shared the space, placing the works very directly in dialogue with one another for an extended period. These include sculptures from my solo exhibition A Field at Virginia Commonwealth University, works on paper made for Made in LA 2020 at the Hammer Museum and Huntington Library, new DIY anthologies of criticism for my publishing company Cassandra Press, and preparatory dramaturgical and directorial work for my upcoming video and performance-based exhibition at Night Gallery and several other productions. My work has always united a constellation of distinct practices through a core of collage, reassembling cultural materials to reflect the unspoken schema that define perception. Seeing my projects side by side allowed an even more macro-scale view than I am used to, creating an expanded historical and theoretical context for these works. Beyond sharing physical space, they have been able to situate themselves amid an expanded landscape of scholarship, engaging, interrogating, and destabilising texts including Adrian Piper's *Xenophobia and Kantian Rationalism*; anthropologist J Lorand Matory's writings on fetishism; the work of social scientist Leon Festinger; Norman Mailer's 1957 essay *The White Negro: Superficial Reflections on the Hipster*; and the critical writings of Dylan Rodriguez, as they're extensions or oppositions to a legacy of Black feminist scholarship.'



Kandis Williams' collages, with their comment on racial histories and deep dive into the unconscious signifiers of nationalism and colour, helped propel her to stardom during the BLM protests of 2020.



Top: 'When the chief passes by, the dancers have "to die": they throw themselves down, hiding their faces with their hands. Crafted during the Johnson, Nixon and Reagan administrations, the current federal "starve the beast" movement is designed to reestablish numerous forms of domination by comprehensively transforming key institutions within the national and international political economy, that is, "deevolution" at home and "neoliberalism" abroad', 2020; ink, dye, collage on canvas; 121.9 x 182.9cm, KW122. **Bottom:** 'We have spared no expense. Scope, scalpel, axe, drill. The Sort of Thing You Should Not Admit: violent death turns out to be puzzlingly complex and if you have a problem figuring out whether you're for me, then you ain't black', 2020; Xerox collage and ink on watercolour paper, 185.4 x 129.5cm, KW126