



LOVE IS A BATTLEFIELD: ARTIST ALEXANDRA GRANT'S "ANTIGONE 3000"

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Artist Alexandra Grant creates powerful, provocative work, collaged from text and shapes, paint and paper, ink and wax, lines and curves, that upends hate and chaos, transforming them into love and beauty.

It wasn't really that surprising to discover that artist Alexandra Grant and writer Roxane Gay went to high school together. There's an intersection between their similar battles against the canon of expectation that have driven the western world — and the place of women — for centuries. In Grant's case, the seeds for that were put in place when she was still young. An only child born to two college professors in the Midwest, she was funneled through Paris and Mexico City. Being over six feet, a quality she shares

with Gay, now with prematurely white hair, she has always stood out. She found solace from her otherness in the world of books. "I think part of my attraction to becoming an artist," says Grant, who had entered college to study math but then switched her major, "was to finally have a shared language with people that wasn't dependent on location or nationality."



"I knew that language was going to be at the heart of my practice," she says, "The decision to come to LA was in part because I saw how many text-based artists there were here," she says referring to a legacy that includes John Baldessari, Ed Ruscha and Barbara Kruger. But where they provoke, Grant engages. "I think there has to be a return to narrative," she says.

The genesis of her current series, *Antigone 3000*, which was shown at Lowell Ryan Projects, and the thinking behind how the physical work came together, seems simple enough. She wanted to be seen and understood as a woman and as an artist. "I wasn't being shown in relationship to other abstract painters of my generation and I wanted to be in the bigger conversation," she says. With Mike Brown's death in Ferguson in 2014, the story of *Antigone*, which she had first encountered through the Jean Anouilh play as a child and then again in the psychology classes she took as an art student, suddenly felt especially relevant. Galvanized, Grant began to explore the myth in her paintings.



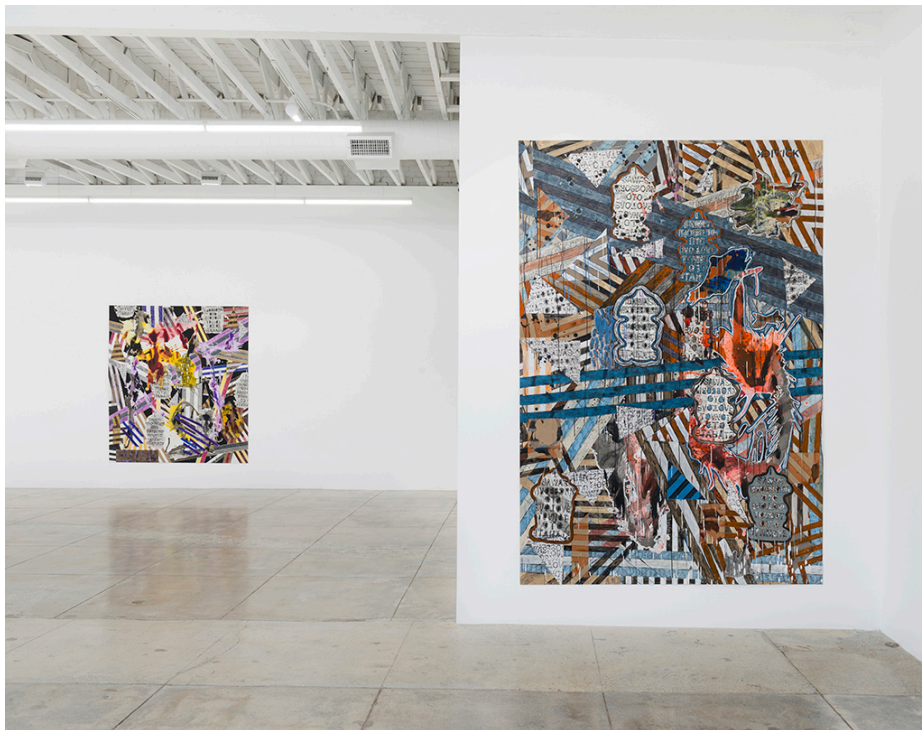
The story, for those who are unfamiliar with Socrates play from which Grant draws her text, places the young Greek girl at the center of a conflict between what is law and what is right. When her brother, Polynices, is killed in fight over who will rule the city of Thebes, her Uncle, now the king, refuses to honor him with a ceremonial burial. He even goes so far as to decree that anyone who mourns him will be stoned to death as a traitor. Antigone defies his order, defending her stance with the statement that she was born to love, not to hate. "It's the dynamic between the violence of the state and violence of the organic mess of life coming into conflict," says Grant. "Her move is so central to every generation. I wanted to play with that. How would I represent that abstractly?"



She started with a ruler. "Those lines represent the state. The Rorschach and the poured paint represent the messiness of life. But then how was I going to represent Antigone? I wanted to create a different way of representing language that wasn't handwriting or me printing Gothic or Helvetica on a computer and having it be like graphic design. And I had all this tombstone wax, which you use to make grave



rubbings, left over from a project, and I thought, 'What if I took this rubbing material and I rubbed paper on that painting, what would happen?' And then I just started combining the more abstract painting with the texts and the reason they're all on paper is because everything is rubbed over that plaster and there's older drawings and more abstract ones all cut up in triangles and pasted on."



The potent visual antagonism of the finished work is palatable. Each painting, in its abstraction, is a battlefield and a visual proposition that Antigone, in choosing love over hate, rises above opposition and towards the divine propelled by her steadfast conviction. Though this series represents Grant's first dive into the world of Antigone, in many ways her work has always been about choosing love — from



grantLOVE, her philanthropic love brand which produces and sells original artworks and editions to benefit artist projects and arts non-profits, to her publishing house X Artists' Books, to her frequent collaborations, even the fact that she was ordained as a Universal Life Minister in order to preside over a friend's wedding. "I don't see myself as a revolutionary," she says, "but I do see myself as standing for something." Love may be a battlefield but, in the end, it always triumphs.

For information or to inquire about purchasing Grant's work, contact Lowell Ryan Projects at 323.998.0063 or via email at info@lowellryanprojects.com.