



FAMILY MATTERS

HER CONCEPTUAL PERFORMANCES HAVE TAUGHT US MUCH ABOUT THE NATURE OF RACE AND SEX. BUT ON THE SET OF THIS SHOOT, LORRAINE O'GRADY LEARNED A LITTLE ABOUT HERSELF

When I moved to my new space, I felt unexpectedly blessed. With one wall of windows, another of mirrors, and a third of cabinets, there'd be no room to accumulate STUFF. When Jason came to photograph, only one image hung on the remaining wall—a framed group of early 20th-century photos of my mother and aunts. They'd been used in a 1990 piece, *The Strange Taxi: From Africa to Jamaica to Boston in 200 Years*. Now, they watched over my bank of laptops, monitors, and external drives. Keeping me straight. Reminding me who I was. But of course, Jason noticed something I no longer saw: all four elegantly dressed women had assumed the portrait stance of their time. Face front, directly addressing the camera, body turned slightly, one hand resting on a piece of furniture. When I entered the viewing area, he'd arranged a group of old family pieces. "There's something missing," I said. It was the prop from *Rivers, First Draft*, a 1982 Central Park performance, which had been the crude prototype of the later photomontage, *The Fir-Palm*, a botanical conceit for my West Indian-New England background. **Lorraine O'Grady**