

Deborah Grant: Christ You Know it Ain't Easy!!
January 25 – February 28, 2014

Drawing Room

Opening Reception: Friday, January 24, 6–8pm

For further information and images, please contact
Molly Gross, *Communications Director*, The Drawing Center
212 219 2166 x119 | mgross@drawingcenter.org

January 24, 2014



Deborah Grant, *God's Voice in the Midnight Hours* (detail), 2013. Oil, acrylic, enamel, paper, Arches W.C. paper, linen, and birch wood on Baltic birch panel. Twenty-four panels, each: 24 x 18 x 1 1/2 inches (61 x 46 x 3.8 cm). All works courtesy of the artist and Steve Turner Contemporary, Los Angeles.

New York – The Drawing Center presents *Deborah Grant: Christ You Know it Ain't Easy!!*, an installation that combines painting, drawing, and collage to recount the fictional meeting between African-American folk artist Mary A. Bell and renowned modernist painter Henri Matisse. For *Christ You Know it Ain't Easy!!*, which takes its title from the Lennon/McCartney song “The Ballad of John and Yoko,” Grant spent over two years researching primary documents including Mary Bell’s drawing and letters. The exhibition occupies the Drawing Room and includes a large-scale work on four birch panels (*Crowning the Lion and the Lamb*), as well as twenty-four smaller birch panels (*God's Voice in the Midnight Hours*), two shaped panels (*Obedient unto Death, Even Death on a Cross* and *Hosanna to the Son of David*), and a series of five drawings (*Easter's Best*). It is Grant’s first solo museum show in New York.

Christ You Know it Ain't Easy!! is the latest installment in Grant’s ongoing series *Random Select* in which she interweaves historical accounts and personal experiences with references to contemporary political and social issues. Grant culls material from a variety of sources including magazine photographs, comic books, and published texts, which she masterfully assembles via a signature drawing method involving silhouetted figures and calligraphic marks and lines to create highly personal, non-linear narratives that investigate politics, race, and cultural identity.

Mary A. Bell (1873–1941) was a devout Catholic domestic servant who produced over a hundred drawings later in life after retiring from service. She never received formal artistic training and believed herself to be an instrument of God. Her crayon and colored-pencil renderings—which frequently depict fanciful scenes of well-dressed white couples but which also include portraits of

Creole ladies and other outsider types—were collected by such cultural figures as writer Gertrude Stein, art critic Henry McBride, writer and photographer Carl Van Vechten, painter Florine Stettheimer, and sculptor Gaston Lachaise (for whose wife’s sister Bell worked). Bell envisioned her drawings as promoting both personal renown and racial advancement and she hoped to see her ideas realized not only in the medium of drawing but also film. Troubled for many years by mental illness, Bell was committed to a mental health facility in Boston in 1940, where she died the next year from heart failure.

In Grant’s telling, Bell encounters Matisse in a dream after falling asleep while working late one night on her drawings. The modern master appears at the foot of her bed discoursing on his famous large-scale paper collages, which he calls “painting with scissors.” After a brief discussion about abstract art, religion, and her own personal history, Bell wakes up only to realize that she is in the Boston State Hospital. Rendered through graphic silhouettes, intricate line drawings, and collaged photographic elements, Grant’s fictionalized narrative provides an alternate account of the legacy of modernist painting, one not told in the history books.

Curated by Claire Gilman, Curator.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Deborah Grant received her BFA from Columbia College, Chicago, in 1996, and her MFA in painting from Tyler School of Art, Philadelphia, in 1999. Upon completing her training, she participated in residencies at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture (1996) and at the Studio Museum in Harlem (2002–2003). Grant has had solo exhibitions at Steve Turner Contemporary, Los Angeles (2012); the University of California Berkeley Art Museum (2009); Dunn and Brown Contemporary, Dallas (2007); and Roebling Hall, New York City (2006). Major group exhibitions include *Agitated Histories*, Site Santa Fe (2011); *Reinventing Ritual, Contemporary Art and Design for Jewish Life*, The Jewish Museum, New York (2009); *After 1968: Contemporary Artists and the Civil Rights Legacy*, High Museum of Art, Atlanta (2008); *The Old Weird America*, Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston (2008); *The “F” Word*, Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh (2006); and *Greater New York*, PS1 Contemporary Art Center, Long Island City (2004). She is the recipient of the William H. Johnson Prize (2011); the Joan Mitchell Painters and Sculptors Grant (2007); the Nimoy Foundation Grant (2004); and the Tides Lambent Foundation Grant (2003). Born in Ontario, Canada, in 1968, Grant currently lives and works in New York City.

PUBLIC PROGRAM

Thursday, February 6 at 6:30pm
Walkthrough with the artist and curator.

PUBLICATION

To accompany *Deborah Grant: Christ You Know it Ain't Easy!!*, The Drawing Center will produce a fully illustrated edition in the *Drawing Papers* series that will include an introduction by Claire Gilman and an essay by Theresa Leininger-Miller, Associate Professor, Art History, University of Cincinnati.

CREDITS

Deborah Grant: Christ You Know it Ain't Easy!! is made possible in part by Steve Turner and Victoria Dailey, Monroe Denton, Dee and Gianna Kerrison, and Jeanne Greenberg Rohatyn.

ABOUT THE DRAWING CENTER

The Drawing Center is the only not-for-profit fine arts institution in the country to focus solely on the exhibition of drawings, both historical and contemporary. It was established in 1977 to provide opportunities for emerging and under-recognized artists; to demonstrate the significance and diversity of drawings throughout history; and to stimulate public dialogue on issues of art and culture.

HOURS & ACCESSIBILITY

Gallery hours are Wednesday-Sunday 12pm–6pm, Thursday, 12pm–8pm.
Tickets: \$5 Adults, \$3 Students and seniors, Children under 12 are free, and free admission Thursdays 6-8pm.

The Drawing Center is wheelchair accessible.

AT THE DRAWING CENTER

<i>Ferran Adrià: Notes on Creativity</i>	January 25–February 28, 2014
<i>Deborah Grant: Christ You Know it Ain't Easy!!</i>	January 25–February 28, 2014
<i>Rashaad Newsome: FIVE (The Drawing Center)</i>	March 6–11, 2014
<i>Andrea Bowers and Suzanne Lacy (title TBD)</i>	March 15–26, 2014
<i>Lebbeus Woods: Architect</i>	April 16–June 15, 2014
<i>Len Lye: Motion Sketch</i>	April 16–June 15, 2014

Deborah Grant: Christ You Know it Ain't Easy!!

January 25 – February 28, 2014

Images Available for Reproduction

For further information and images, please contact
Molly Gross, *Communications Director*, The Drawing Center
212 219 2166 x119 | mgross@drawingcenter.org



Deborah Grant, *God's Voice in the Midnight Hours* (detail), 2013
Oil, acrylic, enamel, paper, Arches W.C. paper, linen, and birch wood on Baltic birch panel. Twenty-four panels, each: 24 x 18 x 1 1/2 inches (61 x 46 x 3.8 cm). All works courtesy of the artist and Steve Turner Contemporary, Los Angeles.



Deborah Grant, *God's Voice in the Midnight Hours* (detail), 2013
Oil, acrylic, enamel, paper, Arches W.C. paper, linen, and birch wood on Baltic birch panel. Twenty-four panels, each: 24 x 18 x 1 1/2 inches (61 x 46 x 3.8 cm). All works courtesy of the artist and Steve Turner Contemporary, Los Angeles.



Deborah Grant, *Easter's Best*, 2013
Acrylic, archival ink, colored pencil, and Arches W.C. paper mounted to Arches W.C. paper. Five drawings, each: 22 x 30 inches (55.9 x 76.2 cm). All works courtesy of the artist and Steve Turner Contemporary, Los Angeles.



Deborah Grant, *Crowning the Lion and the Lamb* (detail). 2013. Oil, acrylic, enamel, paper, Arches W.C. paper, and birch wood on Baltic birch panel. Four panels, each: 72 x 48 x 2 inches (183 x 22 x 5 cm); overall: 72 x 192 x 2 inches (183 x 487.7 x 5 cm). All works courtesy of the artist and Steve Turner Contemporary, Los Angeles.



Deborah Grant, *Crowning the Lion and the Lamb* (detail). 2013. Oil, acrylic, enamel, paper, Arches W.C. paper, and birch wood on Baltic birch panel. Four panels, each: 72 x 48 x 2 inches (183 x 22 x 5 cm); overall: 72 x 192 x 2 inches (183 x 487.7 x 5 cm). All works courtesy of the artist and Steve Turner Contemporary, Los Angeles.



Deborah Grant, *Crowning the Lion and the Lamb* (detail). 2013. Oil, acrylic, enamel, paper, Arches W.C. paper, and birch wood on Baltic birch panel. Four panels, each: 72 x 48 x 2 inches (183 x 22 x 5 cm); overall: 72 x 192 x 2 inches (183 x 487.7 x 5 cm). All works courtesy of the artist and Steve Turner Contemporary, Los Angeles.