Shadows in the Garden

The Dark Madonna Project by Suzanne Lacy

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Abstract

Drawing on archival sources and interviews with participants and organizers, this article uses scholarship from cultural geography and critical whiteness, gender, and performance studies to assess The Dark Madonna 1986, a large-scale performance project by the artist Suzanne Lacy. This evening performance took place in the Franklin Murphy Sculpture Garden at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) and included two living tableaux with sound. Focusing on different aspects of The Dark Madonna can be instructive to landscape design practice in several ways: investigating how Lacy’s intervention in the mid-sixties modernist design of the UCLA sculpture garden provided a counterpoint to the implicit assumptions of the garden; explicating ways in which performance can inform landscape architecture; and adapting community cultural development strategies that Lacy formulated.