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Rodrigo Moreira, *A Grand Affair*
Curated by Serubiri Moses
November 24, 2024 - January 26, 2025
on participantafterdark.art

PARTICIPANT AFTER DARK and DEPARTMENT OF NSA (NO STRINGS ATTACHED) present *A Grand Affair*, a film by Rodrigo Moreira, written by Rodrigo Moreira, danilo machado, Serubiri Moses; Technical & Assistant Direction by Itziar Barrio; Cinematography by Ryan Harman, Rehan Miskci, Sinan Tuncay; Edited by Itziar Barrio, Rodrigo Moreira; Audio Mix by Rosana Caban; Produced by Lia Gangitano.

From November 24, 2024 - January 26, 2025, PARTICIPANT INC presents Rodrigo Moreira, *A Grand Affair* curated by Serubiri Moses. Written and directed by Rodrigo Moreira, the film is narrated by danilo machado. Initiated and organized by independent curator Serubiri Moses, the project will be launched on our online platform, PARTICIPANT ATER DARK, in tandem with companion print project produced in collaboration with PUBLICIDE.

Structured as an immigration interview, the film project *A Grand Affair* presents a love letter as evidence of commitment to a genuine relationship. Like most relationships, the real subject is the logistics of a long-term commitment. *A Grand Affair* is a collage of short scenes divided into six chapters that visually interpret the letter while the immigration officer reads it. The letter's contents blur the line between a love story and the immigrant's relationship with the U.S. and American culture, depicting various stages of their relationship. Inspired by psychologist Liberty Kovacs's *The Six Stages of Modern Marriage*, the film initiates a psychological reading of an immigrant's romantic and erotic experience. Pleasure is not so much depicted as sexual relief or excitement, but rather as another stage within the immigrant's psychological life; pleasure plays a role in the narrative of the film.

A Grand Affair is aesthetically driven by mass advertising, hyperlinked digital culture, and animation, and thus, "an excess of images inebriated with shine." (Vanessa Gravenor, "9th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art," *The Seen Journal*, 2016). But this is countered by the weight of a confessional migrant narrative described by Fred Moten as "the trace of that commodification in my own flesh." (Cited by Hannah Black in "The 9th Berlin Biennale," *Artforum*, 2016). In this love story, capitalism and its tentacles within the U.S. immigration system take center

stage. This dance between an immigrant and their object of desire is by no means superficial.

The film's treatment of the immigration system leans on the introspective and psychological rather than the structural or institutional. Its aesthetic is reminiscent of editorial advertising. And yet, this colorful mood board is juxtaposed with serious poetry: Walt Whitman, Emma Lazarus, Jean Cocteau, and Allen Ginsberg. The main character of the film, an unnamed protagonist, arrives at JFK airport from a Latin American country. The film shows this character's internal struggles going through immigration, which is itself a process of becoming legible. The tension between internal and external experience is constantly enacted. From the Statue of Liberty to Emma Lazarus's "your poor, your tired, your huddled masses," the desire of the immigrant is placed in juxtaposition with the iconic monuments of the United States.

Kovacs's six stages are mirrored in the film's collaged scenes: honeymoon, expectation, power struggle, seven-year-itch, reconciliation, and acceptance. Narrated by poet and curator **danilo machado**, the film becomes a map to examine the main narrator's life, and their relationship to "America." The immigration experience is treated as a political biography in a way that recalls Brazilian artist Helio Oiticica's words: "I feel as if I'm in a prison in this (sic) infernal island." (Elisa Wouk Almino, "Helio Oiticica in New York," *Paris Review*, 2017). "America" is the unnamed narrator's romantic interest, whose milestones are, in the course of the film, juxtaposed with the complexities of the immigration process: the various investigations including review of legal documents and personal relations. These difficulties are expressed through political and cultural visual references that incorporate iconography associated with ideas, desires, and concepts related to "America." The *I* of the film narrator becomes the interrogative *I*. "America, I've given you all and now I'm nothing." (Allen Ginsberg, "America" in *Collected Poems*, 1984).

Rodrigo Moreira is a Brazilian multidisciplinary artist based in NYC working on printmaking, video, and text. He holds a BA in Communication Studies and a BA in Graphic Design with complementary studies in Fine Arts. Creating poetic interventions on social issues that emerge in everyday life, his projects are related to systems of communication and how images and text can evoke and subvert certain ideologies. Moreira was a 2022 Artist in Residence at Center for Book Arts, 2019 fellow of the AIM Program of The Bronx Museum, 2018 fellow of NYFA Immigrant Artist Mentoring Program: Social Practice. His work has been featured in selected exhibitions in Brazil, Cuba, Croatia, South Korea, Spain, Portugal, and the USA. In 2015, he was awarded the 66th Salão de Abril Prize in Brazil.

Serubiri Moses is a Ugandan curator and author based in New York City. His writing is primarily concerned with aporia, violence, as well as exhibition histories. His exhibitions are rooted in methods of collective teaching, and listening as an epistemology. He serves as part-time faculty in Art History at Hunter College, CUNY, and visiting faculty at the Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College. He previously held teaching positions at New York University and the New Centre for Research and Practice (DE/US), Dark Study (US), Digital Earth Fellowship (NL), and delivered lectures at Williams College, Yale University, University of Pittsburgh, The New School, and basis voor actuele kunst (NL), College of the Atlantic, and University of the Arts Helsinki (FL). As a curator, he has organized exhibitions at museums including MoMA PS1, Long Island City; Kunst-Werke Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin; and the Hessel Museum, Bard College, NY. He previously held a research

fellowship at the University of Bayreuth, received his MA in Curatorial Studies at Bard College, and is an alumni of the Àsikò International Art Programme. He is Contributing Editor at *e-flux journal*, and his forthcoming book *Judith Namala: A Novella* is published by CARA.

Image: Rodrigo Moreira, *A Grand Affair*, 2024, video still. [A color video still featuring two hands in green rubber gloves, drawing with a marker on typewritten and redacted text.]

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Teiger Foundation



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PARTICIPANT INC is located at 116 Elizabeth Street, floor one, between Broome and Grand Streets. The closest trains are the J/Z (Bowery) and the B/D (Grand); the closest wheelchair accessible stop is the 6 (Canal). Entry is on grade and the gallery is barrier free throughout with an all gender, wheelchair accessible bathroom. Service animals are welcome.

PARTICIPANT INC

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