



Philip Guston
Drawing for Conspirators
1930



Whitney Museum of American Art

AUDIO

August 5, 2015
Mia Curran on *Drawing for Conspirators* by Philip Guston
In [99 Objects](#)



-30:50



car voici un extrait très intéressant provenant d'un texte écrit par Guston, en 1978 : « En tant que jeune garçon, j'étais un activiste politique radical, et bien que je ne sois plus du tout un activiste, je garde trace de tout. En 1967-68 je devins très perturbé par la guerre et les manifestations. Ils sont devenus mon sujet et j'étais envahi par cette mémoire. Quand j'avais 17-18 ans [en 1930], j'avais fait toute une série de peintures sur le Ku Kux Klan, qui était très puissant à Los Angeles à cette époque. Les services de police avaient ce qu'ils appelaient le 'Red Squad', dont le but principal était de briser toute tentative de se syndiquer. Je me souviens que c'était en 1932, 1933. Je travaillais dans une usine et fut impliqué dans une grève. Le KKK aida à casser la grève et alors j'ai fait toute une série sur le KKK. En fait, j'avais une exposition sur eux dans une librairie à Hollywood, où je travaillais en ce temps-là. Des membres du Klan sont entrés, ont pris les peintures du mur et les ont déchiré. Deux étaient mutilées. Ça a été le début. Ce sont des auto-portraits [i.e, ci-dessus]. Je me perçois moi-même comme étant derrière une cagoule. Dans les nouvelles séries de "cagoules", ma tentative n'était vraiment pas d'illustrer, de faire des images du KKK, comme je l'avais fait avant. L'idée du mal me fascinait, et plutôt comme Babel qui avait rejoint les Cosaques, qui avait vécu avec eux et écrit des histoires sur eux, j'ai presque essayé de m'imaginer que je vivais avec le Klan. Qu'est-ce ça ferait d'être mauvais ['evil']? De planifier et comploter. Et alors j'ai conçu une ville imaginaire submergée par le Klan.»

As Mayer is keen to point out, Guston's later paintings of Klansmen, which the gallery directors deemed problematic, have been included in countless exhibitions over the last few decades without attracting adverse attention. Last September, though, in the heightened, fractious atmosphere of election year, and in the wake of the Black Lives Matter protests that erupted after the police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis, their potential to offend or cause pain to black visitors became the central issue for the galleries. It later transpired that it was security staff working for Washington's National Gallery of Art who had first expressed concern about their "painful" subject matter.

The statement did little to placate Mayer's concerns and she is still struggling to make sense of the their loss of nerve. "I was baffled by their reasons," she says. "The issues they raised were all fully addressed in the catalogue, in which two black artists were among the many contributors who had written brilliantly about the work. Those same issues would have, or should have, been addressed in the contextualisation that was done for the exhibition. They certainly had the time to do that. I think they were simply afraid. I felt it was the wrong decision then. And I still do."

The Observer
Painting

This article is more than 3 years old

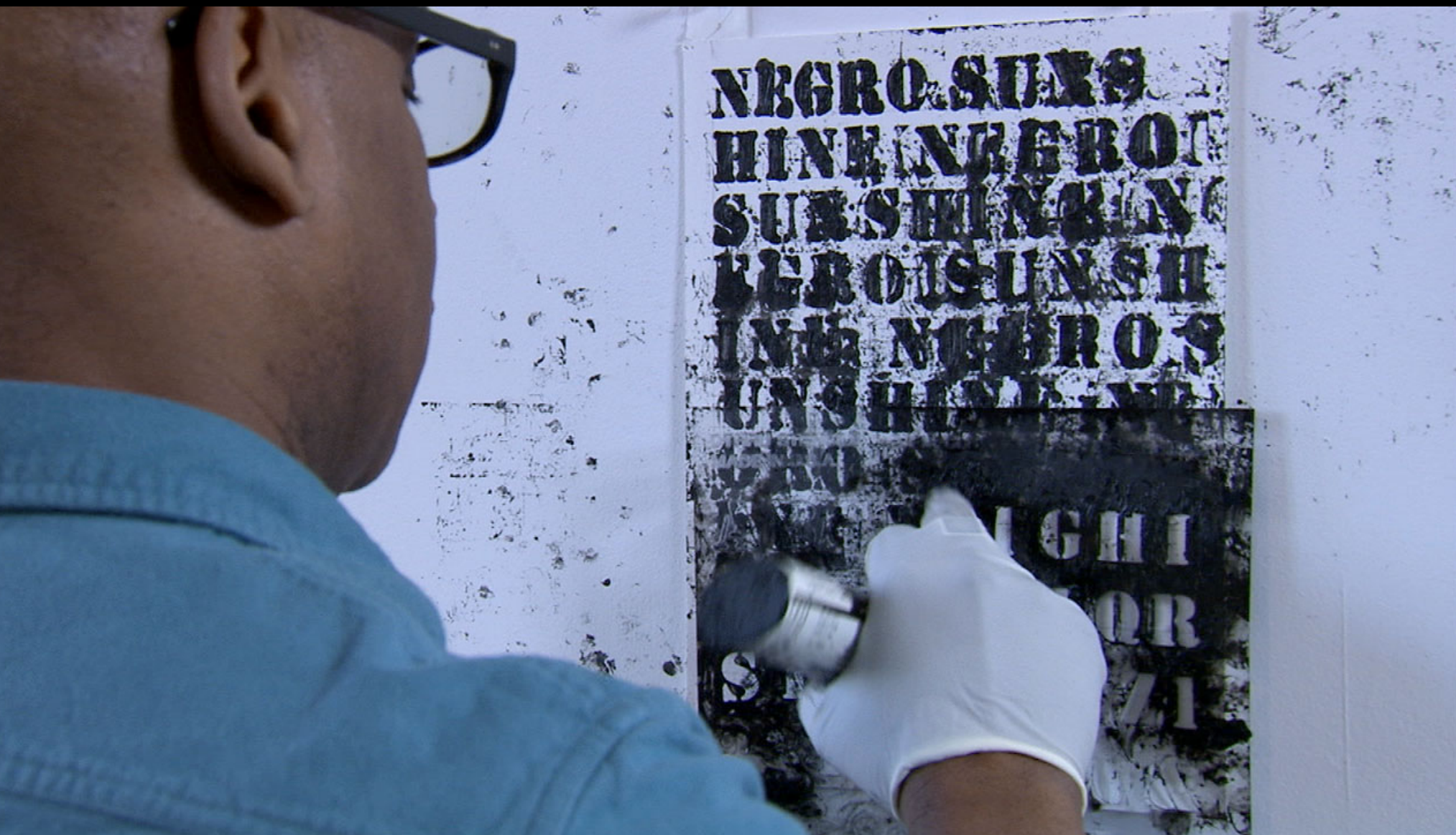
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Sean O'Hagan

Sun 21 Feb 2021 13:00 CET

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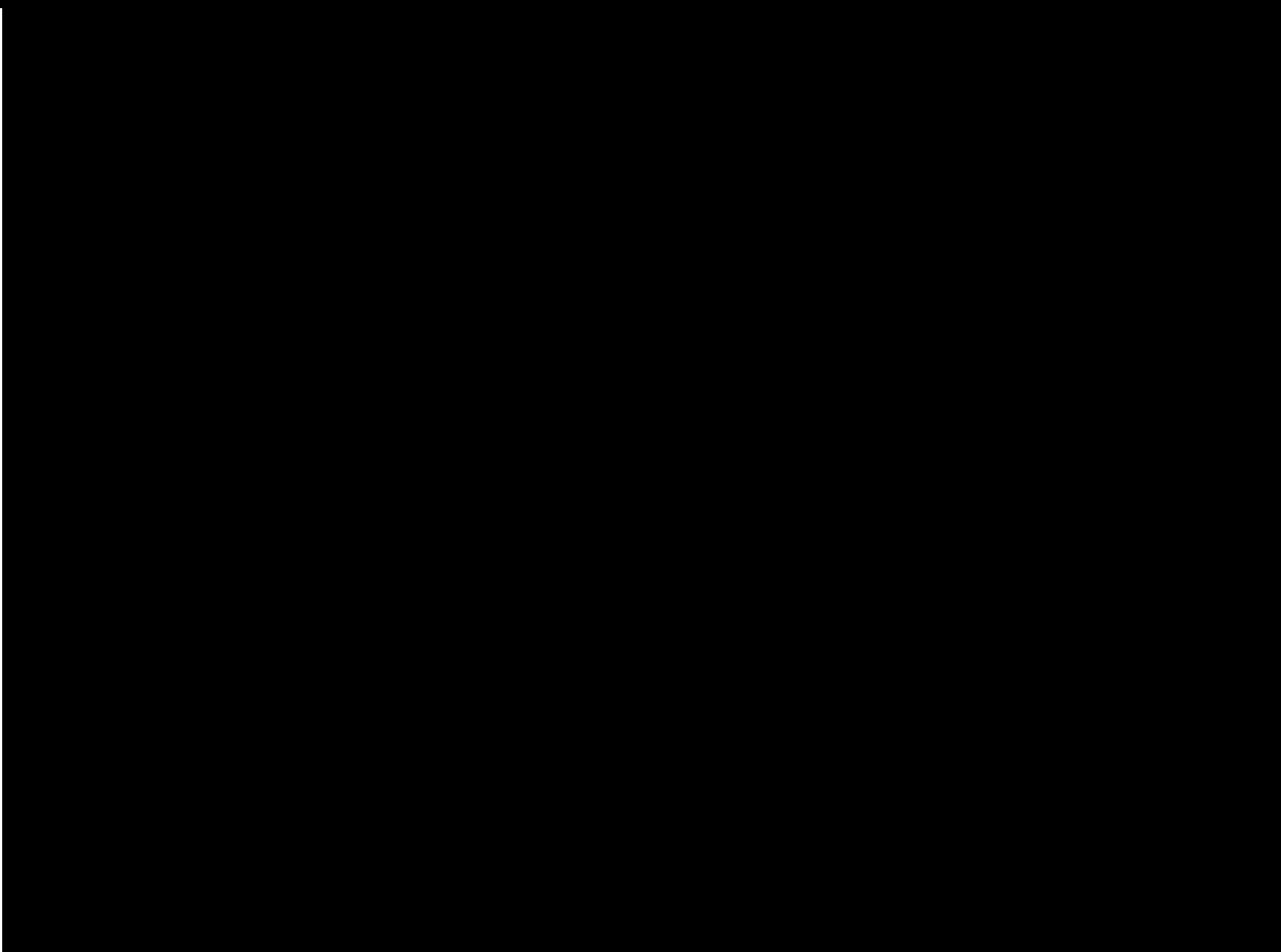




Glenn Ligon & Trenton Doyle Hancock



On Instagram, an impassioned Mark Godfrey, Tate Modern’s curator of the exhibition, posted his thoughts on the cancellation. Among other things, he pointed out that, contrary to what was implied by the directors, he and his fellow curators had “re-addressed how we would present the work featuring the Klan imagery in a manner sensitive to these times”. He went on to describe the tone of the directors’ statement as “extremely patronising to viewers, who are assumed not to be able to appreciate the nuance and politics of Guston’s work”. Soon afterwards, news leaked out that Godfrey had been suspended by the Tate.



The Observer
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Philip Guston's daughter on his Klan paintings: 'They're about white culpability - including his own'



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Tate Senior Curator Reportedly Suspended
for Comments on Guston Show
Controversy



BY ALEX GREENBERGER

October 28, 2020 10:34am

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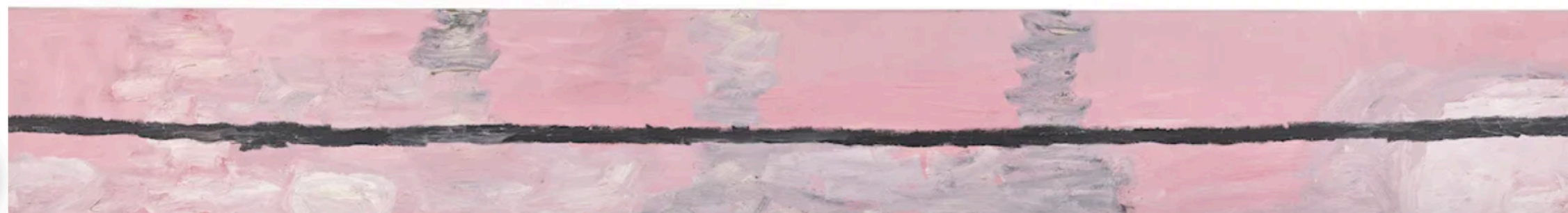
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Museum Directors Explain Controversial Decision to Delay Philip Guston Show



BY **ALEX GREENBERGER**

October 5, 2020 2:35pm



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As the controversy spiralled into the mainstream, the *Times* published a scathing column by **David Aaronovitch** under the headline “**The Tate is guilty of cowardly self-censorship**”. This prompted a response from Maria Balshaw, director of the Tate, and Francis Morris, director of Tate Modern, in which they rebutted Aaronovitch’s accusation, but more or less admitted that the decision had been made by the American museums and they had had no real choice but to go along with it. They made clear, however, that they fully supported the decision. It had been taken, they explained, “**in response to the volatile climate in the US over race equality and representation**” at “**a time when ‘ownership’ of representation has never been more contested**”.



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BY **ALEX GREENBERGER**

September 30, 2020 10:02am



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