



Photograph by Kwame Brathwaite

In the nineteen-sixties, the age of Ann-Margret and Jean Shrimpton, the photographer and activist Kwame Brathwaite co-founded a group called the Grandassa Models. (“Grandassa” is taken from the term “Grandassaland,” which the black nationalist Carlos Cooks had used to refer to Africa.) “We said, ‘We’ve got to do something to make the women feel proud of their hair, proud of their blackness,’” Brathwaite recalled. The models’ skin tones ranged from light brown to dark brown, and they had full lips, natural hairstyles, and a variety of body shapes. The above photograph is from a series in which the models wore Afrocentric fashions, their hair untouched by heat tools, against a variety of brightly colored backgrounds. The first monograph dedicated to Brathwaite’s work, titled “Black Is Beautiful” (a phrase that Brathwaite and the Grandassa Models helped popularize) will be released on May 1, 2019.

—Tyler Foggatt