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***Images Available Upon Request**

Cincinnati Art Museum to present evocative solo exhibition *'Kara Walker: Cut to the Quick'* Nov. 5, 2021–Jan. 16, 2022



CINCINNATI— The Cincinnati Art Museum will present *Kara Walker: Cut to the Quick, From the Collections of Jordan D. Schnitzer and His Family Foundation*—an exhibition that asks viewers to look deeper, and not look away—from November 5, 2021 through January 16, 2022.

A leading contemporary artist and MacArthur genius grant recipient, Kara Walker (b. 1969) re-examines archetypes from American history which continue to shape the structures of modern culture, and the mechanisms of power under which these images were produced and consumed. Using an incisive command of form and starkly contrasting shades of black, gray and white, the artist investigates the prevailing legacies of violence, racism, sexism and imperialism that manifest themselves so openly within the daily American experience.

Walker's work spans multiple media including drawing, painting, sculpture, film, printing techniques, and the cut paper silhouettes for which she is best known. Engaging the experience of the nineteenth century panorama, Walker creates narrative arcs that travel from the trans-Atlantic slave trade to the contemporary moment. Her powerful and provocative images interrogate America's historical memory with tropes that are both comfortably familiar and unsettling. These sites of inquiry offer space for contemplation without predetermined resolution.

In Cincinnati, *Cut to the Quick* will be guest curated by Nashville-based poet and writer Ciona Rouse with Cincinnati Art Museum site curator Trudy Gaba. A Community Care Space designed by Kara Pierson, founder of Cincinnati's Lilac & Indigo, accompanies the exhibition.

Rouse co-curated the exhibition for its debut at the Frist Art Museum in Nashville, Tennessee, alongside the Frist's executive director and CEO Dr. Susan H. Edwards. Selections of Rouse's poetry inspired by Walker's artwork will be displayed in the gallery along with QR codes directing guests to audio versions of the poems.

"Entering into Walker's work, we step into a world that appears almost whimsical but that invites us to lean in and notice something far more grotesque, troubling and necessary to wrestle with. As a poet, I see Walker's work much like I read a poem. I find new imagery and make new meaning every time. And each time it calls me into seeing myself more clearly in the midst of the larger American narrative," said Rouse. "Cincinnati has such strong roots related to abolition and freedom. I'm excited to reimagine this exhibition for this city and join Ohio in grappling with the questions Walker presents in her work through this particular collection, which spans most of her career."

Through more than 80 works created between 1994 and 2019 from the collections of Jordan D. Schnitzer and the Jordan Schnitzer Family Foundation—premier American collectors of works on paper—*Cut to the Quick* demonstrates both Walker's artistic mastery of medium and the urgency and power of her message.

"As a collector, I know how art can inform, confound, elicit new views, and ultimately enrich our lives. For me, the thought of waking up each day without art would be like waking up without the sun," said Schnitzer. "When you experience Kara Walker's art, you're challenged not only to interpret the artist's intent, but your own response. The issues and images in this exhibition are unfortunately timeless. Race and gender inequalities have impacted our lives since the beginning of our existence. Kara Walker's art guides us through our own beliefs and values. I hope everyone who sees this exhibition of Kara Walker's prints and multiples is as inspired and moved as I am."

cincinnati art museum

Cut to the Quick includes several of the artist's most renowned series, including *The Emancipation Approximation* (1999–2000), *Testimony* (2005), *Harper's Pictorial History of the Civil War (Annotated)* (2005), *An Unpeopled Land in Uncharted Waters* (2010), and *Porgy & Bess* (2013). The most recent work in the exhibition is a small-scale bronze model of *Fons Americanus*, the allegorical monument installed in Tate Modern's Turbine Hall in 2019.

In the gallery the series take on an immersive experience, conveying to the viewer a sense of being part of the scenes before them, implicated by presence, both participant and observer. Walker's work engages the viewer in a disruptive awareness, boldly colliding the reality of history with the artificiality of fictions.

Integral to Walker's artistic process is her extensive research in history, literature, art history, and popular culture. Her signature room-sized installations of silhouettes in tableaux are heavily influenced by forms of storytelling from mythology to fantasy, and were inspired by her study of colonial portraiture, animated films, and the popular nineteenth-century craft of cut-paper silhouette portraiture.

"The silhouette lends itself to avoidance of the subject, to not being able to look at it directly," Walker has said of her signature style. "Yet there it is the whole time, staring you in the face."

The Cincinnati Art Museum has hosted one previous solo exhibition of Walker's work. In 2010 *Kara Walker: Harper's Pictorial History of the Civil War (Annotated)* presented her series of prints of the same name in its entirety. The series is part of the museum's permanent collection, and pieces from it appeared in the 2016 presentation of *30 Americans* as well as the 2019–2020 special exhibition *Women Breaking Boundaries*.

"Walker's bravery leaps out at me when I walk through this exhibition," said Rouse. She's willing to tackle difficult questions, dig into our mythologies and confront issues our nation so often goes through cycles of trying to sweep back under the rug. And she does it exquisitely in various media. This exhibition shows her range and bravery and, perhaps, invites viewers to step into our own versions of brave in response."

The museum asks that visitors please note this exhibition contains mature content, including depictions of physical and sexual trauma. A Community Care Space, with resources for reflection mindfulness and rest, is incorporated into the exhibition space.

Tickets are \$12 for general admission, with discounted rates for students, children and seniors. Admission is free for members. Photography is allowed with no flash. On social media, use #CAMWalker.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a variety of programming for all ages; details to be announced closer to the exhibition dates.

About the Cincinnati Art Museum

The Cincinnati Art Museum is supported by the generosity of individuals and businesses that give annually to [ArtsWave](#). The Ohio Arts Council helps fund the Cincinnati Art Museum to encourage economic growth, educational excellence and cultural enrichment for all Ohioans. The Cincinnati Art Museum gratefully acknowledges support from the City of Cincinnati, as well as our members.

Free general admission to the Cincinnati Art Museum is made possible by a gift from The Rosenthal Family Foundation. Special exhibition pricing may vary. Parking at the Cincinnati Art Museum is free. Visit cincinnatiartmuseum.org for more information.

Image credit: Kara Walker (American (b. 1969)), *False Face*, edition 1/10, 2017, bronze, 13 x 18 1/4 x 1 1/4 in., Collection of Jordan D. Schnitzer, 2017.488, © Kara Walker

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