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## **KARA WALKER'S FIRST AMERICAN MUSEUM SURVEY ARRIVES AT THE HAMMER MUSEUM SPRING 2008**

***Kara Walker: My Complement, My Enemy, My Oppressor, My Love*  
on view in Los Angeles March 2 through June 8, 2008**



Kara Walker. *A Work on Progress*, 1998. Cut paper on wall. 69 x 80 in. (175.3 x 203.2 cm). Collection of Judie and Howard Ganek.

Los Angeles, CA *Kara Walker: My Complement, My Enemy, My Oppressor, My Love* is the first comprehensive presentation of this remarkable African American artist's career. The Hammer is the only West Coast venue for the show, which originated at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis and has traveled to the Musée d'Art moderne de

la Ville de Paris and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. It has been organized by Walker Art Center's Deputy Director and Chief Curator, Philippe Vergne, and Yasmil Raymond, Assistant Curator, in close collaboration with the artist, and arrives at the Hammer Museum on March 2, where it will remain on view through June 8, 2008.

Over the past decade, Kara Walker has risen to international prominence for visually stunning works that challenge conventional narratives of American history and the antebellum South, and is among the most provocative and prominent American artists of her generation. With biting humor, the artist comments on race, slavery and liberation, sexual attraction and exploitation, discrimination, and modernity. The lush sensuality of her work haunts the viewer as it exposes the unofficial and subjugated histories of race and slavery in America.

This is a particularly meaningful exhibition for the Hammer Museum as Kara Walker was in 1999 the first artist to be featured in the Hammer Projects series. Her breakthrough came in 1994 at The Drawing Center in New York where Ann Philbin was previously Director, and Gary Garrels, the Hammer's Chief Curator and Deputy Director of Exhibitions and Public Programs also

organized Kara's first museum show at SFMOMA in 1997. He is overseeing the installation of this exhibition at the Hammer.

The exhibition features works ranging from the artist's signature cut black-paper silhouettes and room-size tableaux, to intimate works on paper and her acclaimed recent film animations to narrate her tales of romance, sadism, oppression, and liberation. Walker's sophisticated command of shading and line evoke the tradition of the cartoon as a preparatory study, while her silhouettes draw from the 19<sup>th</sup> century cyclorama, large cylindrical paintings without a beginning or an end. Her stunning drawings and silhouettes reflect a profound agility and attention to detail, as she combines forms in complex counterpoints of positive and negative space. Walker's ability to fuse her technical and formal style with a corporeal aesthetic creates characters and narrative vignettes that are beautiful and tender, yet often grotesque and repugnant as well.

Walker's scenarios put an end to conventional readings of a cohesive national American history and expose the collective, and ongoing, psychological injury caused by the tragic legacy of slavery. Her work leads viewers through an aesthetic experience that evokes a critical understanding of the past and proposes an examination of contemporary racial and gender stereotypes. Using the genteel 18th-century art of cut-paper silhouettes, Walker's compositions play off stereotypes and portray, often grotesquely, life on the plantation, where masters and slaves engage in a profoundly unsettling historical struggle. She has said, "The black subject in the present tense is the container for specific pathologies from the past and it is continuously growing and feeding off those maladies."

Organized deliberately as a narrative, the exhibition articulates the parallel shifts in Kara Walker's visual language and subject matter: from a critical analysis of the history of slavery as a microcosm of American history through the structure of romantic literature and Hollywood film to a revised history of Western modernity and its relationship to the notion of "Primitivism."

## About the Artist

Born in 1969 in Stockton, California, Kara Walker received her BFA from the Atlanta College of Art in 1991 and her MFA from Rhode Island School of Design in 1994. Since that time, she has created more than 30 room-size installations and hundreds of drawings and watercolors, and has been the subject of more than 40 solo exhibitions. She is the recipient of numerous grants and fellowships, including the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Achievement Award (1997) and, most recently, the Deutsche Bank Prize (2004) and the Larry Aldrich Award (2005). She was the United States representative for the 25th International São Paulo Biennial in Brazil (2002). She currently lives in New York, where she is associate professor of visual arts at Columbia University, New York.

## Catalogue

To accompany the exhibition, the Walker Art Center has published a 418-page illustrated catalogue containing critical essays by scholars and cultural critics on the myriad social, racial, and gender issues present in Kara Walker's work by exhibition curator Philippe Vergne; cultural and literary historian Sander L. Gilman; art historian and critic Thomas McEvilley; art historian Robert Storr; and poet and novelist Kevin Young. The publication features more than 150 four-color images of the artist's work, a complete exhibition history and bibliography as well as an illustrated lexicon of the recurring themes and motifs in the artist's most influential installations by Yasmil Raymond. Kara Walker has contributed a 36-page visual essay to the catalogue, which is distributed by D.A.P./Distributed Art Publishers, Inc.

***Kara Walker: My Complement, My Enemy, My Oppressor, My Love*** was organized by the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis. It is made possible by generous support from the Henry Luce Foundation, the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc., the Lannan Foundation, the Peter Norton Family Foundation, Linda and Lawrence Perlman, and Marge and Irv Weiser. Additional support is provided by Jean-Pierre and Rachel Lehmann.

Major support for the Hammer Museum's presentation is provided by The Broad Art Foundation and The Joy and Jerry Monkarsh Family Foundation.

It is also made possible through the generosity of the Lannan Foundation, Susan and Larry Marx, Harvey S. Shipley Miller, George Freeman, and The Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation. Public programs for the exhibition are supported by Catherine Benkaim and Barbara Timmer.

## ABOUT THE HAMMER MUSEUM

The Hammer Museum, a public arts unit of the University of California, Los Angeles, is dedicated to exploring the diversity of artistic expression through the ages. Its collections, exhibitions, and programs span the classic to the cutting-edge in art, architecture, and design, recognizing that artists play a crucial role in all aspects of culture and society.

Founded by Dr. Armand Hammer in 1990, the museum houses the Armand Hammer Collection of Old Master, Impressionist, and Post-Impressionist paintings and the Armand Hammer Daumier and Contemporaries Collection. Associated UCLA collections include the Grunwald Center for the Graphic Arts, comprising more than 45,000 prints, drawings, photographs, and artists' books from the Renaissance to the present; and the Franklin D. Murphy Sculpture Garden on the UCLA campus. The Hammer's newest collection, the Hammer Contemporary Collection, is led by works on paper, particularly drawings and photographs from 1960 to the present.

The Hammer presents major single-artist and thematic exhibitions of historical and contemporary art. It also presents approximately ten Hammer Projects exhibitions each year, providing international and local artists with a laboratory-like environment to create new work or to present existing work in a new context.

As a cultural center, the Hammer offers a diverse range of free public programs throughout the year, including lectures, readings, symposia, film screenings, and music performances. The Hammer's Billy Wilder Theater houses these widely acclaimed public programs and is the new home of the UCLA Film & Television Archive's renowned cinematheque.

## HAMMER MUSEUM INFORMATION

For current program and exhibition information call **310-443-7000** or visit [www.hammer.ucla.edu](http://www.hammer.ucla.edu).

**Hours:** Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday, 11am – 7pm; Thursday, 11am – 9 pm; Sunday, 11am – 5 pm; closed Mondays, July 4, Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day.

**Admission:** \$5 for adults; \$3 for seniors (65+) and UCLA Alumni Association members; free for Museum members, students with identification, UCLA faculty/staff and visitors 17 and under. The Museum is free for everyone on Thursdays.

**Location/Parking:** The Hammer is located at 10899 Wilshire Boulevard, at Westwood Boulevard. Parking is available under the Museum. Rate is \$3 for three hours with Museum validation.

**Hammer Museum Tours:** For group tour reservations and information, call 310-443-7047 or visit [www.hammer.ucla.edu](http://www.hammer.ucla.edu)