

SIKKEMA JENKINS&CO.

KARA WALKER

Drawings

March 5 – April 4, 2020 / September 8 – 30, 2020

Sikkema Jenkins & Co. is pleased to present a solo exhibition of works on paper by Kara Walker, featuring selections from the artist's personal archive alongside more recent drawings. The show previews a selection of works that will be included in Walker's first major exhibition in Switzerland at the Kunstmuseum Basel opening in May 2020. The museum exhibition will travel to HEART - Herning Museum of Contemporary Art in Herning, Denmark and the De Pont Museum of Contemporary Art in Tillburg, The Netherlands.

Among the most acclaimed artists working in the United States, Walker utilizes a diverse range of artistic practices to explore issues of race, gender, sexuality, and violence. Although she's best known for her cut paper silhouette wall installations and monumental sculptural works, drawing remains the core of Walker's artistic practice. Previously kept within her private archive, these works on paper reveal the scope of Walker's process, from sketches, studies, and collages, to texts and "dream journals." Materials such as watercolor, graphite, and ink give the drawings a sense of spontaneity and immediacy. To view these works on paper is to realize the intimacy and intensity of Walker's vision in creating her subjects, speaking back to history and thus simultaneously reforming it within the present. The figures within Walker's drawings insist upon themselves as the protagonists of a new narrative, revealed to us through bodies and words and unspeakable acts.

In the 38 drawings of *The Gross Clinician: Pater Gravidam* (2018), a centerpiece of the exhibition, history is all-consuming; the title refers to Thomas Eakins 1875 painting, *The Gross Clinic*, which depicts the public operation on a woman by Dr. Samuel Gross. Swathes of graphite, sumi ink, and gouache flesh out scenes of bodily and psychological violence. The context within each drawing is not always clear; some figures are suspended against blank backgrounds, or placed against ruinous landscapes, barren fields and shadowed mountains. While some drawings explicitly depict acts of medical brutality, reflecting the series' namesake, others invoke a multitude of traumas and symbols, including colonial-era "Yankees," the snake in the Garden of Eden, palm trees, and police in full riot gear. *The Gross Clinician: Pater Gravidam* finds its genesis within Walker's new mythology; chaotic, unholy, and unending.

Born in Stockton, California in 1969, Kara Walker was raised in Atlanta, Georgia from the age of 13. She studied at the Atlanta College of Art (BFA, 1991) and the Rhode Island School of Design (MFA, 1994). She is the recipient of many awards, notably the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Achievement Award in 1997 and the United States Artists, Eileen Harris Norton Fellowship in 2008. Walker is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters (elected 2012) and American Philosophical Society (elected 2018), and was named an Honorary Royal Academician by the Royal Academy of Arts, London in 2019. She lives and works in New York.

Walker's work has been acquired by prominent museums and public collections throughout the United States and Europe, including the Kunstmuseum Basel's Kupferstichkabinett (Department of Prints and Drawings); the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Tate Gallery, London; the Museo Nazionale delle Arti del XXI secolo (MAXXI), Rome; and the Deutsche Bank Collection, Frankfurt.

Walker was selected by the Tate Modern for the 2019 Hyundai Commission. She responded with a large-scale public sculpture in the form of a four-tiered fountain entitled *Fons Americanus*. Directly alluding to the Victoria Memorial at Buckingham Palace, Walker's sculpture stands as a "counter-memorial," a playful yet incisive subversion of such monuments' original public function within the context of European imperialist projects. Surrounded by two pools of water as a disaster at sea, the work represents a counter-narrative to the Western pride of empire-building, a mythologized origin story built upon the violent and tragic foundations of our collective history. *Fons Americanus* will be on view at the Tate Modern Turbine Hall through April 5.

UPCOMING EXHIBITIONS:

MERLIN JAMES

APR. 9 – APR. 4

UPCOMING ART FAIRS:

ADAA ART SHOW

FEB. 27 – MAR. 1

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OPEN TUESDAY – SATURDAY 10 TO 6