

# DE PONT MUSEUM

## KARA WALKER - MAJOR RETROSPECTIVE OF DRAWINGS AND FILMS AT DE PONT MUSEUM (NL)

### *A Black Hole is Everything a Star Longs to Be*

*Walker sets out art as a site for confrontation and necessary conversations. – Art Review*

De Pont Museum proudly announces a major exhibition of work by American artist Kara Walker: *A Black Hole is Everything a Star Longs to Be*.



*Imposter Syndrome, 2020, Glenstone Museum, Potomac, Maryland*

For the first time in thirty years, she will be showing her private archives, comprising over 650 drawings, sketches, collages, clippings and textual works. These will be displayed in a non chronological manner in the generous spaces of De Pont, a former wool-spinning mill. The various series of drawings will be alternated with some of Walker's animations and stop-motion films, which seamlessly complement her works on paper. Among these the stop-motion film *Prince McVeigh and the Turner Blasphemies* (2021), which was recently added to the museum's collection. It's showing at De Pont marks its European première.

"Drawing transforms a blank page into a site of reflection," says Walker. Her exhibition makes this statement clear at a glance. With the broad selection of drawings, including monumental works such as a series of portraits of Barack Obama, *A Black Hole is Everything a Star Longs to Be* embodies the entire spectrum of her artistic practice, imbuing the exhibition with an unrestrained portrait of her working methods and thought processes.



*The Right Side* (left) and *The Wrong Side* from the series *The Gross Clinician Presents: Pater Gravidam*, 2018, Kunstmuseum Basel, Kupferstichkabinett, acquisition 2019.

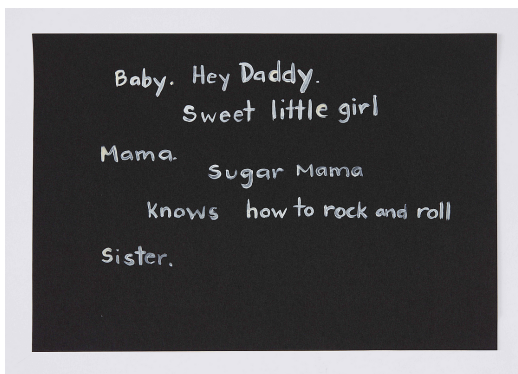
Walker gained recognition in the early 1990s with her panoramas of black cut-paper silhouettes on white backgrounds, in which she confronted the viewer in a fantastical but also unsettling way with issues that often remained unvoiced: the history of enslavement, relations between Black and white people, sexual inequality, and racism. Animations followed, and later also large sculptural installations. The thirteen-meter-high fountain *Fons Americanus*, which was shown in the Turbine Hall of London's Tate Modern in 2019, is a remarkable example.



top: *Untitled*, 1997–1999, collection of Charlotte and Herbert S. Wagner III

left: *Barack Obama as Othello "The Moor" With the Severed Head of Iago in a New and Revised Ending* by Kara E. Walker, 2019, The Joyner/Giuffrida Collection

By allowing access to this personal archive, Walker now offers a glimpse of the creative process that precedes her diverse oeuvre. In doing so, she reveals more than just various sources; the visitor also gets the sense of looking over the artist's shoulder as she works. Unlike her stylized silhouettes and meticulously staged installations, her drawings stand out due to their directness and the personal, often diary-like character. Walker responds quickly, impulsively, and at times subversively to sociopolitical developments – MeToo, George Floyd, populism – and links these developments to the underlying history. It is reflective of her desire to gain insight into the consequences that the transatlantic slave trade has had for our age and for her own identity: her position as a woman, a Black woman, and a Black female artist.



*Trolls*, 2012, courtesy of the artist and Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York

Yet her overwhelming variety of techniques and urge to experiment also signify the joy of creating, which itself generates an infectious energy. With the poetic and ambiguous title *A Black Hole is Everything a Star Longs to Be*, taken from a work produced in 2012, Walker argues for the autonomy of the artist and resists submission to patriarchy, the art market, and the history of art as a whole.

Moreover, the spacetime phenomenon known as a black hole represents the limits of knowledge and science. Yet the "Black Hole" can also be conceived as a place where everything converges and from which nothing escapes. As is the case with archives.

The exhibition has been organized by Kunstmuseum Basel, in collaboration with Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt and De Pont Museum in Tilburg.

## RECENT ACQUISITION

### *Prince McVeigh and the Turner Blasphemies*, 2021



*Prince McVeigh and the Turner Blasphemies*, 2021, video still, collection De Pont Museum, Tilburg

De Pont acquired Walker's stop-motion film *Prince McVeigh and the Turner Blasphemies* (2021) in November 2021. Two years ago, two other animation films by the artist had already been added to the museum's collection: *...calling to me from the angry surface of some grey and threatening sea...* (2007) and *National Archives Microfilm M999 Roll 34: Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands: Six Miles from Springfield on the Franklin Road* (2009).

*Prince McVeigh and the Turner Blasphemies* can be considered a response to social developments in the US in recent decades, wherein right-wing extremist views have culminated in acts of violence such as the 1995 bombing in Oklahoma City, carried out by Timothy McVeigh, the murder of James Byrd Jr. in 1998, and the storming of the Capitol on January 6, 2021. The film is a reaction to the Trump era, to radical nationalism, and to conceptions of progress and justice in the United States.

The title refers to the 1926 feature film *The Adventures of Prince Achmed*, by the German director and silhouette-animation pioneer Lotte Reiniger, and to *The Turner Diaries*, a dystopian novel by William Luther Pierce, published in 1978 under the pseudonym Andrew Macdonald. In this book, the author describes a race war and the eventual annihilation of all non-white peoples throughout the entire world. *The Turner Diaries* is regarded as one of the most influential texts within today's far-right movements and was cited by McVeigh himself as a source of inspiration. The score of Walker's film includes a variety of genres and was composed by the Minneapolis musician and composer Lady Midnight. Its varying orchestrations of marching band, ragtime, soul and rock melodies heighten the driving, cinematic tone of the narrative.



Published in conjunction with the exhibition is the richly illustrated catalogue *Kara Walker – A Black Hole is Everything a Star Longs to Be, Drawings 1992–2020*, with texts by Kara Walker, Anita Haldeman, Maurice Berger and Aria Dean, and an introduction by Josef Helfenstein, Philipp Demandt and Martijn van Nieuwenhuyzen. Published by JRP|Editions, Switzerland, 598 pp. ISBN 978-3-03764-557-4. € 60

All images © Kara Walker, courtesy of Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York; Sprüth Magers, Berlin.

## ABOUT KARA WALKER

Kara Walker lives and works in New York City. She was born in Stockton, California, in 1969, but from the age of thirteen grew up in Atlanta, Georgia. She studied at the Atlanta College of Art (BFA, 1991) and the Rhode Island School of Design (MFA, 1994). Walker has received many awards, including the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Achievement Award in 1997 and the United States Artists Eileen Harris Norton Fellowship in 2008. In 2012 she became a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Her work is represented in countless museums and public collections, among them the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, the Museum of Modern Art, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Tate Modern, London; Museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo (MAXXI), Rome; De Pont Museum, Tilburg; and Deutsche Bank Collection, Frankfurt.



*Kara Walker, 2022, photo Ari Marcopoulos*

In 2007 the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis organized the major retrospective *Kara Walker: My Complement, My Enemy, My Oppressor, My Love*. This exhibition then traveled to the ARC/Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles, and the Museum of Modern Art in Fort Worth, Texas. Recent solo presentations have been organized by the Art Institute of Chicago, Camden Art Centre in London, and the Metropolitan Arts Center (MAC) in Belfast.

In 2014 Walker realized her first large-scale public project, the monumental installation *A Subtlety, or... the Marvelous Sugar Baby* at the vacated Domino Sugar Refinery in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. Commissioned by Creative Time, the project – a massive, sugar-coated sphinxlike sculpture – is a response to the turbulent history of sugar. In 2019 she produced the thirteen-meter-high fountain *Fons Americanus* in the Turbine Hall of Tate Modern.

## KARA WALKER

*A Black Hole is Everything a Star Longs to Be*

February 19, 2022 - July 24, 2022

Visual material for publication can be downloaded on the press page of our website, via [this link](#). For other inquiries, please contact: [h.zeedijk@depont.nl](mailto:h.zeedijk@depont.nl) | 06 58969360

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Check our website for the most up-to-date information!

**De Pont Museum is open:**

Tuesday through Sunday: 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

*Thursdays: 5 to 8 p.m. (free admission), once evening hours can be reinstated*

Wilhelminapark 1, Tilburg

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De Pont Museum, January 19, 2022

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