

KARA WALKER

A BLACK HOLE IS EVERYTHING A STAR LONGS TO BE



EDITOR(S): Anita Haldemann

AUTHOR(S): Anita Haldemann, Aria Dean, Kara Walker, Maurice Berger

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THE DRAWING PRACTICE OF KARA WALKER

A unique opportunity to encompass the celebrated and impacting universe of Kara Walker, this publication gathers together 600+ works on paper realized by the artist between 1992 and 2020—almost all of them being reproduced for the first time, as they come out from her until now zealously-guarded private archive.

Renowned for her recent monumental installations, drawing on paper remains the foundation of Walker's creative practice, offering an air of spontaneity and unfiltered emotion which make this volume an unprecedented insight into Walker's world, influences, and topics. Many of her works on paper are executed with a brush, which lends them a flowing and open dynamic. Small sketches, studies, collages, and meticulously finished large-format works appear side by side with diaristic notes, typewritten reflections on index cards, and dream journals. The intimacy of each individual page contrasts with the stunning range of works. Flipping through this publication, the reader effectively becomes an eyewitness to the genesis of Walker's art, observing her as she enacts her thinking on the paper and adapts, invents, and transforms figures and narratives. Scrutinizing her own identity—as an artist, an African-American, a woman, and a mother—Walker probes both its personal dimension and its social implications in the

context of current events. The latter aspect is prominent in four new sensational portraits that reflect on Barack Obama's presidency and lasting influence.

Born in Stockton (California) in 1969, Kara Walker lives in New York. When she was 13, her family moved to Atlanta. She earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the Atlanta College of Art in 1991 and a Master of Fine Arts from the renowned Rhode Island School of Design in 1994. She rose to prominence in the mid-1990s with wall-sized silhouette installations. One of the most acclaimed artists working in the United States today, Kara Walker adopts traditional artistic approaches to create provocative work executed with extraordinary technical finesse while addressing history, race relations, gender roles, sexuality, and violence. Walker does not propose a conciliatory view of the past; rather, she prods the viewer to question established narratives and entrenched myths. She is unsparing in her analysis of deep-rooted conflicts and persistent social ills. Her most recent solo exhibitions include *Fons Americanus*, Tate Modern, London, 2019–20; and *Harper's Pictorial History of the Civil War (Annotated)*, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, 2017–18.

Designed by Gavillet & Cie, Geneva, the book features more than 700 reproductions as well as three essays by Anita Haldemann, Head of the Kunstmuseum Basel Prints and Drawings Department and show curator, cultural historian Maurice Berger, and art critic and artist Aria Dean. A text by Kara Walker introduces the book.

Published with Kunstmuseum Basel, this publication accompanies Kara Walker touring exhibition *A Black Hole Is Everything a Star Longs to Be* at Kunstmuseum Basel (June–September 2021), Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt (October 2021–January 2022), and De Pont Museum, Tilburg (February–July 2022).