



KARA WALKER

Emancipation Approximation, 1999-2000

From the Screen Print portfolio of 27 prints in cloth box

Gift of Brent Sikkema, 2015.2

Emancipation Approximation



Kara Walker (b. 1969) Born in Stockton, California, Kara Walker moved to Atlanta, Georgia, at the age of 13. Her family settled in Stone Mountain, a previous stronghold of the Ku Klux Klan, just twenty years after the end of segregation. This new location would later inform her artistic practice. Walker knew she wanted to be an artist at age 3 while working with her father, Larry Walker, in his art studio. After earning her BFA at the Atlanta College of Art (1991) and her MFA at the Rhode Island School of Design (1994), she became one of the youngest people to win a prestigious MacArthur Foundation “genius” grant in 1997. She is best known for her silhouetted figures that address issues of race, gender, power, and sexuality both historically and today.

A product of its time

Kara Walker uses many languages of the past to create contemporary artwork. She uses the silhouette, a cut-paper tradition popularized in the US in the mid 18th century, as well as figures that harken back to the Antebellum South. She brings her artwork to the present day through its subject matter of power struggles, racial stereotypes, sex, and violence. In a time in the US that is post-segregation, post-civil rights, and politically correct with a black president, some might think the subject matter isn't relevant. Yet, we are also in a time where police forces all over the US are under scrutiny for racial profiling. The themes of her artwork directly reflect the cultural disparities prevalent in today's world.

Take a closer look

The *Emancipation Approximation* is a suite of 27 serigraphs, or screenprints. The name refers to the Emancipation Proclamation that Abraham Lincoln issued in 1863 declaring “all persons held as slaves” within rebellious states “are, and henceforward shall be free.” By changing the word from proclamation (proclaim—announce officially) to approximation (approximate—close to the actual), Walker suggests a continuing oppression that lingers on even to this day.

Did you know?

Kara Walker was asked by the nonprofit Creative Time to create a public art project in an old Domino Sugar factory in Brooklyn, New York. Walker created a giant, sugar-coated sphinx-like woman, entitled *A Subtlety or the Marvelous Sugar Baby*, in response to the history of sugar, including the refinement and the use of slavery. It also makes references to the objectification of the female body, specifically the African American female body.

On your own

www.pbs.org/art21/artists/kara-walker

www.wsj.com/articles/kara-walkers-thought-provoking-art-1415238221

<http://bombmagazine.org/article/2904/kara-walker>

www.complex.com/style/2014/05/kara-walker-interview

www.cmoa.org/CollectionDetail.aspx?item=1004147&retPrompt=Back+to+Results&retUrl=CollectionSearch.aspx%3Fsrch%3DWalker%252c%2BKara

<http://creativetime.org/projects/karawalker>