

SPRÜTH MAGERS

Kara Walker

Sprüth Magers, Berlin

April 27 – September 8, 2018

Kara Walker's work is well known for the incisive connections it draws between the legacy of slavery in the United States, the evolution of historical narratives and cultural beliefs, and contemporary race relations. Since the 1990s, her silhouetted wall works, drawings, and videos have treaded an uncomfortable line between beauty and violence, attraction and repulsion, and past and present, and she is recognized equally for her skillful draftsmanship and her trenchant storytelling. Sprüth Magers is honored to exhibit Walker's video *Fall From Grace, Miss Pipi's Blue Tale* (2011), a work that highlights the artist's compelling approach to difficult but crucially relevant subject matter.

The seventeen-minute video follows the complicated tale of Miss Pipi, a "Southern Belle" with beautifully coiffed hair who has a sexual encounter with a black man, presumably a slave. When their tryst is uncovered, he is eventually beaten, castrated, and brutally killed by a group of white men. The story invokes a cultural fear with origins in the nineteenth-century American South of black men's sexual power over and violation of white women. As with many of her films, Walker uses the ancient art of shadow puppetry, so that her characters appear as silhouettes against simple, sometimes colorful backgrounds. Their forms are starkly delineated, yet they also remain empty, ready for viewers' imaginations to fill in any missing details that are often sexually and violently explicit.

While Walker's narrative moves forward linearly, it is interspersed with scenes that add a level of surreal abstraction: flowering trees scroll by, a man in a top hat dances to jovial music, a figure who is half-human, half-bicycle wheels across the screen. In addition, the artist offers viewers glimpses of the puppeteers themselves, of which Walker is one. This periodically breaks the illusion of silhouettes, adding touches of humor and jolting us out of the artist's uncanny reverie and into the present moment. The video's soundtrack, moreover, moves from Delta Blues to seventies groove music to ambient noise, adding yet another complex layer to Walker's ambivalent blend of cultural and historical references.

Kara Walker (*1969, Stockton, USA) was raised in Atlanta and lives and works in New York. A retrospective of her work was organized by the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, USA (2007) and traveled to ARC/Musée d'Art Moderne de la ville de Paris; Whitney Museum, New York; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; and Museum of Modern Art in Fort Worth, Texas. Other solo exhibitions include those at the Domino Sugar Refinery, Brooklyn, organized by Creative Time, New York (2014); Camden Arts Centre, London (2013); Art Institute of Chicago (2013); Center for Contemporary Art Ujazdowski Castle, Warsaw, Poland (2011); and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (2006). Walker's *Katastwóf Karavan* was recently presented as part of Prospect.4, New Orleans, and other major group exhibitions include *America Is Hard to See* at the Whitney Museum, New York (2015); *Remembering is Not Enough*, MAXXI, Rome (2013); the 11th Havana Biennial (2012); the 2007 Venice Biennale and the 1997 Whitney Biennial.

The Berlin gallery is concurrently presenting exhibitions by Andro Wekua and Senga Nengudi.

For further information and press enquiries, contact Silvia Baltschun (sb@spruethmagers.com).

Public reception: April 27, 6 – 9pm

Opening hours: Tuesday – Saturday, 11am – 6pm