

Kara walker: artist

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Considered one of the respectable and influential contemporary fine artists in United States in this generation, Kara Walker revives historical events. Her intelligent artworks, which are mostly monochromatic, silhouette in style, suggest tragic sceneries believably happen during antebellum period in the South where sectionalism, racialdiscrimination, sexism and gender inequality occurred.

The Life and Biography of Kara Walker

Kara Walker was born on November 26, 1969 in Stockton, California. She was a member of a blackfamily. Although she admitted that it was her family who convinced her to show and enhance her own artistic intelligence and talent, she remembers that at a very young age of 2½ or 3 years old, she already has the conviction to follow the footsteps of his educated artist father Larry Walker, as she was watching him drawing while sitting on his lap. Kara Walker received her Bachelor of Fine Arts majoring in Painting and Printmaking at Atlanta College of Art in 1991 and her Masters in Fine Arts at Rhode Island School of Design which she also majors in Painting and Printmaking in 1994. Currently, she is a member of the faculty in Columbia University where she works as a professor of an MFA program and teaches visual arts.

Aside from her numerous art exhibitions, Kara Walker received recognitions as part of her achievements which includes her genius award of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation in 1997 wherein the record shows that she is the youngest recipient of the said genius grant at the age of 27; her representation in Sao Paulo Biennial in Brazil in 2002; and this year's

inclusion of her name as one of the 100 Most Influential People in the World - Entertainment and Artists in Times Magazine.

Works and Masterpieces

Unlike other artists who commonly express their feelings, or wander and explore the beauty of life, or transcends the limitation of artistry to go beyond the thin line of natural characterization and fictional imagery, Kara Walker chose to make focus on the heartbreaking and controversial historical folklore of African American people during pre-American Civil War as her only subject matter, which anyone could speculate her work that has unconsciously come in series. She is famous for her signature medium, and that is using caricatures or cut-paper silhouette life-sized images adhesively displayed and installed mostly on an entire white-painted wall creating a panoramic nostalgia of her topic.

Kara Walker put on view to the public her first ever large masterpiece of a 50 feet long and 13 feet high mural which she called *Gone, An Historical Romance of a Civil War as It Occurred Between the Dusky Thighs of One Young Negress and Her Heart*, in 1994. After the first hit, she then experimented to have a narrative vignette and a cyclorama. Her first cyclorama in 1997 entitled *Slavery! Slavery!* was a 12 feet high and 85 feet long in a 360-degree installation.

Also you can read *Rhetorical Devices in Night Walker* by Brent Staples

Enhancement of her medium is technically improved as she explores different techniques and procedures in her artworks to make them more artistic, attractive, and more pleasurable to the eyes of her audience. This

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includes the use of light projections. The Darkytown Rebellion in 2001, which is a 14 feet high and 37 feet long mural using life-sized black paper cut-outs and overhead light projectors of different colors, demonstrates the involvement of the viewers in the mural as their shadows cast with the characters glued in the wall. In her latest experimentation, she challenges herself to animate her silhouette black paper cut-out images and make them move with the help of 16mm film, plywood trees, dimensions variable and sounds. Her success in this stroke is another breakthrough, and the animation project is exhibited in 2004, which she gave the title Testimony: Narrative of a Negress Burdened by Good Intentions.

Although Kara Walker is well-known for having her own style of using silhouette cut-outs, she is also fond of drawing and painting, as this is what she mastered in the University. One of her colorful painting is entitled Allegory. This painting is finished in 1996, using the gouache and watercolor on 5.3 feet high and 4.3 feet wide paper.

Kara Walker has also a series of drawings with a story behind it. The one is called Do You Like Creme in Your Coffee and Chocolate in Your Milk?, a 64 pages of paper using watercolor, colored pencil, and graphite. This is a series of dramatic narration and representation about the emotions and struggles of an artist like her from public views, opinions, and critiques.

Another artwork that she created is the large-scale wall text. The most famous one in 1998 is called Letter from a Black Girl, a collage of typewritten text in 30 index cards, artistically set up as a life-sized mural.

Themes

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While Kara Walker is fascinated using the unconventional medium which transcends in different level of artwork, she inculcates the same subject matter of American Pre-Civil War Antebellum South. Having combining the topics of slavery, violence and sex, drawn from cultural influences that include folklore, cartoons, movies, black memorabilia, Harlequin romance novels and slave narratives, she then come up all those themes in five major categories. These are racial representation; desire, pleasure and shame; historical agreement between fact, fantasy and fiction; descriptive storytelling or narrative; and humor.

R E F E R E N C E S

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