



Kara Walker: My Complement, My Enemy, My Oppressor, My Love

By Philippe Vergne, Sander Gilman, Thomas McEvilley, Robert Storr, Kevin Young, Yasmil Raymond

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Philippe Vergne, Sander Gilman, Thomas McEvilley, Robert Storr, Kevin
Young, Yasmil Raymond

Kara Walker is among the most complex and prolific American artists of her generation. Over the past decade, she has gained international recognition for her room-sized tableaux, which depict historical narratives haunted by sexuality, violence and subjugation and are made using the paradoxically genteel eighteenth-century art of cut-paper silhouettes. Set in the antebellum American South, Walker's compositions play off of stereotypes to portray, often grotesquely, life on the plantation, where masters, mistresses and slave men, women and children enact a subverted version of the past in an attempt to reconfigure their status and representation. Over the years, the artist has used drawing, painting, colored-light projections, writing, shadow puppetry, and, most recently, film animation to narrate her tales of romance, sadism, oppression and liberation. Her scenarios thwart conventional readings of a cohesive national history and expose the collective, and ongoing, psychological injury caused by the tragic legacy of slavery. Deploying an acidic sense of humor, Walker examines the dialectics of pleasure and danger, guilt and fulfillment, desire and fear, race and class. This landmark publication, which is sure to win international design awards, accompanies Walker's first major American museum survey. It features critical essays by Philippe Vergne, Sander L. Gilman, Thomas McEvilley, Robert Storr and Kevin Young, as well as an illustrated lexicon of recurring themes and motifs in the artist's most influential installations by Yasmil Raymond, more than 200 full-color images, an extensive exhibition history and bibliography, and a 36-page insert by the artist.

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- Rank: #1196515 in Books
- Published on: 2007-03-01
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.70" h x 1.20" w x 6.84" l, 2.62 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 418 pages



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Editorial Review

Review

Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 2/17/07-5/13/07

Los Angeles: UCLA Hammer Museum, 2/17/08-5/11/08

New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 11/11/07-2/3/07

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