



MONTCLAIR ART MUSEUM

NEWS RELEASE

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[DOWNLOADABLE IMAGE OF KARA WALKER ARTWORK](#)

Credit: Kara Walker, *Virginia's Lynch Mob*, 1998, cut paper on wall, installation dimensions variable, approximately 120 x 144 inches. Montclair Art Museum.

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**MONTCLAIR ART MUSEUM ANNOUNCES A MAJOR NEW ACQUISITION BY ESTEEMED ARTIST
KARA WALKER**

Centennial Fund Acquisitions Also Include Works by Spencer Finch, Hank Willis Thomas, and Nick Cave

MONTCLAIR, NJ, June 1, 2016—The Montclair Art Museum (MAM) announces the acquisition of a major new work for its collection, Kara Walker's *Virginia's Lynch Mob*, 1998. The purchase was approved by the Museum's Board of Trustees on Wednesday, May 18.

The sale of the work was brokered by Sikkema Jenkins & Co., Ms. Walker's longtime gallery representative, and was made from MAM's Centennial Acquisition Fund. The Museum created the \$1 million Fund in its Centennial year, 2014, with monies restricted to purchasing works of art and sought artworks that would make a significant impact on audiences, raise the Museum's profile in the realm of contemporary art, and complement its historical collections, thus setting the Museum on a rising trajectory at the start of a new century.

MAM Director Lora Urbanelli said: "We are so excited to be adding this major work of art to the collection by one of the most important contemporary artists working today. This mural-sized, complex silhouette makes a powerful statement about America's racial history, one that sadly continues to resonate today. As a museum with a commitment to educational dialogue through works of art, we could not have chosen a more impactful object. Our plan is create an exhibition around this new acquisition for the fall of 2018."

Alexandra Schwartz, curator of contemporary art at MAM, said: "*Virginia's Lynch Mob* would be a landmark acquisition for any museum, but is especially so for MAM. Our contemporary art program was founded only five years ago, but we have been steadily acquiring major works by leading contemporary artists, including Nick Cave, Mark Dion, Spencer Finch, Natalie Frank, Vik Muniz, Hank Willis Thomas, Mickalene Thomas, and Saya Woolfalk."

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Works by Cave, Finch, and Hank Willis Thomas were also purchased through MAM's Centennial Fund. Hank Willis Thomas, Mickalene Thomas, Nick Cave, Kara Walker, and Saya Woolfalk are all prominent African American artists whose presence in the collection contributes to MAM's strengths in this area.

MAM Chief Curator Gail Stavitsky has steadily built up the Museum's historical collection over many years, with special emphasis on African American and women artists. Stavitsky said: "I am so pleased that this major work by Kara Walker will join the previous acquisitions of her prints and truly complement their related themes."

Kara Walker is renowned for her powerful installations, sculptures, works on paper, and videos, which explore African-American history and the legacy of slavery. Born in 1969 in Stockton, California, she grew up mostly near Atlanta, where her father was an artist and professor. She earned a BFA from the Atlanta College of Art and an MFA from the Rhode Island School of Design, graduating in 1994. In 1997, at age 27, she became one of the youngest-ever recipients of the MacArthur Fellowship (or "Genius Prize"). After teaching at Columbia University for many years, she was recently named Tepper Chair in Visual Arts at the Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers University. She has had solo exhibitions at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Walker Art Center; and Tate Liverpool, among many other institutions, and her work is in numerous public collections, including the Museum of Modern Art; Whitney Museum of American Art; Guggenheim Museum; the Tate; The Centre Pompidou; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Menil Collection; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; MAXXI; Baltimore Museum of Art; Hammer Museum; and Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston. In 2014 she was widely praised for her Creative Time installation, *A Subtlety, or the Marvelous Sugar Baby...*, at the former Domino Sugar Factory in Brooklyn.

The works that launched Walker's career were her large-scale wall installations, of which *Virginia's Lynch Mob* is an important example. These mural-like installations consist of silhouette cut-outs, adhered directly to the wall, and imagine scenes from the history of slavery and its legacy of racial and sexual violence against African-Americans. The black-and-white format refers to the 18th-century English and French silhouette tradition, in which aristocratic young women hand cut silhouette portraits of their friends and family. Walker's ironic appropriation of this genteel art form—born of the era of colonialism and slavery—belies the violence and sorrow of the scenes she depicts. In this case, we see a lynch mob forming a parade that progresses along the wall. Pursued by a variety of characters—including a man carrying a noose, black children in despair, a white girl playing with a KKK mask, and an eagle dangling its prey—the victim, Virginia, appears to ascend to the heavens.

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About the Museum

The Montclair Art Museum, a notable, community-based institution with an international reputation, boasts a renowned collection of American and Native American art that uniquely highlights art making in the United States over the last three hundred years. The collection includes more than 12,000 objects: paintings, prints, original works on paper, photographs, and sculpture by American artists from the 18th century to the present, as well as traditional and contemporary Native American art and artifacts representing the cultural developments of peoples from all of the major American Indian regions.

The Vance Wall Art Education Center, launched in 2016, encompasses all the Museum's educational efforts, from the established Yard School of Art to the newly minted MAM Art Truck. MAM programs serve a wide public of all ages and bring artists, performers, and scholars to the Museum on a regular basis. The Yard School of Art offers a multitude of comprehensive courses for children, teens, adults, seniors, and professional artists and has been recognized in the Discover Jersey Arts People's Choice Awards as the Favorite Adult Art Class and Favorite Art Camp two years in a row.

The Montclair Art Museum is located at 3 South Mountain Avenue in Montclair, N.J. Information and directions are available on the Museum website, montclairartmuseum.org, or by calling 973-746-5555. MAM is open Wednesdays through Sundays, Noon – 5 p.m., and on the first Thursday night of the month (October–June), from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. It is closed on Mondays, Tuesdays, and major holidays. Museum admission is \$12 for nonmember adults, \$10 for senior citizens and students with I.D., and free for members and children under 12. Free First Thursday Nights and Free First Fridays are free for everyone. The Store at MAM is open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. and has extended hours until 9 p.m. on Free First Thursday Nights.

All Museum programs are made possible, in part, by the New Jersey State Council on the Arts/Department of State, a Partner Agency of the National Endowment for the Arts, and by funds from the National Endowment for the Arts, Carol and Terry Wall / The Vance Wall Foundation, the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, and Museum members.

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