

A long-time resident of Chicago, Kerry James Marshall is widely regarded as one of the greatest painters of his generation. Strongly influenced by his experiences as a young man, Marshall developed a signature style as an artist, centring on the life and history of the black subject.

His now-substantial body of work offers his perspective on the complexity of the African-American condition, along with its persistent issues of race politics, cultural representation and social emancipation. In an attempt to reconcile the black subject with images of Western ideals, Marshall places both in his paintings, highlighting determinations of black identity that are contextualised by history and the current social-political situation. Also addressing the history of art, Marshall strives to fill what he describes as the 'lack in the image bank' with his work, whilst raising pertinent questions about how the art system sustains itself and the related antagonisms of legitimisation, power and marginalisation.

Yet painting is really only one facet of an exquisitely polymorphous practice that also includes sculpture, photography, installation, collage, video, prints and animated film. It is precisely his aesthetic wealth and visual intelligence that M HKA is seeking to foreground in the exhibition Kerry James Marshall – Painting and Other Stuff – the biggest exhibition of work by Marshall to date, co-produced by a major European museum partnership. Acting as a survey of Marshall's practice, the scope of this project is complimented by the artist's vast personal collection of image cuttings that form a reservoir of references on black representation in art and wider culture. The artist's interest in these images is evidently not just a matter of formal representation or even narrative. For Marshall, the breadth of visual media he uses also has a speculative dimension – image-making becomes a site to ask some of art's most profound, enduring questions.

Painting and Other Stuff will be comprised of a number of informal groupings organised around various themes and motivations that Marshall has considered over his career. They will focus on such ideas as 'addressing art history', 'notions of beauty', 'the image bank', 'commemoration' and 'the everyday'. Many new works are presented, and numerous series are also exhibited together for the first time, for example, his on-going Dailies (1999–2000) comic-strip series – a sort of superhero serialisation based on African mythology – will get its first outing in its entirety. A key selection of Marshall's sculptural works will also be exhibited, including Mementos (1998), a series of giant ink-stamp sculptures along with their related 'black power' slogan text prints. Along with the addition of formative collages, photographs and installations, Painting and Other Stuff opens up Marshall's multifaceted approach to making art, offering us a glimpse into his inner world of ideas and ambitions.

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