

Often provocative and humorous, Kara Walker's work explores the tensions and power plays of racial and gender relations. Walker's work engages with historical narratives and the ways in which these stories have been suppressed, distorted and falsified. This exhibition extends her exploration of the brutalising histories of colonialism and slavery, and the political and psychological consequences that accompany identity formation in contexts of oppression and violence.

Drawing from art historical and literary sources, she creates and deconstructs scenarios that expose biases and prejudices, exploring the power struggles underlying personal and political relationships. Her work proposes alternative mythologies, and new ways of engaging with traumatic historical material. Walker uses historical decorative styles including the silhouette to create complex and sophisticated narratives, emphasising and undermining the ways in which images and narratives can be subject to stereotyping.

For her exhibition at Victoria Miro Mayfair, Walker is showing a selection of preparatory drawings, sketches and models related to the production of Vincenzo Bellini's two-act opera *Norma* she directed and art directed for Teatro La Fenice. This production, staged for six performances between May and June 2015, was a special project commissioned by Okwui Enwezor to coincide with the 56th Venice Biennale. Walker directed the opera and designed the sets and costumes. Her production moved the action from Roman Gaul to an unnamed west or central African colony under European subjugation in the late 19th century. The drawings and other studies show the artist's detailed working process. The selection includes a number of works in pastel and watercolour, and demonstrates Walker's facility with colour as well as line.

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