

Walker, Kara (b. 1969)
Stockton, California

EDUCATION/INFLUENCES

- BFA-Atlanta College of Art; MFA-Rhode Island School of Design; Faculty at Columbia University-NY

- Draws images from pre-Civil War narratives, black stereotypes, traditional practice of silhouettes

BIG IDEAS/THEMES

- Works are controversial; exploring intersection of race, gender, sexuality with iconic, silhouetted figures.

- Black silhouettes; usually almost life-size, sometimes cut black paper on canvas or painted on wall or prints. Obscures specific details-everyone is black, everyone is “other”, nightmarish yet fantastical-cinematic feel.

- Silhouettes are 19th century art practice-”poor man’s portrait”, proper Victorian medium.

KIA WORK-*I’ll be a Monkey’s Uncle*, screenprint, 1996

- From early series. African-American girl-stereotypical pigtails-silhouetted in profile, holding a wrung, dripping cloth. Facing her is squat, hunched, presumably male figure with large head, flat nose, and long monkey tail. Is it a monkey dressed in clothes or an African-American male with a monkey’s tail? Overt reference to “physiognomy”-a 19th century racist belief that connected behavior to the shape of the human head (blacks and Semitic cultures were rated the lowest) and compared physical characteristics of black slaves to monkeys. Title emphasizes message; a phrase that compares person’s stupidity to species lower on the evolutionary chain.

