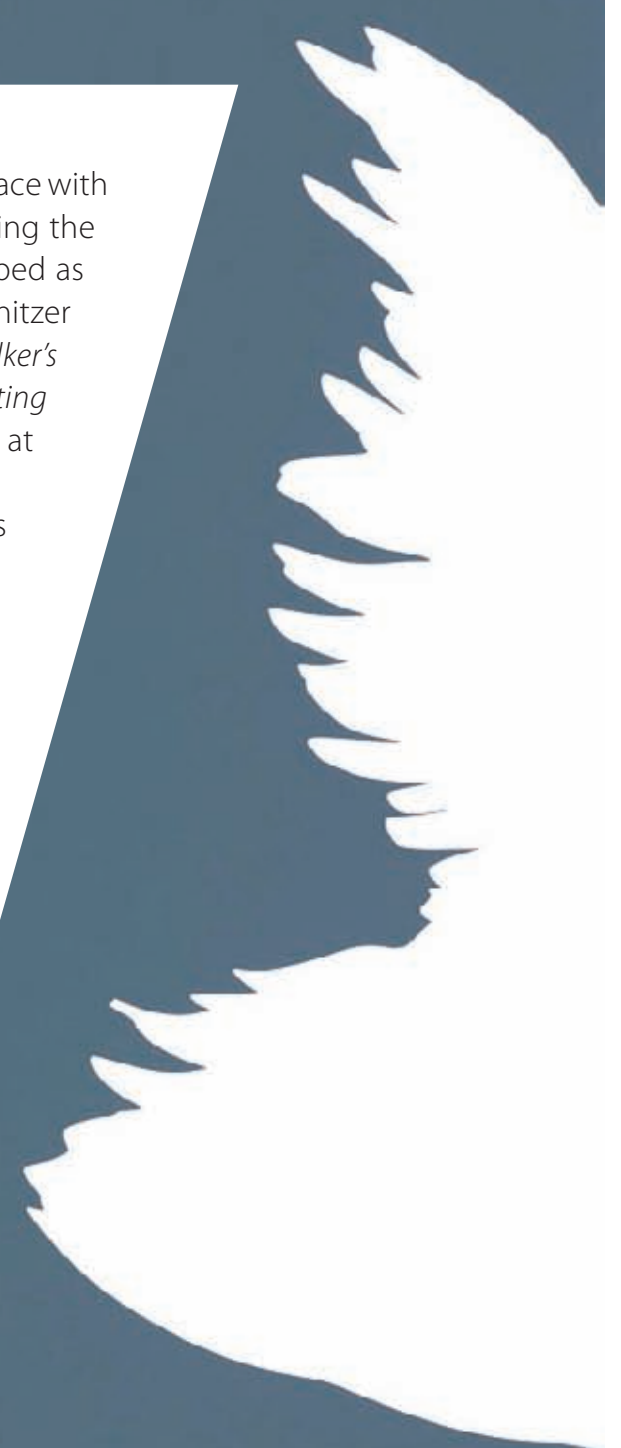


The burden of the history is something to keep in mind when face to face with Kara Walker's elegant, complex and challenging silhouettes depicting the horrors of the antebellum South — images that have been described as an “apocalyptic carnival” — that will be on display for the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art's upcoming exhibit *Emancipating the Past: Kara Walker's Tales of Slavery and Power* opening 6 pm Friday, Jan. 24. *Emancipating the Past* is the first-ever solo exhibit by an African-American artist at the JSMA.

The New York-based artist's blockbuster show, 60 works from the collection of JSMA's namesake Jordan Schnitzer, is important to Eugene for several reasons: On the surface, it's a reminder that contemporary art is alive, well and relevant. And that good contemporary art can change minds and expose populations to differing perspectives in ways that no other medium can. A show like *Emancipating the Past* is also an opportunity for a place like the Willamette Valley to reflect on its own racial history and politics through a national lens; how local history — like that of Eugene's 1951 cross burning targeting an interracial couple — and more recent history — the 2008 bouts of blackface masked as “school spirit” at Oregon State University — as well as the ongoing local celebration of Martin Luther King Jr. Day, fit into the national narrative and legacy of slavery, power and racism.

History is a burden we all share. It's not Black History. It's not Women's History. Or Gay History, or the History of the South. It's *everyone's* history. Welcome to the world of Kara Walker. Our world.



'THE EMANCIPATION APPROXIMATION'