

# News Release

## Hyundai Motor, Tate Unveil Kara Walker's Monumental Fountain for the Hyundai Commission

- “Hyundai Commission: Kara Walker: *Fons Americanus*” opens from Oct. 2 through Apr. 5, 2020 in Tate Modern's Turbine Hall
- The soaring fountain explores the transatlantic slave trade and the interconnected histories of Africa, America, and Europe
- Walker, an artist acclaimed for her provocative and candid investigations of race, sexuality and violence, creates one of the most ambitious Hyundai Commission works to date

**Seoul, 30 September 2019** — Hyundai Motor and Tate Modern today unveil a monumental 13-metre-high fountain created by Kara Walker. Best known for her provocative and candid investigations of race, sexuality and violence through the history of slavery, Walker has now created one of the most ambitious Hyundai Commissions to date. *Fons Americanus* presents an origin story of the African diaspora and poses timely questions about what is remembered and what is forgotten in public monuments. It is the fifth annual Hyundai Commission, a series of site-specific works created for the Turbine Hall by renowned international artists, as part of a unique long-term partnership between Tate and Hyundai Motor.

Standing at the far end of the Turbine Hall, *Fons Americanus* is a soaring fountain that rises from two oval basins filled with water. Sculptural figures occupy these basins and all four sides of the multi-tiered central pedestal, with water spouting from the top figure. Its form is inspired by the Victoria Memorial in front of Buckingham Palace, designed in 1901 and unveiled in 1911 to honour the achievements of Queen Victoria. Rather than a celebration of the British Empire, Walker's work offers a powerful critique, inverting the usual function of memorials and questioning the narratives of power they present. The fountain is an allegory of the Black Atlantic, exploring the interconnected histories of Africa, America and Europe through fact, fiction and fantasy. Using water as a key theme, the artist references the transatlantic slave trade and the ambitions, fates and tragedies of people from these three continents.

The sculptural figures covering the monument are derived from an array of art historical, literary and cultural sources. These include J.M.W. Turner's *Slave Ship* 1840, Winslow Homer's *Gulf Stream* 1899 and Damien Hirst's formaldehyde shark *The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living* 1991. The 19th century slave propaganda image 'The Voyage of the Sable Venus from Angola to the West Indies' is a particular source of inspiration, alongside other images of the Roman goddess Venus standing on a seashell. The figure of Venus stands proudly at the top of

Walker's fountain, recast as a priestess from Afro-Brazilian and Caribbean religions. Her scalloped shell becomes a smaller second sculpture located in front of the Turbine Hall bridge, in which the face of a crying boy emerges from a pool of water, filling the shell with his tears.

The full title of the work is painted on the Turbine Hall wall, written in Walker's own words. Encouraging visitors to confront a history often overlooked in Britain, she presents the artwork as a 'gift ... to the heart of an Empire that redirected the fates of the world'. She has signed the work 'Kara Walker, NTY', or 'Not Titled Yet', in a play on British honours awards such as 'OBE' (Order of the British Empire).

*Hyundai Commission: Kara Walker: Fons Americanus* is curated by Clara Kim, The Daskalopoulos Senior Curator, International Art (Africa, Asia & Middle East), Tate Modern with Priyesh Mistry, Assistant Curator, International Art, Tate Modern and Petra Schmidt, Production Manager, Tate Modern. In partnership with Hyundai Motor. Supported by Sikkema Jenkins & Co. with additional support from Tate Americas Foundation. The work has been created with sustainable non-toxic materials, including recyclable cork, wood and metal, coated in a solvent-free acrylic and cement composite.

In addition to the Hyundai Commission, Hyundai Motor supports the Hyundai Tate Research Centre: Transnational through its partnership with Tate. Hyundai Motor's support for the Centre began in January 2019, and will continue through December 2024. Over the next five years, the Centre's vision is to offer new perspectives on global art histories through research activities, including annual symposia, seminars and workshops at Tate and beyond.

"Nam June Paik," a major exhibition that brings together over 200 career-spanning works of the late visionary Korean artist Nam June Paik (1932-2006), will also be curated from Oct. 17 at Tate Modern. It will be the first exhibition born out of research supported by the Hyundai Tate Research Centre: Transnational.

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### **About Kara Walker**

Kara Walker was born in Stockton, California in 1969 and was raised in Atlanta, Georgia. Her work is represented in major museum collections across the USA and Europe and she has received numerous awards, including the MacArthur Foundation Achievement Award and the Eileen Harris Norton Fellowship. She is also a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, was elected to the American Philosophical Society in 2018 and as of this year, elected an Honorary Royal Academician at The Royal Academy of Arts, London. A major survey exhibition of her work opened at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis in 2007 and travelled to Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, The Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, The Hammer Museum in Los Angeles and the Museum of Modern Art in Fort Worth. Other solo shows of her work have been held at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Art

Institute of Chicago, Camden Arts Centre in London and Metropolitan Arts Center (MAC) in Belfast.

### **About Tate Modern Turbine Hall**

Since Tate Modern opened in 2000, the Turbine Hall has hosted some of the world's most memorable and acclaimed works of contemporary art, reaching an audience of millions each year. The way artists have interpreted this vast industrial space has revolutionized public perceptions of contemporary art in the twenty-first century. The annual Hyundai Commission gives artists an opportunity to create new work for this unique context. The commissions are made possible by the long-term partnership between Hyundai Motor and Tate, confirmed until 2025 as part of the longest initial commitment from a corporate sponsor in Tate's history.

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### **About Hyundai Motor Europe HQ**

Hyundai Motor Europe HQ was formally established in 2000 with its main office in Offenbach, Germany. Hyundai currently sells cars in 41 European countries through 3,000 outlets and in 2018 achieved registrations of 543,292 vehicles in the region – an increase of 3.9 percent compared to 2017, a higher rate than the market average. 2018 was the fourth consecutive year with a record sales result. 75 percent of the vehicles Hyundai sold in the region are models designed, engineered, tested and built in Europe to meet the needs of European customers, served by the company's extensive European infrastructure. This includes two factories in the Czech Republic and Turkey, which have a combined annual capacity of 600,000 units. Hyundai is proud to offer the youngest product line-up in Europe: 90 per cent of the models are less than two years old. Hyundai offers its unique Five Year Unlimited Mileage Warranty package with all new cars sold in the region, providing customers with a five-year warranty with no mileage limit, five years of roadside assistance and five years of vehicle health checks.

More information about Hyundai Motor Europe HQ and its products is available at [www.hyundai.news](http://www.hyundai.news).

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### **Contact**

#### **Florian Buengener**

Deputy General Manager Corporate & Brand PR

[fbuengener@hyundai-europe.com](mailto:fbuengener@hyundai-europe.com)

+49(0)69 271472 – 465

#### **Beatrice Luini**

Corporate & Brand PR Specialist

[bluini@hyundai-europe.com](mailto:bluini@hyundai-europe.com)

+49(0)69 271472 – 466

### **About Hyundai Motor**

Established in 1967, Hyundai Motor Company is committed to becoming a lifetime partner in automobiles and beyond with its range of world-class vehicles and mobility services offered available in more than 200 countries. Employing more than 110,000 employees worldwide, Hyundai sold more than 4.5 million vehicles

globally. Hyundai continues to enhance its product line-up with vehicles that are helping to build solutions for a more sustainable future, such as NEXO – the world's first dedicated hydrogen-powered SUV.

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