

January 12, 2009

SFMOMA REVITALIZES ITS HAAS ATRIUM WITH NEW WORK BY KERRY JAMES MARSHALL

The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) is pleased to present *Art in the Atrium: Kerry James Marshall*. Over the course of two weeks (February 9–23, 2009), renowned artist Kerry James Marshall will work with painters from San Francisco’s celebrated Precita Eyes Mural Arts Center to create two murals for the Haas Atrium, the museum’s primary public space. Kerry James Marshall is the first artist commissioned to create works for this space, and his two murals will be on view until 2010.

Marshall’s rich and varied body of work includes large-scale paintings, installations, and public projects that explore issues of racial identity and black history. “You can’t be born in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1955 and grow up in South Central [Los Angeles] near the Black Panthers headquarters, and not feel like you’ve got some kind of social responsibility,” says Marshall, and it is this call that the artist answers in his work.

The artist received his BFA from the Otis Art Institute, in Los Angeles, was a resident fellow at the Studio Museum, in Harlem, and in 1987 moved to Chicago, where he began teaching at the University of Illinois. Marshall has received fellowships from the MacArthur Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Illinois Council for the Arts. His work has been widely collected by museums throughout the United States and has been featured in major national and international exhibitions, including a presentation at SFMOMA in 1999.

For these new commissioned works, Marshall will be utilizing two large midair surfaces in the museum’s Haas Atrium. The artist’s murals will depict Mount Vernon and Monticello, the respective estates of founding fathers George Washington and Thomas Jefferson. Although these cherished sites have been depicted countless times before, Marshall’s paintings will be quite different—playfully incorporating the slaves who supported plantation life. At first glance, a number of optical tricks conceal them from view, but visitors who engage with the works will discover the otherwise invisible figures so often omitted from representations of American history.

The Precita Eyes Mural Center—a San Francisco community-based arts organization that has played an integral role in the city’s cultural heritage and in arts education—will aid in the execution of these



Kerry James Marshall; *Visible Means of Support: Mount Vernon*; 2009; acrylic latex on canvas; courtesy of the artist; © Kerry James Marshall.

works, and the finished murals will be unveiled on February 26, 2009. This date comes roughly one month after the inauguration of the United States' first multiracial president—an opportune moment to reconsider issues of history, race, and representation.

The *Art in the Atrium* program aims to expand upon the museum's current repertoire by regularly inviting artists to rework the public Haas Atrium space. No admission fee is required to visit the Haas Atrium, and thus the works exhibited there can be enjoyed by anyone who walks in. Educational materials and interactive features will supplement the various projects, both in the atrium and online.

Inspired by Marshall's atrium commission, SFMOMA's Education Department has planned an extensive youth project in association with the Precita Eyes Mural Center. In response to prevalent themes in Marshall's work, 15 teenagers from three Oakland-based high schools will design and produce their own mural; in addition, they will develop and curate their own exhibition. This innovative program offers teens the chance to explore their own identities as well as their relationships to the larger community and the world at large. Students will meet both at SFMOMA and at the site of the mural (in Oakland's DeFremery Park) to develop their artistic skills and to talk with Marshall. The mural's completion will be celebrated in late May with a gathering of local artists and students at DeFremery Park, and the related exhibition will be installed in SFMOMA's Koret Visitor Education Center around the same time.

Art in the Atrium: Kerry James Marshall is presented to the public thanks to the generosity of the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund.

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Museum hours: Open daily (except Wednesdays): 11 a.m. to 5:45 p.m.; open late Thursdays, until 8:45 p.m. Summer hours (Memorial Day to Labor Day): Open at 10 a.m. Closed Wednesdays and the following public holidays: New Year's Day, Fourth of July, Thanksgiving, Christmas. The Museum is open the Wednesday between Christmas and New Year's Day.

Koret Visitor Education Center: Open daily (except Wednesdays): 11 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.; open late Thursdays, until 8:30 p.m. Summer hours: Open at 10 a.m.

Admission prices: Adults \$12.50; seniors \$8; students \$7. SFMOMA members and children 12 and under are admitted free. Thursday evenings after 6 p.m. admission is half-price. The first Tuesday of each month admission is free.

SFMOMA is easily accessible by Muni, BART, Golden Gate Transit, SamTrans, and Caltrain. Hourly, daily, and monthly parking is available at the SFMOMA Garage at 147 Minna Street. For parking information, call 415.348.0971.

Visit our Web site at www.sfmoma.org or call 415.357.4000 for more information.

The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art is supported by a broad array of contributors who are committed to helping advance its mission as a dynamic center for modern and contemporary art. Major annual support is provided by the Koret Foundation Funds, Evelyn and Walter Haas Jr. Fund, and Grants for the Arts/San Francisco Hotel Tax Fund. KidstART free admission for children 12 and under is made possible by Charles Schwab & Co. Inc. Thursday evening half-price admission is sponsored by Banana Republic.

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