

mes Marshall, School of Beauty, School of Culture, 2012
ames Marshall - Courtesy de l'artiste et Jack Shainman Gallery, New York - Photo : M. Sean Pathasema

MUSÉE D'ART MODERNE DE PARIS

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MUSÉE D'ART MODERNE DE PARIS

PRESS RELEASE

Kerry James Marshall
The Histories

September 18, 2026 - January 24, 2027



The Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris is presenting the first exhibition in France devoted to the American artist Kerry James Marshall (born in 1955 in Birmingham, Alabama, United States), from September 18, 2026 to January 24, 2027.

Originated by the Royal Academy of Arts in London in collaboration with the Kunsthaus in Zurich, the exhibition *Kerry James Marshall: The Histories* features seventy works, including eight new paintings made especially for the exhibition.

Considered one of the most influential contemporary painters, Kerry James Marshall is known for his large-scale compositions that centre Black people, frequently elevating the everyday to the epic. By inserting Black figures into art historical archetypes, the artist invites the viewer to witness the undeniable power of presence. Kerry James Marshall addresses themes including the Middle Passage and the legacies of the Civil Rights and Black Power movements, without directly depicting violence or alienation. His work draws inspiration from both the Western art historical canon and other pop cultural forms of visual expression, especially nineteenth-century French painting, contemporary culture, Afro-futurism, comic books, and science fiction.

Organized with the artist's support, the exhibition covers over four decades of his career. It brings together many bodies of his work, with primarily paintings, as well as examples of the artist's prints, drawings and sculpture, from museums and private collections across North America and Europe.

In paying tribute to the work of Kerry James Marshall, the Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris is continuing its series of pioneering monographic exhibitions in France devoted to Black American artists, notably Kara Walker (2007) and Jean-Michel Basquiat (2010).

Director
Fabrice Hergott

Curator
Mark Godfrey, independant curator
assisted by Emma Nordberg
Kelly-Christina Grant, scientific advisor

Follow the MAM

Kerry James Marshall
School of Beauty, School of Culture
2012
Collection Birmingham Museum of Art, Alabama, acquis grâce aux fonds octroyés par Elizabeth (Bibby) Smith, Collectors Circle for Contemporary Art, Jane Comer, Sankofa Society et des fonds régionaux
© Kerry James Marshall
Courtesy de l'artiste et Jack Shainman Gallery, New York
Photo : M. Sean Pathasema

Practical information
Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris
11 Avenue du Président Wilson
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www.mam.paris.fr

Open Tuesday through Sunday 10am to 6pm

Late hours on Thursday until 9:30 p.m.

Cultural activities Information and bookings
Tel. +33 1 53 67 40 80
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Ticketing
Regular admission : €17
Reduced admission : €15
Combined ticket including the *Simone Fattal* exhibition: €20 / €18

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Kerry James Marshall works in series and cycles, as reflected in the exhibition's chronological-thematic arrangement, which showcases eleven groups of works made between 1980 and the present.

Exhibition sequence

The exhibition opens with the artist's early mature works, created in the 1980s, including *Invisible Man* (1986), inspired by Ralph Ellison's eponymous novel (1952). This section establishes Kerry James Marshall's concern with depicting Black figures, while also raising questions about representation in art history and who and what has been excluded. The artist's radical approach—using a range of black pigments mixed with other colors—affects the viewer's perception of his figures.

The second gallery displays large canvases dealing with the history of the "Middle Passage," an expression designating the journey of captured Africans across the Atlantic to be sold as slaves.

The exhibition continues with a presentation of monumental works illustrating scenes of contemporary life in settings ranging from hair and beauty salons to parks and outdoor spaces. Referencing artists such as Édouard Manet, Gustave Caillebotte, Georges Seurat, and other painters of modern life, Marshall offers a corrective to the absence of large scale images portraying the everyday experience of Black people in the history of Western art.

The series *Souvenirs* (from 1997 to 1998) takes as its point of departure the American Civil Rights movement; the *Vignette* paintings (from 2003 to 2014) depict Black couples in a style that draws from rococo paintings as well as American greeting cards.

One of the major works in the exhibition is *Wake*, an accumulative sculpture created in 2003 and enhanced with new medallions each time it is exhibited.

One section groups together imaginary portraits of historical Black figures, such as Scipio Moorhead and Harriet Tubman, examining the way historical portraits can be created in the absence of archives and previous portrayals of individuals.

The last galleries follow the development of Kerry James Marshall's artistic practice, as he reinterprets iconic works of classical Western painting. The 2000s through 2020s underscore the artist's longstanding interest in the artistic disciplines taught in art schools. One of the major pieces is *The Academy* (2012), in which a male model posing for a life drawing class holds up his fist in the Black Power salute.

The exhibition concludes with a new series of works. These eight paintings explore lesser acknowledged episodes in African history. Several focus on the transatlantic slave trade, pointing to on the role played by some Africans in the sale of enslaved people to European merchants.

Exhibition catalogue

Celebrating nearly a half-century of Kerry James Marshall's oeuvre, the exhibition catalogue, published in French by Paris Musées and in English by the Royal Academy of Arts, London, is the most thorough publication on the artist to date. The catalogue published by Paris Musées is also the first publication in French devoted to him. It includes reproductions of all the works in the exhibition and brings together a study by Mark Godfrey, along with six essays by Aria Dean, Darby English, Madeleine Grynsztejn, Cathérine Hug, Nikita Sena Quarshie, and Rebecca Zorach, in addition to an extensive interview between Kerry James Marshall and Benjamin H.D. Buchloh.

Organized by the Royal Academy of Arts, in collaboration with the Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris / Paris Musées and the Kunsthaus Zurich, the exhibition was held at the Royal Academy of Arts, London, from September 2025 to January 18, 2026, and is currently on view at the Kunsthaus Zurich until August 16, 2026.

MUSÉE D'ART MODERNE DE PARIS

Biography

KERRY JAMES MARSHALL : THE HISTORIES

1955
Kerry James Marshall is born in Birmingham, Alabama, a city that was the backdrop for several pivotal moments in the American Civil Rights movement.

1963
Moves with his family to a public housing project in the predominantly Black neighbourhood of Watts in Los Angeles, California, where he witnesses the riots of August 1965: a six-day uprising fuelled by mounting racial tensions. His family then moves to South Central Los Angeles, a few blocks from Black Panther Party headquarters.

1965
At the age of 10, Marshall makes his first visit to a museum, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), as part of a school trip.

1976
Makes multiple visits to the landmark exhibition, *Two Centuries of Black American Art*, curated by David Driskell at LACMA.

THE BEGINNINGS OF BLACK FIGURATION

1978
Graduates from the Otis College of Art and Design in Los Angeles, where he studied painting and drawing under Sam Clayberger, Arnold Mesches, and Charles White.

1980
Paints A Portrait of the Artist as a Shadow of His Former Self, inspired by Ralph Ellison's novel, *Invisible Man* (1952). This work marks the beginning of his commitment to figurative painting.

1985
Begins a one-year artist residency at the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, furthering his research into Ralph Ellison. *Invisible Man* (1986) is the centrepiece of the exhibition that concludes his residency in 1986.

1986
In Harlem, Marshall visited and filmed David Hammons's studio. The film was screened for the first time in 2022 as part of the exhibition *Toni Morrison's Black Book*, curated by Hilton Als at the David Zwirner gallery in New York.

MIDDLE PASSAGE

1984–89
Produces a series of woodblock prints entitled *African Powers*, depicting the Yoruba deities Eschu, Shango, Ogun, Olorun, Oschun, and Obatala.

1986
Creates a series of collages, *At the End of the Wee Hours*, based on a refrain from Aimé Césaire's poem *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*.

1989
Works as a production designer on the film *Daughters of the Dust* (1991), based on the religious legacies of different generations within a community descended from enslaved people. Directed by Julie Dash and shot by Arthur Jafa, Marshall's wife, Cheryl Lynn Bruce, plays one of the leading roles in the film.

1991–92
Produces a series of paintings devoted to the Middle Passage.

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THE PAINTING OF MODERN LIFE

1993
LACMA acquires *De Style*, the first of Marshall's paintings to enter a museum collection.

1994
First touring exhibition, *Telling Stories*, opens at the Cleveland Museum of Art.

1995
At the exhibition *About Place: Recent Art of the Americas* at the Art Institute of Chicago, Marshall's *Garden Projects* series is shown alongside works by artists with whom he engaged in a dialogue, notably Jeff Wall, whose photographic practice is also inspired by history painting. Wall subsequently co-organised Marshall's first solo exhibition in Canada, held in 2010 at the Vancouver Art Gallery.

1997
Receives a MacArthur "genius" grant. His *Garden Project* series depicting public housing estates in Chicago and Los Angeles is shown at both the Whitney Biennial in New York and Documenta X in Kassel.

SOUVENIRS

1997–98
Produces *Souvenir*, a series of four paintings chronicling the passing of major figures in the fields of politics, literature, the arts, and music during the Civil Rights movement.

1998
The major solo exhibition Mementos opens at the Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago. It is conceived as a large-scale installation comprising sculptures, a video, prints, and the four large paintings from the *Souvenir* series.

1999
Creates a series of superhero comic strips entitled *Rythm Mastr* for the 53rd Carnegie International at the Carnegie Museum of Art in Pittsburgh. His work is exhibited alongside that of Luc Tuymans and Kara Walker.

FOCUS: WAKE / GULF STREAM

2003
First major exhibition in Europe in the "Delays and Revolutions" section of the 50th Venice Biennale, where he brings together the painting *Gulf Stream* with the sculpture *Wake*, which consists of a ship and a single medallion depicting its cargo of enslaved Africans. He has since added medallions each time the work is exhibited.

2012
At the 2003 Venice Biennale, Marshall discovered Chris Ofili's exhibition *Within Reach* at the British Pavilion. Impressed by his Afrofuturist idylls in red, black, and green, he drew inspiration from them to conceive *Who's Afraid of Red, Black and Green*, presented at the Vienna Secession in 2012, his second major European exhibition, featuring works linked to the cultural history and aesthetics of Black communities. Marshall subsequently wrote about Chris Ofili's work in 2010.

2013
The European touring retrospective exhibition *Kerry James Marshall: Painting and Other Stuff* opens at the Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst Antwerpen in Antwerp, at the Kunsthal Charlottenborg in Copenhagen, at the Fundació Antoni Tàpies in Barcelona and at the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía in Madrid.

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PANTHEON

2007
Begins a series of portraits of iconic figures of resistance: leaders of slave revolts, abolitionists, artists, and poets.

2009
Commission to create a diptych of murals for the lobby of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, depicting Mount Vernon and Monticello, the estates of US Presidents George Washington and Thomas Jefferson.

2013
First solo exhibition in Washington, D.C., at the National Gallery of Art, *In the Tower: Kerry James Marshall*, featuring works such as *Great America* (1994), which addresses the transatlantic slave trade, and the then recently completed *Portrait of Nat Turner with the Head of His Master* (2013).

THE PAINTING OF MODERN LIFE II

2015
Marshall is among the artists featured in the international exhibition *All the World's Futures* at the 56th Venice Biennale, curated by Okwui Enwezor. He also presents the mural *Above the Line*, an extension of the ongoing comic strip series *Rythm Mastr*, created specifically for the High Line in New York.

2016-2017
A major American retrospective spanning thirty-five years of his career, Mastry, is organised at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, the Met Breuer in New York, and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles. His work is also presented in Paris as part of the exhibition *The Color Line: African-American Artists and Segregation* at the Musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac, alongside artists such as Henry Ossawa Tanner, Romare Bearden, and Elizabeth Catlett.

2017
The City of Chicago unveils his monumental mural painted on the Chicago Cultural Center. Entitled *Rush More*, it pays tribute to twenty Black women who have played a decisive role in the development of the city's cultural scene, such as Margaret Burroughs, Gwendolyn Brooks, and Oprah Winfrey.

VIGNETTES, THE ACADEMY, AND RED-BLACK-GREEN

2003
Begins a series of *Vignettes* devoted to love scenes.

2007-2009
Production of his influential series of imaginary Black painters in their studios.

AFRICA REVISITED

2019
Receives the W. E. B. Du Bois Medal from the Hutchins Center for African and African American Research, Harvard University's highest honour in the field of African and African American studies.

2022
Elected an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Academy of Arts in London.

2023
His commissioned stained-glass windows, *Now and Forever*, depicting the struggle for racial justice, are unveiled at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C., replacing those depicting Confederate generals, which were removed in 2017.

2023-2025
Creates a new series of paintings depicting imaginary historical scenes from Africa.

MUSÉE D'ART MODERNE DE PARIS

Exhibition texts

Introduction

Kerry James Marshall, born in 1955 in Birmingham, Alabama (United States), is celebrated for his figurative paintings that place Black people at their centre—figures so often rendered invisible or marginalised throughout the history of Western art. Marshall's pictorial style is defined by the blackness of the bodies he depicts: he uses a range of pigments to produce resonant shades of black within monumental compositions of rich, vivid colour.

His practice is grounded in a deep engagement with Western art history and painting, the conventions of which he reimagines and transforms while quoting from its major genres, from portraiture and landscape to history painting. The latter was first concerned with Biblical and mythical narratives, and has been used to depict contemporary political events. He also draws from the art of Africa, and its diasporas, for instance Kongo *nkisi nkondi* "power figures", and Haitian Voodoo *veves* — drawings used to invoke spirits. For Marshall, it is important that an artist knows the histories of art in detail in order to contribute to them in powerful, meaningful, and original ways.

The Histories showcases eleven distinct cycles of his work, the earliest dating back to the 1980s and the most recent from 2023 to 2025. Many of these works engage with pivotal moments in Black history.

Marshall, has always gravitated towards a rational approach to picture-making, planning his compositions meticulously, every element carefully orchestrated. At a time when art was often expected to provide quick meanings, his multilayered works insist on complexity, raising more questions than they resolve.

The Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris is the third and final institution to host *The Histories*, following the Royal Academy of Arts in London and the Kunsthaus in Zurich. This is the first solo exhibition devoted to Marshall's work in a French museum. It is particularly significant given that Marshall's practice engages in an ongoing dialogue with French painting, from Ingres to Seurat, by way of Fragonard, David, Géricault, and Manet.

THE BEGINNINGS OF BLACK FIGURATION

Kerry James Marshall's family moved to Los Angeles in 1963. In 1965, at the age of 10, he visited the Los Angeles County Museum of Art on a school trip, his first time in a museum. Three years later, he was selected for a summer drawing workshop at the Otis Art Institute in Los Angeles, where he first encountered the work of Charles White (1918–1979)—whose work depicts the experiences of Black people in the United States—and committed to becoming a full-time student there after high school.

The 1970s was a politically tumultuous period at Otis College, and within the art world in general. Conceptual artists were abandoning painting; some artists associated with the Black Arts Movement were distancing themselves from European art traditions and devoting themselves to political works calling for uprising and protest. Not to be deterred, Marshall continued to study to broaden the knowledge and skills associated with the best results in picture making. When the time was right, these could be put to effective use.

That time arrived after he read Ralph Ellison's 1952 novel *Invisible Man.* The protagonist, a Black man, feels he is invisible in a racist society that refuses to see him. This idea inspired Marshall to begin a series of works in which Black figures are set against a dark ground, so that they become almost invisible to the viewer. From this point on, his figures function rhetorically, raising questions about Black absence and presence both in society and in art history. He gradually enriched his figures by using multiple pigments to model Black bodies.

MUSÉE D'ART MODERNE DE PARIS

MIDDLE PASSAGE

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It is a history understood in fragments, and accordingly, instead of making works functioning like costume dramas, Marshall composes paintings with disparate images, motifs, and textures. These works incorporate symbols and diagrams derived from Yoruban religion, Voodoo and other syncretic religions. These traditions, which arose from the fusion of various belief systems–such as the traditional religions of African peoples–with Catholicism, which was imposed by the colonizers, were practiced across the African diaspora as acts of defiance as well as to maintain connections to Africa.

Before embarking on the series, Marshall completed a group of woodblock prints titled *African Powers*, depicting six Yoruban orishas — divine spirits or gods. He had also recently worked as the production designer on Julie Dash's film *Daughters of the Dust* (1991).

THE PAINTING OF MODERN LIFE

In the nineteenth century, French artists like Édouard Manet and Georges Seurat transformed the genre of history painting to render scenes of modern life on an epic scale. Made on unstretched canvases and secured to the wall with grommets, the paintings in this room date from the early to mid-1990s, when Kerry James Marshall, having relocated to Chicago and settled into a studio, began to make his own painting of everyday life: children playing, lovers dancing, families enjoying a day in the park.

De Style (1993) shows a group of Black men in a barber shop — the first work of Marshall's to be acquired by a museum. It is both an amalgamation of established art-historical styles, such as Piet Mondrian's Neo-Plasticism and seventeenth-century Dutch group portraits, and a tribute to the diversity of Black styles. A year after completing it, Marshall embarked on the works in his *Garden Project* series, three of which are shown here. These look back to the American public housing projects named "gardens" whose first residents included families, like Marshall's own, who had migrated from the South and settled in the north and west of the United States from the 1940s. Made in the 1990s, at a time when many housing projects were suffering from a lack of financing, the images convey the hopes of the past and the failures of public housing.



Kerry James Marshall
De Style, 1993
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, acquired thanks to funds granted by Ruth and Jacob Bloom
© Kerry James Marshall
Photo © Museum Associates/LACMA

MUSÉE D'ART MODERNE DE PARIS

SOUVENIRS

In 1998, Kerry James Marshall produced a suite of paintings, photographs, sculpture, prints, and videos for his solo exhibition *Mementos* at the Renaissance Society in Chicago. Four of these paintings are reunited here, set in the middle-class houses of Marshall's friends and relatives. One is the house of his mother-in-law. Decorations in their living rooms included tributes to the assassinated Kennedys and Dr Martin Luther King Jr. The works concern the ways in which the tumultuous decade of the 1960s, marked by unfulfilled optimism and political upheaval, might be commemorated in the 1990s.

As well as thinking about glittery greetings cards, Marshall wanted to transform the genre of Renaissance Annunciation paintings, where the archangel Gabriel appears in Mary's home to tell her she will give birth to Jesus. The angels in these paintings appear somewhat exhausted by the process of assessing the unrealised dreams or real achievements of these political protagonists and cultural heroes.



Kerry James Marshall *Gulf Stream*, 2003
Collection Walker Art Center, Minneapolis. acquired thanks to funds granted by the T. B. Walker Acquisition Fund, 2004
© Kerry James Marshall / Courtesy de l'artiste et David Zwirner, London Photo : Jack Hems

FOCUS : WAKE / GULF STREAM

Kerry James Marshall first showed these two works together in 2003 at the Venice Biennale. The sculpture *Wake* centers on a black ship on a pedestal that stands for a black sea. While recalling the journey made by enslaved Africans, the work also suggests the growing power of Black cultural expression. Each time it is displayed, Marshall adds more medallions, representing the proliferating achievements of Black Americans. The idea of accumulation comes from the *nkisi nkondi*, a type of Kongo "power figure" into which users drove iron nails to increase its spiritual potency. *Wake* also encompasses "black light" photographs of a slave ship, and plates commemorating the first cargo of twenty Africans brought to America in 1619, as well as one for William Tucker, the first person of African origin born in America in around 1624. Marshall represents Tucker with a photograph of himself as a teenager.

The painting *Gulf Stream* was shown opposite Wake in Venice. In it, Marshall revisits a celebrated 1899 painting by the American artist Winslow Homer, depicting a Black sailor lying on a vessel on the verge of sinking, surrounded by a shiver of hungry sharks. In Marshall's version, a group of friends is enjoying their day out aboard a sailboat off the American coast, but storm clouds visible on the horizon, seem to indicate uncertain times ahead. Marshall exhibited these two works in Venice to call attention to Europe's role in the transatlantic slave trade.

MUSÉE D'ART MODERNE DE PARIS

PANTHEON

For centuries, Black Americans have resisted conditions of oppression and have created a rich culture in defiance of enslavement and inequality. In the series of portraits here, Kerry James Marshall pays tribute to slave rebels, poets, artists, abolitionists, and activists. As many of the historical figures depicted in this room were not painted during their lives, Marshall is free to imagine the appearance of his subjects, while at the same time prompting his viewers to consider the ways in which portraiture can be a catalyst for deeper historical understanding.

The two landscapes displayed here depict the homes of American presidents George Washington and Thomas Jefferson and point to the slave labour that supported their estates. The presidents are anamorphically stretched out, mirroring the distorted image that history has retained of them.

As well as being an essay on the complexity of the colour black, the deliberately hard-to-see *Black Painting* challenges the limits of perception and knowing. One might be tempted to believe it shows the moment prior to the assassination of Chicago Black Panther leader Fred Hampton in 1969, but closer examination reveals a detail that might suggest a different story—Angela Davis's 1971 book, *If They Come in the Morning* sits atop the nightstand.

RYTHM MASTR

Kerry James Marshall's long-running project, *Rythm Mastr*, is a series of comics and related works that began in 1999 and that he continues to work on today. The Marvel and DC comics that Marshall first read as a child did not feature Black superheroes. He remembers the appearance of the Black Panther in Fantastic Four in 1965 as a "pivotal event" but later reflected that "a lot of black superheroes just ended up fighting petty crime." Wanting something more from comics, he decided to create his own.

Rythm Mastr revolves around a Black Metropolis mirroring the South Side of Chicago. At its heart is a group of African artefacts-turned-superheroes whose powers are awakened by the powerful drumming of the titular character. Across multiple strips and fragmentary storylines, Marshall's characters comment on subjects ranging from urban regeneration, museum collections and the importance of "*BAAAD MUTHUFUKKAs*" like the slave rebel Nat Turner (1800–1831), who became an icon of the Black Power movement.

THE PAINTING OF MODERN LIFE II

In the 2010s, Kerry James Marshall continued to construct powerful scenes of everyday life. The settings were parks, nightclubs, homes, city streets, and art galleries. He often reworked arrangements and elements from famous paintings, such as when he transformed a detail from one of the paintings *The Ambassadors* (1533) by the German artist Hans Holbein the Younger into the beauty salon in *School of Beauty, School of Culture*, or by incorporating the attitude of the waitress from Edouard Manet's *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère* (1882) into the woman posing in *Untitled (Club Scene)*.

Some paintings here refer to specific moments from the past, such as the crowning of Gloria Smith as the second Miss Black America at the height of the "Black is Beautiful" period in 1969. Others provoke questions about Marshall's own time: *Untitled (Policeman)* (2015) was made shortly after the beginning of Black Lives Matter movement when protestors campaigned to "defund the police". Together, these paintings express a wide range of Black experiences of and attitudes towards America, from deep joy to a profound, uneasy ambivalence.

MUSÉE D'ART MODERNE DE PARIS

VIGNETTES, THE ACADEMY, AND RED- BLACK-GREEN

For Kerry James Marshall, every historical genre and style of painting is ripe for reinvention.

In *Vignette*, Marshall reworked the compositions of French artists like Jean-Antoine Watteau and Jean-Honoré Fragonard. By painting romantic scenes, he creates images of resistance: during the time of slavery, it was "breeding", not marriage or relationships, that was encouraged as a way of increasing wealth and workforce. Surrounded by pink brushstrokes and presented as dream scenes, the works also raise the question of whether Black couples can really relax in public spaces or if this idea remains an illusion.

The works in the next room are part of two distinct cycles. The first one features paintings with scenes from art schools, studios and museums — places where artists study, create and exhibit their work. There is a deep fascination in Western art with the studio as the locus of production and the museum as the repository of wonders. Adding to this tradition, Marshall transforms it by centring Black figures as both producers and consumers.

In the second group of artworks, Marshall deploys the colours of the UNIA (Universal Negro Improvement Association) or Pan-African Flag, created by the thinker Marcus Garvey in 1920, as well as the imagery and slogans of the Black Panthers from the late 1960s. But rather than straightforwardly celebrating Black Nationalism, Marshall constructs cheeky and layered works that reference the connected histories of painting and erotica.



Kerry James Marshall *Vignette #13*, 2008
Collection Jennifer Gilbert
© Kerry James Marshall
Image courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

AFRICA REVISITED

Made specifically for *The Histories*, the paintings exhibited here concern challenging moments in the recorded history of Africa, not often represented.

Five of them address the slave trade, showing people kidnapping children, rowing captives in a canoe to buyers out of scene, returning with all kinds of booty, and celebrating their successful trades. These figures are shown having sold slaves, driven by their greed for the consumer goods that Europeans supplied in exchange.

Another painting depicts the murder in 1828 of Shaka Zulu by his half-brothers in Zululand (the current province of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa). Together, these paintings disrupt a view of the African past, providing a more complex portrayal.

Two final paintings depict the so-called "white queens" of Africa, Colette Hubert and Ruth Williams, at their respective weddings with the presidents Léopold Sédar Senghor (Senegal) and Seretse Khama (Botswana). These scenes, showing real unions but with the details reimagined by Marshall, to offer a more nuanced view of the narratives of post-colonial Africa.

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Events

Friday, September 18 at 4 pm
Introductive session : A Conversation with the Artist
With Kerry James Marshall, Mark Godfrey, moderated by Fabrice Hergott
Salle Matisse
Free admission, registration required, subject to availability

This talk introduces Kerry James Marshall's work in connection with the exhibition. Held on the day of the public opening, this conversation between the artist and the curators of the show, Mark Godfrey and Fabrice Hergott, explores Marshall's career, the conception of the show, the significance of its title, and Marshall's relationship with French painting.

Thursday, November 5 at 7 pm
Representations of Black figures
Speakers to be announced
Salle Matisse
Free admission, registration required, subject to availability

Since the 1980s, Kerry James Marshall has engaged with the traditions, genres, and conventions of Western painting while placing the Black figure at the center of his work. The session explores how the Black figure has been represented in the West, as well as Marshall's methods for reimagining and transforming the art historical canon.

Thursday, December 3 at 7 pm
On History Painting
Speakers to be announced
Salle Matisse
Free admission, registration required, subject to availability

This session takes the form of a discussion on history painting, approached through its structural and formal dimensions–composition, materiality, and colour–as well as through the distinctive narrative strategies developed by Kerry James Marshall.

Thursday, January 14 at 7 pm
Art, Memory and Colonial Legacies
Speakers to be announced
Salle Matisse
Free admission, registration required, subject to availability

Since the 1990s, Kerry James Marshall has engaged with the history of the transatlantic slave trade. This session examines how the historical and memorial narratives of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, as well as their cultural legacies, are represented in his work. The session also opens a broader discussion on transmission of these narratives and on the enduring legacies of colonialism and slavery in contemporary societies. transforming the art historical canon.

MUSÉE D'ART MODERNE DE PARIS

Visitor Information

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Getting there

- Metro: Alma-Marceau or Iéna (Line 9)
- Bus: 32/42/63/72/80/92
- Vélib' stations: 4 rue de Longchamp; 4 avenue Marceau; place de la Reine Astrid; 45 avenue Marceau; or 3 avenue Bosquet
- Bicycle: Bicycle parking spaces are available in front of the museum entrance.
- RER C: Pont de l'Alma (Line C)

Opening hours

- Tuesday to Sunday, 10:00 am – 6:00 pm
- (last ticket sales at 5:15 pm)
- Closed on Mondays and certain public holidays
- Late openings: Thursdays until 9:30 pm

Admission

Full price: €17
Reduced price: €15
Free for under 18s

Combined ticket with the *Simone Fattal* exhibition:
Full price: €20
Reduced price: €18

The exhibition is accessible to visitors with motor disabilities and reduced mobility.

Booking a ticket in advance is strongly recommended at: www.billetterie-parismusees.paris.fr

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MUSÉE D'ART MODERNE DE PARIS

Paris Musées

Paris Musées is a public institution that incorporates the 12 City of Paris museums and 2 heritage sites. It is the leading museum network in Europe and, in 2025 received more than 5.1 million visitors.

Paris Musées is a public institution that incorporates the 12 City of Paris museums and 2 heritage sites. It is the leading museum network in Europe and, in 2024 received more than 4.8 million visitors. The Paris Musées network includes art museums (Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris, Petit Palais - Musée des Beaux-Arts de la Ville de Paris); history museums (Musée Carnavalet - Histoire de Paris, Musée de la Libération de Paris- Musée du Général Leclerc- Musée Jean Moulin); former artists' studios (Musée Bourdelle, Musée Zadkine, Musée de la Vie romantique); writers' houses (Maison de Balzac, Maison de Victor Hugo in Paris and in Guernsey); the Palais Galliera –the City of Paris fashion museum; museums bequeathed by major donors (Cernuschi Museum of Asian Art, Cognacq-Jay Museum); as well as heritage sites: the Paris Catacombs and the Archaeological Crypt of the Ile de la Cité.

Paris Musées was founded in 2013. Its mission is to promote, curate and present the collections of the City of Paris museums, which contain over a million works of art, and are open to the public free of charge. Constant attention is paid to research and the conservation of the collections as well as to their enlargement through donations, bequests and acquisitions. Every year, the museums and sites administered by Paris Musées run an ambitious exhibition programme, accompanied by cultural and mediation services for all, especially those who are not often exposed to cultural activities. We also publish catalogues to accompany the exhibitions.

Furthermore, since its creation, Paris Musées has been committed to a deliberate strategy of adapting its working practices and procedures towards a reduction and an improvement in the environmental impact of all its activities (exhibition production, publishing, the transport of artworks, and energy consumption generally) at all the fourteen sites and museums in the netwwork. As part of its commitment to sharing art and culture with the greatest possible number of people, Paris Musées has also put in place an innovative digital strategy that provides free online access to more than 400,000 high-definition images of works from its collections, as well as a wealth of other content (virtual tours, podcasts, etc.). They can be accessed on the Paris Musées Collections and Paris Musées Explore websites. Paris Musées also organises a course of art history lectures given by Specialist advisors from the City of Paris Museums; this can be subscribed to online.



PARIS MUSEUMS PASS

Paris Musées offers a one-year pass giving unlimited access to temporary exhibitions, as well as special rates on activities (guided tours, talks, workshops, shows, art history courses, etc.), discounts in the museum network's bookshops, cafés and restaurants, and priority access to museum news.