

NEWS

WALKER ART CENTER TO PRESENT NEW BODY OF WORK BY ARTIST KAHLIL ROBERT IRVING IN UPCOMING SOLO EXHIBITION

Kahlil Robert Irving: Archaeology of the Present
On View February 23, 2023 – January 21, 2024

**Opening Events Include an Artist Talk Between Irving and Jerald Cooper,
Moderated by Antwaun Sargent**

MINNEAPOLIS, FEBRUARY 7, 2023 – On February 23, 2023, the Walker Art Center will open an exhibition of new work by artist Kahlil Robert Irving (b. 1992), whose multidimensional practice explores how systems of control, oppression, and histories of anti-Blackness operate subtly on the peripheries of our attention. For his forthcoming exhibition at the Walker, titled *Kahlil Robert Irving: Archaeology of the Present*, Irving examines the philosophical question, “*What happens when we peel back the city street?*”. Through the lens of archaeological excavation, Irving reveals and critiques how the street—a familiar and often overlooked element of the built environment—is witness to the struggles and experiences of Black America. The exhibition will feature a site-specific installation and a selection of sculptural and video works, and will remain on view through January 21, 2024.

The Walker’s Public Engagement, Learning and Impact (PELI) Department will host a community reception and talk to celebrate the exhibition’s opening on Thursday, February 23, 2023 at 6pm. Antwaun Sargent will moderate a dynamic conversation between Kahlil Robert Irving and creative consultant Jerald Cooper. Using Irving’s installation as a reference point, the three will discuss how our present moment is composed of physical remnants that begin to tell a fragmented story of American history through art, design and culture. A reception will immediately follow the artist talk, featuring a bar and small bites by James Beard award-winning Chef Justin Sutherland and his team. Tickets for this free event will be available at the Walker’s Main Lobby box office on a first-come basis beginning at 5pm that evening.

“It is a dream come true to present my first solo museum exhibition in the Midwest at the Walker,” says Kahlil Robert Irving. “The exhibition marks a new point of departure for me, in terms of exploring the possibilities of presentation and visitor experience in my work. The Walker has a tremendous history exhibiting historically important exhibitions, and I am excited to share this new large-scale project with the community of Minneapolis.”

For Irving, the street, and its varied appearances across cities and neighborhoods, is emblematic of issues of camouflaged anti-Blackness, including unacknowledged racism and discrimination, lingering segregation, and police violence. By excavating and exposing the city street within the gallery context, Irving uncovers layers of living history that hold both personal and communal meaning. This exploration is manifest in the exhibition by the creation of an environment that suggests an archaeological site. Sculptural and floor works will be experienced by audiences from above through a raised platform constructed within the gallery. The structure will frame and enshrine the featured works, creating the effect of an observational deck within a 'dig' site. In this way, Irving prompts viewers to examine these works in the present moment from both historical and analytical viewpoints.

Among the featured works are two large-scale sculptures inspired by the mosaic floors of Hellenistic Antioch but made to resemble the asphalt of a city street, suggesting the transformation of the ancient into the contemporary. The exhibition will also include new amassment sculptures that capture Irving's distinct approach to ceramics, which does include engagement with wet clay. With these works, the artist subverts the archetypal ceramic object by using the medium to create amalgamations of found and discarded items, that would otherwise be overlooked, into organic-looking forms. An arrangement of large clay pipes as well as a video projection of rolling clouds will further create the overall environment. The clay pipes, which are industrially made, are presented in contrast with the sculptures Irving makes in his studio.

For the artist, the presentation acts as a landscape where industrial, factory-built objects coexist with the fictional, artist-made sculptures, calling into question our assumptions of what belongs in an art gallery versus on the city street. The video piece, mounted into the floor, inverts our expectations of the sky as a place of possibility, and the ground as one of necessity, symbolizing the assertion that change and progress are found communally and presently, rather than in a lofted future.

"By considering the present day through the lens of history and memory, Irving's practice prompts us to reorient our perception of the world around us. His work brings us face-to-face with parts of the past and the present we would sooner ignore or forget," says William Hernández Luege, Curatorial Assistant for Visual Arts at The Walker. "We are delighted to have the opportunity to collaborate with Kahlil on this challenging and thought-provoking presentation and to provide him the space to continue to experiment and grow within his practice. We look forward to sharing his vision with our community and to fostering dialogue about the many critical threads within his work."

ABOUT KAHLIL ROBERT IRVING

Kahlil Robert Irving (b. 1992, San Diego, CA) is an artist currently living and working in the USA. In December 2021 Irving opened his first museum solo exhibition – 'Projects: Kahlil Robert Irving' at the Museum of Modern Art. Irving recently participated in the 2019 Singapore Biennial; 'Social Works II' at Gagosian Gallery in London; 'Soft Water Hard Stone', The New Museum

Triennial; and 'Making Knowing' at the Whitney Museum of Art. His work has also been exhibited at the Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas; the Arizona State University Art Museum; the Rhode Island School of Design Museum, and MASS MoCA, among others. His work can be found in the collections of the Brooklyn Museum, New York, the Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas; the RISD Museum, Rhode Island; the Tang Teaching Museum & Art Gallery, New York; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Irving attended the Sam Fox School of Design and Visual Art, Washington University in St. Louis (MFA Fellow, 2017); and the Kansas City Art Institute (BFA, Art History and Ceramics/Sculpture, 2015).

ABOUT THE WALKER ART CENTER

Known for presenting today's most compelling artists from close to home and around the world, the Walker Art Center features a broad array of contemporary visual arts, music, dance, theater, and moving image works. Ranging from concerts and films to exhibitions and workshops, Walker programs bring us together to examine the questions that shape and inspire us as individuals, cultures, and communities. The adjacent Minneapolis Sculpture Garden, one of the first urban sculpture parks of its kind in the United States, holds at its center the beloved Twin Cities landmark *Spoonbridge and Cherry* by Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen as well as some 60 sculptures on the 19-acre Walker campus. Visit walkerart.org for more information on upcoming events and programs.

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