

**RESIDENT ARTIST KERRY JAMES MARSHALL CREATING
CROSS-CULTURAL GALLERY AND PERFORMANCE PROJECT
EPIC STORY FEATURING INNER-CITY AFRICAN-AMERICAN
SUPERHEROES TO BE BROUGHT TO LIFE WITH HELP OF LOCAL TEENS**

Columbus, OH—As part of a Wexner Center Residency Award project, internationally renowned artist Kerry James Marshall engaged a group of local teens for an extended period this fall and winter to help bring his latest project to fruition. This remarkable multimedia, cross-cultural project is part exhibition, part performance, and part youth initiative based on his expansive narrative *Rythm Mastr*, an epic tale of love, vengeance, and redemption in the inner city featuring African and African-American superheroes. The story will be brought to life in the galleries during select times by local teen performers, who will be performing the piece using Japanese-style Bunraku puppets. And from **February 2 through April 13, 2008**, the puppets will be displayed in a Wexner Center gallery as sculpture, alongside the elaborate performance set and drawings from *Rythm Mastr* in the exhibition ***Kerry James Marshall: Every Beat of My Heart***. Also on view will be a video documenting the project, directed by Cincinnati-based filmmaker April Martin (who has been at the Wexner Center working on an unrelated project, also supported by a Wexner Center Residency Award).



In the summer of 2007, Marshall traveled to Japan—along with Columbus-based puppeteer Kevin Fish and Martin Holman, professor of Japanese Studies at the University of Missouri-Columbia and an American expert on Japanese Bunraku—for about a month to learn the ancient craft of Japanese Bunraku; in this tradition, the puppets are attached to rods and manipulated by multiple puppeteers. (Visit <http://wexarts.org/wexblog> and click on “Kerry James Marshall” in the right column for a blog entry and images from this trip.)

In September, Marshall held a set of game-show-style, team-based “challenges” that served as auditions for the nearly 200 teenagers who applied; the two winning teams include 20 teenagers from across the Columbus community (participating students are being paid a stipend for their participation). This group has worked intensely with Marshall in rehearsal since November and will perform the piece for the public with the puppets in a Wexner Center gallery in February. **The free performances are Saturday, February 2 at 4 and 7 pm, and Sunday, February 3 at 2 and 4 pm**, and will feature two narrators, the puppeteers, and percussionist Kahil El’Zabar. Seating in the gallery will be extremely limited, available on a first-come, first-served basis at the Wexner Center Ticket Office/ Patron Services Desk the day of the performance (starting at 10 am on Saturday and 11 am on Sunday; two tickets per patron). Overflow seating with a live video feed will be available in the Wexner Center’s Film/Video Theater.

Notes Shelly Casto, the Wexner Center’s Director of Education and curator of this project, “We are excited by both the scope of Kerry James Marshall’s project as well as his commitment to working with teens in the community over the course of several months. This cross-disciplinary project—

focused as much on the process as on the final outcome—affords an exceptional opportunity for Columbus youth and, because it's the work of someone of Marshall's stature, will be watched by the international art world as well."

This project is supported by a Wexner Center Residency Award, given annually in the three programming areas at the Wexner Center: visual art, performing arts, and media arts.

Marshall will give a free public talk at the Wexner Center **Tuesday, February 26 at 4:30 pm** as part of the President and Provost's Diversity Lecture Series at Ohio State.

Also on view: *Adi Nes: Biblical Stories* and *Solitaire: Lee Lozano, Sylvia Plimack Mangold, Joan Semmel*. An **Opening Celebration** for all exhibitions will be held **Friday, February 1, 5–8 pm**.

Gallery admission is free. Visitor info: <http://www.wexarts.org/info/visit/>.

MORE ABOUT KERRY JAMES MARSHALL

Marshall is an internationally known painter, photographer, master draftsman, cartoonist, video maker, and sculptor whose work explores contemporary issues in urban America and highlights the invisibility of African Americans in the history of Western art. In a June review of the *Documenta* show in Kassel, Germany, Holland Cotter of *The New York Times* wrote that Marshall "addresses the complicated and compromised position of African-Americans today in pictures of direct but subtle force. In a show intent on destabilizing stardom, he comes through as a star." His works are in the collections of the Whitney Museum of American Art, The Museum of Modern Art, The Museum of Contemporary Art (Los Angeles), the Studio Museum of Harlem, the Walker Arts Center, and the Columbus Museum of Art, among many other museums. His work has also been shown at the Whitney Biennial, the 2003 Venice Biennale, and in other exhibitions from coast to coast and overseas—including *Splat Boom Pow! The Influence of Cartoons in Contemporary Art*, which was on view at the Wexner Center in 2004. A recipient of a MacArthur Foundation "genius" grant, Marshall was born in Birmingham and is based in Chicago.



EXHIBITION SUPPORT

Kerry James Marshall: Every Beat of My Heart is organized by the Wexner Center for the Arts, The Ohio State University.

The exhibition is made possible through the Wexner Center Residency Award program with major support from the Nimoy Foundation, Toby Devan Lewis, Nancy and Dave Gill, and the Crane Group. Additional support provided by the Greater Columbus Arts Council, Peter Norton Family Foundation, Donna and Larry James, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Accommodations are provided by The Blackwell Inn.

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