

Pavilion of Antigua and Barbuda
at the 57th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia
FRANK WALTER: THE LAST UNIVERSAL MAN 1926–2009

Curated by Barbara Paca, Ph.D., Cultural Envoy to Antigua and Barbuda

13 May–22 November 2017

Centro Culturale Don Orione Artigianelli, Fondamente Nani, Dorsoduro 947, 30123 Venice

Frank Walter: The Last Universal Man 1926–2009 marks Antigua and Barbuda’s inaugural representation at the 57th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia. The exhibition invites visitors to inhabit the creative world and humanist vision of seminal Caribbean artist Frank Walter through a selection of his paintings, sculpture, audio recordings, and writing—as well as through video exploration of his entire oeuvre consisting of 5,000 works of art and a 25,000-page archive. *The Last Universal Man* is also conceived of as a space to inspire dialogue—a posthumous fulfillment of Walter’s intention to open his house and studio as a center for art.

Fittingly situated in the tranquil setting of central Venice’s fifteenth-century monastery Don Orione Artigianelli, the exhibition extends outdoors to an Antiguan garden. This sets the contemplative mood of Walter’s artistic retreat and *paradisus terrestris*, which he built above the southern Antiguan coastline in the last decades of his life. The artwork that once filled Walter’s house and studio is inextricable from his postcolonial experience. Yet the issues he engaged with—such as identity, memory, and environment—resonate today.

Walter began adulthood with the distinction of being the first person of color to manage a sugar plantation in Antigua, and he remained devoted to the land as a source of meaning and sustenance throughout his life. Walter’s complex, mixed-race descent from both slave owners and enslaved people meant that he struggled with the complexities of his identity. His position as other within postcolonial society was felt acutely in the systemic racism he endured during his eight-year Grand Tour of Europe in the 1950s, and it informed his obsessive interest in his white aristocratic lineage. In Walter’s imagining, his German heritage was connected to the royal houses of Great Britain and Europe, and he increasingly referred to himself as the “7th Prince of the West Indies, Lord of Follies and the Ding-a-Ding Nook.”

Walter’s need to invent his own universe originated in the difficulties he encountered in constructing his identity in relation to a society defined by exclusion. When Walter retreated into

nature, art was his solace. He populated his world with talismanic sculptures depicting figures as varied as ancient Arawak people, European royalty, and men from outer space. He revisited his memories in painting and writing and explored nature as an avid environmentalist and student of science. Walter's diverse practice as visual artist, musician, and philosopher reveals him as the ultimate Vitruvian man.

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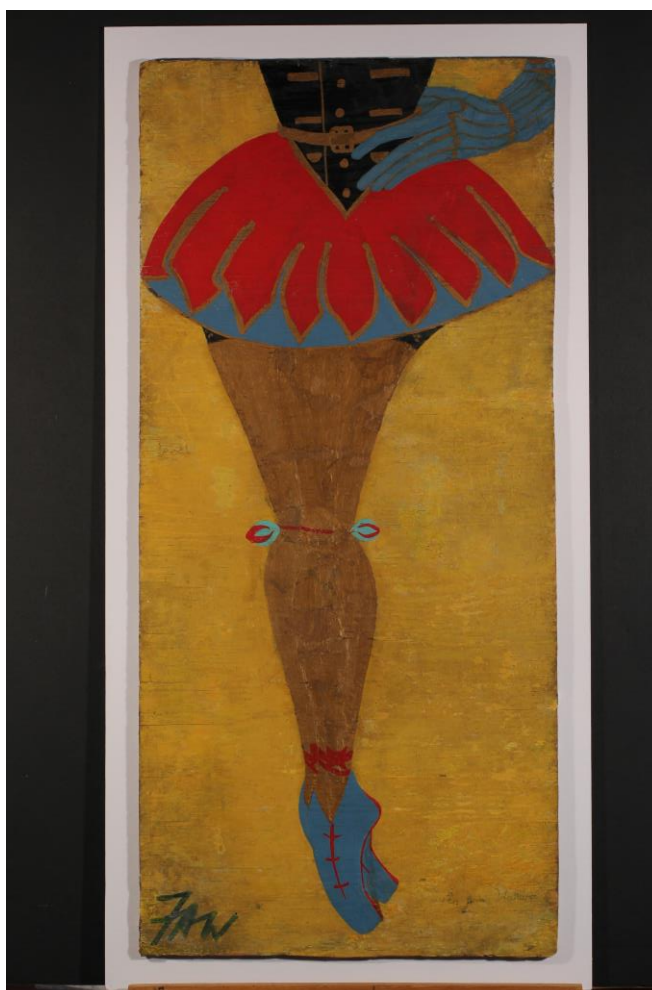
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WEBSITE

<http://www.frankwalter.org>

CATALOGUE

<http://radiusbooks.org/books/frank-walter-the-last-universal-man-1926-2009/>



More Images Available on <http://www.frankwalter.org>
For Hi Res Files, Contact Barbara Paca barbara@preservationgreenllc.com

PRESS IMAGES - CAPTIONS

1.
African Genealogy: Ballerina Legs, date unknown, oil on plywood, 60.5 x 28.3 cm, photography by Kenneth M. Milton Fine Arts Conservation, © courtesy The Estate of Frank Walter 2017
2.
Fragment of the Walter Family Coat-of-Arms, date unknown, oil on the back of a record album cover, 27.5 x 26.5 cm, photography by Kenneth M. Milton Fine Arts Conservation, © courtesy The Estate of Frank Walter 2017
3.
Centrifugal Sun Rockets, ca. 1994, oil on wood, 30.2 x 37.3 cm, Photography by Kenneth M. Milton Fine Arts Conservation, © Courtesy The Estate of Frank Walter 2017
4.
Psycho Geometrics, date unknown, oil on cardboard, 32 x 35.5 cm, photography by Kenneth M. Milton Fine Arts Conservation, © courtesy The Estate of Frank Walter 2017
5.
Self Portrait in Tree, date unknown, oil on card, 9.8 x 8 cm, photography by Kenneth M. Milton Fine Arts Conservation, © courtesy The Estate of Frank Walter 2017
6. Frank Walter, black-and-white photograph, 1969, © Courtesy Timothy Payne 2017
7. Frank Walter, black-and-white photograph, 1988, photography by Kenneth M. Milton Fine Arts Conservation, © courtesy The Estate of Frank Walter 2017
8. Frank Walter, Polaroid photograph, 1992, photography by Kenneth M. Milton Fine Arts Conservation, © courtesy The Estate of Frank Walter 2017

BIOS

Featured artist Frank Walter was born in Antigua in 1926 and was recognized early as a wunderkind, mastering Latin and science at the prestigious Antigua Grammar School. Noted as the first person of color to manage a sugar plantation, he opened the door for aspiring youth of his time. He later became one of the Caribbean's most enigmatic artists, living close to nature, high on a hillside without running water or electricity until his death in 2009. His work continues to inspire young artists throughout the island nation of Antigua and Barbuda.

Melville Richardson is the Commissioner for Antigua and Barbuda's inaugural National Pavilion at La Biennale di Venezia, and serves as Education Officer in Visual Arts for the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology for the Government of Antigua and Barbuda.

Barbara Paca is the Curator for Antigua and Barbuda's inaugural National Pavilion at La Biennale di Venezia, and serves as Cultural Envoy to Antigua and Barbuda. She is an art historian and landscape architect, who holds a Ph.D. from Princeton University and was awarded postdoctoral fellowships as a Fulbright Scholar and at Princeton's Institute for Advanced Study. She is the author of *Ruth Starr Rose (1887–1965): Revelations of African American Life in Maryland and the World* and *Frank Walter*, the catalogue for the 2013 Art Basel in Miami Beach.

300–400 CHARACTER BLURB

Frank Walter: The Last Universal Man 1926–2009 marks Antigua and Barbuda's inaugural National Pavilion at La Biennale di Venezia. Set in the tranquility of a fifteenth-century monastery in central Venice, the exhibition extends into an Antiguan garden to honor the achievements of artist, poet, planter, and philosopher Frank Walter, one of the Caribbean's most enigmatic artists. A richly illustrated catalogue accompanies the show along with extensive video transporting you to the island nation.