

To the CAM community:

I deeply regret that a great deal of anger, frustration and resentment have developed in the St. Louis community as a result of my failure to engage certain questions from the audience during the public lecture at CAM last Saturday. The concerns were legitimate, so I regret that I did not answer them adequately at the time.

The KING magazine covers and Black Star Press works—two series among a broader body of work that deals with the circulation and recycling of images—are at the center of this controversy as they explore the politics of race. Although the works date from the early 2000s, they have been exhibited many times since then and I have also spoken about them in depth in prior artist talks and interviews, I should have been much clearer and more articulate about them. Given the painful recent history of the city, as well as the much longer history of violence and injustice directed at its African-American community, I should have been better prepared to address the subject matter.

I am a staunch advocate of social equality and civil rights in America. I am also an artist who seeks to create thoughtful, sometimes difficult dialogues about these issues. I have always hoped that these works, and the exhibition as a whole, would provide a forum for a conversation about the way American society gets represented in the media as images shift from context to context (newspapers, magazines, film, TV, etc.) and about how the representation of the body, particularly of the black body, is an exceedingly complex topic in American art and culture.

I hope that the St. Louis community will give my exhibition a chance to generate this conversation. I also hope that the community, as well as the museum, its director and its staff, will understand how much I regret the misunderstanding and the ill feeling caused thus far.