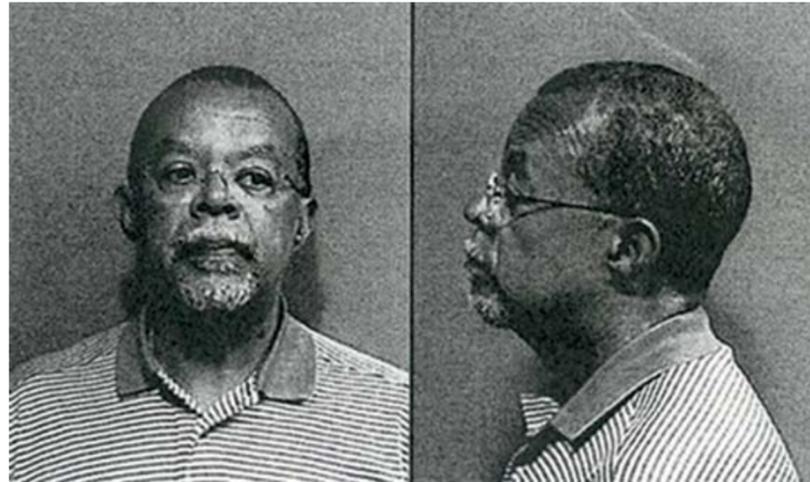


**KEN GONZALES-DAY
PROFILED**



PROFILED



To draw any head accurately in profile, takes me much time. I have dissected the skulls of people lately dead, that I might be able to define the lines of countenance... I began with the monkey, proceeded to the Negro and the European, til I ascended to the countenances of antiquity, and examined a Medusa, an Apollo, or a Venus de Medici. This concerns only the profile.

Petrus Camper, quoted in Johann Kaspar Lavater, *Physiognomy; or The Corresponding Analogy between the conformation of the features and the ruling passions of the mind...*, 1775-78, p. 128

Whatever rules may be transgressed, it is a noble and beautiful face, more so, perhaps, than if all rules had been obeyed.

Nathaniel Hawthorne, *Passages from the French and Italian Note-Books*, 1871, p. 312

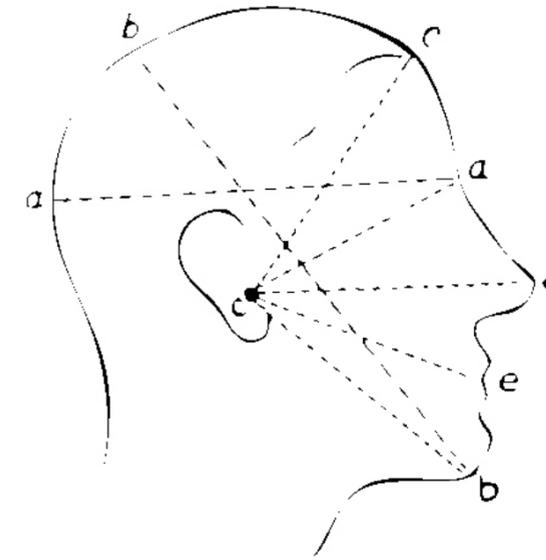
A professor who happens to be black is arrested for breaking into his own home in Cambridge, Massachusetts. A Pakistani-American man is shot by police in Los Angeles—he is autistic. A Latin-American is late for work after he is pulled over and questioned on suspicion that he may be undocumented. The ACLU investigates accounts that U.S. citizens perceived to be Muslim are unduly questioned about their religious beliefs by border patrol agents. Each represents a contemporary example of racial profiling. Together, they form the backdrop against which this project evolved. Racial profiling, discriminatory treatment of persons of color, remains at the center of political debates about criminal justice, terrorism, national security, and immigration reform despite the fact that scholars and scientists increasingly argue that race has more to do with culture than biology.

In order to decouple the appearance of *difference* from moral, legal, and spiritual judgments, thinkers have drawn attention to the economic and political invisibility of whiteness, from housing loans to the locations of supermarkets and fast food chains. But while studies have been made of literary and art-historical depictions of race in text and painting, the sculpted figure and the portrait bust have garnered little attention. *Profiled* addresses these forms.

This project surveys depictions of the human form as found in some of the most prestigious collections in the United States and Europe, spanning mainly from the eighteenth century until the present day. Yet *Profiled* is not a history of sculpture: it is a conceptual clustering of cultural artifacts, arranged to foreground the emergence, idealization, and even folly of race, including whiteness. My aim is to provide a new context for considering these ambiguous and sometimes troubling objects, some of which might otherwise be withheld from public view. So, like the protagonist in a mystery novel, I set out to look for clues in a vast cultural warehouse of sculptural depictions of race spanning more than two centuries and stretching across two continents. The images gathered during this investigation are presented here in an artist's book (thanks to the support of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art's PAC Prize) that conceptually reframes Western figurative sculpture through the lens of race and material history. As noted in the Petrus Camper epigraph, an Apollo or a Venus came to symbolize a particular conception of human "achievement." As such, their marble limbs may tell us as much about the times in which they were made as the subjects they depict.

The profile was long a favorite site for moral and character valuations, even before the genteel paper silhouettes of the Victorians or the photographic mug shots of the criminologist. In the last decades of the eighteenth century, author Johann Kaspar Lavater wrote his influential *Essays on Physiognomy*, proposing the importance of "physiognomical lines," as he called them, to elucidate character analysis. Informed and guided by a fascination with measuring everything from the angle of the forehead to the proportions of the body, the Enlightenment's longing for knowledge contributed to the *othering* of difference across a wide range of subject positions, from gender and sexual orientation to the identification of "primitive" races: the Oriental, the Jew, the Noble Savage—to name just a few. Over time, numerous texts, treatises, and pamphlets have continued to shape ideals of beauty in the arts, humanities, and the sciences.

The project began while I was a Visiting Scholar and Artist-in-Residence at the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles in 2008–09. The idea was simple enough: I set out to photograph every portrait bust in the J. Paul Getty Museum and the Getty Villa, in Malibu, as a way of thinking about race, even if that race turned out to be mostly white. I initially intended to shoot them all in profile as a way of suggesting a comparison to the historic use of the facial profile in the mug shot, with its obvious associations with the "science" of physiognomy, character analysis, and the many pseudo-sciences that emerged in the latter half of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth.



The next site I visited, the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago, prompted me to expand the formal parameters beyond the profile as such, in order to consider the origins, appearance, and uses of race as a subject of aesthetic and scientific interest. Granted access to the Field Museum's storage vaults in the summer of 2009, I photographed examples from artist Malvina Hoffman's extensive sculptural series, *Races of Mankind*, exhibited in conjunction with the 1933 Chicago World's Fair, "A Century of Progress." Hoffman's commission to sculpt 104 distinct racial types points to a quantitative turn in the history of racial typologies. I visited as well the San Diego Museum of Man to see a number of works from its display of racial/evolutionary "types" for the 1916 Panama-California Exposition that inspired the Field Museum to commission Hoffman in 1930 and today remain on view or in storage. Such attempts at comprehensive taxonomies are fascinating for a number of reasons. Perhaps the most meaningful aspect of Hoffman's work is the intended fusion of science and fine arts: to capture and preserve "the vanishing races" before, as some believed, they disappeared altogether.

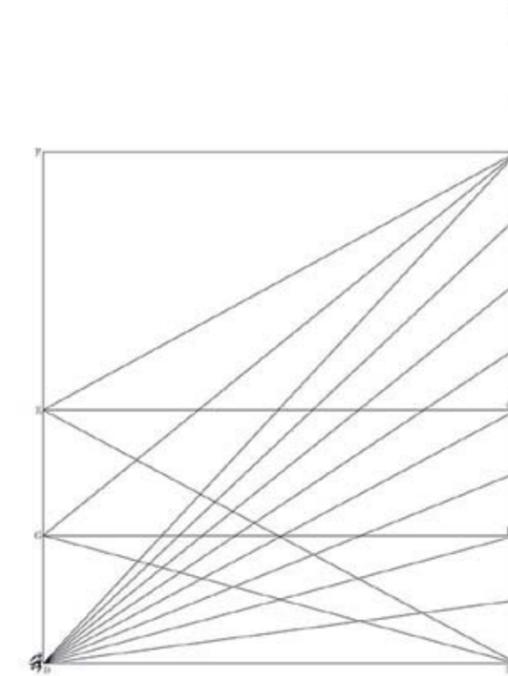
As became evident during my museum research, many sculptures and portrait busts derive from earlier versions, or are even copies of copies. In some cases, the sculptor worked from a photograph. In others, the busts were not busts at all, but fragments from larger sculptures. Even Hoffman's convincing "portraits" may have been composited from various models. So *Profiled* is about more than the uncanny double, it is about the fragmented and fractured subject and its visual potential.

In 2010 I visited the Bode Museum on Berlin's Museum Island in order to examine this iconography at its European point of origin. The Bode has a rich collection and was one of the last museums to be emptied during the Second World War. The Museum Island was badly damaged by Allied bombing and the ensuing fires. Restoration efforts have been underway for over five decades, and many damaged works have been brought back from the brink of destruction. For me, their charred and stained surfaces silently testify to a legacy of racial and ethnic categorization that took place in both Europe and the United States during the period. They also serve as a potent reminder of the tragic consequences of the eugenics movement.

While in Germany, I travelled to the collections of the Foundation for Prussian Palaces and Gardens in search of four sculptures of "Moors" purchased by Electress Dorothea and Frederick William I (1620–88), Elector of Brandenburg, for their country palace in Caputh. The seventeenth-century Italian sculptures appear to have been obtained to memorialize the Brandenburg's African colonies, including the Brandenburg Gold Coast and Arguin (the port from which thousands of slaves were also shipped under Portuguese and Dutch rule). They are displayed with Chinese porcelains, beneath a frescoed ceiling depicting allegorical figures of Germany and Africa.

Later, I photographed the death mask of Frederick II of Prussia (1712–86), or Frederick the Great. He may be best known for his Sanssouci Palace and Gardens in Potsdam, meant to rival even the grandeur of Versailles. Amidst Sanssouci's extensive grounds stands the Chinese House. Created not as a scientific study but as an extravagant folly (local Prussians posed for the gilded, life-size sculptures of "Orientals" that surround the pavilion), this work is one of the earliest, and certainly largest, sculptural depictions of Asians in Europe.

Extending the discussion of race in a slightly different manner, Frederick the Great was also among the most dedicated patrons of Voltaire, a man held as the epitome of Enlightenment ideals. Voltaire's 1759 novella *Candide* freely employs literary images of the "primitive" races, but they in turn are used to satirize over-civilized European society. One of Voltaire's characters suggests that Candide's face is an "index of his mind," reflecting positivist ideas that would be explicitly articulated when Lavater claimed to have made a "science" of physiognomy. My interest in the philosopher also led me to *L'École des beaux-arts* in Paris—where such Neoclassical luminaries as Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres and Jacques-Louis David studied and taught—to see a life-size likeness of Voltaire. To my surprise the sculpture had been defaced. A swastika was carved into its forehead and bright red paint dabbed onto the narrow lips in what some might interpret as the ultimate critique of whiteness.



Transported from other times and places, these sculptures are silent reminders of persons once loved, celebrated, and even feared. Photographing them and researching their origins has helped me to better understand not only the conditions of their making, reception, and use, but the malleability of racial categories themselves—including the construction of whiteness. *Profiled* examines these dated ideologies and their aesthetic manifestations, but the project is as much about the present as it is about the past. Cast, carved, burned, and broken, these are the shadows of people who once lived in this world, or in the imaginations of their makers; they are subtle reminders of the philosophical, metaphysical, spiritual, legal, and scientific claims that once depended upon appearance alone. This project seeks to integrate these motionless—yet multivalent—forms into the complex history of racial formation. Encompassing everything from memorials of emperors and kings to gods and goddesses, Orientalist follies, and racial typologies—together they provide a new perspective on what it means to be profiled in our own time.

Ken Gonzales-Day
Los Angeles, 2011

The forehead and nose of the Greek gods and goddesses form almost a straight line.

Johann Joachim Winckelmann, quoted in Johann Kaspar Lavater, *Physiognomy; or The Corresponding Analogy between the confirmation of the features and the ruling passions of the mind...*, 1775-78, p. 251



