

Artist Profile – Kehinde Wiley

b. 1977 Los Angeles, CA; lives and works in New York City

Wiley attended the San Francisco Art Institute where he graduated in 1999 with a BFA, he later attended Yale University and received his MFA in art in 2001. Wiley has received many awards including the Pratt Legend Award, the Asher B. Durand Award, and the W.E.B. Du Bois Medal. In 2017 Wiley was commissioned to paint a portrait of President Barack Obama and that painting is now held permanently in the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery.

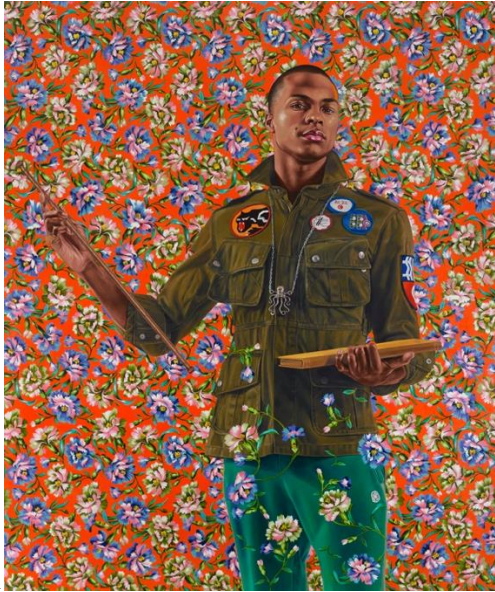
Wiley creates portrait paintings that address themes of colonialism, slavery, and other problematic histories. His goal is to make viewers question the histories of domination and exploitation as well as placing a sense of authority into those who had previously been marginalized. Wiley hopes to repair these historical injustices and encourage society to be more inclusive in the future. Wiley uses portraits of old leaders who were involved in said problematic histories and replicates their pose using African American subjects, not always of the same gender, that are depicted with often assertive expressions. Wiley places his subjects against elaborate floral backgrounds that are inspired by Victorian-era wallpaper and textile designs.

When choosing his subjects, Wiley will often use someone from the general area that the historical issue took place. For example, in Missouri, slave markets were held on the steps of the courthouse until 1820 and at the end of the Civil War there were around 115,000 enslaved people in Missouri. When creating a painting responding to this history, Wiley chose a subject who was from a suburb of St. Louis and painted him wearing a hat with the name of his hometown. By letting his subjects wear these items that show hometown pride, Wiley is giving a platform for self-expression to African American members of the population.

Wiley's process to find a model is termed "street casting", he scans crowds on the street until he spots someone he would like to paint. Not everyone agrees to model for Wiley, but those who do are invited back to his studio to be photographed, these photographs are used as a reference for Wiley's final paintings. Wiley allows each subject to choose their pose from a set of images taken from reproductions of artworks, this allows self-expression from his subjects.

Although Wiley's works are based off of historical issues and events, he also speaks to current issues such as police brutality, the Black Lives Matter Movement, citizenship, roles of men, women, and children, class, and oppression. One way he does this is by incorporating logos and brands in the clothing his subjects wear, letting viewers make associations between the brand and current events.

Examples of Wiley's works include *Anthony of Padua (1)*, *Judith and Holofernes (2)*, and *Jacob de Graeff (3)*.



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