



*Phoenix Art Museum explores the vibrancy of youth, power and potential in upcoming Kehinde Wiley mid-career retrospective*

**KEHINDE WILEY: A NEW REPUBLIC** PRESENTS A SURVEY OF THE NEW YORK-BASED CONTEMPORARY ARTIST'S ICONIC WORKS



PHOENIX (September 8, 2016) – Phoenix Art Museum will explore themes of youth, power and potential through portraiture and contemporary representation in *Kehinde Wiley: A New Republic*, a comprehensive mid-career retrospective of Wiley, one of the most iconic painters to emerge from New York in the last fifty years. *A New Republic*, which originates from Brooklyn Museum and opens in Phoenix on October 7, 2016, will feature nearly 60 paintings, sculptures, videos, and stained glass windows, and explores the remarkable span of the artist's nearly 15-year career, including his signature large-scale paintings that depict young, contemporary, multicultural men and women in the context of classical European portraiture traditions. Wiley will be present for the opening of the exhibition on October 7, beginning at 6 PM, and will be available in the gallery to meet and interact with the greater community.

“Phoenix Art Museum is thrilled to present the work of Kehinde Wiley, a significant contemporary American artist whose work fuses the past and the present in a bold way,” said Amada Cruz, the Sybil Harrington Director. “Wiley’s updating of portraiture for the 21<sup>st</sup> century has resonated with our diverse communities for many years, and we look forward to providing our visitors with access to such relevant and iconic work.”

Born in Los Angeles, Wiley earned his MFA from the Yale University School of Art in 2001 and began his first series of portraits shortly thereafter during a residency at the Studio Museum in Harlem. Using a technique known as “street-casting,” Wiley first set out to photograph and recast assertive and self-empowered young men from the local neighborhood in the style and manner of traditional European painting. Since then he has painted women, along with rap and sports stars, but has focused his attention largely on ordinary men of diverse cultural backgrounds in their everyday clothes. His iconic style combines elements from the Renaissance, Baroque and Rococo art eras with contemporary subjects, eclectic color schemes and a multitude of modern cultural signifiers to present an entirely new art experience that both challenges and defies the status quo.

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*A New Republic* illustrates the evolution of Wiley’s work, pulling from many of his varied projects and exhibitions, from paintings to documentaries to stained glass. A selection from Wiley’s ongoing *World Stage* series is included, highlighting commonalities across cultures in areas with colonial histories. This series, which began in 2006, now has satellite studios in countries with diverse populations that have a history of colonialism, such as China, Brazil, Haiti, Nigeria and Israel, among others.

The exhibition also features several altarpieces from the *Memling* series. Based on 15<sup>th</sup> century works by Flemish painter Hans Memling, Wiley’s reflections of Memling’s style were a significant departure from the large-scale paintings that made Wiley famous. Using wood rather than canvas, these small-scale, deceptively simple works reveal a more intimate, nuanced element to the artist’s more familiar, larger-than-life canon.

Works selected from the *Economy of Grace* series add greater dimension to *A New Republic*, with portraits of street-casted women adorned in re-imagined gowns inspired by Old Master paintings and created by Givenchy’s Ricardo Tisci. With poses drawn from paintings found in the Louvre, couture gowns, and highly-stylized hair and makeup, the portraits defy historical and contemporary Euro-centric ideals of beauty and grace, celebrating the female form in new and intriguing ways.

“Throughout his fourteen year career, Wiley has created a striking counterpoint between his contemporary subjects and the cultural traditions of representation,” said Gilbert Vicario, Selig Family Chief Curator of Phoenix Art Museum. “His work makes an effort to communicate issues around identity, class, power and authority with an authenticity that will resonate deeply with our audience.”

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## About the Exhibition

*Kehinde Wiley: A New Republic* is organized by the Brooklyn Museum. Its Phoenix premiere is made possible through the generous support of PetSmart, with additional support provided by Contemporary Forum, Arizona Public Service (APS), UMB Bank, Joan Cremin and Haig Tchamitch, Meredith and Charlie vonArentschildt, Adam and Iris Singer, along with Gail and Steve Rineberg.

Admission is free for Phoenix Art Museum Members. This special engagement exhibition is offered at \$5 for adults, \$3 for youth aged 6-17, plus general admission (required), which varies according to age. For a full breakdown of general admission prices see [www.phxart.org/visit/hours\\_admission\\_location](http://www.phxart.org/visit/hours_admission_location). During free-access hours from 3 – 9 PM each Wednesday, from 6 – 10 PM on the First Fridays of each month and the second Sunday of each month from 12 – 5 PM, this special engagement exhibition is offered to the general public for \$5 for adults and \$3 for youth aged 6-17.

*Kehinde Wiley: A New Republic* is accompanied by a fully-illustrated catalogue published by the Brooklyn Museum and DelMonico Books/Prestel (\$39.95 paperback; \$49.95 hardcover), and is available for purchase at The Museum Store and online at [www.phxart.org/store](http://www.phxart.org/store).

## About Kehinde Wiley

Kehinde Wiley was born in South Central Los Angeles in 1977. One of two sets of fraternal twins in his family, Wiley grew up in Southern California, spending his time in galleries and museums, as well as participating in an art exchange program in the then Soviet Union. He graduated with a MFA from Yale University School of Art in 2001 and rocketed to fame for his images of young African-American males depicted in poses drawn from portraits of rich and powerful men in art history by renowned painters like Reynolds, Gainsborough, Titian, Ingres and Tiepolo. In 2005, VH1 Hip Hop Honors Awards commissioned Kehinde Wiley to paint portraits of the hip-hop honorees, which resulted in a compelling mix of popular culture and Old Master tropes and styles. Since then Wiley has embarked on a series of works that explore other cultures. His 2007 series *The World Stage: China* showed young African American men appropriating the attitudes, facial expression and poses of Chinese Communist propaganda. His 2008 series *The World Stage: Africa, Dakar-Lagos* took him to Africa and saw him working with young men from local slums to explore the forms and symbols of African tribal art and post-colonial liberation. One year later, he went to Brazil and worked with young men from the favelas in Rio de Janeiro in order to produce the series *The World Stage: Brazil*. His work has been widely exhibited in museums across the world, including *The World Stage: Israel* (Contemporary Jewish Museum, San Francisco and The Jewish Museum, New York, 2012-2013); *Smile* (Utah Museum of Contemporary Art, Salt Lake City, 2012); *Kehinde Wiley: Selected Works* (SCAD Museum of Art, Savannah, GA, 2011); *The World Stage: Africa, Lagos-Dakar*, artpace and The Studio Museum (San Antonio and Harlem, 2008-2009); *Focus: Kehinde Wiley*, Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth (2008); *Kehinde Wiley*, Portland Art Museum (2007); *Redefined: Modern and Contemporary Art from the Collection*, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington DC (2006) and *Passing/Posing: The Paintings of Kehinde Wiley*, The Brooklyn Museum of Art (2004).

## About Phoenix Art Museum

Phoenix Art Museum has provided access to visual arts and educational programs in Arizona for more than 50 years and is the largest art museum in the Southwestern United States. In addition to an annual calendar of special exhibitions, Phoenix Art Museum's permanent collection galleries are drawn from more than 18,000 objects of modern and contemporary art, fashion design, and photography, as well as American, Asian, Latin American, and European art. Each month, the Museum hosts a wide variety of public programs, including lectures, performances, tours, workshops, and film screenings designed for audiences of all ages to enjoy.

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IMAGE CREDITS PAGE 1: *Kehinde Wiley: A New Republic* is organized by the Brooklyn Museum and made possible by the Henry Luce Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts. 1. Kehinde Wiley, *Portrait of Mary Hill, Lady Killigrew*, 2013. Oil on canvas. Collections of Guillermo Nicolas and James Foster. © Kehinde Wiley. (Photo: Stephen White, courtesy of Stephen Friedman Gallery). 2. Kehinde Wiley, *Portrait of a Venetian Ambassador, Aged 59, II*, 2006. Oil on canvas. Private collection, Pacific Palisades, California, courtesy of Roberts & Tilton, Culver City, California. © Kehinde Wiley. (Photo: Anthony Cuñha, courtesy of Roberts & Tilton) 3. Kehinde Wiley, *Princess Victoire of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha*, 2012. Oil on linen. Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Sean McCarthy. © Kehinde Wiley. (Photo: Jason Wyche) IMAGE CREDITS PAGE 2: Kehinde Wiley, *Morpheus*, 2008. Oil on canvas. Courtesy of Roberts & Tilton, Culver City, California; Sean Kelly, New York; Galerie Daniel Templon, Paris; and Stephen Friedman Gallery, London © Kehinde Wiley.

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