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April 26, 2016

Kehinde Wiley: A New Republic

A mid-career retrospective of a prolific artist opens June 11

An exhibition featuring portraits by one of the country's leading contemporary artists will be on view June 11 through September 5 at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. Composed of more than 50 monumental paintings and sculptures, *Kehinde Wiley: A New Republic* raises intriguing questions about race, identity, and the politics of representation.

Recognized for his portrayal of contemporary African American men using conventions of traditional European portraiture, Wiley has expanded his vision to include women and cultures from around the globe. In addition to lesser-known early works, this exhibition also explores new developments, which include bronze busts, "paintings" in stained glass, and works from his *World Stage* series.

"Kehinde Wiley is one of the most popular artists in America today," Director Alex Nyerger said. "The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts was one of the first comprehensive art museums to acquire his portraits, and we are thrilled to present a larger selection of his work to the public. These paintings and sculptures challenge centuries of stereotypes, and we hope our visitors will feel engaged and make the connection between Wiley's works and those in our galleries."

Wiley selects the subjects for his portraits through the process of "street casting" by enlisting young men and women to pose for his paintings. These people, wearing hoodies, jeans, and baseball caps, are contrasted against ornate backgrounds that evoke an aristocratic style of portraiture. By replacing European aristocrats with black subjects, Wiley points out the absence of African Americans from such historical narratives.

The works on view will include selections from his ongoing *World Stage* series, where Wiley's work has taken on a global perspective. In addition to establishing a studio in Beijing, China, Wiley has spent time in Africa, France, Israel, Jamaica, Haiti, and other countries. Portraits of women from the *An Economy of Grace* series include *The Two Sisters*, which was lent to the exhibition by VMFA Board of Trustees President William A. Royall, Jr., and his wife, Pamela.



Kehinde Wiley (American), *Willem van Heythuysen*, 2006. oil, enamel on canvas. Arthur and Margaret Glasgow Fund Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond

To help visitors make their own connections between the works in the exhibition and works in the collection, VMFA has prepared a space, *The Art Lounge: Connect Kehinde Wiley to VMFA*, where visitors can access art history books, touch screens, and free cards to look deeper into Wiley's artistic process. A map also will be available to help locate all 12 corresponding works in VMFA's galleries.

The exhibition is organized by the Brooklyn Museum and curated by Eugenie Tsai, John and Barbara Vogelstein Curator of Contemporary Art at the Brooklyn Museum. VMFA's Associate Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art, Sarah Eckhardt, PhD., is the organizing curator for VMFA.

Kehinde Wiley: A New Republic is made possible by the Henry Luce Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts. The presenting sponsor at VMFA is Altria Group with additional institutional support from the Julia Louise Reynolds Fund, Norfolk Southern Corporation, and the Richmond (VA) Chapter, The Links, Incorporated.

About Kehinde Wiley

Kehinde Wiley was born in Los Angeles and received a BFA from San Francisco Art Institute in 1999, as well as an MFA from Yale University in 2001. His works are in the collections of more than 40 museums, such as the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; and the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. Wiley has had solo exhibitions at the Phoenix Art Museum; the Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio; the Portland Art Museum, Oregon; the Jewish Museum, New York; and the Studio Museum in Harlem, among other museums. His work has been the subject of 10 monographs to date. Wiley is currently working on multiple projects, including a monumental painting for a commission with "ART in Embassies" for the new United States Embassy in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.

About the exhibition

- **TITLE:** *Kehinde Wiley: A New Republic*
- **DATES:** June 11 – September 5, 2016
- **CURATOR:** Coordinating curator for VMFA is Dr. Sarah Eckhardt, Assistant Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art
- **ORGANIZER:** Eugenie Tsai, John and Barbara Vogelstein Curator of Contemporary Art, Brooklyn Museum.
- **NUMBER OF WORKS:** 55
- **ITINERARY:** Brooklyn Museum of Art: Feb. 20–May 24, 2015; Modern Art Museum, Fort Worth, Texas: Sept. 20, 2015–Jan. 10, 2016; Seattle Art Museum: Feb. 11–May 8, 2016; Virginia Museum of Fine Arts: June 11–Sept. 5, 2016; Phoenix Museum of Art; Oct. 7, 2016–Jan. 8, 2017; Toledo Museum of Art: February 10 – May 14, 2017; Oklahoma City Museum of Art: June 16 – Sept. 10, 2017
- **ADMISSION:** Free for VMFA members, children 6 and under, and active military personnel and their immediate families; \$12 for adults; \$10 for seniors 65+, adult groups of 10 or more, college students, youth (7-17) and students with school ID.
- **CATALOGUE:** A fully illustrated catalogue published by the Brooklyn Museum and DelMonico Books/Prestel accompanies the exhibition and will be available for purchase at the VMFA Gift Shop (\$39.95 paperback; \$49.95 hardcover).

About the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

VMFA's permanent collection encompasses more than 35,000 works of art spanning 5,000 years of world history. Its collections of Art Nouveau and Art Deco, English silver, Fabergé, and the art of South Asia are among the finest in the nation. With acclaimed holdings in American, British Sporting, Impressionist and Post-Impressionist, and Modern and Contemporary art – and additional strengths in African, Ancient, East Asian, and European – VMFA ranks as one of the top comprehensive art museums in the United States. Programs include educational activities and studio classes for all ages, plus lively after-hours events. VMFA's Statewide Partnership program includes traveling exhibitions, artist and teacher workshops, and lectures across the Commonwealth. VMFA, a certified Virginia Green attraction, is open 365 days a year and general admission is always free. For additional information, telephone 804-340-1400 or visit www.vmfa.museum.

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