



ART in Embassies Exhibition

UNITED STATES EMBASSY PRETORIA

IROZEALb (iona rozedal brown)

R,S: Pod 222: The Reunion (Song of Solomon 5:10-11), 2013

Acrylic, ink, and krink on wood panel, 48 x 60 in. (121,9 x 152,4 cm)

Courtesy of the artist and Edward Tyler Nahem Fine Art, New York, New York

ART in Embassies



Established in 1963, the U.S. Department of State's office of ART in Embassies (AIE) plays a vital role in our nation's public diplomacy through a culturally expansive mission, creating temporary and permanent exhibitions, artist programming, and publications. The Museum of Modern Art first envisioned this global visual arts program a decade earlier. In the early 1960s, President John F. Kennedy formalized it, naming the program's first director. Now with over 200 venues, AIE curates temporary and permanent exhibitions for the representational spaces of all U.S. chanceries, consulates, and embassy residences worldwide, selecting and commissioning contemporary art from the U.S. and the host countries. These exhibitions provide international audiences with a sense of the quality, scope, and diversity of both countries' art and culture, establishing AIE's presence in more countries than any other U.S. foundation or arts organization.

AIE's exhibitions allow foreign citizens, many of whom might never travel to the United States, to personally experience the depth and breadth of our artistic heritage and values, making what has been called a: "footprint that can be left where people have no opportunity to see American art."

For fifty years, ART in Embassies has played an active diplomatic role by creating meaningful cultural exchange through the visual arts. The exhibitions, permanent collections and artist exchanges connect people from the farthest corners of an international community. Extending our reach, amplifying our voice, and demonstrating our inclusiveness are strategic imperatives for America. ART in Embassies cultivates relationships that transcend boundaries, building trust, mutual respect and understanding among peoples. It is a fulcrum of America's global leadership as we continue to work for freedom, human rights and peace around the world.

*John Forbes Kerry
U.S. Secretary of State*

TRANSFORMATIONS

Welcome to Hill House, the historic residence of the United States Ambassador to South Africa, which my family and I are proud to call home. This house has long been a beacon and a site of challenging debates in decades when an oppressive silence governed Pretoria. We are pleased that Hill House now hosts guests in a thriving, out loud democracy.

This home is a tributary at the confluence of American and South African currents, and as such the magnificent art in this residence is intended as a portal between the cultures at a moment of profound transitions. Just as vibrant questioning is essential for democratic growth, an inspired work of art is not a resting place for the eye but should rather excite reflection. If art consoles at all it is only after being the cause of the agitation.

The art Raina and I have selected to display at Hill House explores many of the questions with which we, Americans and South Africans alike, continue to wrestle. Each of the pieces interrogates at some level issues of identity, culture and agency over historic narratives. While all stunning in their own right, as a

collective exhibition it is hoped that they will begin an ongoing dialogue with a South African aesthetic at the point of the twentieth anniversary of this artistically vibrant republic.

We have chosen *Transformations* as the theme of this exhibition. This seems appropriate in an age when we have all become more sharply attuned to the need for transformational approaches to overcome the acute economic disparities in our societies. One of the most important aspects of the experience of visual art is not just in how it allows us to connect with our own inner truths, but in how it can unsettle convention and compel the viewer in an incorruptible moment to examine shades of other lived experiences. It is a means of severing power from itself. There is an equality in inspiration and in disorientation, and sometimes a developing empathy.

The artists represented on our walls inhabit this sense of metamorphosis and dislocated identities. In a reverse Middle Passage, they have emerged in a new Africa bearing bold mysteries. Glenn Ligon and Hank Willis Thomas give shape to the Invisible Other

TRANSFORMATIONS

with styles that reveal through concealment. Lorna Simpson and Whitfield Lovell work through wood and collage depicting African American women with a haunting and ephemeral pride. Iona Rozeal Brown and Kehinde Wiley birth brightly hued characters with the cross cultural, unobstructed gaze of hip hop. Derrick Adams cobbles a timeless urbanscape that might be viewed from the heights of Harlem or Thembisa township. Sanford Biggers and Robert Pruitt use traditional mediums of quilt and paper to crash through with their forward marching Afrofuturism. And the South African entry by Siemon Allen whistles back at the lot with his evocation of Sophiatown rhythms and a reminder that Blues People straddle both sides of the Atlantic.

I am incredibly fortunate to serve as Ambassador to South Africa now, on the twentieth anniversary of democracy here and the fiftieth anniversary of the passage of the civil rights act in the United States. Our countries have been through painful struggles rooted in inequality, and we both continue to meet the lingering challenges of these dark histories. Our people reach daily towards the goals of every democratic society, striving for greater prosperity and dignity

for all. At its heart, this ART in Embassies exhibition is about the thousands of human connections that bonded our two nations' struggles to secure equal rights for all its peoples, and the thousands more that will carry us into transformed futures together.

This exhibition is made possible by curator Camille Benton and the energetic staff of ART in Embassies and the considerable generosity of lenders. A special note of appreciation goes to Thelma Golden, the spirited visionary at the helm of the Studio Museum in Harlem who guided our selections with her nimble mind and passion for these artists.

I hope that the works we have selected will move your spirit just as they have enriched our lives. Thank you for coming to share these works with my family, and we look forward to welcoming you back to Hill House soon.

**Ambassador Patrick Gaspard
and Ms. Raina Washington**

Pretoria, May 2014

DERRICK ADAMS 1970

Derrick Adams is a multi-disciplinary, New York based artist with practices rooted in the philosophies of deconstructivism and the formation and perception of ideals attached to objects, colors, textures, symbols and ideologies. His focus is on fragmentation and manipulation of structure and surface – exploring shape-shifting forces of popular culture and its counter balances in our lives...shedding light on persuasive, performative, and often duplicitous identities, as well as on architectural objects and history. Adams's work explores the relationship between man and monument as they coexist in the landscape as representations of one another. The collage works on paper create minimal geometric constructions of angular human figures that seemingly live in a state of deconstruction, at the same time, as if in the process of being built.

Adams received his Master of Fine Arts degree from Columbia University, New York City, and his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, and is a Skowhegan and Marie Walsh Sharpe Art Foundation alumnus. He is a recipient of a 2009 Louis Comfort Tiffany Award. Exhibition and performance highlights include: MoMA PS1 Greater New York 2005, PERFORMA 05, Brooklyn Museum Open House, The Kitchen NYC 2010, The Bearden Project at the Studio Museum in Harlem 2011/12, a four-night solo performance in BAM's new Fisher Theater in September 2012, and a solo exhibition at Galerie Anne de Villepoix in Paris, 2013.

www.derrickadams.com

***Kingdom Come**, 2013. Mixed media collage on paper, 50 x 50 in. (127 x 127 cm). Courtesy of the artist, New York, New York*



SIEMON ALLEN 1970

Siemon Allen is a South African artist who currently lives and works in the United States. While in South Africa, Allen was a founding member of the FLAT gallery, an artist's initiative that operated in Durban from 1993 to 1995. His work was included in the 2nd Johannesburg Biennale as part of the exhibition *Graft* and also in the *Vita 93* and *Vita 98* exhibitions. Allen is currently a visiting professor in the Sculpture and Extended Media program at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Virginia.

“My work reflects a number of distinct but interconnected activities. I collect, organize, and display artifacts. I sample sounds from various media sources and re-configure these to produce audio works, some integrated into sculptural works and others covertly presented in specific sites. I construct large hand-woven panels with cast off movie film or videotape that operate between painting and architectural enclosure. I design and produce limited edition artist's books.

The thread that runs through all of these seemingly varied practices is my need to reconcile my interests in the world of the political with the language of the aesthetic. I try to approach any given project with an attitude of detached research. I want the social critique that inevitably arises out of my work to operate subtly and to reflect what I see as the contradictory and complex nature of South African identity. Ironically, most of my work, is the result of my being in the United States, where I find myself looking at the image of South Africa as I might reconstruct it—through historical artifacts (stamps), through current media (newspapers) or through received audio (sampled sound works). To some extent it speaks to what I feel is a kind of separation from the source, and leads me to consider how much of this work is, at its core, an investigation into notions of branding and identity through displacement.”

www.siemonallen.org

Rave, 2010. Epson HD ink on Hahnemühle Museum Etching Fine Art Paper on Sintra, 78 x 78 in. (198,1 x 198,1 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Richmond, Virginia and Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa. Photographed by Henry Throop



SANFORD BIGGERS

A Los Angeles native working in New York City, Sanford Biggers creates artworks that integrate film, video, installation, sculpture, drawing, original music, and performance. He intentionally complicates issues such as hip hop, Buddhism, politics, identity, and art history in order to offer new perspectives and associations for established symbols. Through a multi-disciplinary formal process and a syncretic creative approach he makes works that are as aesthetically pleasing as they are conceptual.

Sanford Biggers's art first received critical attention for his collaborative work in the *Freestyle* exhibition at the Studio Museum in Harlem in 2001, followed by his inclusion in the Whitney Biennial in 2002. Since then his installations, videos, and performances have

appeared in venues worldwide including Tate Britain and Tate Modern in London, England; the Whitney Museum and Studio Museum in Harlem, New York; Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco, California; as well as institutions in China, Germany, Hungary, Japan, Poland and Russia. Biggers is assistant professor at Columbia University's Visual Arts program and a board member of Sculpture Center, Soho House and the CUE Foundation. He also taught in Virginia Commonwealth University's Sculpture and Extended Media program and was a visiting scholar in Harvard University's Visual and Environmental Science Department in 2009.

www.sanfordbiggers.com

Quilt #17 (Sugar, Pork, Bourbon), 2013
Repurposed quilt, fabric treated acrylic, spray paint and silkscreen, 71 3/16 x 79 3/16 in. (180,8 x 201,2 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, New York, New York, and Massimo De Carlo, Milan, Italy. Photographed by Henry Throop



NICHOLAS HLOBO 1975

In his work, Nicholas Hlobo weaves together disparate materials including satin ribbon, leather and the inner tubes of car tires. Anchored in dense Xhosa cultural references and his experiences of living in post-apartheid South Africa, his work is highly individual and seductively tactile, distinguished by its wide ranging sources, sensitivity to materials, and clarity of vision.

Hlobo has stated: “Through my works I attempt to create conversations that explore certain issues within my culture as a South African. The conversations become a way of questioning people’s perceptions around issues of masculinity, gender, race and ethnicity.”

Nicholas Hlobo was born in Cape Town, and lives in Johannesburg. He has a Bachelor of Technology degree from the Witswatersrand Technikon, Johannesburg (2002), and has had solo exhibitions at Locust Projects, Miami, (2013); the National Museum of Art, Architecture, and Design, Oslo (2011); the Level 2 Gallery at Tate Modern, London (2008); and the Boston ICA (as part of the *Momentum* series, 2008), among other institutions. In 2011 Hlobo showed newly commissioned work on *ILLUMInations*, the 54th International Art Exhibition of the Venice Biennale; his work also appeared in Venice in *The World Belongs to You, works from the Pinault Collection* at the Palazzo Grassi, and the Future Generation Art Prize exhibition at the Palazzo Papadopoli.

www.stevenson.info/artists/hlobo.html

Work Not Illustrated

iROZEALb (iona rozeal brown) 1991

iRozealb's most recent paintings are an unprecedented mixture of anonymous courtesans, geisha, and other Japanese subjects. She explores the theme of Afro-Asiatic allegory, addressing the global influence of African American culture as fetish. Brown's work signals the energy, critical direction, and complexity of contemporary practice that is engaged in a tenuous marriage of commerce and resistance. In her paintings, Brown intertextually juxtaposes color and texture, a technique that parallels her artistry as a DJ. Both practices emerge from a process of self-sampling and remixing, devices employed by media to create its own endless permutations or representations and meanings. Throughout her work, Brown brings a subversive reading to her art, and manipulates hyper self-conscious imagery to articulate contemporary concerns regarding race, gender, and class.

iROZEALb earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from San Francisco Art Institute, California, in 1999, and a Master of Fine Arts degree from Yale University School of Art, New Haven, Connecticut, in 2002. She attended Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Maine, in 1999, and Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, New York, in 1996.

www.gfineartdc.com



Divine Sleektah 2
(Archangel Mudra), 2009-2011
Acrylic and ink on panel,
52 x 38 ½ in. (132,1 x 97,8 cm)
Courtesy of the artist and G Fine Art,
Washington, D.C. Photographed by
Henry Throop



R,S: Pod 222: The Reunion (Song of Solomon 5:10-11), 2013. Acrylic, ink, and krink on wood panel, 48 x 60 in. (121,9 x 152,4 cm)
Courtesy of the artist and Edward Tyler Nahem Fine Art, New York, New York

GLENN LIGON 1970

Glenn Ligon first became known in the late 1980s for his text-based paintings referring to the political and racially charged writings of Zora Neale Hurston, Jesse Jackson, and Richard Pryor, among others. Over time, language-based conceptualism became his primary concern, as notions of high art modernism gave way to the fraught cultural atmosphere of the time — one profoundly affected by AIDS and racial tension. While his text-based paintings are perhaps his best known works, they are only one part of a larger, interdisciplinary practice that includes his re-interpretations of 1970s Black history coloring books, and *A Feast of Scraps*, a photo album of family snapshots into which he inserts pornographic and stereotypical images of Black men. Whether working with photography, drawing, installation, or neon reliefs, Ligon's years of artistic engagement speak to his identification as an African American gay man within a world fraught with identity politics.

Upon entering office and moving into the White House, President Barack Obama installed Ligon's *Black Like Me No. 2* (1992) in his family's private living quarters. In the spring of 2011, Ligon was the subject of a major retrospective at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City.

Glenn Ligon received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Wesleyan University, Middletown, Connecticut, in 1982, and attended the Whitney Museum Independent Study Program in 1985. He lives and works in New York City.

www.artspace.com/glenn_ligon

Stranger Study #18, 2013. Oilstick and coal dust on canvas, 40 x 30 in. (101,6 x 76,2 cm). Courtesy of the artist, New York, New York



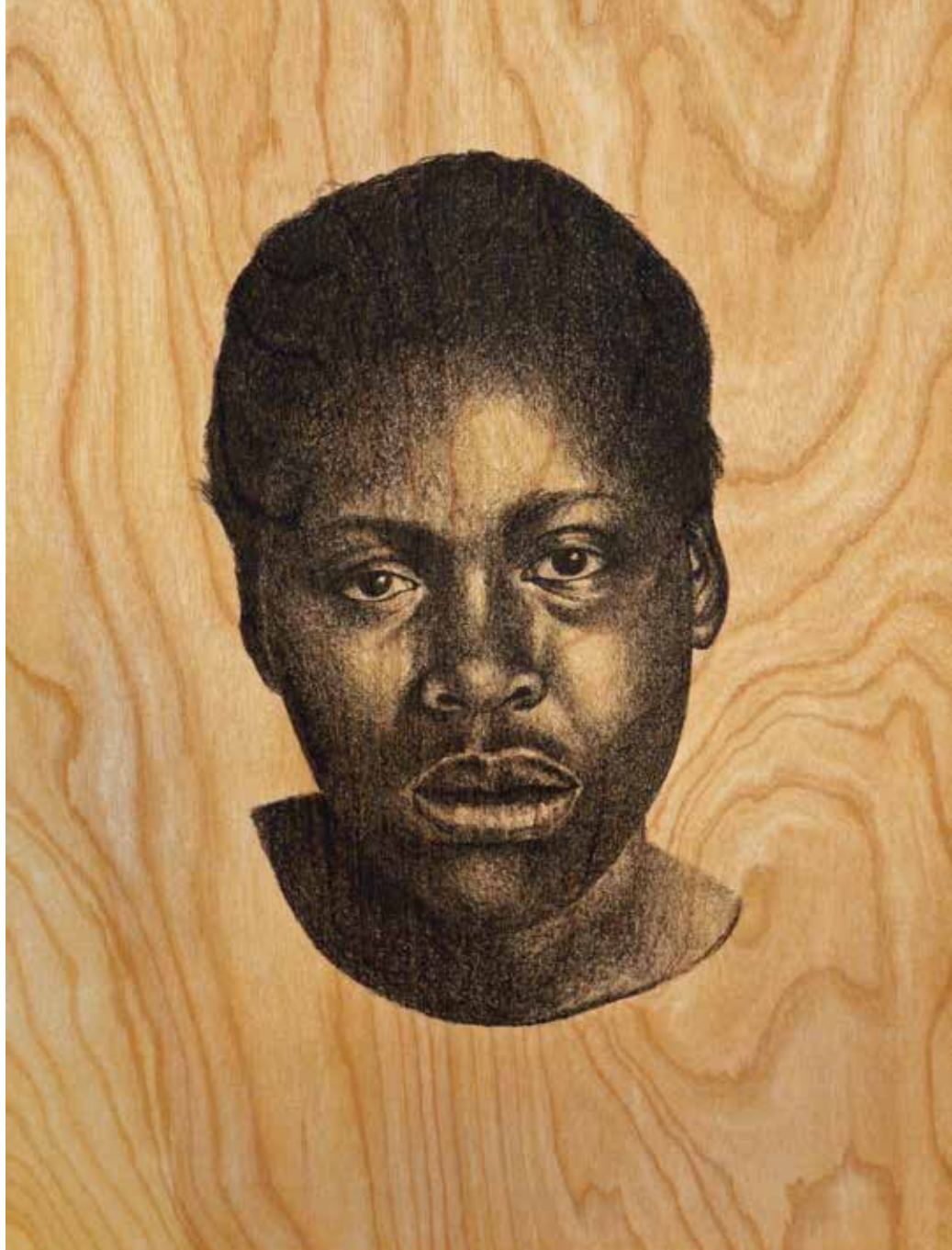
WHITFIELD LOVELL 1959

Whitfield Lovell is internationally renowned for his installations that incorporate masterful Conté crayon portraits of anonymous African Americans from the time period between the Emancipation Proclamation and the Civil Rights Movement. Using vintage photography as his source, Lovell often pairs his subjects with found objects, evoking personal ideas of memories, ancestral connections, and the collective American past. In 2007 Lovell was awarded a MacArthur Foundation fellowship, often referred to as the “genius grant.”

Works by Whitfield Lovell are featured in major museum collections including those of the Whitney Museum of American Art and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, both in New York City; the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Smithsonian American Art Museum, and Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, all in Washington, D.C.; Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia; Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut; Hunter Museum of American Art, Chattanooga, Tennessee; both the Brooklyn Museum and The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York; Seattle Art Museum, Washington, and many others.

[www.dcmooregallery.com/
artists/whitfield-lovell](http://www.dcmooregallery.com/artists/whitfield-lovell)

Sparrow, TP, 2011. *Lithograph on wood veneer, mounted, 17 ½ x 13 in. (44,5 x 33 cm).*
Courtesy of the artist and DC Moore Gallery, New York, New York



ROBERT PRUITT 1964

Robert Pruitt is an artist living and working in Galveston, Texas. He creates drawings and sculptures about the complexity of Black identity by combining contrasting signs and imagery of disparate Black influences and aesthetics. He layers science fiction, hip-hop music, comic books, and Black political and social struggles into layered portraits of his friends and community.

Pruitt has exhibited work at the Museum of Fine Arts Houston, Texas; The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York; the 2006 Whitney Biennial, New York City, among other venues. He is a founding member of the artist collective Otabenga Jones & Associates.

www.robert-pruitt.com

Sun Spirit, undated. Charcoal on paper, 76 x 60 in. (193 x 152,4 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Galveston, Texas. Photographed by Henry Throop



MARY SIBANDE 1982

Mary Sibande lives and works in Johannesburg. She obtained a diploma in fine arts at the Witwatersrand Technikon in 2004, and a Bachelor of Technology degree in fine art from the University of Johannesburg in 2007. Sibande has taken part in a number of group shows and workshops.

In her paintings and sculptures, Sibande employs the human form as a vehicle to explore the construction of identity in a post-colonial South African context. She also attempts to critique stereotypical depictions of women, particularly black women in South African society. The body, and particularly the skin and clothing, are sites where history is contested and where fantasies play out. Sibande looks at the generational disempowerment of black woman, and in this sense

her work is informed by postcolonial theory. Domestic settings act as stages where historical psycho-dramas play out. Sibande's work also highlights how privileged ideals of beauty and femininity, aspired to by black woman, discipline their bodies through rituals of imitation and reproduction. She inverts the social power indexed by Victorian costumes by reconfiguring it as a domestic worker's "uniform" complicating the colonial relationship between "slave" and "master" in a post-apartheid context.

[www.gallerymomo.com/
artists/mary-sibande/images/index](http://www.gallerymomo.com/artists/mary-sibande/images/index)

Work Not Illustrated

LORNA SIMPSON 1960

Lorna Simpson was born in 1960 in Brooklyn, New York, and received her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in photography from the School of Visual Arts, New York City, and her Master of Fine Arts degree from the University of California, San Diego. She first became well-known in the mid-1980s for her large scale photograph-and-text works that confront and challenge narrow, conventional views of gender, identity, culture, history, and memory. With the African American woman as a visual point of departure, Simpson uses the figure to examine the ways in which gender and culture shape the interactions, relationships and experiences of our lives in contemporary multi-racial America.

Her work has been exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; the Miami Art Museum, Florida; the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota; and the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin, Ireland. She has participated in such important international exhibitions as the Hugo Boss Prize at the Guggenheim Museum, New York, and Documenta XI in Kassel, Germany. Simpson's first mid-career survey was at the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art, California; the Miami Museum of Art, Florida; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the Kalamazoo Institute of Art, Michigan; and the Gibbes Museum in Charleston, South Carolina.

<http://lsimpsonstudio.com>

Collages. Each, of twelve: 10 ¹³/₁₆ x 7 ⁵/₁₆ in. (27,5 x 18,6 cm). Courtesy of the artist and Salon 94, New York, New York



A Friend, 2012



Touching, 2012



Her, 2012



Green Hornet, 2012



Complicated, 2012



Blackeye, 2012



Sunglasses, 2012



Show Girl, 2012



Use Her in a Sentence, 2012



Daisy Chain, 2012



Black and Silver, 2012



Sometimes, 2012

HANK WILLIS THOMAS 1976

Hank Willis Thomas is a photo conceptual artist working primarily with themes related to identity, history, and popular culture. He received his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, New York City, and his Master of Fine Arts (MFA) degree in photography, along with a Master of Arts degree in visual criticism, from California College of the Arts (CCA) in San Francisco, California. Thomas acted as a visiting professor at CCA and in the MFA programs at Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, and ICP/Bard, New York City, and has lectured at Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut; Princeton University, New Jersey; the Birmingham

Museum of Art, England; and the Musée du Quai Branly in Paris, France. He received a new media fellowship through the Tribeca Film Institute and was an artist in residence at John Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland. In 2011 Thomas was a fellow at the W.E.B. DuBois Institute at Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts. Thomas's work is in numerous public collections including those of the Museum of Modern Art, the Guggenheim Museum, the Brooklyn Museum, and the Whitney Museum of American Art, all in New York City; the High Museum of Art, Atlanta, Georgia, and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas.

<http://hankwillisthomas.com>

***The Traveler**, 2012. Digital c-print, 40 x 30 in. (101,6 x 76,2 cm)
Hank Willis Thomas in collaboration with Sanford Biggers. Courtesy of the artists and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York, New York*



KEHINDE WILEY 1977

Los Angeles native and New York based visual artist, Kehinde Wiley has firmly situated himself within art history's portrait painting tradition. As a contemporary descendent of a long line of portraitists, including Joshua Reynolds (1723-92), Thomas Gainsborough (1727-88), Titian (1488/90-1576), Jean Dominique Ingres (1780-1867), among others, Wiley, engages the signs and visual rhetoric of the heroic, powerful, majestic, and the sublime in his representation of urban, black and brown men found around the world.

Initially, Wiley's portraits were based on photographs taken of young men found on the streets of Harlem. As his practice grew, his eye led him toward an international view, including models found in urban landscapes throughout the world such as Mumbai, India; Senegal, Dakar; and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, among other places – accumulating a vast body of work called, *The World Stage*.

The models, dressed in their everyday clothing most of which is based on the notion of far-reaching Western ideals of style, are asked to assume poses found in paintings or sculptures representative of

the history of their surroundings. This juxtaposition of the “old” inherited by the “new” – who often have no visual inheritance of which to speak – immediately provides a discourse that is at once visceral and cerebral in scope.

Kehinde Wiley received his Master of Fine Arts degree from Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, in 2001. Shortly thereafter, he became an artist-in-residence at the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York. Wiley's work has been the subject of exhibitions worldwide and is in the permanent collections of museums including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City; the Studio Museum in Harlem; the Denver Art Museum, Colorado; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, California; The Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota; the High Museum, Atlanta, Georgia; the Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio; the Phoenix Art Museum, Arizona; the Milwaukee Art Museum, Minnesota; the Jewish Museum, New York; and the Brooklyn Museum, New York.

www.kehindewiley.com



Algorna Study II, 2008. Oil wash on paper, 40 x 36 in. (101,6 x 91,4 cm)
Collection of Julie and Bennett Roberts, Los Angeles, California; courtesy of Roberts & Tilton, Culver City, California
Photographed by Henry Throop

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