

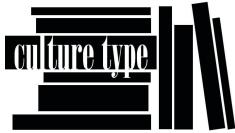
Stephen Friedman Gallery

Culture Type

Kehinde Wiley's Black Rock Senegal Residency Announced 16 Artists Selected for Inagural Year

Victoria L Valentine

22 July 2019



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Black Rock Senegal. | Photo by Mamadou Gomis, © Kehinde Wiley

BLACK ROCK SENEGAL announced the first group of artists selected for the residency program established by Kehinde Wiley. Located in Dakar, [Black Rock](#) is hosting an international slate of 16 artists working in a variety of disciplines, including painting, sculpture, photography, film, and one writer, from August 2019 and April 2020. The news was released today by Stephen Friedman, Wiley's London gallery.

Wiley, 42, whose own career was advanced early on by the Studio Museum in Harlem's Artist-in-Residence program, has been developing Black Rock for more than a decade. He first announced the program in March. The description for the residency states that it was started "to incite change in the global discourse around West Africa in the context of creative evolution."

The residency brings artists to an impressive, newly constructed waterfront compound to live and work for one to three months, with three artists accommodated on site a time. Selected artists are provided with room and board, individual studios, local staff to help them get acclimated to the city, and a language tutor. Residents also receive a stipend for incidentals and art supplies.

A panel of leading artists and curators selected the residency participants from more than 700 applications. The selection committee was comprised of artists Mickalene Thomas and Carrie Mae Weems; Thelma Golden, director and chief curator of the Studio Museum in Harlem; Christine Riding, head of the curatorial department at The National Gallery in London; Thomas Lax, curator of performance and media art at the Museum of Modern Art in New York; and Swizz Beatz, the artist, collector, and music producer.

The following artists were selected for the 2019-20 session:

[Tunji Adeniyi-Jones](#) (UK, Painting)
[Laurence Bonvin](#) (Switzerland, Film)
[Sonya Clark](#) (USA, Sculpture)
[Yagazie Emezi](#) (Nigeria, Photography)
[Nona Faustine](#) (USA, Photography)
[Devin B. Johnson](#) (USA, Painting)
[Heather Jones](#) (USA, Textiles)

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Grace Lynne (USA, Painting)

Zanoxolo Sylvester Mqeku (South Africa, Sculpture)

Kelechi Njoku (Nigeria, Writing)

Chelsea Odufu (USA, Film)

Kambui Olujimi (USA, Mixed Media)

Zohra Opoku (Ghana, Mixed Media)

Rafael RG (Brazil, Mixed Media)

Tajh Rust (USA, Painting)

Ytasha Womack (USA, Film)

WHILE IN RESIDENCE at the Studio Museum in Harlem (2001-02), Wiley began to focus his practice on portraiture with subjects cast from the streets of the neighborhood. Today, the Los Angeles-born, New York-based artist's widely recognized portraits weigh the dynamics of power, culture, and historic narratives. His works reimagine classic European portraits by replacing their subjects with black and brown men and women he personally identifies from various U.S. cities and the capitals of Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Caribbean, and Latin America.

A hallmark of his career, Wiley was selected by President Barack Obama to paint his official portrait for the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C. The Smithsonian museum's first presidential portrait by an African American artist was unveiled in February 2018.

Wiley was honored by the Gordon Parks Foundation last month. "Tahiti-Kehinde Wiley," an exhibition of works that reflect the artist's recent time in Tahiti, is on view at Galerie Templon in Paris through July 24. Coming soon, "Rumors of War," his first public artwork, will debut in Times Square in New York City in September. In December, the sculpture will be permanently installed at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond. In October, "Napoleon Leading the Army over the Alps," the triumphant horseback portrait Wiley made in 2005, will be displayed alongside the 1801 Jacques-Louis David painting that inspired it, at Château de Malmaison in western Paris. The paintings will also be united at the Brooklyn Museum in January 2020.

WILEY'S ACCLAIM has positioned him to provide opportunities for others. There are countless artist residencies around the world, but few based in Africa. Wiley's late father was from Nigeria and the artist has been familiar with Senegal for more than two decades.

"I came here when I was 19 years old. My mother and father broke up before I was born, and I grew up in South-Central Los Angeles with my mom. Back then Air Afrique flew through Dakar to Nigeria, so my first experience in Africa was here," Wiley told the New York Times. "I made friends with several Senegalese people in America. One was Boubacar Kone, who had married the actress C.C.H. Pounder — he passed away. They had a private museum here. They would support artists and had an artists-in-residency, as well. So my engagement here goes back a long way."

Named for the volcanic black rocks that line the property's shoreline, Black Rock includes a residence and studio space for Wiley, who is establishing a base in Dakar where he will spend months at a time and also interact with the artists in residence.

Black Rock was designed by Senegalese architect Abib Djenne with interiors by Fatiya Djenne and Aissa Dione, a textile designer based in Dakar and Paris. There is also in-house chef. The experience blends art, architecture, nature, and community.

"An artist can come here and have an experience that is at once about getting work done and about rigor," Wiley told the Times. "But I think it's also about being able to just spoil the artist and make them feel like they're respected as thinkers and as part of the culture." CT