

Stephen Friedman Gallery

Evening Standard

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The American painter will also turn his attention to the world-class landscapes housed in the gallery's collection

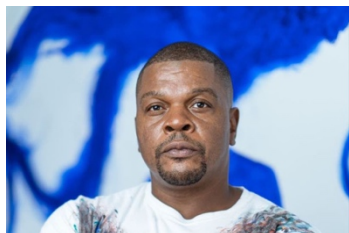


Image: Kehinde Wiley. Photographer: Abdoulaye Ndao

Black Londoners will take centre stage later this year in a groundbreaking National Gallery show by American artist Kehinde Wiley. Wiley, who became the first black artist to paint an official portrait of a US President when his painting of Barack Obama was commissioned (he has also painted Michael Jackson), will put on the exhibition this winter.

Best known for his portraits that show contemporary people of colour in the settings of traditional Old Master paintings, Wiley will turn his attention to landscape for the new show. It will include a film featuring Black Londoners he met on the streets around the gallery in Trafalgar Square, to be shown alongside some of the gallery's historic landscapes and seascapes, by artists including Turner.

National Gallery Director Dr Gabriele Finaldi said: "We have been in conversation with Kehinde Wiley since early 2019 about working together on National Gallery Collection-related themes. He will be engaging with the sublime landscape tradition in Western painting and I look forward to his strong and distinctive take on this subject."



Image: Wiley's Portrait of Melissa Thompson appeared in his exhibition at the William Morris Gallery in 2020. ©Kehinde Wiley. Courtesy Stephen Friedman Gallery London

It won't be Wiley's first exhibition in a London public gallery - in February last year his first exhibition to feature all-female sitters, *The Yellow Wallpaper*, opened at the William Morris Gallery in Walthamstow, but was cut short by the pandemic. He found his sitters by the process described above, which he calls "street casting", in which he strolled the streets of Dalston and approached people he saw there.

Wiley has described his work as "a type of self-portraiture". "It's about looking at people who happen to look like me," he says. Dates for the National Gallery show have yet to be confirmed.