

Stephen Friedman Gallery

TimeOut
The Obama Portraits Tour
17 June 2021



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Image: © 2018 Kehinde Wiley. Courtesy of the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery. Kehinde Wiley. Barack Obama, 2018. Oil on canvas. National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution. The National Portrait Gallery is grateful to the following lead donors for their support of the Obama portraits: Kate Capshaw and Steven Spielberg; Judith Kern and Kent Whealy; Tommie L. Pegues and Donald A. Capoccia.

The Obamas are no strangers to L.A. (remember “Obamajam”?) But here’s a new one: Two paintings of Barack and Michelle Obama, which typically hang in the Smithsonian’s National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C., are set to embark on a five-city tour, including a stop at LACMA from November 7, 2021 to January 2, 2022.

The portraits, which were unveiled in 2018, stand in stark contrast to the sober, warm glow of most presidential paintings. Kehinde Wiley’s portrait of Barack Obama sets the president in front of a wall of green foliage dotted with flowers that represent his professional and familial roots in Chicago, Hawaii and Kenya. And Michelle Obama’s portrait, painted by Amy Sherald, includes a grayscale depiction of the first lady against a blue background, wearing a dress adorned in colorful geometric patterns.