

Stephen Friedman Gallery

The Art Newspaper
Lacma acquires 60 works with a focus on Black representation
Scarlet Cheng
16 December 2021



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Image: Amy Sherald, *An Ocean Away* (2020). © Amy Sherald, courtesy of the artist and Hauser & Wirth, photo by Joseph Hyde

Among the works joining the museum's collection are paintings by Amy Sherald and Kehinde Wiley as well as a self-portrait by an artist who worked as a preparator at Lacma for decades.

Today the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (Lacma) announced the acquisition of 60 works spotlighting Black representation. The acquisition has been made in conjunction with the recently opened exhibition *Black American Portraits*, which includes over 140 works depicting a diverse and, in the words of co-curators Christine Y. Kim and Liz Andrews, "abundant, nuanced, and joyful" Black identity.

Curators at Lacma had long intended to put together a portraiture show from the museum's collection, but in the aftermath of the murder of George Floyd and nationwide demonstrations last summer, they decided to focus on depictions of Black Americans. "We committed ourselves to this idea that not only would we look through the collections," says museum director Michael Govan, "but also to expand what was in the collection, and really show a larger diversity of images of Black American portraits."

Since the museum has no dedicated acquisitions budget, the new acquisitions were obtained through donations of cash and works from patrons. These 60 works have been acquired over the last two years, but the official announcement has been put off until now.

"The main objective here has been to collect works of art in all media to be included in the exhibition, *Black American Portraits*," Kim writes over email. "There are works by Black artists as well as non-Black artists included in these acquisitions and in the exhibition such as Alice Neel, Cathy Opie, Glenn Kaino and rafa esparza. We covered work in all media, including augmented reality (Ada Pinkston) and perpetually uploaded content (Kahlil Joseph's BLKNWS), and of all generations."



Image: Kehinde Wiley, *Yachinboaz Ben Yisrael II* (2021). © Kehinde Wiley, photo by Joshua White, courtesy of the artist and Roberts Projects, Los Angeles

Among the new acquisitions are works by two artists long on the museum's curatorial wish list, Amy Sherald and Kehinde Wiley, whose portraits of Michelle and Barack Obama are currently on view at Lacma (until 2 January) as part of a nationwide touring exhibition organised with the National Portrait Gallery. Sherald's oil painting *An Ocean Away* (2020) is a promised gift of Hollywood power couple Willow Bay and Robert Iger; it portrays two Black figures on a beach holding and sitting on colourful surfboards. Wiley's *Yachinboaz Ben Yisrael II* (2021) is a promised gift of Rich Paul, a prominent sports agent; the large portrait depicts a fashionable young Black man in a red sweatshirt rendered against a stylised floral design. Both works are featured in *Black American Portraits*.

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Most of the 60 works being added to Lacma's permanent collection were made in the last two decades, including pieces by renowned artists such as Todd Gray, Kerry James Marshall, Lezley Saar, Lorna Simpson, Mickalene Thomas and Kara Walker. They also include younger artists such as Kim Dacres (*No, my first name ain't baby*, 2020) and Otis Kwame Kye Quaiocoe (*Lady on a Blue Couch*, 2019).

One acquisition was especially close to the heart of museum staff: *Just How I Feel* (1972), a self-portrait by Cedric Adams in graphite. Adams worked as an art preparator at Lacma for over 25 years, and his powerful piece was purchased with donations from museum staff, including Govan and Kim.

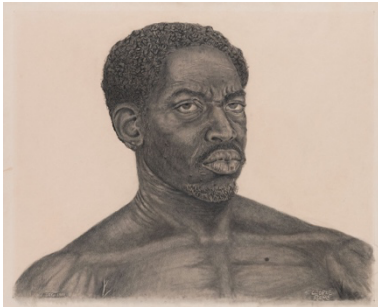


Image: Cedric Adams, *Just How I Feel* (1972). © Cedric Adams, photo © Museum Associates/LACMA