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Pogrebin, Robin. "Obama Portraits to Tour the Nation." *The New York Times*.
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The New York Times



The Obama portraits, which were unveiled at the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery in 2018. Credit...Left, Kehinde Wiley; right, Amy Sherald

The portraits of President Barack Obama and Michelle Obama have become a destination for visitors to the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery in Washington ever since they were [unveiled](#) in 2018. Next year, the acclaimed paintings — by the artists [Kehinde Wiley](#) and [Amy Sherald](#) — are going on the road with a five-city tour that the museum announced on Thursday.

"The portraits are going to be shared with people who did not have the opportunity to see them," Ms. Sherald said in a telephone interview, adding that for some, [visiting the paintings](#) has been something of a "[pilgrimage](#)." In mid-May 2021, the portraits will temporarily come down from the walls of the Portrait Gallery, which is also publishing a book — "The Obama Portraits" — in partnership with Princeton University Press, to be released Feb. 11.

The tour will start at the [Art Institute of Chicago](#) in June 2021 and continue through May 2022 with stops at [the Brooklyn Museum](#); the [Los Angeles County Museum of Art](#); the [High Museum of Art](#) in Atlanta; and the [Museum of Fine Arts, Houston](#).

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“Since the unveiling of these two portraits of the Obamas, the Portrait Gallery has experienced a record number of visitors, not only to view these works in person, but to be part of the communal experience of a particular moment in time,” Kim Sajet, director of the National Portrait Gallery, said in a statement. “This tour is an opportunity for audiences in different parts of the country to witness how portraiture can engage people in the beauty of dialogue and shared experience.” Mr. Wiley and Ms. Sherald were the first African-American artists to have been selected for the National Portrait Gallery’s official portraits of a president or first lady.