

SEANKELLY

"A New Republic," *Scene*, February 2016.

SCENE

Shantavis Beale II, a 2012 painting by Kehinde Wiley, is now on view at the Seattle Art Museum, one of 60 pieces offering an overview of the Brooklyn-based artist's work.



"A NEW
REPUBLIC"

Feb. 11-May 8
Seattle Art Museum

Written by LAURA HARGER



COURTESY SEAN KELLY NEW YORK © KEHINDE WILEY PHOTO JASON NYDIE



BROOKLYN-BASED ARTIST KEHINDE WILEY's kaleidoscopic mash-ups, inspired by the idiosyncratic street style of young black men and women in South LA and Harlem, come to the Seattle Art Museum this February. Juxtaposing up-to-the-minute portraiture against the loftiest of backdrops—from triptych altarpieces to lush botanical textiles—he depicts his modern subjects as worthy of the social sanction and exalted status of historical nobility. "I take the figure out of its original environment and place it in something completely made up," Wiley explains. "I quote historical sources [to] position young black men within the field of power."

The 60 exhibited works trace Wiley's career trajectory, from his seminal early-2000s paintings of young Harlem men recast in the setting of Old Master works to his ongoing "World Stage" project: portraits of locals in Nigeria, India, Haiti, and other countries marked by colonialism, all rendered against vibrant backdrops and rococo patterns. Also on view are portraits of women from Wiley's "Economy of Grace" series, as well as his stained-glass works, which reverently morph young black men into saints and martyrs. "These works bowl you over with fabulousness and beauty," says Catharina Manchanda, curator at SAM. "This exhibition will not just engage viewers in an important conversation, but also create a galvanizing experience that will last long after they leave the galleries." Wiley's blockbuster show is not to be missed, whether you're a classicist or a connoisseur of cutting-edge work. ✱



ABOVE: The sitter's pose in *Morpheus*, from 2008, references a sculpture by French Neoclassical sculptor Jean-Antoine Houdon. **TOP LEFT AND RIGHT:** *Anthony of Padua* (2013) and *The Two Sisters* (2012) place their subjects against ornate floral backdrops, in poses drawn from classical paintings. The men in Wiley's paintings wear their own street clothes; the women in his "Economy of Grace" series, on the other hand, wear couture gowns custom-made for each subject by Riccardo Tisci of Givenchy.

TOP LEFT: COURTESY THE ARTIST AND ROBERTS & TILTON, CULVER CITY, CALIFORNIA © KEHINDE WILEY; PHOTO: MAX YAWNEY; TOP RIGHT: COURTESY SEAN KELLY, NEW YORK © KEHINDE WILEY; PHOTO: JASON WYCHE; BELOW: COURTESY ROBERTS & TILTON, CULVER CITY, CALIFORNIA; SEAN KELLY, NEW YORK; GALERIE DANIEL TEMPLON, PARIS; AND STEPHEN FRIEDMAN GALLERY, LONDON © KEHINDE WILEY.