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KEHINDE WILEY: A NEW REPUBLIC



Shantavia Beale II, 2012, Kehinde Wiley, American, b. 1977, oil on canvas, 60 x 48 in., Collection of Ana and Lenny Gravier. Courtesy Sean Kelly, New York, © Kehinde Wiley, Photo: Jason Wyche.T

FEB 11 – MAY 8 2016

Kehinde Wiley is one of the leading American artists to emerge in the last decade and he has been ingeniously reworking the grand portraiture traditions of Western culture. Since ancient times the portrait has been tied to the representation of power, and in European courts and churches artists and their patrons developed a complex repository of postures and poses and refined a symbolic language. This language, woven into all aspects of a portrait, described the sitter's influence and power, virtue and character, or profession. In his consideration of portrait traditions, Wiley has been especially drawn to the grand aristocratic portraits of the 18th century.

The artist began his first series of portraits in the early 2000s during a residency at the Studio Museum in Harlem. He set out to photograph and recast assertive and self-empowered young men from the neighborhood in the style and manner of traditional history painting. Since then he has also painted rap and sports stars but for the most part his attention has focused on ordinary men of color in their everyday clothes. Trained at Yale in the 1990s, Wiley was steeped in the discussions concerning identity politics during this decade and he brings his personal insights and theoretical studies to his practice.

Wiley's portraits are highly stylized and staged, and draw attention to the dialectic between a history of aristocratic representation and the portrait as a statement of power and the individual's sense of empowerment.



PERSONAL HISTORIES



Uncle Thomas, 2008, Titus Kaphar, American, b. 1976, tar on paper, 48 x 36in. (121.9 x 91.4cm), Seattle Art Museum, Contemporary Art Support Fund, 2009.31. © Titus Kaphar, Photo courtesy of Roberts & Tilton, Culver City, CA.

JUL 5 2014 – MAY 3 2015

Historical narratives tend to highlight key events in a nation's history. The fate of a country's leaders, wars won or lost, and other transformative national events are enshrined as "official" history, while the struggles and successes of minorities and less influential groups often remain forgotten or in the margins.

The artists in this installation—including Laylah Ali, William Cordova, Titus Kaphar, Whitfield Lovell, and Kara Walker—chart alternative narratives. All works in *Personal Histories* are drawn from SAM's collections.



LATOYA RUBY FRAZIER: BORN BY A RIVER



Grandma Ruby Braiding JC's hair from the series: *The Notion of Family*, 2007, LaToya Ruby Frazier, American, b. 1982, gelatin silver print, 19 1/4 x 24 in. © LaToya Ruby Frazier.

DEC 13 2013 – JUN 22 2014

In 1963 R&B singer-songwriter Sam Cooke recorded *A Change Is Gonna Come*. This heartfelt song became an anthem for the 1960s' American Civil Rights Movement. The title of this installation is borrowed from the opening lyrics of this powerful song.

Frazier is a photographer and media artist whose practice is informed by late 19th- and early 20th-century modes of representation. With an emphasis on postmodern conditions, class, and capitalism, she investigates issues of propaganda, politics, and the importance of subjectivity. Frazier's work is an intimate look at her family, connecting their experiences to the history of her home town, and its drastic decline from one of America's first steel mill towns to the "distressed municipality" it is today.

In 1982, LaToya Ruby Frazier was born next to the Monongahela River in Braddock, Pennsylvania. Like Gordon Parks, Dorothea Lange, and other social documentary photographers, Frazier uses the camera to call attention to complex and challenging conditions. The exhibition includes photographs from two ever-growing bodies of work—those taken at the street level (*The Notion of Family*) and those taken from the sky above. Frazier was inspired by an essay written by noted scholar W.E.B. DuBois about his life growing up next to a river. She chartered a helicopter and photographed her community aerially, providing a dramatically different vantage point by which to view the community she called home.



IN A SILENT WAY



Untitled (Playing harmonica), 1990–99, Carrie Mae Weems, American, born 1953, gelatin silver print, framed: 28 x 27 3/4 in., Seattle Art Museum, Gift of Vascovitiz Family, in honor of the 75th Anniversary of the Seattle Art Museum, 2012.13.1 © Carrie Mae Weems Photo: Courtesy of Jack Shainman Gallery.

MAY 18 – DEC 1 2013

This exhibition of works from SAM's permanent collection brings together a group of works by Roy deCarava, David Hammons, Carrie Mae Weems, Glenn Ligon and Rashid Johnson that quietly reflect on African American identities and histories. The works show a range of descriptive and poetic approaches, but they are united by a shared sensibility that is captured in the title, borrowed from the jazz musician Miles Davis.

The Harlem photographer Roy deCarava photographed Miles Davis and many other jazz legends in New York, but he had an equal interest in unpretentiously photographing individuals in his own neighborhood. Extending the pensive mood of deCarava's work is *Money Tree*, a photograph by conceptual artist David Hammons. It shows a backyard tree with a makeshift hoop, which speaks metaphorically of the dreams and desires of many young African American men. By contrast, Carrie Mae Weems charts complex narratives that touch on gender, race, sexuality, class, family and community in her *staged Kitchen Table* photographs.

Taken together, all of the works in this exhibition echo and expand on each other. The intertwining of history, homage and interpretation is evocatively explored by Glenn Ligon and Rashid Johnson. Ligon's excerpt from James Baldwin's novel, *Stranger in the Village*, is presented as black text on black surface. Ligon turns the hyper-visibility of Baldwin's outsider in a Swiss village into its opposite, making the text almost illegible. Rashid Johnson's photograph and installation movingly pay homage to boxing legend Jack Johnson, the first African American athlete to win the world heavyweight boxing championship in 1908. Johnson's career was an inspiration to many, including Miles Davis, who created his own tribute.



MORALITY TAKES: AMERICAN ART & SOCIAL PROTEST, 1935–45

JUN 29 2012 – MAY 5 2013

The Great Depression, fascism in Europe, America's entry into world war—the dark forces that changed the western world forever in the decade from 1930 to 1940—upended America's art establishment as artists channeled moral outrage into a new sense of social purpose. Some of the most radical artists of the day were those who organized on behalf of workers' rights and civil rights, and the ideals of a free society, including freedom of artistic expression.

This installation features works by these socially and politically engaged artists. Drawn entirely from SAM's collection, it is occasioned by the recent gift of works by Mervin Jules and Joseph Hirsch, from Allan and Nenetie Harvey of Seattle. These are joined with paintings and drawings by Seattle artists Abe Blashko, Rudolph Zallinger, and Alton Pickens.

Social Realism is the term traditionally applied to the work of these artists, who chose to work in a style that forcefully conveyed human suffering and moral character, but that is an inadequate description. They filtered reality through the imagination, and their portrayals are startling exaggerations—personifications of the forces of good and evil within all of us, as individuals and as a society.



The Tailor [The Sorrowful Tailor], ca. 1943, Mervin Jules (American, 1912–1994), tempera on composition board, 18 ½ x 12 in. Gift of Allan and Nenetie Harvey, Seattle Art Museum 2011.21.1. © Mervin Jules.



BURDEN OF HISTORY



Home to Go, 2001, Adrian Paci, Albanian, born 1969, plaster, marble dust, wood, tiles and rope, 65 x 35 3/8 x 47 1/4in., Seattle Art Museum, Gift of the Contemporary Collectors Forum, 2008.12, © Adrian Paci, Photo: Courtesy of Peter Blum Gallery, New York

APR 9 2011 – AUG 26 2012

Contemporary artists struggle with the weight of what has come before them and how to make new contributions to the field. Painting is one of the oldest of artistic traditions, and many artists; including Anselm Kiefer, Elizabeth Murray and Rashid Johnson; whose paintings are brought together in *Burden of History*, create works that seem to physically reflect the negotiation with that tradition. Sculptors too; including Do Ho Suh, Katharina Fritsch and Jeff Koons; deal with the figure in ways that offer fresh insights and at times embrace materials not often associated with sculpture, as in the use of stainless steel military dog tags assembled by Do Ho Suh in his monumental sculpture *Some/One*.

Artists often address their own history in their work. For example, *Home to Go*, a sculpture by Albanian-born artist Adrian Paci, was born from a life-changing experience. In 1997, during the political upheaval and civil war in his homeland, Paci was forced to immigrate to Italy. Using his body as the model to create the figure, *Home to Go* stands as both a metaphor and a literal translation of the profound physical and psychological effects of cultural displacement. Revealing the relationships between history and contemporaneity, the artworks in *Burden of History* highlight great works within SAM's Modern and Contemporary Art Collection.



THEASTER GATES: THE LISTENING ROOM



Dr. Wax Archive at Dorchester Projects, Chicago, 2009, Theaster Gates, Photo by Young Sun Han, Courtesy of artist and Kavi Gupta Chicago/Berlin.

DEC 9 2011 – JUL 1 2012

With a background in urban planning and religious studies, Theaster Gates' work explores the ways history, place and performance intersect. Gates wears many hats, including cultural producer, activist and performer. His past site-specific installations have employed what he terms, "critique through collaboration." For example, in a recent installation at the Whitney Museum of American Art, the artist transformed the museum's sculpture court with spare, architectural forms fabricated from recycled wood, calling on his interest in Eastern philosophy and art. Gates then invited a number of collaborators, including historians, artists and street musicians, to add to the space their own "commentary, bling, and acts of sincerity."

Incorporating a vast array of disciplines, Gates' solo exhibition at SAM will transform the gallery with cultural ephemera. Coupled with objects and architectural elements that elicit stories through every day practices, the backbone of the installation will be a collection of vinyl records that reflect cultural and social currents of the 60s, 70s and 80s.



SAVE THE INDIAN & KILL THE MAN: NEW PHOTOGRAPHS BY MATIKA WILBUR

JAN 10 – AUG 14 2011

From 1880 and into the modern era, the U. S. government forced thousands of Native children into residential schools under the policy of “Kill the Indian and Save the Man,” in the mistaken belief that only through assimilation could Native people survive. Stripped of their languages and traditions, and forced to endure starvation, disease and abuse, many internalized their ordeal through alcoholism and suicide, thus creating a cycle of trauma felt by subsequent generations. In this installation of twelve photographic prints, Matika Wilbur up-ends the manifesto of cultural genocide in provocative works that lay bare issues of contemporary “Indian-ness,” and the resolve of a new generation to express their identities, not by past trauma, but in modern, complex and surprising ways.



City of Dreams and Mr. Runningwater, 2010, Matika Wilbur, Swinomish/Tulalip, silver gelatin print, 11 x 14 in., Courtesy of the artist.



CHEN SHAOXIONG: INK. HISTORY. MEDIA

JUL 19 – DEC 7 2014

Chen Shaoxiong (born 1962) was a founding member of the “Big Tail Elephant Group” of conceptual artists in Guangzhou in the 1990’s. Today, he works both independently and collaboratively as a member of an Asian artist collective called “Xijing Men” as well as another Chinese artist collective, “Project without Space.” His art crosses mediums, including painting, photography, collage, and conceptual art.

This exhibition presents Chen’s two recent video works—*Ink History* and *Ink Media*—as well as their companion ink drawings. For *Ink History*, Chen created over 150 ink drawings of historic photos of major events in China from 1909 to 2009. He then turned the drawings into a three-minute video of modern Chinese history as the clock ticks in the musical score. For his most recent work, *Ink Media*, Chen downloaded news photos of protests around the world from the Internet, and then re-enacted these scenes with ink drawings. Although not in any chronological or spatial order, the video shows protest—both strong and vulnerable—as a universal political expression.



Ink Media #4, 2011-2013, Chen Shaoxiong, Chinese, b. 1962, ink painting on rice paper, 18 x 28 in., © Chen Shaoxiong, Photo courtesy of Pékin Fine Arts.

