

# KEHINDE WILEY DOWN

**NOVEMBER 1 – DECEMBER 20, 2008  
18 WOOSTER STREET**

*DOWN*, an exhibition of seven heroically scaled paintings by Kehinde Wiley opens November 1, 2008 at Deitch Projects's 18 Wooster Street gallery.

Initially inspired by Holbein's painting *The Dead Christ in the Tomb* as well as historical paintings and sculptures of fallen warriors and figures in the state of repose, Wiley has created an unsettling series of prone bodies – some a product of the ravages of war, some contorted into erotic revelry, while others embody the majesty and severity of entombed Saints.

Epic in nature, *DOWN*, is Wiley's most ambitious series to date. These figurative paintings, which extend up to twenty-five feet in length, have grandeur and gravity seldom seen in contemporary art.

In *DOWN*, the poses are drawn from works of fallen characters by Holbein, Mantegna, Houdon, Maderno, Restout and Clesinger. Wiley re-conceptualizes classical pictorial forms to create a contemporary version of monumental portraiture. The works resound with violence, pain, and death, as well as sexual ecstasy. They portray a sense of heroism in the face of death, incorporating a scale that pushes beyond the mere corporeal and into the level of legend and hero worship.

Described by Wiley, *DOWN* is "an answer to the negative views of young Black men in American society. It recognizes an idiom that can be seen from a distance as a negative form transformed into something more fabulous and joyful. *DOWN* is a recognition of a type of artistic malaise that exists in current dialogue in art where joy is perceived as suspect and where absolute beauty is regarded with disdain. *DOWN* is at once an embrace of the visceral and the very physical embodiment of its denial."

The subjects of the paintings are all African-American men in their late teens and twenties found in Brooklyn. Twin brothers, Dee and Ricky Jackson, who were portrayed as Lord Digby and Lord Russell in a previous series of paintings, chose the models for *DOWN*, allowing Wiley to expand his practice by having the models not only participate as subjects, but also in the exchange that goes with the casting, creating a self-directed system.

*DOWN* is Kehinde Wiley's third solo exhibition at Deitch Projects. Wiley's *World Stage: Africa, Lagos-Dakar* has been on view from July through October 26th at the Studio Museum in Harlem. The exhibition will travel to ArtPace in San Antonio in January.

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**FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION CONTACT JASMINE LEVETT AT 212 343 7300**