



# KEHINDE WILEY *BLACK LIGHT*

**SEPTEMBER 3 – 26, 2009**  
**76 GRAND STREET**

Deitch Projects is pleased to present *Black Light*, an exhibition of photographs by Kehinde Wiley that thrusts the black male image, captured by means of light manipulation and digital technology, into focus. This shuffle of Wiley's artistic process reveals an integral component of his studio practice rarely seen while remaining, uniquely, Kehinde Wiley portraiture.

Enlisting the technical tenor of Hype Williams' hip-hop videos from the 90's, Wiley saturates his consummately styled subjects of Fulton Street Mall pedigree— caps flipped backward, wearing gear of New York legend— in "super rapturous light". To transcendental and beatific effect, such illumination proffers a new measure of Wiley's technical abilities, so that the medium of photography propels each figure to the point before paint consumes canvas— the moment when flesh, at its three dimensional, truth-telling, reveals scars long ago enacted. Brownded fingernails, questioning red-glazed eyes and voluptuously glossed, cigarette-charred lips heighten what, for some, is no longer visible: a vulnerable microcosm of our metropolis— a black light. Through the 17 photographs on display, Wiley produces an intimate study of embattled psychologies whose adherents are at once flawed and majestic, canonized and misunderstood.

Brilliant patterns extracted from 50's home décor magazines and Martha Stewart's 1999 home collection embrace sitters in a kind of religious shroud collapsing fore and backgrounds, spatial comprehension and the black male gaze into a cacophonous, unsettling harmony.

Quoting the manner of Seydou Keita and grandeur of Ingres— but never straying from his ultimate message, Wiley maintains the re-contextualization of historical portrait painting by imposing the contemporary black male figure onto an awe-inducing pictorial heritage replete with narratives of power, wealth and hierarchy. Suddenly the questions become, "Why for so long had these stories been excluded and with whom does all this rendered power ultimately lie?"

In an insightful essay for the book that accompanies *Black Light*, Brian Keith Jackson writes, "In our fast paced, technological and reality TV existence, we would like to believe that we have a handle on, if not control of, time and our place within it. But time is its own keeper, we merely the benefactors of its glow. In that, what we can do is capture and cultivate a moment, a movement, a setting, something to refer to when time does what it will ultimately do—tick on...These photographs deliver on that very promise."

Kehinde Wiley was born in Los Angeles in 1977. He received a BFA from the San Francisco Art Institute in 1999 and an MFA from Yale in 2001. In addition to *World Stages: Africa Lagos-Dakar* at the Studio Museum in Harlem and ArtPace, San Antonio in 2008, other recent solo exhibitions include *FOCUS: Kehinde Wiley* at the Modern Art Museum in Fort Worth and *Down* at Deitch Projects in 2008. He was recently commissioned by Puma to design a line of apparel and accessories for the World Cup 2010. Wiley lives and works in New York. This is his fourth solo exhibition at Deitch Projects.

The exhibition *Black Light* will be accompanied by, *Black Light*, a full-color book published by Powerhouse and will be available at Deitch Projects.

**WWW.DEITCH.COM**

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