

SEANKELLY
KEHINDE WILEY
TRICKSTER

MAY 6 – JUNE 17, 2017,
OPENING RECEPTION: FRIDAY, MAY 5, 6-8PM

Sean Kelly is delighted to announce *Trickster*, a major exhibition featuring Kehinde Wiley's newest series of paintings—large-scale portraits of his peers and predecessors; a select group of extraordinary artists that includes Derrick Adams, Sanford Biggers, Lynette Yiadom-Boakye, Nick Cave, Rashid Johnson, Glenn Ligon, Kerry James Marshall, Wangechi Mutu, Yinka Shonibare, Mickalene Thomas, Hank Willis Thomas, and Carrie Mae Weems, amongst others. This will be Wiley's second exhibition with the gallery and his first in the gallery's new space. An opening reception will take place on Friday, May 5 from 6-8 pm. The artist will be present.

In mythology, tricksters are supernatural figures that exhibit cunning intellect and subversive humor. They delight in breaking rules and playfully disrupting the habitual, expected or normal structures of a stable system. An archetype that appears in almost every culture's folklore, the trickster's role is to disrupt the status quo. Most tricksters are also shape-shifters, who can disguise themselves as any form and have the ability to cross over physical and figurative boundaries.

For Wiley, artists such as those featured in this body of work embody the trickster spirit. Not only in their inherent ability to change the way we see and think about the world with their work, but also in relation to their blackness. Wiley sees the trickster figure as an important metaphor for the way that people of color often find themselves metaphorically shape-shifting in order to navigate between real and symbolic social boundaries.

Amongst the most important artists of their generation, those portrayed, and particularly Wiley himself, have navigated, pushed and redefined boundaries to establish a new canon within the history of western art. As Lewis Hyde wrote in the book *Trickster Makes This World* (p.7), "...boundary creation and boundary crossing are related to one another, and the best way to describe trickster is to say simply that the boundary is where he will be found—sometimes drawing the line, sometimes crossing it, sometimes erasing or moving it, but always there, the god of the threshold in all its forms."

Blackness also emerges as an important aesthetic element of Wiley's new work, which have been heavily influenced by Francisco de Goya's infamous Black Paintings; a series of fourteen intensely haunting murals, strikingly dark in both their subject matter and color palette. Wiley has taken Goya's restricted use of color and barren landscapes as a point of departure for his canvases, in which the field becomes a sepia shadow mirroring the flesh of his subjects and enveloping them in a darkness that could be interpreted as either menacing or embracing.

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Kehinde Wiley's work has been the subject of numerous exhibitions worldwide and is in the permanent collections of many museums including: the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Studio Museum in Harlem; the Denver Art Museum; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; The Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; the High Museum, Atlanta; the Columbus Museum of Art; the Phoenix Art Museum; the Milwaukee Art Museum; the Jewish Museum, New York; and the Brooklyn Museum, New York. In 2015, Wiley was awarded the US State Department Medal of Arts from then Secretary of State John Kerry. That same year he the subject of a mid-career survey exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum in New York, entitled *A New Republic*, which continues to travel the country and is currently on view at the Toledo Museum of Art in Toledo, Ohio.

Kehinde Wiley lives and works in New York.

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Gallery hours are Tuesday through Friday from 11am-6pm, and Saturday from 10am-6pm
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