

SEANKELLY

KEHINDE WILEY *TRICKSTER*

MAY 6 – JUNE 17, 2017,

OPENING RECEPTION: FRIDAY, MAY 5, 6-8PM

Sean Kelly is delighted to present *Trickster*, an exhibition of monumental new paintings by Kehinde Wiley. A departure from Wiley's practice of painting anonymous sitters, these portraits include a select group of extraordinary contemporary artists—Derrick Adams, Sanford Biggers, Nick Cave, Rashid Johnson, Glenn Ligon, Kerry James Marshall, Wangechi Mutu, Yinka Shonibare, Mickalene Thomas, Hank Willis Thomas, Carrie Mae Weems, and Lynette Yiadom-Boakye. 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 *Trickster*, Wiley explores the range of ways that artists engage with and draw from the world around them. He employs the mythological trickster trope—existent in nearly every culture's folklore—to not only examine how artists disrupt the status quo and change the way in which we think, but as a signifier of how people of color navigate both real and symbolic social boundaries inherent to their blackness. As Lewis Hyde wrote in the book *Trickster Makes This World*, "...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." Wiley views the artists portrayed—amongst the most important and influential of their generation—as having navigated, pushed and redefined boundaries to establish a new canon within the history of Western art.

Wiley, as is central to his practice, draws on the historically Eurocentric Western art canon as a point of departure for *Trickster*. Influenced by Goya's infamous *Black Paintings*, a series of fourteen powerfully haunting murals, striking in both their dark subject matter and palette, Wiley has restricted his use of color and incorporated barren landscapes into these new canvases. Here, the field becomes a sepia shadow mirroring the subjects' flesh and enveloping them in a darkness that could be interpreted as either menacing or embracing. The result is a dance between light and dark, perfection and imperfection, hero worship and human frailty.

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.

A catalogue on *Trickster*, published by Sean Kelly and Hatje Cantz Verlag, featuring an interview with Thelma Golden, Director of the Studio Museum in Harlem, an extensive essay by Cheryl Finley, Associate Professor of Art History at Cornell University, and creative piece of writing by Poet Saeed Jones, is forthcoming.

Kehinde Wiley lives and works in New York.

Concurrent with *Trickster*, Sean Kelly will present Laurent Grasso's new film, *Élysée*, in the downstairs gallery space.

For media inquiries, please contact: Christine McMonagle at 212.239.1181 or christine@skny.com

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