

TEMPLON



KEHINDE WILEY

ART DAILY, June 3, 2025

Kehinde Wiley unveils "Flourish" in Netherlands debut at Museum Van Loon



AMSTERDAM.- Museum Van Loon is presenting *Flourish: Kehinde Wiley x Museum Van Loon*, an exhibition of new portraits by renowned American artist Kehinde Wiley. This marks Wiley's first solo exhibition in The Netherlands. His new body of work constitutes a visual response to the portrait collection and historic interiors of Museum Van Loon. Melted into the museum's collection, *Flourish* addresses ties between Western portraiture, Dutch global colonial presence and contemporary art as social and cultural practice. Simultaneously, *Flourish* highlights beauty and grace in the 21st century, captured through models the artist met in Suriname. The exhibition is on display at Museum Van Loon from 29 May to 31 August 2025.

Flourish: Kehinde Wiley x Museum Van Loon

The collaboration between Museum Van Loon and Kehinde Wiley started a few years ago. Inspired by the museum's portrait collection and its ties to Dutch global colonial presence, Wiley's artistic research brought him to Suriname. Kehinde Wiley: "When investigating the Van Loon collection, what came to my mind was: who were we then, and who do we want to be now? This work sits at the intersection of those questions. I envisioned translating the historical portraits into a voyage that encounters young people who are present in the 21st century. In Suriname, I saw a country that occupies so many spaces at once, so many races at once, so many time periods at once. *Flourish* aims to capture what it means to have value, beauty, and grace in today's world, through the ancient language of portraiture. By celebrating individuals who may not have been on these museum walls historically, my work says: 'You are welcome here. You matter.'"

Kehinde Wiley is internationally celebrated for his striking portraits that blend classical European painting traditions with contemporary representation. His work reinterprets the artistic language of nobility and power, placing Black and brown people – often individuals he meets around the world – at the center of his compositions. In 2018 Kehinde Wiley unveiled President Barack Obama's iconic portrait – the first African-American to be commissioned the official U.S. Presidential portrait.

Bridging histories through portraiture

In 2019 Museum Van Loon changed course, putting the historic collection to use as a platform for storytelling that befits our variegated society, on a range of relevant themes. Director Gijs Schunselaar: 'We care for our historic collection and want to share it with the world. At the same time, we aim to be a shepherd of todays and futures that include all. We are extremely excited to partner with Kehinde Wiley in pursuing that vision. Wiley's work celebrates classical and contemporary aesthetics while addressing relevant contemporary issues that have become embedded in our national heritage. Flourish constitutes a prime – and spectacular – example of what drives us as an institution: bringing worlds together.'