

STEPHEN FRIEDMAN GALLERY

PREVIEW: KEHINDE WILEY | THE YELLOW WALLPAPER | WILLIAM MORRIS GALLERY

22 FEBRUARY–12 JULY 2020

'Kehinde Wiley: The Yellow Wallpaper' at William Morris Gallery is the artist's first solo show in a UK museum. Featuring six new large-scale female portraits, the exhibition offers a visual response to American novelist Charlotte Perkins Gilman's acclaimed feminist text, 'The Yellow Wallpaper', 1892. Wiley explains, "'The Yellow Wallpaper' is a work of literary fiction that explores the contours of femininity and insanity. This exhibition seeks to use the language of the decorative to reconcile blackness, gender, and a beautiful and terrible past."

Gilman's text is a semi-autobiographical tale which sees her narrator confined to her bedroom after being diagnosed with hysteria and explores the disastrous consequences of denying women independence. These new portraits feature women that the artist met on the streets of Dalston, East London. Viewed from below in three-quarter view, the figures gaze directly at the viewer from a lavishly patterned background. Wiley employs the heroic visual vocabulary of traditional portraiture to position the subjects as autonomous, powerful and emblems of strength within a society of complicated social networks. Recalling a style once used almost exclusively to depict white aristocratic subjects, these portraits distil a complex dialogue about race and identity in a post-colonial age.

For over fifteen years Wiley has sourced William Morris' iconic floral designs for his paintings. Building on his interest in the relationship between the human body and the decorative, Wiley's model is depicted in a reimagined field inspired by the William Morris oeuvre. Gilman's 'The Yellow Wallpaper' also holds a strong, personal connection to William Morris. Morris' daughter, May Morris, herself an accomplished designer, struck up a friendship with Gilman in July 1896 when they first met at an International Socialist Conference in London. That autumn, May Morris invited Gilman to give a lecture at her family home Kelmscott House, Hammersmith. A month later William Morris died and Gilman sent a moving letter of sympathy, which was a rousing call to arms: "Do you love to do - to DO and especially to make? With that, and the freedom to exercise it, life has no terrors."

For full details and larger images, please see the end of this document.



Kehinde Wiley

Portrait of Dorinda Essah, 2020

Oil on linen

266.4 x 201.5cm

(104 7/8 x 79 3/8in)

(WILEY 85)

[View detail](#)



Kehinde Wiley

Portrait of Savannah Essah, 2020

Oil on linen

266 x 185.5cm

(104 3/4 x 73 1/8in)

(WILEY 87)

[View detail](#)



Kehinde Wiley

Portrait of Mojisola Elufowoju, 2020

Oil on linen

267.2 x 202.5cm

(105 1/4 x 79 3/4in)

(WILEY 83)

[View detail](#)



Kehinde Wiley

Portrait of Melissa Thompson, 2020

Oil on linen

265.5 x 201.8cm

(104 1/2 x 79 1/2in)

(WILEY 82)

[View detail](#)



Kehinde Wiley

Portrait of Quanna Noble, 2020

Oil on linen

263.5 x 203.5cm

(103 3/4 x 80 1/8in)

(WILEY 86)

[View detail](#)



Kehinde Wiley

Portrait of Asia-Imani, Gabriella-Esnae, and Kaya Palmer, 2020

Oil on linen

265 x 202cm

(104 3/8 x 79 1/2in)

(WILEY 84)

[View detail](#)

KEHINDE WILEY
Portrait of Dorinda Essah, 2020



Oil on linen
266.4 x 201.5cm
(104 7/8 x 79 3/8in)
(WILEY 85)

Image 1/9

Description

'Kehinde Wiley: The Yellow Wallpaper' at William Morris Gallery is the artist's first solo show in a UK museum. Featuring six new large-scale female portraits, the exhibition offers a visual response to American novelist Charlotte Perkins Gilman's acclaimed feminist text, 'The Yellow Wallpaper', 1892. Wiley explains, "'The Yellow Wallpaper' is a work of literary fiction that explores the contours of femininity and insanity. This exhibition seeks to use the language of the decorative to reconcile blackness, gender, and a beautiful and terrible past."

Gilman's text is a semi-autobiographical tale which sees her narrator confined to her bedroom after being diagnosed with hysteria and explores the disastrous consequences of denying women independence. These new portraits feature women that the artist met on the streets of Dalston, East London. Viewed from below in three-quarter view, the figures gaze directly at the viewer from a lavishly patterned background. Wiley employs the heroic visual vocabulary of traditional portraiture to position the subjects as autonomous, powerful and emblems of strength within a society of complicated social networks. Recalling a style once used almost exclusively to depict white aristocratic subjects, these portraits distil a complex dialogue about race and identity in a post-colonial age.

For over fifteen years Wiley has sourced William Morris' iconic floral designs for his paintings. Building on his interest in the relationship between the human body and the decorative, Wiley's model is depicted in a reimagined field inspired by the William Morris oeuvre. Gilman's 'The Yellow Wallpaper' also holds a strong, personal connection to William Morris. Morris' daughter, May Morris, herself an accomplished designer, struck up a friendship with Gilman in July 1896 when they first met at an International Socialist Conference in London. That autumn, May Morris invited Gilman to give a lecture at her family home Kelmscott House, Hammersmith. A month later William Morris died and Gilman sent a moving letter of sympathy, which was a rousing call to arms: "Do you love to do - to DO and especially to make? With that, and the freedom to exercise it, life has no terrors."



Image 2/9



Image 3/9



Image 4/9



Image 5/9



Image 6/9



Image 7/9



Image 8/9



Image 9/9

KEHINDE WILEY
Portrait of Savannah Essah, 2020



Oil on linen
266 x 185.5cm
(104 3/4 x 73 1/8in)
(WILEY 87)

Image 1/10

Description

'Portrait of Savannah Essah' is a new oval painting by American artist Kehinde Wiley. Wiley met Savannah Essah on the streets of Dalston, East London when he was casting for his exhibition, 'The Yellow Wallpaper' at William Morris Gallery in London. In the portrait Wiley portrays Savannah Essah adopting a confident pose with one hand resting on her chest and the other on one hip. Viewed from below, she gazes directly at the viewer from a lavishly patterned background. Here Wiley employs the heroic visual vocabulary of traditional portraiture to depict the subject as

an emblem of strength within a society of complicated social networks. Wiley is renowned for his finely detailed portraits of contemporary men and women, as well as global figures such as former US President Barack Obama.

'Portrait of Savannah Essah' is currently included in 'Kehinde Wiley: The Yellow Wallpaper' at William Morris Gallery, London, the artist's first solo show in a UK museum and the first to feature exclusively female portraits. The exhibition offers a visual response to American novelist Charlotte Perkins Gilman's acclaimed feminist short story, 'The Yellow Wallpaper', 1892. Gilman's text is a semi-autobiographical tale which sees her narrator confined to her bedroom after being diagnosed with hysteria and explores the disastrous consequences of denying women independence. Wiley explains, "'The Yellow Wallpaper' is a work of literary fiction that explores the contours of femininity and insanity. This exhibition seeks to use the language of the decorative to reconcile blackness, gender, and a beautiful and terrible past."

For over fifteen years Wiley has sourced William Morris' iconic floral designs for his paintings. Building on his interest in the relationship between the human body and the decorative, Wiley's model is depicted in a reimagined field bursting with colour and patterns inspired by the William Morris designs. Gilman's 'The Yellow Wallpaper' also holds a strong, personal connection to William Morris. Morris' daughter, May Morris, herself an accomplished designer, struck up a friendship with Gilman in July 1896 when they first met at an International Socialist Conference in London. That autumn, May Morris invited Gilman to give a lecture at her family home Kelmscott House, Hammersmith. A month later William Morris died and Gilman sent a moving letter of sympathy, which was a rousing call to arms: "Do you love to do - to DO and especially to make? With that, and the freedom to exercise it, life has no terrors."



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Image 8/10



Image 9/10



Image 10/10

KEHINDE WILEY
Portrait of Mojisola Elufowoju, 2020



Oil on linen
267.2 x 202.5cm
(105 1/4 x 79 3/4in)
(WILEY 83)

Image 1/9

Description

'Portrait of Mojisola Elufowoju' is a new oval portrait by Kehinde Wiley created for the American artist's solo exhibition 'Kehinde Wiley: The Yellow Wallpaper' at William Morris Gallery, London from February to July 2020. This exhibition was the first solo show of new paintings by the artist at a public institution in the UK and also the first to feature exclusively female portraits. The works offer a visual response to American novelist Charlotte Perkins Gilman's acclaimed feminist text, 'The Yellow Wallpaper', 1892. Wiley explains, "'The Yellow Wallpaper' is a work of literary

fiction that explores the contours of femininity and insanity. This exhibition seeks to use the language of the decorative to reconcile blackness, gender, and a beautiful and terrible past."

Gilman's text is a semi-autobiographical tale which sees her narrator confined to her bedroom after being diagnosed with hysteria and explores the disastrous consequences of denying women independence. 'Portrait of Mojisola Elufowoju' features a woman that the artist met on the streets of Dalston, East London. Viewed from below in three-quarter view, the figure gazes directly at the viewer from a lavishly patterned background. Wiley employs the heroic visual vocabulary of traditional portraiture to position the subject as autonomous, powerful and an emblem of strength within a society of complicated social networks. Recalling a style once used almost exclusively to depict white aristocratic subjects, this portrait distils a complex dialogue about race and identity in a post-colonial age.

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Image 5/9

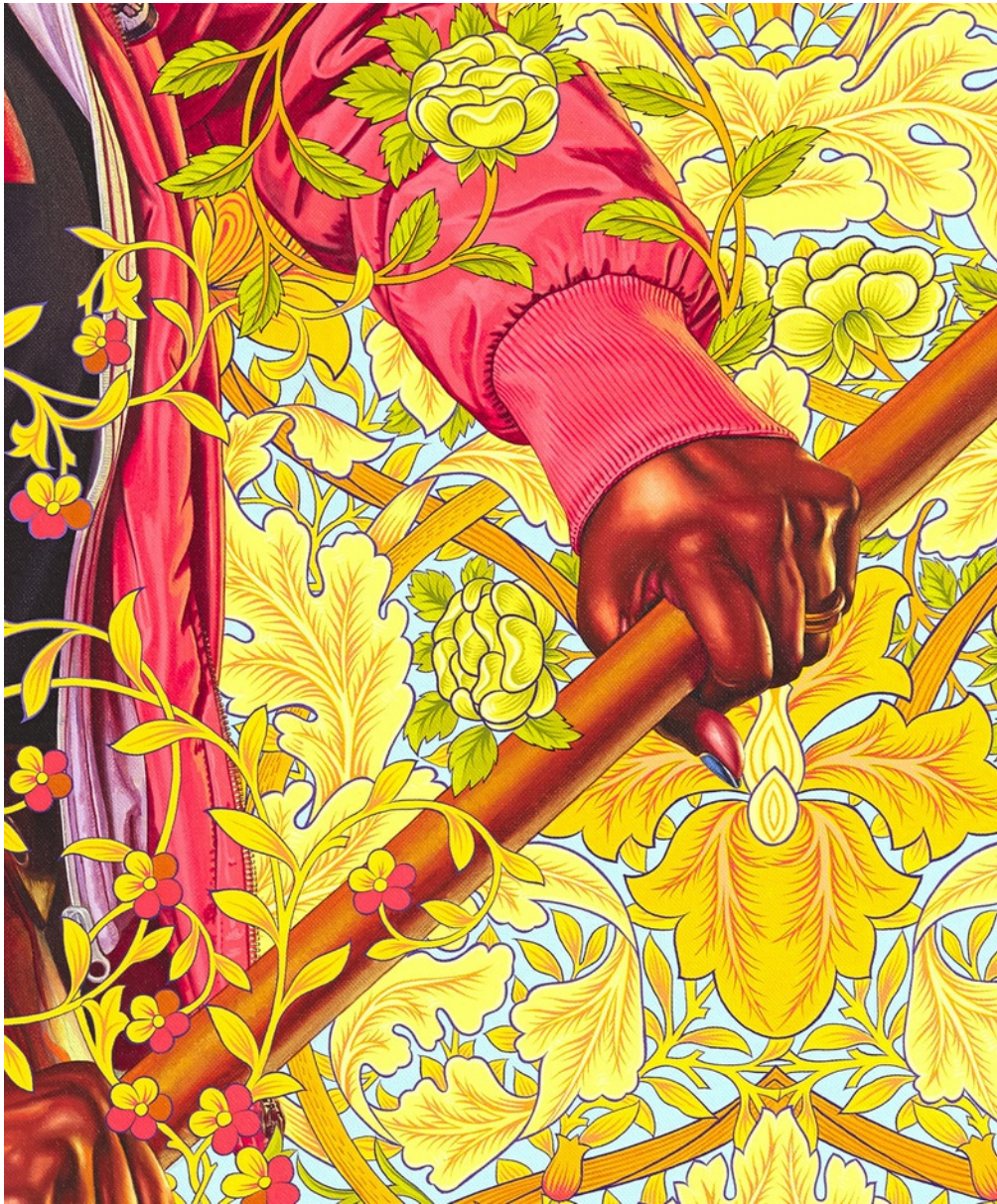


Image 6/9

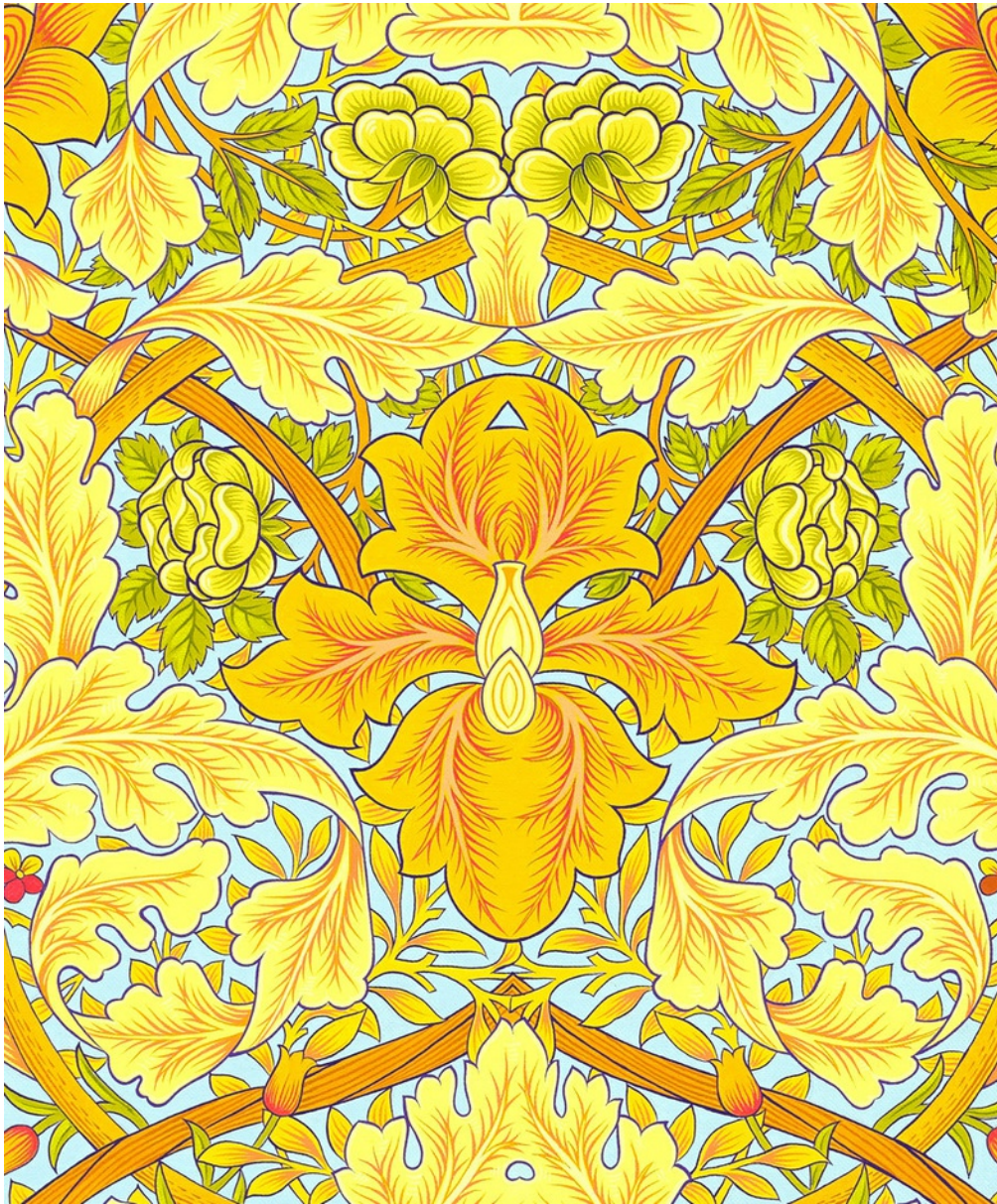


Image 7/9



Image 8/9



Image 9/9

KEHINDE WILEY
Portrait of Melissa Thompson, 2020



Oil on linen
265.5 x 201.8cm
(104 1/2 x 79 1/2in)
(WILEY 82)

Image 1/10

Description

'Portrait of Melissa Thompson' is a new oval portrait by Kehinde Wiley created for the American artist's solo exhibition 'Kehinde Wiley: The Yellow Wallpaper' at William Morris Gallery, London in spring 2020. Wiley is renowned for his finely detailed portraits of contemporary men and women, as well as global figures such as former US President Barack Obama. This is the first solo show of new paintings by the artist at a public institution in the UK and also the first to feature exclusively female portraits. The works offer a visual response to American novelist Charlotte Perkins

Gilman's acclaimed feminist text, 'The Yellow Wallpaper', 1892. Wiley explains, "'The Yellow Wallpaper' is a work of literary fiction that explores the contours of femininity and insanity. This exhibition seeks to use the language of the decorative to reconcile blackness, gender, and a beautiful and terrible past."

Gilman's text is a semi-autobiographical tale which sees her narrator confined to her bedroom after being diagnosed with hysteria and explores the disastrous consequences of denying women independence. 'Portrait of Melissa Thompson' features a woman that the artist met on the streets of Dalston, East London. Viewed from below in three-quarter view, the figure is seated in a stately chair and gazes directly at the viewer from a lavishly patterned background. Wiley employs the heroic visual vocabulary of traditional portraiture to position the subject as autonomous, powerful and an emblem of strength within a society of complicated social networks. Recalling a style once used almost exclusively to depict white aristocratic subjects, this portrait distills a complex dialogue about race and identity in a post-colonial age.

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Image 5/10



Image 6/10



Image 7/10



Image 8/10



Image 9/10



Image 10/10

KEHINDE WILEY
Portrait of Quanna Noble, 2020



Oil on linen
263.5 x 203.5cm
(103 3/4 x 80 1/8in)
(WILEY 86)

Image 1/5

Description

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KEHINDE WILEY

Portrait of Asia-Imani, Gabriella-Esnae, and Kaya Palmer, 2020



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(WILEY 84)

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