

# SEANKELLY

La Force, Thessaly. "Kehinde Wiley's Spring: The Clothes of the Season, Worn by the Artist's Muses,"  
*New York Magazine*, February 8, 2015.

*NEW YORK*

## Kehinde Wiley's Spring: The Clothes of the Season, Worn by the Artist's Muses



KEHINDE WILEY'S SPRING FASHION PORTFOLIO  
Khalidiah Asante

Dress by Michael Kors, available at 790 Madison Ave.; 212-452-4685.

"I wanted beautiful women," says the 37-year-old artist Kehinde Wiley. It was the summer of 2011, and Wiley — known primarily for his ornate, classical-style portraits of young black men — was scouting the streets of Harlem, Brooklyn, and Queens for new subjects. Female subjects, for his first formal attempt at painting women. "I knew that I wanted to cast a broad net and not go within the fashion-world-model look. I wanted women who had a sense of self-possession and a kind of haughtiness that you can just pick up on." With his team of two or three plus a camera crew (the project was filmed for a PBS documentary called *Kehinde Wiley: An Economy of Grace*), he took scouting snapshots on the street, eventually whittling his list of subjects down to just seven. Over the next several months, Wiley photographed them, had them fitted for haute-couture gowns designed by Riccardo Tisci at Givenchy, then painted them large-scale, in works modeled after French and British portraits from the 18th and 19th centuries (pictured

this page). A number of them will be on display at a retrospective of Wiley's work opening February 20 at the Brooklyn Museum, in what will likely be one of the big exhibitions of the winter.

Here, in a portfolio of original photographs for *New York*, Wiley updates those paintings — six of the same women, styled in this season's gowns from the Row, Chloé, Erdem, Rodarte, and others and staged, as his paintings are, to seem both out of time and sumptuously of the moment. He calls the photographs, like the paintings, "intelligent, wasteful acts of spending." With their exaggerated hair and surreal makeup, and accessorized with jewels, the women look both regal and demure. "What we wanted to do was to play up the real world within the language of glamour," Wiley says. "I wanted to have a reprise of that moment, to go back to this idea of fashion and art having something in common, the idea that fashion could change the perception of an individual."

The women hail from a variety of backgrounds. Ena Johnson, 25, is studying for her nursing degree. Candice Stevens, 30, works for the Department of Correction. Shantavia Beale, 23, is a mother of two. But Wiley isn't interested in turning anyone into a Cinderella story. "He portrayed us in a beautiful way without whitewashing our representation," recalls Johnson of the first time she saw Wiley's paintings. "He let little details about us shine through, things that are cultural — that are human. In the painting of Treisha, he painted on her nail designs." Khalidiah Asante, 28 and an art teacher, says of her experience: "I have always been self-conscious about my feet. I'm a dancer, I have calluses underneath my feet that I'd never want to get rid of, because I need them. But when I was younger I wasn't really happy or confident about that, but the fact that he got every detail of my foot, every wrinkle — God, that is wonderful — the part I really hate about my body, I was like, Wow, this is *gorgeous*."

"We need to see more positive representations of ourselves," Johnson says. "There's too much negative. When I was in the Chelsea gallery, my daughter pointed me out, and that was an experience that was so amazing, to be seen in that light."

*Styling by Rebecca Ramsey; makeup by Deja Smith for DD-Pro using Makeup Forever; hair by Dee Trannybear for DD-Pro using Redken.*

*\*This article appears in the February 9, 2015 issue of New York Magazine.*



KEHINDE WILEY'S SPRING FASHION PORTFOLIO  
Ena Johnson  
Dress by Valentino, available at [valentino.com](http://valentino.com).  
Photo: Kehinde Wiley



KEHINDE WILEY'S SPRING FASHION PORTFOLIO  
Treisha Lowe  
Dress by Blumarine, available at [blumarine.com](http://blumarine.com).  
Photo: Kehinde Wiley



KEHINDE WILEY'S SPRING FASHION PORTFOLIO  
Candice Stevens  
Dress and wrap by the Row, available at  
[neimanmarcus.com](http://neimanmarcus.com).  
Photo: Kehinde Wiley



KEHINDE WILEY'S SPRING FASHION PORTFOLIO  
Shantavia Beale  
Dress by Emilio Pucci, available at 855 Madison Ave.;  
212-752-4777.  
Photo: Kehinde Wiley



KEHINDE WILEY'S SPRING FASHION PORTFOLIO  
Candice Stevens  
Dress by Chloé, available at Bergdorf Goodman, 754  
Fifth Ave.; 212-753-7300.  
Photo: Kehinde Wiley



KEHINDE WILEY'S SPRING FASHION PORTFOLIO  
Dacia Carter  
Dress by Erdem, available at [erdem.com](http://erdem.com).  
Photo: Kehinde Wiley



KEHINDE WILEY'S SPRING FASHION PORTFOLIO

Khalidiah Asante

Dress by Rodarte, to order at Ikram; 312-587-1000;  
shoes by Marc Jacobs, available at 163 Mercer St.;  
212-343-1490.

Photo: Kehinde Wiley



KEHINDE WILEY'S SPRING FASHION PORTFOLIO

Treisha Lowe

Dress by Chloé, available at Saks Fifth Ave.; 611 Fifth  
Ave.; 212-753-4000.

Photo: Kehinde Wiley



KEHINDE WILEY'S SPRING FASHION PORTFOLIO  
Ena Johnson  
Dress by Giorgio Armani, available at 760 Madison  
Ave.; 212-988-9191.  
Photo: Kehinde Wiley



KEHINDE WILEY'S SPRING FASHION  
PORTFOLIO  
Kehinde Wiley's Muses As They First Appeared,  
On Canvas, In 2012  
Dacia Carter and Khalidiah Asante  
Photo: Jason Wyche/Courtesy of Sean Kelly,  
New York

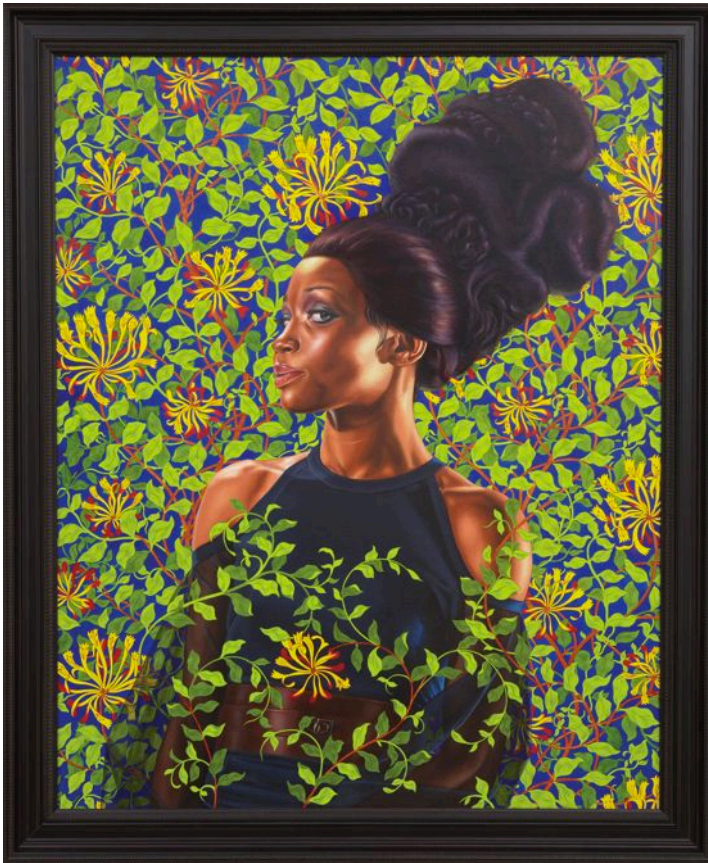


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