



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Kehinde Wiley to deliver keynote address at San Francisco Art Institute Commencement and receive honorary degree**

**San Francisco, CA, March 21, 2018** —San Francisco Art Institute (SFAI) is pleased to announce that alumnus Kehinde Wiley (BFA 1999), whose recent portrait of President Barack Obama for the National Portrait Gallery made international news, will deliver the keynote address at this year's Commencement ceremony to be held May 13, 2018 and will receive an Honorary Doctor of Fine Arts degree that day.

"Kehinde Wiley's work reflects the core values of a San Francisco Art Institute education – exquisite technique delivering a complex human story," says SFAI President Gordon Knox. "His paintings re-shape how we see and understand power and argue for a more inclusive vision of individual and collective potential. As a school, SFAI is proud to have played a part in the emergence of such a brilliant artist. We are delighted to now welcome him back to celebrate his successes and those of our graduating students, who leave SFAI set to make their own glorious marks on the world."

"San Francisco Art Institute is where I honed in on my skills and identity as an artist, and I've carried that experience with me throughout my career," says Wiley. "Art schools empower young people, giving a sense of art history as well as the tools to question those histories and re-envision our culture. It is a wonderful honor to return to SFAI and speak at Commencement to a new generation of emerging artists, full of potential. I hope my story and work will inspire them to claim the full capacities of their education for powerful communication and social change."

The Commencement Ceremony will take place at 2pm on May 13 at the Nourse Theater in San Francisco.

Other recent recipients of an honorary degree from SFAI include alumnus Enrique Chagoya, Linda Nochlin, Theaster Gates, Jack Whitten, alumna Kathryn Bigelow, and Roberta Smith.

### **About Kehinde Wiley**

Kehinde Wiley has firmly situated himself within art history's portrait painting tradition. As a contemporary descendent of a long line of portraitists, including Reynolds, Gainsborough, Titian, and Ingres, among others, Wiley engages the signs and visual rhetoric of the heroic, powerful, majestic and the sublime in his representation of urban, black and brown men and

women found throughout the world. By applying the visual vocabulary and conventions of glorification, history, wealth and prestige to the subject matter drawn from the urban fabric, the subjects and stylistic references for his paintings are juxtaposed inversions of each other, forcing ambiguity and provocative perplexity to pervade his imagery.

Kehinde Wiley holds a BFA from San Francisco Art Institute; an MFA from Yale University; and an honorary PhD from Rhode Island School of Design. His paintings are in the collections of over forty museums including the National Portrait Gallery, Washington, D.C.; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; and the Brooklyn Museum. Selected museum exhibitions include The National Portrait Gallery, Washington, D.C.; Phoenix Art Museum; Jewish Museum, New York; the Brooklyn Museum; the Petit Palais, Paris; BOZAR, Brussels; the Phoenix Museum of Art; the Toledo Museum of Art; and the Modern, Fort Worth, among others. His work has been the subject of ten monographs to date. Wiley was recently the subject of the documentary, *An Economy of Grace* (2014, Show of Force).

Wiley was honored in 2015 by the US Department of State with the Medal of Arts award, celebrating his commitment to cultural diplomacy through the visual arts. In February 2018, his portrait of Barack Obama was added to the permanent installation of presidential portraits in the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery. He lives and works in New York.

## **SFAI Year-End Events**

The invitation-only Commencement Ceremony is part of a week-long series of events and exhibitions to which the public is invited:

### ***MFA Exhibition***

*SFAI Fort Mason Campus*

- *VIP Preview (ticketed): Thursday, May 10, 6-9pm*
- *Public Opening Reception: Friday, May 11, 7-9pm*
- *On View: May 10-17*

As the culminating event of its inaugural year at Fort Mason, SFAI gives the Bay Area public a chance to discover the next Kehinde Wiley or Annie Leibovitz at its annual graduate exhibition. More than 60 MFA artists will transform SFAI's new Fort Mason campus into a dynamic, large-scale gallery of contemporary installations, painting, sound, video, sculpture, photography, printmaking, performance, and more.

### ***BA + MA Symposium***

*SFAI Chestnut Street Campus, Osher Lecture Hall*

*Wednesday, May 9, 1-5pm*

Graduating scholars present portions of their theses in a moderated symposium.

***MFA Film Festival***

*SFAI Chestnut Street Campus, Osher Lecture Hall*

*Wednesday, May 9, 6-9pm*

Experience a curated screening of moving-image media—from narrative films and short videos to digital animations and innovative hybrids of sound and image.

***BFA Exhibition***

*SFAI Chestnut Street Campus*

- *Public Opening Reception: Sunday, May 13, 4-6pm*
- *On View: May 13-18*

A campus-wide exhibition features multi-disciplinary works by graduating Bachelor of Fine Arts students.

**About San Francisco Art Institute**

Founded in 1871, SFAI is one of the country's oldest and most prestigious institutions of higher education in the practice and study of contemporary art. As a diverse community of working artists and scholars, SFAI provides students with a rigorous education in the arts and preparation for a life in the arts through an immersive studio environment, an integrated liberal arts and art history curriculum, and critical engagement with the world. Committed to educating artists who will shape the future of art, culture, and society, SFAI fosters creativity and original thinking in an open, experimental, and interdisciplinary context.

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