

LEGENDS OF UNITY KEHINDE WILEY: WORLD CUP 2010/PUMA

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18 WOOSTER STREET**

PUMA Commissions Contemporary Artist Kehinde Wiley for Portraits of African Football Players to Launch World Cup 2010 Campaign

To herald the start of a World Cup year and to celebrate PUMA's long-standing partnership with African football (the Company sponsors 12 African teams, five of which have qualified for World Cup), PUMA has partnered with Kehinde Wiley, one of the world's most sought-after artists, and commissioned him to create four original works of art inspired by three of football's most decorated players. Wiley is best known for using contemporary African American men in poses taken from the annals of art history and for his distinctive use of elaborate, graphic and colorful wallpaper-like backgrounds.

PUMA-sponsored football stars; Samuel Eto'o of Cameroon, John Mensah of Ghana and Emmanuel Eboué of Ivory Coast sat for Wiley as he painted three individual portraits of each player wearing their national team kits. A fourth 'Unity' Portrait was painted with all three players together, symbolizing the united countries of Africa. The players' pose was inspired by a pendant Wiley discovered while touring the Continent. In the 'Unity' Portrait, the players are wearing the PUMA Unity Kit, a limited edition uniform designed to be a third kit shared by all African teams, symbolizing unity. The brown pigment in the kit is a customized pantone PUMA created by mixing actual soil samples from four different African nations—Ghana, Cameroon, Cote D'Ivoire and Mozambique. The brown to blue color gradient represents the soil to the sky progression. In each portrait, Wiley captures the essence of each player using the rich heritage, customs and people of Africa as inspiration.

"PUMA is fortunate to have partnered with such a pivotal artist as Kehinde Wiley," said Antonio Bertone, Chief Marketing Office, PUMA AG. "His keen eye for design, color and composition, brilliantly capture the spirit and passion of Africa – and the players he painted. His style perfectly complements the vibrant culture of modern Africa and the PUMA brand."

The individual portraits, measuring 5 feet by 6 feet and the 'Unity' portrait measuring 9 feet by 12 feet, will be unveiled in Berlin on January, 20 2010. The portraits will then travel as an exhibition beginning in February to Paris, London, New York, Beijing and Milan, ending in South Africa in June for the World Cup.

PUMA, best known for the sponsorship of 12 African national football teams, is expanding its reach beyond the pitch by create African-inspired lifestyle products and artwork that is relevant and understandable to a younger generation in tandem with Wiley. To that end, Kehinde Wiley has also lent some of his unforgettable patterns to the PUMA Spring Summer 2010 PUMA Africa lifestyle collection of apparel, footwear and accessories. The PUMA Africa collection uses seven graphic patterns from Wiley's existing work and integrates them throughout the bright, bold, color-blocking patterns of the collection. The collaboration between PUMA and Kehinde Wiley is part of a larger Africa-themed campaign PUMA is embarking on in advance of World Cup 2010, which will be held in South Africa in June.

Born in Los Angeles to an African American mother and a Nigerian father, Wiley describes his relationship with Africa as “one of searching and longing.” Kehinde, which means “second born of twins” in Yoruba, grew up without knowing his father and curiosity led him to Nigeria at the age of 20 to retrace his roots. Upon meeting his father, Wiley completed a series of portraits of him, and later, in 2007, returned to Africa to compile a body of work entitled “The World Stage: Africa Lagos-Dakar,” which was exhibited at the Studio Museum in Harlem. At age 32, he represents the African-American cultural explosion that has gripped the world. With an MFA from the esteemed Yale University School of Art, Kehinde Wiley’s work is sought after in major galleries around the world.

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