

**FOR  
IMMEDIATE  
RELEASE**

76 GRAND STREET NEW YORK NY 10013



***KEHINDE WILEY***

**FAUX REAL**

**May 10 - June 14, 2003**

**Opening Saturday May 10, 6-9pm**

**76 Grand Street**

Deitch Projects is pleased to present *Faux Real*, a painting installation by Kehinde Wiley, inspired by a Venetian scuola. The installation features something rarely seen in contemporary art, a spectacular ceiling painting, along with four arched altarpieces. The works reference specific paintings by Titian and Tiepolo, but Wiley incorporates a range of art historical and vernacular styles, from the French rococo to the contemporary urban street. He collapses history and style into a uniquely contemporary vision.

Wiley describes his approach as "interrogating the notion of the master painter, at once critical and complicit." He makes figurative paintings that "quote historical sources and position young black men within that field of 'power.'" His "slightly heroic" figures, slightly larger than life size, are depicted in poses of power and spiritual awakening. He deliberately mixes images of power and spirituality, using them as a filter in the portrayal of masculinity.

The figures in the ceiling painting are neither falling nor rising, floating in a static middle ground. The figures are relatively expressionless, allowing the viewers to project their own self-image into the work. The models are young men who

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the artist meets on the street, mostly from 125<sup>th</sup> Street in Harlem. They are asked to assume poses from works by Titian and Tiepolo, dressed in their street clothes. Wiley does not alter the style of the clothing, changing only the color and the pattern. The viewer could easily assume that the poses derive from contemporary hip-hop attitudes, rather than Venetian Old Master paintings.

Wiley also incorporates late French rococo ornamentation, transforming gold filigree into schools of swimming sperm. He explains how sperm have an amazing potential to create life, but will most likely expire in the process, making them both heroic and pathetic. Wiley's embrace of the French rococo, with its garishness and vulgarity, complements his embrace of hip-hop culture, making his approach both historical and contemporary.

In an insightful essay for the brochure that accompanied *Ironic Iconic*, the exhibition of the 2001-2002 Artists-in-Residence at the Studio Museum in Harlem, Malik Gaines described how "Wiley sifts through the remnants of his culture and is able to build a whole from these many cluttering parts...With the stroke of his brush, Wiley brings his black boys to life, giving them just enough strength to contend with the terrible and beautiful pasts that continuously encroach upon all of us."

Kehinde Wiley was born in Los Angeles in 1977. He received a BFA from the San Francisco Art Institute in 1999 and an MFA from Yale in 2001. In addition to *Ironic Iconic*, his work was featured in *Black Romantic* at the Studio Museum-in-Harlem in 2002. Wiley now lives and works in New York. This is his first solo exhibition at a commercial gallery.

**GALLERY HOURS 12 –6, TUESDAY – SATURDAY  
FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION CONTACT  
JULIA CHIANG AT 212 - 343 - 7300**