

Kehinde Wiley

Quotes

*Thinking, Art, Artist, People, Mean, Ideas, Believe, Painting, Book,
Expectations, Mother, World, America, Museums, Talking, Black, Desire, Years,
School, Men*

I think there's something important in going against the grain, and perhaps finding value in things that aren't necessarily institutionally recognized.

~Kehinde Wiley

This is something that, as artists, we constantly deal with-throwing away the past, slaying the father, and creating the new. This desire to throw away the old rules.

~Kehinde Wiley

The backgrounds by design are a very key part of the conversation, because I want a kind of fight or pressure to exist between the figure and the background.

~Kehinde Wiley

All art is self-portraiture.

~Kehinde Wiley

Painting is situational. And my particular situation exists within gender, race, class, sexuality, nation.

~Kehinde Wiley

I believe that artists should be part of the culture. I think that my work clearly bears that out.

~Kehinde Wiley

The art world has become so insular. The rules have become so autodidactic that, in a sense, they lose track of what people have any interest in thinking about, talking about or even looking at.

~Kehinde Wiley

We have a lot of sort of received historical ways of viewing portraiture. And I suppose in some way I'm sort of questioning that by toying with the rules of the game.

~Kehinde Wiley

We're wired to be empathetic and to care about the needs of others, but also to be curious about others. And I think that's just sort of in our DNA. And so portraiture is a very human act.

~Kehinde Wiley

I guess art is in the eye of the beholder.

~Kehinde Wiley

I think that's kind of indicative of a type of self-confidence that people develop when they recognize their own ability to create.

~Kehinde Wiley

Almost as though the painting itself becomes the embodiment of a type of struggle for visibility, and this might be considered the main subject of the painting.

~Kehinde Wiley

When you're at your best, you're analyzing yourself and becoming increasingly isolated from a broader narrative.

~Kehinde Wiley

I think that I'm increasingly aware of the fact that in order to work towards any statement that's radically global or universal, you have to start in a place that's radically intimate and particular.

~Kehinde Wiley

I think that artists provide questions, not answers. We provide provocations rather than fully formed objects.

~Kehinde Wiley

I try to create a place of disorientation.

~Kehinde Wiley

I think that at its best you just have to respect each arena for what they can do well.

~Kehinde Wiley

Status and class and social anxiety and perhaps social code are all released when you look at paintings of powerful individuals from the past.

~Kehinde Wiley

My assistants generally do all the flowers and all of the decorative work. I concentrate on the figure.

~Kehinde Wiley

There were certain expectations that were assumed of me as a young black American 20th-century - then 20th-century artist.

~Kehinde Wiley

I've had moments where I've met people who were complete, like, idiots, who could not understand visual culture to save their lives.

~Kehinde Wiley

He's a great - he's a great professor. He retired recently, but. But Peter Halley as well.

~Kehinde Wiley

I think the world that I grew up in was like being in this sort of magical artistic garden.

~Kehinde Wiley

In my work, I want to create an understanding, not about what a painting looks like but about what a painting says.

~Kehinde Wiley

I believe the artist is capable of contributing to the broader evolution of

culture in all of its dimensions.

~Kehinde Wiley

I create something that means something to me, to the world, and try to do my best. I can't fix everything.

~Kehinde Wiley

One of my most strong memories was studying with Mel Bochner, one of the, I think, high water marks of American conceptual art.

~Kehinde Wiley

I think what we should concentrate on is what it feels like to be a working artist in the day to day. One doesn't imagine what comes down the line.

~Kehinde Wiley

It's a culture. It's - I mean, people obsess over this. And people create subcultures that identify - and there are people in the streets who will recognize certain patterns and signifiers.

~Kehinde Wiley

How does the artist function as poet-slash-witness-slash-trickster?

~Kehinde Wiley

On the contrary, my desire is that the viewer sees the background coming forward in the lower portion of the canvas, fighting for space, demanding presence.

~Kehinde Wiley

I have a really strong suspicion of the romantic nature of portraiture, the idea that you're telling some essential truth about the interior lives of your subject.

~Kehinde Wiley

A realization and a dissection of the canon gave rise to the work. But there's also a sneaking suspicion of the canon.

~Kehinde Wiley

I use those expectations as a color on my palette, a certain temperature in the room. You can use those expectations for the great punchline, but also for a great painting, in society.

~Kehinde Wiley

I grew up in South Central Los Angeles, where people are in cars.

~Kehinde Wiley

I was 12 in 1989 during perestroika, when my mother found a program that sent me to Russia to study art in the forests outside of Leningrad.

~Kehinde Wiley

I mean, the radical contingency that is - that exists and the fact that I'm going into the streets and finding random strangers any given day - who's in these streets that day?

~Kehinde Wiley

I have been painting models with black and brown skin only for the past years. So, I did already have this experience, this is how I have come to the paintings I do now.

~Kehinde Wiley

Is it the responsibility of the colored artist or the ethnic artist to create works that are designed to exist in opposition to a certain political structure?

~Kehinde Wiley

You know, one of my - one of my best and, I think, most enlightening moments was when I was contacted by Michael Jackson. And he requested that I paint his portrait.

~Kehinde Wiley

I like to play with the conventions around what we expect of paintings historically. But I also like to play with the conventions that you expect from a Kehinde Wiley painting, too.

~Kehinde Wiley

I went back to my mother's house recently and I saw some of my earlier works as a 15-year-old art student. And a lot of them were reiterations of classic works.

~Kehinde Wiley

Mel Bochner was able to give me the tools to look at those types of experiences, register them with my own, but also hold them far enough away to see them 360.

~Kehinde Wiley

There's nothing shocking inherently about that, given that so much of the way that artists are taught is by copying old master paintings.

~Kehinde Wiley

My paintings at their best take that vocabulary and attempt to transpose that into a form that gives respect not only to the history of painting but also to those people who look and sound like me.

~Kehinde Wiley

I think that an obsession with art history gave rise to the work.

~Kehinde Wiley

There is something to be said about laying bare the vocabulary of the aristocratic measure, right? There's something to be said about allowing the powerless to tell their own story.

~Kehinde Wiley

In America, there's this type of expectation of just-add-water celebrity, this type of, "Of course you found me; we're all going to be famous for 15 minutes," sort of Paris-Hilton-ization of society.

~Kehinde Wiley

The work that I wanted to create wasn't being done then. I was too much concerned about fellow students, professors, institutional style [in Yale].

~Kehinde Wiley

I actually studied cooking and, like, was thinking about becoming a chef.

~Kehinde Wiley

My peers at the time: you know, young black kids from off the streets of Harlem, having these conversations with me in my small, dirty little studio up in Harlem.

~Kehinde Wiley

I had an amazing instructor, Joseph Gotto , who, as a painter, spoke to me as it - he didn't condescend.

~Kehinde Wiley

This is - it's a sociological experiment in many ways. And so you're seeing the results of what happens when you put a lot of boys in a room looking at art history.

~Kehinde Wiley

After high school I went to the San Francisco Art Institute, and I began a formalized art education where we went through the history of art but we also went through the art of my contemporaries.

~Kehinde Wiley

In the end I'm in love with it [Western European easel painting]. And

that's where a lot of the influence from the work comes from.

~Kehinde Wiley

So sometimes you have to play your hand and sort of push in a direction. And I think that masculinity is the driving point for a lot of the way that people, like, posture in the work.

~Kehinde Wiley

My mother's from Texas. Small town outside of Waco called Downsville. And my father's from Nigeria. And so I guess I'm properly African-American.

~Kehinde Wiley

The artists ultimately respond to the public.

~Kehinde Wiley

You have to bring books to explain your work.

~Kehinde Wiley

As a twin, I operate with twin desires.

~Kehinde Wiley

[My parents] met in university back in the '70s. And I didn't grow up with my father. He - they separated before I was born.

~Kehinde Wiley

What it is is a type of editorialization, you know? This is self-portraiture. This is what you think about the world we live in.

~Kehinde Wiley

I love the idea of engaging religious sentiment and how that vocabulary has evolved over time.

~Kehinde Wiley

Mel [Bochner] sets a very high standard. He expects only the best and most thoughtful and rigorous examinations, not only of the history of art but your own practice.

~Kehinde Wiley

I think it was a matter of, like, I'm not going to have my kids in these wild streets. Both my twin brother and I were in art school together.

~Kehinde Wiley

I think that one of the questions that I asked of myself in later years was to this point of the political directive.

~Kehinde Wiley

There is no purity with regards to the marketplace and art, I believe.

~Kehinde Wiley

I think it's possible to allow an artist to go beyond his borders and play.

~Kehinde Wiley

Most people say, "Hell, no. I don't know who you are. This scares me. Like, I'm not interested in this." Another way of looking at these paintings is, these are the guys who said yes.

~Kehinde Wiley

I was surrounded by art by virtue of not only the educational opportunities that my mother's foresight availed me to.

~Kehinde Wiley

I think that just the nature of art education in schools, it's about packs, you know? Like, we're young wolves running together, creating a consensus. And consensus is antithetical to the art process.

~Kehinde Wiley

I have a lot of problems with Western European easel painting.

~Kehinde Wiley

I'm fully capable of multitasking certain conceptual concerns within the work.

~Kehinde Wiley

I've met others [people] who simply responded to me, "You're Kehinde Wiley. I know your work. I saw it at the Brooklyn Museum [Brooklyn, NY] And I'd be honored to be in your work."

~Kehinde Wiley

At the same time I really enjoy painting flesh.

~Kehinde Wiley

Usually I bring very attractive women with me to excite interest. I mean, it's a type of, like, strangers-with-candy situation.

~Kehinde Wiley

You'll find that street casting in America is a lot different than street casting in different nations.

~Kehinde Wiley

There's always a tug of war. Like, in the States, in America, there's certainly a higher quotient, I would imagine, of, like, macho, like, masculinity posturing.

~Kehinde Wiley

I love the flexibility of saying, "Today we're making 50-foot paintings, and we're going to have to join hands and figure out how that's going to work." But in the end, it's a possibility.

~Kehinde Wiley

I love being able to have a team.

~Kehinde Wiley

While I can hire out the portrait, I don't, because it's just - that's where I shine. You know, that's my blood sport.

~Kehinde Wiley

I love being a portraitist.

~Kehinde Wiley

That should be something that an artist can respond to as well in terms of a painting.

~Kehinde Wiley

Your best as an artist is to create something that resonates for you.

~Kehinde Wiley

In some way they are all self-portraits, but I think I know what you mean by asking this - I would say, it is too idealistic to paint yourself.

~Kehinde Wiley

I studied shades, textures by painting after the Old Masters, the classical European paintings, as part of my educational process.

~Kehinde Wiley

I have been painting white people for much longer in my life than I have done for colored people.

~Kehinde Wiley

There was no image of the other biological half of myself. And as an artists, as a - as an - as a portraitist, the look of who you are was radically important to me.

~Kehinde Wiley

I was 11 when I was first introduced to live drawing classes and going to art school.

~Kehinde Wiley

There's something really cool about being able to fly to South Africa and watch one of the most talented African footballers wearing a shoe on the field.

~Kehinde Wiley

Portraiture is something that we're all drawn to. I think primarily other forms - we prefer, by and large, to look at human beings than a bowl of fruit.

~Kehinde Wiley

I think that the Kehinde Wiley brand is something that I'm working towards expanding and to inclusion.

~Kehinde Wiley

What's interesting about my project recently is that I'm going out into broader global spaces but then isolating at the same time - sort of pushing out but then pulling in.

~Kehinde Wiley

For me, I wanted to create something that's much more driven by a type of selfishness, a type of decadence.

~Kehinde Wiley

Just so [becoming a chef] that I could support my art habit. You know? I mean, this is - this is something where you've been literally given an opportunity to put the world on pause for a second.

~Kehinde Wiley

There is no pedestrian culture [in South Central Los Angeles].

~Kehinde Wiley

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