

cincinnati art museum

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***Images Available Upon Request**

Cincinnati Art Museum Adds Celebrated Painting by Kehinde Wiley to its Collection

The Two Sisters is now on view

CINCINNATI—March 1, 2023— The Cincinnati Art Museum has acquired *The Two Sisters*, a monumental double portrait made in 2012 by Kehinde Wiley (American, b. 1977), thanks to a generous gift from the Ragland family, longtime supporters of the museum.

Wiley is among the most recognizable and acclaimed contemporary artists, working across the globe in sculpture, stained glass and his primary medium, oil painting. He is redefining the art of portraiture for today's world, portraying contemporary African American and African figures with virtuosic technique, in poses inspired by the conventions of historical European art. Wiley's renown has grown in recent years, following his commissions for the official presidential portrait of Barack Obama in 2018 and the monumental bronze equestrian statue *Rumors of War* for the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts the following year.

Measuring almost nine feet tall, *The Two Sisters* is part of Wiley's 2012 series of paintings, *An Economy of Grace*. In this pioneering body of work, Wiley portrayed female subjects for the first time. Following his unique process developed over the previous decade as he made portraits of men, Wiley "street cast" his subjects, identifying and approaching the women depicted in *The Two Sisters* as they went about their lives in New York City. Wiley also continued his approach of modeling his compositions after historical European portraits and incorporating rich decorative motifs. In the museum's new acquisition, Wiley was inspired by French artist Théodore Chassériau's 1843 double portrait of his sisters that hangs in the Louvre.

"For the past two decades, Wiley has been writing a new chapter of art history by portraying historically underrepresented women and men on a heroic scale and style nurtured in Europe from the 1700s to the 1900s—the cradle of colonialism. His art corrects biased expectations of who should be celebrated in our pantheon of art and culture—both who belongs behind the canvas and in front of it," says Peter Jonathan Bell, the museum's curator of European paintings, sculpture and drawings. "After introducing this acquisition with a special presentation just off the museum lobby, we look forward to exhibiting *The Two Sisters* in close dialogue with masterpieces by Gainsborough and Reynolds, where it will breathe new life into our historical collection."

Wiley wove fashion design and filmmaking into his creation of *The Two Sisters*. Riccardo Tisci, then creative director for Givenchy, designed the sitters' dresses in collaboration with Wiley—another departure from Wiley's previous depictions, in which his subjects wore streetwear, not couture. The project was documented in an award-winning 2014 film directed by Jeff Dupre, *Kehinde Wiley: An Economy of Grace*. Museum visitors can view a [trailer for the documentary](#) on a screen in the gallery.

The Two Sisters is on view in the Conversations Gallery, just off the museum's main entrance and lobby, alongside two other recent additions to the museum by Wiley, bronze busts of *Mame Kéwé Aminata Lõ* and *Barthélémy Senghor*. Later this year, *The Two Sisters* will move to the second floor collections galleries.

About the Cincinnati Art Museum

The Cincinnati Art Museum is supported by the generosity of individuals and businesses that give annually to ArtsWave. The Ohio Arts Council helps fund the Cincinnati Art Museum with state tax dollars to encourage

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economic growth, educational excellence and cultural enrichment for all Ohioans. The Cincinnati Art Museum gratefully acknowledges operating support from the City of Cincinnati, as well as our members.

Free general admission to the Cincinnati Art Museum is made possible by a gift from the Rosenthal Family Foundation. Special exhibition pricing may vary. Parking at the Cincinnati Art Museum is free.

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