

## **Cultural Sensitivity Touring Guide vis á vis *Kehinde Wiley: A New Republic***

The issues dealt with by art can often be difficult ones to talk about. Discussions surrounding sexual orientation, ethnic identity, and gender identification are all important and very relevant to much of contemporary art. Thus, as representatives of the Modern, it is imperative that docents use language on their tours that is thoughtful regarding individuals' ethnicities and cultures, genders, and sexual orientations. We do this best by exhibiting a sensitivity to the personal and cultural identity of each of our visitors, using language that is unburdened by any projection of cultural inferiority or exoticization.

When touring the Wiley exhibition, a few examples of language that are kind and sensitive to differences within the human family might be:

- African American hair is natural, curly, and often a symbol of pride and personal power.
  - It is not "wild," "crazy," or "too big."
- Young African American men are chosen by Wiley on the streets of major American cities.
  - They are not from "the projects," "the hood," "the ghetto," or any other pejorative term for low-income, inner-city neighborhoods.
- The sitters' clothing in Wiley's portraits are contemporary fashions worn by young men to convey a sense of connection to urban fashion and hip hop culture. Brands such as Timberland (boots), Sean John, Rocawear, and Dee and Ricky accessories (<http://deeandricky.com/collections/>) are (or have been) visual currency among young, urban men and women, many of whom identify with hip hop culture.
  - The sitters are not wearing "gangster," "ghetto," or "hood" clothes.
- Wiley's sexuality is openly acknowledged by the artist and an important factor in his early street casting of young men. To talk about this homosexuality and its bearing on the homoerotic undertones of many of his early series is in keeping with what Wiley himself (and many critics) have asserted.
  - Do not, however, make as your tour's focal point the artist's sexuality. Remember: if the work can bear it out, then it is helpful to include it in the conversation. If it has nothing to do with the piece you are exploring, let it be. Of course, if a guest asks about an artist's sexuality, you can certainly share what you know.
- As you tour this exhibition, notice if you feel uncomfortable talking about a specific piece or concept. If so, feel free to contact Erin to discuss your thoughts and check the language you are using for the artwork in question.

**Thank you for ensuring that our tours are always sensitive to individuals from all cultures and communities.**