

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Only: Amanda Young, (860) 838-4082, amanda.young@wadsworthatheneum.org
Taryn Bunger, (860) 838-4081, taryn.bunger@wadsworthatheneum.org

**Works by Salomon van Ruysdael and Kehinde Wiley
Among Newest Acquisitions by Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art**

Hartford, Conn. (May 10, 2016) – The Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art has acquired two new works of art by major artists: a 17th-century Dutch landscape by Salomon van Ruysdael and a portrait by contemporary American artist Kehinde Wiley. Both purchases have been approved by the Curatorial Committee of the museum and are currently on view to the public.

“One of the more serious activities for a museum is the thoughtful building of its collections with the education and delight of future generations of museum-goers in mind,” said Thomas J. Loughman, Director and C.E.O. “In the case of these two new works of art, we are especially fortunate to have acquired stellar exemplars by very different—but much sought-after—artists. Both fundamentally strengthen the Wadsworth Atheneum’s encyclopedic collections.”

“River Landscape with Boats and Liesvelt Castle” (1641) by 17th-century Dutch painter Salomon Jacobsz. van Ruysdael (1602–1670) was purchased at Maastricht during The European Fine Art Fair in March. The Wadsworth Atheneum team was taken by its serene, nearly monochrome composition, which has been praised as one of the finest of Salomon’s mature river landscapes. Dutch artists revolutionized landscape painting during the 17th century, as the watery, flat, and prosaic countryside of the Netherlands inspired countless painters to depict the land in an often naturalistic way. Among them, Salomon van Ruysdael became, along with Jan van Goyen, one of the most influential Dutch landscape painters in his own day and for later generations, including the burgeoning landscapists of the Hudson River School in early 19th-century America.

Signed and dated 1641 and imbued with soft, subtly applied colors, “River Landscape with Boats and Liesvelt Castle” is one of the most felicitous achievements of van Ruysdael’s early period. Its lyrical character and everyday life scenery can stand emblematically for the Dutch term for Ruysdael’s time: “the Gouden Eeuw,” the Golden Age of the Netherlands.

Oliver Tostmann, Susan Morse Hilles Curator of European Art, avers that van Ruysdael’s, “River Landscape with Boats and Liesvelt Castle” will greatly enhance the museum’s collection of Dutch paintings, to which the museum has not added since 1996.

“This painting is an excellent example of van Ruysdael’s landscapes, which proved to be influential for later artists such as Théodore Rousseau and Camille Pissarro, as well as American painters from the Hudson River School, all represented with landscapes in our collection,” said

Tostmann. “This work joins, ‘View of the Dunes near Bloemendael with Bleaching Fields,’ by Salomon’s nephew Jacob van Ruisdael, as well as Aelbert Cuyp’s, ‘Wooded Landscape.’ Together they handsomely round out our presentation of Dutch landscapes and will allow the public a more comprehensive look at our holdings of Dutch art.”

“Portrait of Toks Adewetan (The King of Glory)” (2016) by American artist Kehinde Wiley (b. 1977) is the first work by the artist to enter the museum’s collection. Wiley is one of the more interesting contemporary portrait painters working today. His work raises questions about race and the politics of representation, accomplished by imitating the paintings of Old Masters but replacing the aristocratic European subjects with contemporary black and brown men and women. Wiley approaches his subjects on the streets of New York. In the studio, the sitter selects a portrait from art history on which his image will be based. Toks Adewetan’s source image is a 14th-century Russian icon of Christ in the collection of the State Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow.

Wiley’s portraits are painted in a photorealistic, hyper-baroque style, with confrontational figures and highly ornate, classic gilded frames. The backgrounds of Wiley’s paintings are often derived from the textile and wallpaper designs, in this case William Morris’s 1866 design “Blue Fruit” or “Pomegranate” wallpaper, which has come to life with flowering, leafy branches springing from the background over the sitter’s crossed arms. In terms of iconography, the pomegranate is a symbol of Christ. Often split open, the red juice represents Christ’s blood and suffering and the seeds that burst forth from the fruit represent his resurrection. The thorny branches of the pomegranate tree suggest Christ’s crown of thorns. But the sitter wears two symbols of non-Christian religions: the Ankh is the Egyptian cross symbolizing life; the Green Buddha is a symbol of environmentalism and Buddhist practice.

“The museum’s contemporary art collection is especially strong in African American artists’ work, in part thanks to our ties with The Amistad Center for Art & Culture,” said Patricia Hickson, Emily Hall Tremaine Curator of Contemporary Art. “However, the contemporary art collection is overdue in its acquisition of a Kehinde Wiley painting, which makes direct connections with our collections of American and European portrait paintings. Historical portraiture, in particular, is the genre that Wiley investigates.”

About the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art

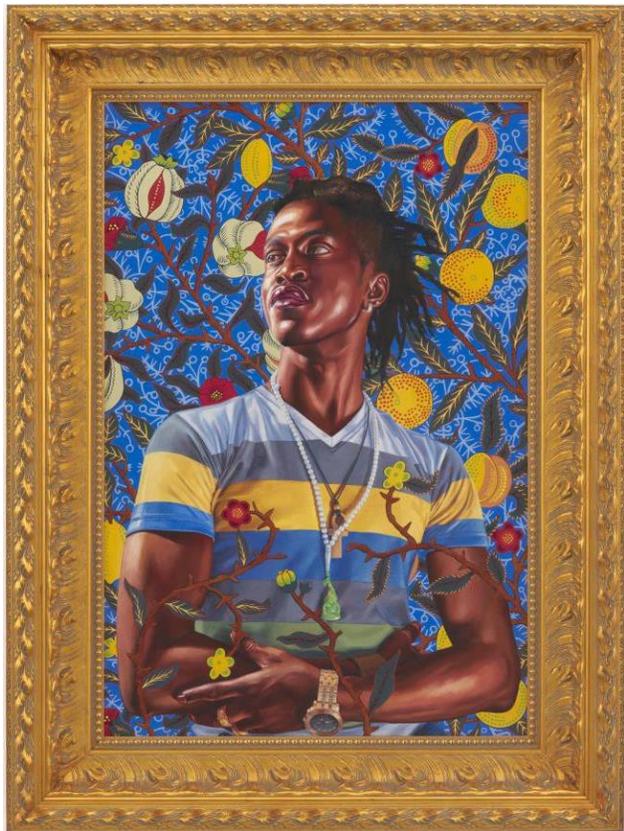
Founded in 1842, the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art is the oldest continuously operating public art museum in the United States. The museum’s nearly 50,000 works of art span 5,000 years, from Greek and Roman antiquities to the first museum collection of American contemporary art. The Wadsworth Atheneum’s five connected buildings—representing architectural styles from Gothic Revival to modern International Style—are located at 600 Main Street in Hartford, Conn. Hours: Wednesday – Friday: 11 a.m. – 5 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday: 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. Admission: \$5 – 15; discounts for members, students and seniors. Free “happy hour” admission 4 – 5 p.m. Public phone: (860) 278-2670; website: thewadsworth.org.

###

Note to editors: High-resolution files of the aforementioned works of art (previews below) are available for download at <http://press.thewadsworth.org>. Please email media@wadsworthatheneum.org for log-in credentials. Please also use the full captions below with any posting or printing of these images.



Salomon Jacobsz van Ruysdael, *River landscape with boats and Liesvelt Castle*, 1641, oil on panel, Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, 2016.4.1



Kehinde Wiley, *Portrait of Toks Adewetan (Christ, The King of Glory)*, 2016, oil on canvas, Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, 2016.6.1