Lesson Title: Power Portraits  
Grades: 9-12  
Time Required: 3–5 classroom periods  
Subject Areas: Visual Art  

Lesson Overview: In this lesson students will examine a portrait by Kehinde Wiley, analyzing how he conveys certain characteristics about his sitter. Students then “commission” their own portraits from one another.

Standards Addressed:

National Core Art Standards

VA:Cr1.2.IIa
Choose from a range of materials and methods of traditional and contemporary artistic practices to plan works of art and design.

VA:Cn10.1.IIIa
Synthesize knowledge of social, cultural, historical, and personal life with art-making approaches to create meaningful works of art or design.

VA:Re8.1.IIa
Identify types of contextual information useful in the process of constructing interpretations of an artwork or collection of works.

Learning Objectives:
Students will be able to:
- Understand the significance of Kehinde Wiley’s work
- Identify key details in a work of art and analyze how those details effect the work’s meaning
- Create a portrait using key details to convey the sitter’s characteristics

Artworks in Focus:
Click on the links below to access these images through the Wadsworth’s Public Portal. Once on the portal, click on the image to view the object information. Click on the image again to download a jpeg version of the work. NOTE: Works of art used in this lesson may not currently be on view at the museum.

Kehinde Wiley, Portrait of Toks Adewetan [The King of Glory], 2016

Materials:
- Access to the image of Portrait of Toks Adewetan [using the above link]
- Projector and screen/SMART Board or equivalent
- Image of The King of Glory [included in this lesson]
- Copies of Portrait Worksheet
- Art supplies of your choice
- Optional: props for portrait activity

Lesson Procedures:

Part One: Guided Looking

1. Project the image of Portrait of Toks Adewetan [The King of Glory] and lead a group discussion based on the questions below:
   - How is he posed? Mimic the pose, how does it feel?
   - How is he dressed? Describe his clothing and accessories? [Be sure they note the Egyptian ankh and jade Buddha pendant]. What might his clothing and accessories tell us about him?
• How would you describe his personality? What makes you say that?
• What do you think he is thinking about? Why do you think that?
• Describe the painting’s composition. How much of the body has the artist included. Would it feel different if it was smaller/included less of his body?
• Can you tell about what year this is painted? What makes you say that? Is there anything in the painting that seems historical? What?
• Describe the colors and lines.
• How would you characterize the artist’s style?
• Describe the background. Can anyone identify the fruit depicted? Tell students they are abstract depictions of pomegranates, a fruit associated with Christianity, specifically Christ’s resurrection. The design is taken from a famous English wallpaper design. How does this knowledge inform your interpretation of the viewer? What about in relation to the ankh and the Buddha?
• Describe the difference between the background and foreground. How are they interacting? What is featured in the background?
• Look at the frame, have you seen frames like that before? Where? How is this painting different from those works?
• Think about painted portraits. Who might own a portrait? What does that say about that person?

2. Tell students a little bit about the work. The artist, Kehinde Wiley, creates portraits of contemporary men of color, disrupting hundreds of years of western portraiture that almost exclusively featured wealthy white men and women in power. He finds his sitters by approaching them on the streets of New York. He then asks them to select a portrait from the history of art to serve as the source for their image. Wiley wants to change how men of color are often portrayed in the media and give them a place of honor in art history.

3. Show students the image of the *The King of Glory*, telling them this is the image Toks chose as his source. Ask the following:
   • How is the portrait similar to source image?
   • How has been changed?
   • Why do you think Wiley used traditional portraiture rather than creating a completely new method?

4. Conclude the discussion by summarizing the different ways Kehinde conveyed characteristics about his sitter [pose, color, light, composition, background design, clothing, accessories, etc.]

Part Two: Portrait Activity

1. Tell students they will be pairing up to create “commissioned” portraits of one another.
2. Hand out the *Portrait Worksheet* to help students organize their thoughts. Pretend that their partner is their “client.” Have the partners discuss what qualities their client wants to convey. These could be personality traits (i.e. strength, kindness, intelligence, etc.), personal interests (i.e. sports, reading, art), or something else they decide is important.
3. Working with their partners, Students will think about how they can visualize those aspects in their “commissioned” portraits, writing each Review the possible ways to do this:
   a. Pose
   b. Facial expression
   c. Lighting

TEACHER RESOURCE
thewadsworth.org/teachers  Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, School and Teacher Programs
teachers@wadsworthatheneum.org
d. Composition
e. Color
f. Clothing
g. Accessories
h. Setting

4. You may want to provide props to help students get in the spirit of portraiture.
5. Students draft their portraits, based on their client’s criteria and review their drafts with their client before beginning work on the final work.
6. Portraits can be completed in the medium of your choice. If you have access to Photoshop or similar photo-editing software, you may consider having students complete the project digitally.
7. Students then present their portraits. They should be able to articulate how they fulfilled their client’s wishes.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION
Portrait of Toks Adewetan (The King of Glory)

European portraiture has long been a symbol of power. Wiley replaces the original—white male—subjects of such portraits with young men of color. The artist asks his contemporary sitters, approached on the streets of New York, to select a portrait from the history of art to serve as the source for their image. Here, Toks Adewetan crosses his arms, assuming Christ’s pose from The King of Glory. The sitter transforms the message of the original icon by looking upward with pride and confidence. The Green Buddha and the Egyptian Ankh around his neck infuse the work with non-Christian references. In the background Wiley features stylized pomegranates—signifying Christ’s resurrection—from a textile design by the nineteenth-century British artist William Morris.

The phrase King of glory is found in a series of verses in Psalm 24:
“Lift up your heads, you gates;
be lifted up, you ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in.
Who is this King of glory?
The Lord strong and mighty,
the Lord mighty in battle.
Lift up your heads, you gates;
lift them up, you ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in.
Who is he, this King of glory?
The Lord Almighty—
he is the King of glory” (Psalm 24:7–10).
**Portrait Worksheet**

Name of Client:

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<th>Qualities/Characteristics your client wants to convey</th>
<th>How will you visualize that quality?</th>
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