

## Paul Wallach: Truth That

BASTIAN Gallery, 8 Davies Street, Mayfair, London W1K 3DW  
 www.bastian-gallery.com  
 March 18 to April 30

New York-born in 1960, Paul Wallach began his career with Mark di Suvero as an artist in residence where he worked for three years. Wallach moved from New York to Dusseldorf in 1992 and has been living and working in Paris since 1994. His work has been exhibited in American and European institutions such as the Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain, St. Etienne, the Domaine de Kerguehenec, Bignan, the Museum Folkwang, Essen, and the Gemeentemuseum in The Hague, and is now debuting in London this March.

In an intimate exhibition of new wall mounted sculptures. Wallach's engaging and poetic contemporary works reflects his belief: 'if a question is easy to answer, then there's no point in asking'.

Ephemeral pieces such as Truth That (2019) and Whencesoever (2019) play with gravity, material and suspension to interrogate time, or the lack of it. The exhibition explores Wallach's sculptural practice and the inherent nature of his chosen materials; string, brick, plaster, cloth, pencil Stripping his sculptures down to a reduction, Wallach discards the excesses of daily life and formulates a new one from the scraps. Placed relationally to the walls they are exhibited on, they make use of their surrounding space and, as multi-dimensional objects, do not allow us to understand them from only one perspective. Instead, they challenge our perception of mass, space and geometry.

Paul Wallach, Truth That, 2019



## Kehinde Wiley: The Prelude

National Gallery, Trafalgar Square, London  
 www.nationalgallery.org.uk  
 until 18 April  
 Reviewed by Michael Macy

Production photo from on-location filming  
 in Norway for Prelude, 2020

©KEHINDE WILEY



**K**ehinde Wiley is an ambitious man. I don't mean that he is after fame or fortune. I have no idea if those things interest him, though he is well known and his paintings sell well. His ambitions are more than just personal, he wants to change how we see art and to encourage us to experience and celebrate the sublimity of nature and our place within it.

These are big ambitions and Wiley is working on them, as evinced by his new show, The Prelude, which opened at the National Gallery on December 10.

Wiley has been the subject of many articles, interviews and analyses. His paintings have been exhibited in galleries around the world and acquired by major museums. He became famous beyond the art world for the official portrait of President Barack Obama. He may well be one of the most profiled painters on the planet. Many erudite people have written about Wiley's work and he, himself, is very articulate about it. So, the way to understand his newest exhibition may be to go past the noise and submerge yourself. The exhibition has five paintings and a film that's roughly 30 minutes long. The catalogue is 57 pages – don't read it before you go; just go.

Perhaps one would go just for the nostalgia.

The paintings reprise 18th and 19th century art forms, adding a new element – the black person – to each scene. They are masterfully executed. Wiley has complete control over this medium and while drawing upon the past, each painting revitalizes the form. The film is reminiscent of mid-20th century experimental films that used multiple screens with little dialogue. Wiley uses film well, letting the images create a world that draws in the viewer. All of this is soon to be subsumed by the 21st century's virtual reality technology. If, as some believe, these are the waning days of these art forms, Wiley has made them new for the age of Black Lives Matter.

There are many other compelling reasons too to see this exhibition. I found that by introducing the specific form of the Black person into classical art, Wiley makes the classics accessible. He touches upon the universal. By using ordinary people as models, he democratizes art. His versions of classical masterpieces reclaim these for all of us. I encourage you to go; experience the paintings. What do they say to you? What memories do they awaken? What feelings do they arouse? Allow yourself to be surrounded by the film, immerse yourself in the images.

This is a joyful show. Go see it. ★