



Smithsonian  
*Donald W. Reynolds Center for  
American Art and Portraiture*  
*National Portrait Gallery*

News

**Media only:** Bethany Bentley (202) 633-8293  
**Public only:** (202) 633-1000

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### **RECOGNIZE! Hip Hop and Contemporary Portraiture Opens Feb. 8 at the National Portrait Gallery**

LL Cool J, Erykah Badu, Common and Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five are just a few of the hip hop artists featured in paintings and photographs in “RECOGNIZE! Hip Hop and Contemporary Portraiture.” The exhibition opens at the Smithsonian’s National Portrait Gallery Feb. 8 and continues through Oct. 26.

Hip hop, one of the most vibrant and popular musical movements in America since the 1970s, is featured in this exhibition as a cultural phenomenon that has had a broad impact on self-expression and portrayal. The exhibition features artists whose work has been influenced by hip hop and who work in the traditional portraiture mediums of photography and painting, as well as video, poetry, spoken word and graffiti. It is the first exhibition at the Smithsonian to examine the influence of the hip hop music and style on American culture.

“‘RECOGNIZE! Hip Hop and Contemporary Portraiture’ demonstrates the myriad of ways that hip hop and portraiture have intersected,” said Carolyn K. Carr, acting director of the National Portrait Gallery. “Of particular interest is the way that the works in this show use the hip hop concepts of sampling and re-mixing by taking visual images from the past and re-imagining them.”

The exhibition includes photographs by David Scheinbaum, paintings by Kehinde Wiley, video self-portraits by Jefferson Pinder and several works commissioned specifically for the show. Award-winning poet Nikki Giovanni has written an ode to hip hop that will be published in the accompanying booklet. Her poem, entitled “It’s Not a *Just* Situation,” is displayed in an exhibition gallery that also includes an audio component. Brooklyn, N.Y.-based artist Shinique Smith has interpreted the poem and created an installation in the same gallery in response to the work. Two Washington, D.C.-based graffiti artists—Tim Conlon and Dave Hupp—created four 20-foot-long murals that are installed in the corridor connecting the galleries.

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SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION MRC 973 PO Box 37012 Washington DC 20013-7012 Telephone 202.633.8300 Fax 202.633.8243

“RECOGNIZE!” is a continuation of the National Portrait Gallery’s “Portraiture Now” series that focuses on contemporary artists who explore the art of depicting the individual. Through a variety of media, “Portraiture Now” features artists whose practices have brought the art of portrayal into the 21st century.

National Portrait Gallery exhibition curators are Brandon Brame Fortune, curator of paintings and sculpture and Frank H. Goodyear III, assistant curator of photographs. Jobyl A. Boone, Smithsonian predoctoral fellow, is the guest curator for the show.

“RECOGNIZE! Hip Hop and Contemporary Portraiture” includes an exhibition booklet of the same title that will be available in the museum store.

### **The National Portrait Gallery**

The National Portrait Gallery tells the stories of America through the individuals who have shaped its culture. Through the visual arts, performing arts and new media, the Portrait Gallery portrays poets and presidents, visionaries and villains, actors and activists who speak American history.

The National Portrait Gallery opened to the public in 1968. The museum’s collection of nearly 20,000 works includes paintings, sculpture, photographs, drawings and new media. Located at Eighth and F streets N.W., Washington, D.C., it is open every day, except Dec. 25, from 11:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. Smithsonian information: (202) 633-1000; (202) 633-5285 (TTY). Web site: [www.npg.si.edu](http://www.npg.si.edu).

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**Note to editors:** High-resolution images are available from the National Portrait Gallery’s ftp site <ftp://npg-pa-gst1@ftp.si.edu>. Call (202) 633-8295 or e-mail [hahnj@si.edu](mailto:hahnj@si.edu) for the username and password.