

The New York Times  
 "A Painting That Begat A Whole Show"  
 Carol Vogel  
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Kehinde Wiley, 34, is an artist preoccupied with global culture. He is also a history painter whose multicultural images of primarily good-looking men recall the work of old masters like Rubens and Jacques-Louis David. The lush and intricately painted backgrounds make them more interesting still.

In "Alios Itzhak," a 2011 canvas that is part of the artist's series "World Stage: Israel," for instance, Mr. Wiley depicts a handsome Ethiopian-Israeli man in a T-shirt and blue jeans, one hand on his hip, staring with attitude straight at the viewer. Behind him is a delicate paper cutout, inspired by a traditional 19th-century Judaica piece in the Jewish Museum in New York's permanent collection.

"He's an interesting contemporary artist who brings together many of the same interests and ideas as the museum's," said Karen Levitov, an associate curator at the Jewish Museum. The members of its curatorial team were so enamored of his work that when they saw "Alios Itzhak," they decided it was something the museum had to acquire.

"It was a perfect match," Ms. Levitov said. "It's nine and a half feet tall and has vibrant colors which give it tremendous impact." So all of the museum's acquisitions committees — fine art, photography, traditional Judaica and contemporary Judaica — pooled their resources to buy the work from the Roberts & Tilton Gallery in Los Angeles, where Mr. Wiley had an exhibition of the series's 15 paintings in April.

Together the curators raised half the money, and the Lisa and Steven Tananbaum Family Foundation, named for longtime supporters of the museum who also collect Mr. Wiley's work, came up with the rest. (Ms. Levitov declined to say how much the painting cost, but the retail price for a painting of that scale — it is 8 feet by 6 feet — is \$130,000.) The acquisition is in honor of Joan Rosenbaum, the museum's longtime director, who retired this month.

Although Mr. Wiley has had



KEHINDE WILEY/ ROBERTS & TILTON, CULVER CITY, CALIF.

Kehinde Wiley's "Alios Itzhak" (2011), oil and enamel on canvas, was recently acquired by the Jewish Museum.

exhibitions at the Studio Museum in Harlem and the Brooklyn Museum, when the Jewish Museum curators first saw the painting, they too began developing an idea for a show. It will run from March 9 through July 29 on the museum's second floor and will include about 10 of his large paintings from the "World Stage: Israel" series. Some will be new to viewers; others are still being completed, and all have a background influenced by Jewish ritual objects. The exhibition will also include a group of textiles and paper cuts chosen by the artist from the museum's collection.

"He does have a big following," Ms. Levitov said, adding that she hoped the show would bring in a new, younger and more diverse audience.