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Rédiger en anglais et en 500 mots une synthèse des documents proposés, qui devra obligatoirement comporter un titre. Indiquer avec précision, à la fin du travail, le nombre de mots utilisés (titre inclus), un écart de 10% en plus ou en moins sera accepté.

Ce sujet comporte les 4 documents suivants :

- une photographie de DAVID DAWSON prise en 2001 disponible sur le site de la National Portrait Gallery (npg.org.uk);
- un extrait d'un article de DAVID SMITH, publié sur le site de *The Guardian*, le 31 décembre 2024;
- un extrait d'un article de KELLY GROVIER, publié sur le site de la *BBC.com*, le 1^{er} août 2025;
- un extrait d'un article de ROGER KIMBALL, publié sur le site de *The Spectator*, le 13 août 2025.

L'ordre dans lequel se présentent les documents est arbitraire et ne revêt aucune signification particulière.

Lucian Freud painting a portrait of Queen Elizabeth II, now exhibited at the National Portrait Gallery in London



Photograph taken by DAVID DAWSON, 2001

By DAVID SMITH, *The Guardian*, December 31, 2024

"All portraiture is a lie," observes Kim Sajet, standing before the revered Lansdowne portrait of George Washington. Artist Gilbert Stuart painted only Washington's face from life; the body was a stand-in. The canvas is also replete with symbols: a rainbow, an inkwell shaped like Noah's Ark, books about the American revolution and constitution.

Portraits are a four-way fabrication, argues Sajet, director of the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery, an oasis of calm in the maelstrom of modern Washington. There is the subject: the more famous they are, the stronger their opinion. There is the artist, striving to be true to their own aesthetic. There is the patron, often with a strong, very particular view of their own. And finally there is the one party that constantly evolves: the audience.

"The most immediate portrait you can imagine today is a selfie or snapshot on your phone," the 59-year-old says. "But even then we manipulate how we take those pictures constantly. Portraiture is always just a moment in time and those moments are becoming shorter and shorter in terms of what actually constitutes the reality."

Sajet is the first female director of the National Portrait Gallery, founded by Congress in 1962 and now home to a collection of about 26,000 objects that attracts about 2 million visitors a year. She is also uniquely cosmopolitan: the daughter of Dutch immigrants, she was born in Nigeria, raised in Australia and is a citizen of the Netherlands.

[...]

The gallery's collection includes portraits of influential Americans ranging from sports stars and entertainers to poets and civil rights leaders. Located less than a mile from the White House, it also houses 1,700 portraits of presidents including about 270 of George Washington alone.

Visitors flock to the America's Presidents exhibition, which contains pictures of every US president with bilingual (English and Spanish) labels that aim to sum up their mark on history in just 140 words.

Sajet comments: "I will get emails saying, 'I can't believe that you said this about President so-and-so' or 'Oh, and you left out X, Y, Z'". Whenever we get a comment, whether it's presidents or anything else, we take it back, we look at it and we say, do we agree or do we disagree?"

"We try very much not to editorialise. I don't want by reading the label to get a sense of what the curator's opinion is about that person. I want someone reading the label to understand that it's based on historical fact."

Sajet is in no doubt that all portraits have an agenda. But in an ever more polarised political environment, the gallery, which shares a historic building with the Smithsonian American Art Museum, strives to remain above the fray.

"What you say, how you choose to say it, what you feature more than what you may not feature – I know these are all decisions made by individuals but we try very hard to be even-handed when we talk about people and that's the key. We hear it all but generally I think we've done pretty well."

"The big advantage of the America's Presidents gallery is that you see American history through the arc of a long timeframe going all the way back and keep everything in perspective. We're all so caught up in the moment but it behooves us to also cast our thoughts back. Portraiture makes history personal and it's not about just memorising names and dates."

The exhibition maps the history of art, from Victorian portraits of bearded men to the abstract expressionism of Elaine de Kooning's rendering of John F Kennedy. [...] America's Presidents concludes with Barack Obama (a hugely popular work painted by Kehinde Wiley in 2018) and Donald Trump (photographed by Matt McClain in 2017) separated by the thickness of a wall and facing in opposite directions. [...]

The delicately crafted 161-word caption for Trump includes the following: "Impeached twice, on charges of abuse of power and incitement of insurrection after supporters attacked the US Capitol on January 6, 2021, he was acquitted by the Senate in both trials. After losing to Joe Biden in 2020, Trump mounted a historic comeback in the 2024 election. He is the only president aside from Grover Cleveland (1837-1908) to have won a nonconsecutive second term."

One day the Trump photo will make way for the official Trump painting. It has already been completed: the gallery found an artist who visited his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida and hit it off with him. Had Trump lost the election in November, the work would have been unveiled next year. But his return to the White House means that the portrait will remain in storage until 2029.

Sajet is not giving anything away about the artist's identity or the painting's current whereabouts but feels confident that Trump and his supporters will like it and find it suitably presidential. [...]

Pablo Picasso was quoted as saying "art is a lie that makes us realise truth," and the portrait gallery embraces paradox. It is surely fitting that this most American of institutions is run by a Nigerian-born Dutchwoman who speaks with an Australian accent. [...]

"I have a great love for the United States and it's home for me but I do think that there is a real advantage in also being able to stand back. If anything, I don't think Americans realise how much impact they have across the globe. [...] Sometimes I think Americans look inward so much and they fail to see what an impact they have across the world."

[...]

'Her meaning contains multitudes': Why the Statue of Liberty is at the heart of US culture wars

By KELLY GROVIER, *BBC.com*, August 1, 2025

[...]

Messily inspired, as all great art is, by a mixture of sources – from the Roman goddess Libertas, to the Greek sun god Helios, to the multifaceted Egyptian goddess Isis (who fascinated the sculpture's creator, the French artist Frédéric-Auguste Bartholdi) – the Statue of Liberty seems hardwired for debate. She boldly embodies the one straightforward truth about cultural symbols: their truths are never straightforward.

The current controversy over the essence of Bartholdi's 46m (151ft)-tall copper sculpture, ingeniously engineered by Gustave Eiffel and formally presented to the United States as a gift from France on 4 July 1884, is a striking painting by African American contemporary artist Amy Sherald that reimagines the Statue of Liberty as a black transgender woman.

Earlier this month, Sherald, best known until now for her 2018 official portrait of First Lady Michelle Obama, was advised that her work, *Trans Forming Liberty*, might upset US President Donald Trump – who in January issued an Executive Order recognising two sexes only – male and female – and therefore should not be included in her upcoming exhibition at the federally funded Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery in Washington, DC. Rather than contemplate removing the work, Sherald decided to cancel the show altogether, citing "a culture of censorship".

The contested work is currently on display at New York's Whitney Museum as part of Sherald's touring exhibition *American Sublime* and is characteristic of the artist's instinct to unsettle expectations. Sherald often achieves this, as she does both in her portrait of Obama and in *Trans Forming Liberty*, by translating her subjects' complexions into an uncanny greyscale (or "grisaille"), nudging viewers to look past skin colour and reassess their assumptions about what constitutes race. The model for Sherald's work, Arewà Basit, a black artist who identifies as non-binary trans-femme, is portrayed against a flat, periwinkle background, hand on hips, wearing a vibrant ultramarine gown that recalls the otherworldly resplendence of Renaissance Madonnas, and neon fuschia hair.

The torch she lifts has been supplanted by a clutch of humble Gerbera daisies, traditionally a symbol of joy and hope. [...] Of the intended potency of her own work, Sherald has explained that her painting "exists to hold space for someone whose humanity has been politicised and disregarded" – a sentiment that arguably rhymes with the hospitable spirit of the statue itself, which is famously affixed with a sonnet by Emma Lazarus, summoning "homeless, tempest-tossed" "masses yearning to breathe free".

That synchronicity, however, may be both the painting's profoundest allure and deepest liability. From the moment the statue was unveiled in October 1886, it provoked criticism from both ends of the political spectrum. Suffragettes insisted the sculpture's depiction of a woman embodying liberty was too ironic to be taken seriously when women themselves were denied the right to vote. At the same time, conservatives objected to any incitement of migrants to flock to the US – those "huddled masses" the sculpture silently summons. By recasting Lady Liberty as a totem of unfulfilled promise, Sherald's work aims to send a tremor down the fault-line of the American conscience.

While neither Trump nor anyone in his administration has, as yet, publicly condemned Sherald's painting or its representation of a black transgender woman, the organisers of her scheduled exhibition, which was due to open on 19 September, had reason to fear imminent repercussions to its funding should the work go on display. In March, barely two months into his second term, Trump signed an Executive Order entitled "Restoring Truth and Sanity to American History", which is aimed at curtailing financial support to museums and projects that, in its words, "degrade shared American values, divide Americans based on race, or promote programs or ideologies inconsistent with Federal law and policy". Stating that the Smithsonian had "come under the influence of a divisive, race-centered ideology", Trump instructed US Vice-President JD Vance to enforce his order. It was only a matter of time before Sherald's recasting of Lady Liberty as black and transgender would catch Vance's eye.

It was after meeting with Vance, who according to an anonymous source quoted by Fox News expressed concerns about the "woke" nature of Sherald's work, that organisers of Sherald's show began having second thoughts about including the painting in the exhibition – triggering the artist's subsequent withdrawal from the project altogether. In recent months, enforcement of Trump's Executive Order has intensified clashes over what kind of story the country's symbols tell – or should be permitted to tell.

[...]

Whatever is ultimately decided about the texture and tone of the exhibits at federal museums and institutions now undertaking reviews, the resonance of cultural symbolism is difficult to control no matter how strenuously a government may try. Some bells can't be unringed. Cracks remain. The exclusion of Sherald's painting from public view has likely only amplified its exposure and impact. What's more visible than something hidden?

[...]

*Trump is giving Americans back their cultural and educational institutions*By ROGER KIMBALL, *The Spectator*, August 13, 2025

Back in March, Donald Trump issued an executive order called "Restoring Truth And Sanity To American History." Its aim was to counter the "revisionist movement" in our cultural institutions that sought "to rewrite our Nation's history, replacing objective facts with a distorted narrative driven by ideology rather than truth."

[...]

Founded in 1846, the Smithsonian was the culmination of an earlier movement, supported by such luminaries as Thomas Jefferson, James Madison and John Quincy Adams, to "promote science and the useful arts."

The institution is named for the British chemist James Smithson, whose fortune was bequeathed to the United States in order "to found at Washington, under the name of the Smithsonian Institution, an Establishment for the increase & diffusion of knowledge among men." [...] Back then the phrase "useful knowledge" was touted everything. That's what the Smithsonian was created to promote. That was then. "In recent years," as Trump notes, the Smithsonian has "come under the influence of a divisive, race-centered ideology. This shift has promoted narratives that portray American and Western values as inherently harmful and oppressive."

[...]

Executive orders are one thing. Enacting or enforcing them is something else. Donald Trump understands this. Thus it is that his order to abolish the racist practice of the "diversity, equity and inclusion" industry was followed up by fines of hundreds of millions at Columbia, Harvard and many other institutions that continued the practice overtly or by stealth in defiance of the law.

And thus it is that Trump's order to restore "truth and sanity" to the institutions charged with preserving and disseminating American history has just been given teeth. Yesterday, Lonnie G. Bunch III, Secretary of the Smithsonian, received a letter whose subject line reads "Internal Review of Smithsonian Exhibitions and Materials." Signed by Lindsey Halligan, Special Assistant to the President, Vince Haley, Director of the Domestic Policy Council and

Russell Vought, Director of the Office of Management and Budget, the letter announces a "comprehensive internal review" of the Smithsonian, its exhibitions and curatorial procedures. "This initiative aims to ensure alignment with the President's directive to celebrate American exceptionalism, remove divisive or partisan narratives, and restore confidence in our shared cultural institutions."

How will that happen? Well, the administration will review "exhibition text, wall didactics, websites, educational materials, and digital and social media content to assess tone, historical framing, and alignment with American ideals." It will interview curatorial staff "to better understand the selection process, exhibition approval workflows, and any frameworks currently guiding exhibition content." One major focus will be on how the Smithsonian plans to celebrate America's 250th anniversary next year. Out will go the divisive anti-American racist rhetoric that has disfigured so much official cultural patronage in recent years. In will come affirmative exhibitions that acknowledge America's many achievements and that emphasize the traditions and historical realities that unite us.

What is happening, and what is going to happen, at the Smithsonian museums may seem like a footnote to the larger Trump agenda of "Making America Great Again." In fact, it stands at the center of that project. Donald Trump understands something that the left has grasped at least since the 1960s but that conservatives have grasped dimly if at all. If you want to restore society, you must commandeer the institutions that represent elite culture. Over the last several decades, those institutions have gradually become captive of a woke ideology that denigrates America while simultaneously celebrating the entire radical menu of racist redress, sexual exoticism and political intransigence.

Back in January, I wrote a column claiming that Donald Trump was "a great man of history." That occasioned a fair amount of ridicule. But as the months pass and Trump moves from one triumph to the next, doing beneficent things that no previous president would have thought possible, my description seems more and more apt. [...]

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