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## Startup consultant and collector George Wells gives Morehouse College a million-dollar art collection

The historically Black men's college in Atlanta, Georgia will receive works by Mickalene Thomas, Rashid Johnson, Amy Sherald, McArthur Binion, and Ivy Haldeman

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George Wells with a work by Rashid Johnson from his collection.

George Wells, the art collector and business consultant, has taken it upon himself to make his alma mater, Morehouse College, a cultural institution with a high-profile art collection. Through a promised gift from Wells worth around \$1m, the private historically Black men's college in Atlanta, Georgia will receive works by Mickalene Thomas, Rashid Johnson, Amy Sherald, McArthur Binion, and Ivy Haldeman.

"It really was born out of the fact that my husband and I, we don't have children, but we wanted to form some sort of lasting legacy," Wells tells *The Art Newspaper*. The founder and chairman of the consultancy Wells Group of New York, who also currently serves as the CFO of the online dental care company Quip, adds: "I work so much with startups and companies that are disrupting their spaces, and I thought, 'Let's disrupt the art world by making Morehouse a cultural institution befitting a contemporary art collection.'"

"This is really the first step, with the plan to give even more art to them over time," Wells says. "It's become my life mission to develop a collection that is unparalleled, [and] to exhibit those works in the context of Morehouse College, and educate the black community and the Morehouse community on what contemporary art and art history is."



Among the first works heading to Morehouse College is Rashid Johnson's *Untitled Broken Men* (2020)

All of the work that Wells is donating is by LGBTQ and/or Black artists who focus on identity and race. “It is my hope that this gift will serve as an impetus for furthering racial equality within the art world during this exceptionally vulnerable time for Americans,” Wells says. Three works are heading to the college immediately: McArthur Binion’s *DNA:Study*, (2020) Rashid Johnson’s *Untitled Broken Men* (2020) and an edition of Amy Sherald’s *Handsome* (2020). Upcoming acquisitions are due to include a painting by Ivy Haldeman and several works by Mickalene Thomas, for whom Wells also serves as a business advisor, and there are plans to organize pop-up displays of the works across the campus.

Wells graduated from Morehouse College in 2000 and is currently a member of its trustee society. Alumni of the institution include the artist Sanford Biggers, the director Spike Lee, and the musician Saul Williams, among others. The school did not previously have a permanent art collection however, so Wells hopes that his gift will help inspire other students to have a wider interest in the arts. “Morehouse is such an important cultural institution,” Wells said of the school “I thought, if in 100 years, people wanted to see what human civilization was up to, specifically the Black community in Atlanta—I want to connect the art to the cultural institution that’s had the highest impact on my life.”