

TEMPLON



KEHINDE WILEY

THE NEW YORK TIMES, 13 février 2026

Trump Wants Smithsonian to Create a Different Official Portrait

The painted portrait from President Trump's first term was completed more than four years ago, but never unveiled. Now he wants the National Portrait Gallery to commission a new one.



The National Portrait Gallery displays painted portraits of all U.S. presidents after they leave office. President Trump, whose photo temporarily hangs there, would like the gallery to commission a second painted portrait to replace one done after his first term but never exhibited.



By [Zachary Small](#) and [Robin Pogrebin](#)

Feb. 13, 2026

The unveiling of an official presidential portrait is typically a ceremonial event, one that places a former president in the long line of leaders who have piloted the United States for almost 250 years. But the portrait of Donald Trump, painted just after he left office in 2021, has never been publicly seen for a number of reasons.

Now add to the list another possible cause for the delay in that portrait's unveiling: Mr. Trump, re-elected to a second term, would like a different one.

"President Trump was appreciative of the portrait created for his 45th term, and looks forward to seeing the completion of a portrait that will encapsulate both his 45th and 47th presidential terms," a White House spokesman, Davis Ingle, confirmed in a statement.

The Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery typically commissions an artist to make an official portrait after a president has left office. It is often hung a year or two later in a special exhibition, "America's Presidents."

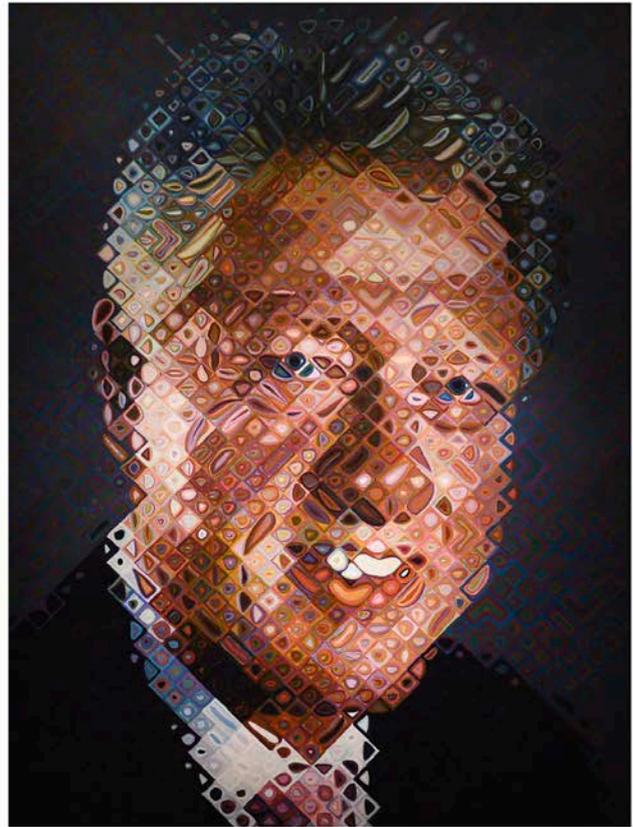
But the first Trump portrait it commissioned, by the artist Ronald Sherr, was never exhibited. By the time the work was accepted by the gallery in 2022, just after Mr. Sherr's death, Mr. Trump had already announced he would run again for president. The gallery traditionally does not hang a painted portrait until a president has permanently left office.

It is unclear why exactly Mr. Trump — who had approved the use of Mr. Sherr as his portraitist — now prefers a different image to represent his presidency when he leaves office. White House officials said Mr. Trump views Mr. Sherr's portrait — which depicts Mr. Trump at a rally with the White House in the background — as a vestige of his first term, and believes it would be more appropriate for a newly commissioned portrait to represent his entire time in office.

A White House spokesman said the administration has discussed a possible second portrait with the Portrait Gallery, but a spokeswoman for the gallery said the institution was unaware of such a request.



Barack Obama as painted by Kehinde Wiley. Gabriella Demczuk for The New York Times



Bill Clinton by Chuck Close. Astrid Riecken for The Washington Post, via Getty Images

Mr. Sherr's family said they still hoped that his work would be seen by the public, and Lois Sherr, his widow, said her husband had told her that the president had spoken warmly of the finished product.

"What sets this portrait by Ron apart," Ms. Sherr said, "is that he captured Trump's movement, energy and feeling of absolute resolve."

Founded in 1962 and opened in 1968, the Portrait Gallery has over the years assembled the only complete public collection of presidential portraits outside the White House.

The "America's Presidents" exhibition contains at least one artwork for every president, but the National Portrait Gallery didn't start commissioning original works until 1994, when it hired Mr. Sherr to paint George H.W. Bush. Separate portraits of first ladies are also commissioned.

In preparing the portraits, the museum works closely with the White House, allowing the president to choose the artist. Official portraits are unveiled and installed only after presidents have left office "to commemorate their time in the White House," a gallery spokeswoman said. President Biden's portrait has been commissioned — from an undisclosed artist — but the timeline for its unveiling has not been set.

The only president besides Mr. Trump to have served a nonconsecutive second term was Grover Cleveland, decades before the Portrait Gallery was established. An 1884 painting of him by Eastman Johnson was given to the Smithsonian in 1971 by Cleveland's family.

Not all presidents have been satisfied with the portraits that have come to hang in the Smithsonian. Theodore Roosevelt thought his made him look "meek," "effeminate" and overly aristocratic; Richard Nixon thought his overemphasized his jowls; Lyndon Johnson [said](#) his was "the ugliest thing I ever saw."

Ms. Sherr said her husband traveled to Mar-a-Lago in Florida in April 2021 for an initial meeting with Mr. Trump. After receiving his approval, she said, Mr. Sherr returned five months later for a series of four painting sessions, during which he started putting together the composition.

"Ron was struck, time and again, that the strongest images were those of Trump at his rallies," Ms. Sherr said. "He always felt that Donald Trump looked the most energized and presidential in those pictures."

The portrait, she said, ended up including the many flags that often appeared behind the president at his assemblies, with the White House in the background. "Trump's eye was always on the White House during the rallies, both before he became president and again, not long after he left office," she said. "It seemed fitting."



George H.W. Bush by Ronald Sherr. Al Drago for The New York Times



Lyndon B. Johnson by Peter Hurd. History/Universal Images Group via Getty Images

The portrait was paid for with [\\$650,000](#) raised by a political action committee affiliated with the president, which donated the funds to the Smithsonian Institution. The museum approved the work two days after Mr. Sherr's death in a Hong Kong hospital from pneumonia, with an underlying condition of small cell carcinoma of the lymph system, according to his family.

Early this year, administration officials asked that the Trump portrait, which had been held by the Portrait Gallery, be sent over to the White House, where officials said it remains.

In the "America's Presidents" exhibition now, there is a photograph of Mr. Trump, a customary place holder until a president leaves office and an official portrait is commissioned.

The photograph, which shows Mr. Trump standing over the Resolute Desk in his office, was not the first one displayed by the Smithsonian. Last month, the Portrait Gallery agreed [to install it to replace](#) a photo that the president did not like as much. At the same time, the museum removed wall text that referred to his two impeachments — language that had upset the White House.

When the change was noted, the Portrait Gallery released a statement.

"For some new exhibitions and displays, the museum has been exploring quotes or tombstone labels, which provide only general information, such as the artist's name," the statement said. "The history of presidential impeachments continues to be represented in our museums."

A White House spokesman did not respond to requests for The New York Times to see or photograph the painting.

What any new portrait might look like is unknown, but Mr. Trump has shown favor toward [other images](#) of him over the years, such as a [painting of him](#) in tennis whites that has hung in the bar at Mar-a-Lago.

Zachary Small is a Times reporter writing about the art world's relationship to money, politics and technology.

Robin Pogrebin, who has been a reporter for The Times for 30 years, covers arts and culture.