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Bill Clinton, Painted From Life: A Gen Z Artist Revives a Rare Presidential Tradition

Six oil portraits painted from observation at the Clinton Global Initiative's 20th anniversary summit, on view online from October 7, 2026.



*Elijah McKenzie-Jackson, **The President (Bill Clinton)**, oil on canvas, 36 x 40 inches.*

New York, NY (October 6, 2026): Very few artists have painted a sitting or former American president from life. Gilbert Stuart did it with George Washington. Elaine de Kooning sketched John F. Kennedy in Palm Beach. Now Elijah McKenzie-Jackson, a Gen Z painter, has painted former President Bill Clinton the same way: in person, with no photograph as reference, following him from the stage through meeting rooms at the Clinton Global Initiative's 20th anniversary summit over roughly twenty-four hours.

The portrait anchors a new series of six oil paintings, *The Ballroom Across 6th Avenue, Two Floors Up, 10:30 Sharp*, which goes on view online on October 7, 2026. Begun at the summit in September 2025 and completed this year in the artist's studio, each canvas measures 36 by 40 inches.

A PORTRAIT MADE IN MOTION. Most presidential portraits today are made from photographs, in staged sittings, and approved before anyone sees them. McKenzie-Jackson worked the old way, from observation, as the summit unfolded around him. The canvases are flat and pared back, built from a single blue and cut by vertical bands, closer to a screen print than a state portrait. The interpretation is entirely his own.

“Portraiture, done honestly, is never really about the subject,” said McKenzie-Jackson. “It’s about what the subject is made to carry.”



The six paintings of The Ballroom Across 6th Avenue, Two Floors Up, 10:30 Sharp, each 36 x 40 inches.

ONE ROOM, SIX PORTRAITS. Alongside the president, McKenzie-Jackson painted five others from the same room at the same scale: Hillary Clinton, philanthropist Tom Golisano, founder Elaine Welteroth, a server clearing the water glasses, and himself. Hung together, they place a former president and a worker side by side, at equal size.

THE WORKS. Six oil paintings, each 36 x 40 inches, oil on canvas:

THE PRESIDENT: Bill Clinton

THE NOMINEE: Hillary Clinton

THE BILLIONAIRE: Tom Golisano

THE FOUNDER: Elaine Welteroth

THE WORKER: “Maria” (a pseudonym)

THE ARTIST: self-portrait

The worker appears under a pseudonym; she is not a public figure.



Elijah McKenzie-Jackson in his studio with works from the series.

ABOUT THE ARTIST. Elijah McKenzie-Jackson is a Gen Z painter and climate activist who recently relocated from London to Washington, DC. His oil and mixed-media work has been exhibited at the United Nations' COP28 Youth & Culture Pavilion in Dubai and above Times Square on New Year's Eve. Named among The New York Times' "8 Global Youth Protest Leaders" and a 2024 Shorty Award winner, he is a 2026 honoree on Attitude magazine's "101: The Future" list, the author of the artist book *BLUE* (Olympia Publishers, 2025), and co-founder of the climate nonprofit WaicUp.

Hi-res images: [Google Drive folder](#) (all six paintings, plus studio and gallery views)

View the series online from October 7: behindtheartist.co.uk

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