

# Stephen Friedman Gallery

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Yinka Shonibare plans ambitious artist residency programme in Nigeria  
Anna Sansom  
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## Yinka Shonibare plans ambitious artist residency programme in Nigeria

The artist's foundation will run spaces in Lagos and Ijebu coinciding with the 2021 Art X Lagos fair



Image: Shonibare: British-born, Lagos-raised © Royal Academy of Arts. Photo: Marcus Leith

The British-Nigerian artist Yinka Shonibare is planning to launch an artist residency programme across two sites in Nigeria: one in Lagos and the other in the rural area of Ijebu in Ogun state. He hopes that it will be “up and running” in time for the Art X Lagos fair in November 2021.

Called the Guest Artists Space (GAS) Foundation, the Lagos residency will be located on the Lekki peninsula to the east of Lagos city. Drawing on the idea of Shonibare's Guest Projects initiative, which offers artists an opportunity to work in his London studio for a month, the artist's aim with GAS is to bring together established and emerging artists. “I want to build an infrastructure for international artists to go to Nigeria and learn from local artists, and for artists on the ground to learn from international artists,” he says.

He also hopes to provide a platform for creative expression on a continent with few contemporary art museums. “Unfortunately, there aren't many opportunities for artists to develop spaces in Africa,” he says. “Artists want to share ideas and have galleries and studios. But if that's not provided, it's left to the artists to fill that gap and take that [responsibility] upon themselves.”

The 2004 Turner Prize nominee, best-known for his sculptures adorned in batik fabrics, says Lagos's “vibrant and exciting” art scene was a key driver for the residency. “The art world is growing in Nigeria, and there are a number of artists from the diaspora doing well internationally,” he says.

Designed by Elsie Owusu Architects, the Lagos building will house a gallery, studio spaces and accommodation for the artists-in-residence as well as Shonibare. A “barrier-free” design accommodates Shonibare's particular needs as a wheelchair user.

The second residency space, in Ijebu, will be on a farm complete with greenhouses, 1,000 cashew nut trees and other crops. The invited artists will be able to spend time in both Lagos and Ijebu. People from nearby villages already work on the farm. “I want the project to contribute to society, with ideas around sustainability,” Shonibare says.

The GAS Foundation is primarily funded by the Yinka Shonibare Foundation, whose trustees and advisers include the artists El Anatsui, Njideka Akunyili Crosby, Antony Gormley and Olafur Eliasson. To raise funds for GAS, Shonibare is organising an auction gala with Phillips auction house in London in May. Eighteen artists have already agreed to donate works to the event.