

# Stephen Friedman Gallery

Museums Association

Yinka Shonibare to create memorial sculpture of David Oluwale for Leeds 2023

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8 January 2021



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Sculpture will honour British Nigerian who died after police harassment in the 1960s



Image: Yinka Shonibare in his London studio (c) Yinka Shonibare Studio. Photo: James Mollison

The British-Nigerian artist Yinka Shonibare is to create a sculpture in memory of David Oluwale, an engineer who emigrated to Leeds from Nigeria and died in 1969 after a campaign of harassment by police. The manslaughter trial that followed Oluwale's death is recognised as a landmark in exposing institutional racism in British policing.

Commissioned by the David Oluwale Memorial Association (Doma), the artwork will be unveiled during Leeds 2023, the city's anticipated year of culture.

The commission comes in response to an independent review of the city's statues and monuments initiated by Leeds City Council last year following the toppling of the Edward Colston statue in Bristol.

The review assessed how to better represent diversity in public spaces, and found that public works "over-celebrated Empire, Christianity and 'great' white men". It recommended that these should be balanced with "works of art that commemorate the varied contributions of the diverse citizens of Leeds".

"It is an honour to have been asked to create this new work to remember an ordinary man with an extraordinary legacy," said Shonibare, the Turner Prize nominee and Royal Academician.

"This sculpture will be a symbol of hope; an everyday reminder of our desire to improve the lives of all and a place for people to come together and I'm looking forward to working with Doma and the communities where David lived in the months and years to come."

"The sculpture will be a memorial for him and also a symbol for the city, a reminder of issues still faced by many today and a place for quiet contemplation as well as cultural celebration," said Doma's Emily Zobel Marshall.

"A better future can only be built on a better understanding of the past and remembering David can help us with that, leaving a legacy of hope and creativity."

Councillor Judith Blake, leader of Leeds City Council, said: "We must never forget the events, good and bad, that have helped mould modern-day Leeds, a city where differences are celebrated and communities join together in a spirit of positivity."

The project has been awarded a development grant from Arts Council England, with support from Leeds 2023, Leeds Civic Trust and private donations.

The sculpture will be located in Aire Park, the new city centre building development at the former site of the Tetley brewery. The park will host Doma's flagship project, the David Oluwale memorial garden, which is also due to open in 2023.