

# Stephen Friedman Gallery

## Yinka Shonibare CBE RA

**Describing himself as a 'post-colonial hybrid', Yinka Shonibare CBE RA creates work that explores issues of race and class through the media of sculpture, painting, photography, film, tapestries and public works.**

Yinka Shonibare CBE RA was born in 1962 in London, England and moved to Lagos, Nigeria at the age of three. He lives and works in London. Shonibare was a Turner Prize nominee in 2004 and was elected as a Royal Academician by the Royal Academy, London in 2013. He was awarded the decoration of Most Excellent Order of the British Empire or MBE in 2004 and Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire or CBE in 2019. Shonibare received the prestigious Art Icon Award from Whitechapel Gallery, London and an honorary degree from The Courtauld Institute, London in 2021.

Shonibare's practice questions the meaning of cultural and national definitions. His signature material is the brightly coloured 'African' Dutch wax batik fabric originally inspired by Indonesian design, mass-produced by the Dutch and eventually sold to the colonies in West Africa. In the 1960s the material became a signifier of African identity and independence.

A solo exhibition of the artist's work opened at Fondation H, Madagascar in April 2025, his first major showcase on the African continent. In April 2024, Shonibare opened a major solo exhibition at Serpentine, London. Shonibare's installation 'Monument to the Restitution of the Mind and Soul' featured in 'Nigeria Imaginary', Nigeria's Pavilion at La Biennale di Venezia, the 60th International Art Exhibition, Italy. The artist's public works include 'Hibiscus Rising', a permanent commission unveiled in November 2023 in Aire Park, Leeds. To mark Sharjah Biennial's 30th anniversary in February 2023, Shonibare was commissioned to create a series of new works for the exhibition. He transformed the Gallery at sketch, London as part of a long-term programme of artist-conceived restaurants, which opened to the public in March 2022.

Shonibare was commissioned by Okwui Enwezor in 2002 to create one of his most recognised works 'Gallantry and Criminal Conversation' at Documenta 11 in Kassel, Germany, which launched him onto an international stage. In September 2008 his major mid-career survey commenced at the MCA Sydney, before travelling to Brooklyn Museum, New York and the Museum of African Art at the Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC. In March 2016 as part of the 14-18 NOW programme of World War 1 Centenary Art commissions, Turner Contemporary's Sunley Gallery, Margate, England was transformed by two major works by Shonibare, 'The British Library' and 'End of Empire'. 'The British Library', an installation of over 6,000 books bound in Dutch wax batik fabric, was acquired by Tate Galleries in 2019 and exhibited at Tate Modern, London.

At the 57th Venice Biennale in 2017 in a pavilion dedicated to artists from racially and culturally diverse backgrounds based in the UK, Shonibare exhibited and also took the role of mentor to a young artist. In 2018 Shonibare curated the Arts Council Collection in a touring exhibition 'Criminal Ornamentation' that toured regional museums the UK. Also in 2018, Shonibare curated 'Talisman in the Age of Difference' at Stephen Friedman Gallery, London which brought together the work of forty-six artists from across Africa and the Diaspora. He was selected as coordinator for the 2021 'Summer Exhibition' at Royal Academy of Arts, London, England.

Building on the success of Guest Projects London, the artist residency programme founded by Shonibare Studio in 2006, Shonibare launched an ambitious new artist residency project, Guest Artists Space (G.A.S.) Foundation, in Lagos, Nigeria in 2019. The Foundation is a non-profit dedicated to facilitating international artistic and cultural exchange and developing creative practices through artist residencies and international collaborations.

Shonibare has developed an extensive portfolio of public works. 'Hibiscus Rising', a new outdoor sculpture commissioned by the David Oluwale Memorial Association was unveiled in Aire Park as part of Leeds 2023, the city's landmark year of culture. In July 2020, the sculptural commission 'Bird Catcher's Dilemma' was unveiled at Salzburg Museum, Austria, celebrating 100 years of the Salzburg Festival. Shonibare's 'Nelson's Ship in a Bottle' was the 2010 Fourth Plinth Commission and was displayed in Trafalgar Square, London until January 2012. This work was later acquired by National Maritime Museum and is now permanently installed outside the museum's new entrance in Greenwich Park, London. In 2012 the Royal Opera House commissioned 'Globe Head Ballerina', which was on display on the building's exterior in Covent Garden, London until 2017.

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Examples of Shonibare's monumental 'Wind Sculpture' series have been exhibited in locations across the world. Iterations of this body of work have been displayed at Ndubuisi Kanu Park, Ikeja, Lagos, Nigeria (2015–2016); Smithsonian Institute, Washington DC (2016); Central Park, New York (2018); Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey (2019); Greenway Public Park, Boston, Massachusetts (2020); Harvard Business School, Boston, Massachusetts (2021–2022) and at Expo 2020 Dubai, United Arab Emirates (2022). Sculptures from the series are permanently installed in Royal Djurgården Sculpture Park in Stockholm, Sweden (2022); Howick Place, London (2014) and Davidson College, North Carolina (2018). A new iteration, 'Material (SG) I', was unveiled at Whitman Walker Health Centre Commission, Washington DC in 2019 and the second edition was installed at 360 Rosemary, West Palm Beach, Florida in 2021. 'Material (SG) IV' is currently on display at Dulwich Picture Gallery, London.

Notable public solo exhibitions include those at Fondation H, Antananarivo, Madagascar (2025), Serpentine, London, England (2024); Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park, Michigan, USA (2022); Museum der Moderne, Salzburg, Austria (2021); M WOODS Art Community, Beijing, China (2020); The Arts House, Singapore (2020); British Museum, London, England (2019); Speed Art Museum, Louisville, Kentucky, USA; Hereford Cathedral, Hereford, England (2019); Richard H. Driehaus Museum, Chicago, Illinois (2019); Fukuoka Art Museum, Fukuoka, Japan (2019); Van Every/Smith Galleries at Davidson College, North Carolina, USA (2018); Fitzrovia Chapel, London, England (2018); Glynn Vivian Art Gallery, Swansea, England (2018); Busan Museum of Art, South Korea (2018); Howick Place, London, England (2018); Gemeentemuseum Helmond, Netherlands (2016); VISUAL Centre for Contemporary Art, Carlow, Ireland (2016); Turner Contemporary, Margate, England (2016); British Council UK/Nigeria, Lagos, Nigeria (2015–2016); Daegu Art Museum, Daegu, Korea (2015DHC/ART Foundation for Contemporary Art, Montréal, Québec (2015); Gerisch Stiftung, Neumünster, Germany (2014); Fondation Blachère, Apt, France (2014); Barnes Foundation, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA (2014); Gdansk City Art Gallery, Gdansk, Poland (2014); Wroclaw Contemporary Museum, Wroclaw, Poland (2014); GL Strand, Copenhagen, Denmark (2014); Royal Museums Greenwich, London, England (2013); Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Wakefield, England (2013) (2014); Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Texas, USA (2013); San Diego Art Museum, San Diego, USA (2012); Israel Museum, Jerusalem, Israel (2010); Nouveau Musée National de Monaco, Monaco (2010); Alcalá 31 Centros de Arte, Madrid, Spain (2011) and Centro de Arte Moderno, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain (2011).

Shonibare's works are included in prominent collections internationally, including Tate, London, England; Arts Council Collection, London, England; Victoria and Albert Museum, London, England; The British Museum, London, England; The Wellcome Collection, London, England; Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, Norwich, England; National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institute, Washington, DC; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Canada; Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Sweden; National Gallery of Modern Art in Rome, Italy; VandenBroek Foundation, The Netherlands and Centre Pompidou, Paris, France.