

PearlLam Galleries

Yinka Shonibare MBE first solo exhibition in Hong Kong

Yinka Shonibare MBE: Dreaming Rich



Yinka Shonibare MBE, *Champagne Kid 7*, (2013), Unique life-size mannequin, Dutch wax printed cotton textile, leather, resin, chair, globe and Cristal champagne bottle, 178 x 85 x 76cmcm. Copyright of artist.

HONG KONG, 30 September, 2013 – Pearl Lam Galleries is delighted to present the first solo exhibition in Hong Kong by renowned British-Nigerian artist Yinka Shonibare MBE; *Dreaming Rich*, opening on 19 November (Press Preview 18 November, 2013, 3-5pm). The exhibition continues Shonibare's exploration of colonialism and post-colonialism with a series of all new works commenting on Hong Kong's modern day relationships with labour, power and wealth.

Dreaming Rich is a characteristically exuberant and colourful critique of wealth, which simultaneously acknowledges society's complicity with it. Shonibare's questioning of cultural and national definitions is a pertinent one for Hong Kong, whose identity has been affected by the conflicting influences of Chinese and British colonialism. The exhibition offers a social commentary on Hong Kong's fascination with luxury commodities, and how those have come in part a medium for social identity.

Cakeman, the centerpiece of the exhibition, is a life-sized sculpture of an aristocrat dressed in elaborate Victorian dress made out of Shonibare's trademark Dutch wax African batik fabric, which through its Indonesian design references Asia and the continents' colonial practices. The material references European colonial practices in Africa and, in the context of *Dreaming Rich*, draws a comparison between

the perspectives of colonial wealth and power in Africa and China. *Cakeman* subverts an act of heavy labour into an image of decadence by depicting a man bent double carrying a precariously balanced tower of colourful cakes on his back. In this figure Shonibare re-imagines a reconstruction of the trappings of power, bringing into sharp focus the contradiction faced by all societies which aspire to do well and “get rich”; where the process of creating vast amounts of wealth relies on the hardships of a labour class.

The artist is interested in the point at which survival turns into greed and excess. The individual *Champagne Kid* sculptures that can be seen cavorting, or swinging from chairs attached to the walls of the gallery, develop Shonibare’s recent line of enquiry into the corruption, excess and debauchery that have in part led to the current economic crisis.

These life-sized drunken aristocratic youths seen alongside *Cake Man* construct an image of wealth and the sense of an over-indulgent party into which the gallery visitor is immediately immersed. Following a recurring theme in his work Shonibare has removed the figure’s heads, calling to mind the guillotined fate that awaited the excessive and corrupt French aristocracy in the 18th Century. Here globes displaying monetary data take the place of faces, which combined with the exuberant poses of the champagne-swilling youths, build a powerful commentary on the excess of anonymous financiers across the globe that contributed to the 2008 financial crisis.

The exhibition’s exploration of the contemporary worship of commodities is further elaborated in a newly created *Bling Painting* wall installation measuring six meters wide and containing 27 round paintings. Each of the circular canvases painted black and gold with toys collected from Hong Kong attached by black and gold wires. Shown alongside five new large-scale collage works on paper that use gold leaf, cuttings from the Financial Times, batik fabric flowers and luxury magazine covers, Shonibare’s reflection on the Hong Kong economy and its desire for luxury goods is a poignant reminder of the cycle of contradictions surrounding wealth and power, poverty and danger; dare to dream rich and you may lose your head, fail to dream rich and risk dying of poverty.

Althea Viafora-Kress, International Gallery Director, Pearl Lam Galleries, said, “*Shonibare has transformed the gallery space. His immaculately dressed figures create a poignant critique of the trappings of wealth and politics encouraging us all to think about how both affect our daily life. We couldn’t be more pleased to present the first solo show of Shonibare’s work in Hong Kong, where I feel sure it will take on a particular resonance given the city’s fascinating colonialist history.*”

Press Enquiries

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Exhibition Dates

19 November 2013 – 9 January 2014 (**Press preview on 18 November, 2013, 3-5pm**)

Monday-Saturday, 10am–7pm

Pearl Lam Galleries, 601–605, 6/F, Pedder Building, 12 Pedder Street, Central, Hong Kong

www.pearllam.com

About Yinka Shonibare

Yinka Shonibare MBE was born in London and moved to Lagos, Nigeria at the age of three. He returned to London to study Fine Art first at Byam Shaw College of Art (now Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design) and then at Goldsmiths College, where he received his MFA, graduating as part of the 'Young British Artists' generation. He currently lives and works in the East End of London. Over the past decade, Shonibare has become well known for his exploration of colonialism and post-colonialism within the contemporary context of globalisation. Shonibare's work explores these issues, alongside those of race and class, through the use of a wide range of media. Mixing Western art history and literature, he asks what constitutes our collective contemporary identity today. Having described himself as a 'post-colonial' hybrid, Shonibare questions the meaning of cultural and national definitions and identity.

Shonibare was a Turner Prize nominee in 2004 and awarded the decoration of Member of the "Most Excellent Order of the British Empire". He has added this title to his professional name. He was notably commissioned by Okwui Enwezor at Documenta 10 in 2002 to create his most recognised work 'Gallantry and Criminal Conversation' that launched him on an international stage. He has exhibited at the Venice Biennale and internationally at leading museums worldwide. In September 2008, his major mid-career survey commenced at the MCA Sydney and toured to the Brooklyn Museum, New York in June 2009 and the Museum of African Art at the Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC in October 2009. In 2010, 'Nelson's Ship in a Bottle' became his first public art commission on the Fourth Plinth in Trafalgar Square. 2013 saw Shonibare staging a major exhibition FABRIC-ATION at GL Strand, Copenhagen, Denmark and the Yorkshire Sculpture Park, UK. In 2014 he will hold exhibitions at Blain|Southern in Berlin, Germany, and The Barnes Foundation, Philadelphia, USA.

About Pearl Lam Galleries

Founded by Pearl Lam, the Galleries' mission is to stimulate cross-cultural dialogue and cultural exchange between East and West by establishing distinct and rigorous programming in each of its gallery spaces in Hong Kong, Shanghai and the forthcoming Singapore gallery.

Pearl Lam Galleries is dedicated to championing Chinese artists who re-evaluate the philosophy and perception of Chinese contemporary art, whilst also committed to presenting major exhibitions by international artists. Jim Lambie, Jenny Holzer, Zhu Jinshi are among the line-up of artists who have solo exhibitions at the Galleries this year.

Pearl Lam Design shows works by established and emerging international designers including André Dubreuil, Maarten Baas, Mattia Bonetti, and Studio Makkink & Bey. They are invited to push the boundaries of traditional Chinese art and craft techniques and create new works that reflect their experiences in China.