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Press Release

Permanent new home secured for Yinka Shonibare, MBE’s Nelson’s Ship in a Bottle as public appeal succeeds

Thanks to the generosity of many individuals, a fundraising appeal launched by the Art Fund and the National Maritime Museum at the end of last year has successfully raised £362,500 to enable the National Maritime Museum to acquire and permanently display Nelson’s Ship in a Bottle by Yinka Shonibare, MBE.

The work will now have a permanent new home outside the recently developed Sammy Ofer Wing at the National Maritime Museum. It will be on view in time for the Museum’s 75th anniversary on 25 April.

The critically-acclaimed and much-loved work was originally commissioned by the Mayor of London for the Fourth Plinth in Trafalgar Square, where it was displayed from May 2010 to January 2012. A public appeal to raise the necessary funds (£362,500 after an Art Fund grant of £50,000) to acquire the work for the National Maritime Museum was launched on 30 November 2011. £264,300 was raised through the public campaign, mostly from individuals. Stephen Friedman of the artist’s London gallery, acting on behalf of Yinka Shonibare, MBE, matched a contribution by the National Maritime Museum of £49,100 to finalise the campaign. The campaign has also benefited from the support of the Mayor of London, who originally commissioned the work and the generosity of Ocean Media, an advertising company who donated free media space to publicise the appeal.

The National Maritime Museum is a perfect place for the work which is a scaled down replica of HMS Victory, the ship captained by Nelson. The work measures 4.7 metres in length and 2.8 metres in diameter. The ship’s 37 large sails are made of richly patterned textiles commonly associated with African dress and symbolic of African identity and independence. Tying together historical and global threads, the work considers the legacy of British colonialism and its expansion in trade and Empire, made possible through the freedom of the seas and new trade routes that Nelson’s victory provided. The National Maritime houses a rich and varied collection of art and items relating to Britain’s maritime history and major collections related to Nelson and the Battle of Trafalgar.

Stephen Deuchar, Director of the Art Fund, commented:
“We are delighted that the Art Fund’s first fundraising appeal for a contemporary work of art has been successful. It is not an easy environment in which to run a campaign but the campaign’s success is testimony to the popularity of Yinka’s work and to the continued generosity of the many enlightened individuals upon whom the charitable sector depends.”
Kevin Fewster, Director of the National Maritime Museum, said:
“I am incredibly pleased to be able to unveil Nelson’s Ship in a Bottle in its new location outside our Sammy Ofer Wing. It is a fantastic addition to the National Maritime Museum’s world famous collections and I would like to thank all of the people, the GLA, the artist and Stephen Friedman Gallery who have helped us give this unique artwork a permanent home in Greenwich through their generous support. I am confident that our millions of visitors will get great pleasure from it for years to come”

Jon Snow, journalist and Fourth Plinth Commissioning Group member, said:
“It’s great news that Yinka Shonibare’s Nelson’s Ship in a Bottle has been secured for the National Maritime Museum. In one fell swoop this totemic sculpture brings together thoughts of empire, slavery, liberation, and the very fibre of our maritime heritage, adding a hugely important multi-cultural dimension to the museum’s message.”

Yinka Shonibare, MBE commented:
“I am absolutely delighted and touched by the public’s generosity. It is testimony to the importance of keeping Nelson’s Ship in a Bottle in the country. The piece was whole-heartedly embraced by the public while at Trafalgar Square and I am glad that the same affection for the work will continue at Greenwich.”

Stephen Friedman said:
“Uniting the contemporary and the historical, Nelson’s Ship in a Bottle is a poignant symbol of multiculturalism. As such, I am delighted that this seminal work will remain in London and has found a permanent home at the National Maritime Museum. The overwhelmingly positive response from the public has been a pleasure to behold and is testament to Yinka Shonibare’s success as a leading global artist.”

Notes to Editors

Funding Breakdown

£650,000: Total value of the work
£140,000: production costs already met for the Fourth Plinth programme
£97,500: 15% museum discount from Stephen Friedman Gallery
£50,000: Art Fund Grant
£264,300: Contributions from the public via the fundraising appeal
£49,100: National Maritime Museum contribution
£49,100: Matched contribution by Stephen Friedman Gallery and James Cohan Gallery, New York, on behalf of Yinka Shonibare, MBE

The Art Fund is the national charity which helps museums and galleries to buy, show and share art for the enjoyment of all. Over the past five years, the Art Fund has given over £24 million towards art of all kinds, from Old Masters to new media, and supported a range of programmes which share and show art to wider audiences, including the national tour of ARTIST ROOMS and the Art Fund Prize for museums. The Art Fund is independently funded and the majority of its income comes from 90,000 supporters who purchase a National Art Pass, costing from £50, which gives free entry to over 200 museums, galleries and historic houses across the country as well as 50% off many major exhibitions.
The National Maritime Museum is part of Royal Museums Greenwich, which holds the world’s largest maritime collection. It is housed in historic buildings forming part of the Maritime Greenwich World Heritage Site. It incorporates the National Maritime Museum, Royal Observatory Greenwich, and 17th century Queen’s House. The museums work to illustrate for everyone the importance of the sea, ships, time and the stars and their relationship with people. Royal Museums Greenwich welcomes over 1.8 million British and international visitors a year and is also a major centre of education and research. For more information visit www.rmg.co.uk

The Fourth Plinth Programme is a key project delivered by the Mayor of London and is now recognised as the most high profile public art commission in Europe. As part of the Mayor's Cultural Strategy, the programme brings world class contemporary art to the heart of the city to unlock debate and discussion about London, contemporary art and public space. The Fourth Plinth Programme is funded in partnership with Cass Sculpture Foundation and with support from Arts Council England. Artists previously commissioned to make works for the plinth include Bill Woodrow, Antony Gormley, Thomas Schütte and Mark Quinn.

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, Yinka Shonibare, MBE has become well known for his exploration of colonialism and post-colonialism within the contemporary context of globalisation. His work explores these issues, alongside those of race and class, through the media of paintings, sculpture, photography and, more recently, film and performance. Yinka Shonibare, MBE 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 has exhibited at the Venice Biennial and internationally at leading museums worldwide.

Stephen Friedman Gallery and Yinka Shonibare, MBE have worked together for 16 years. Stephen Friedman Gallery was established in 1995 and is now recognised amongst the leading international galleries in the field of contemporary art. The gallery represents both established and emerging artists working world-wide today.

Since it’s inauguration the gallery has been based on Old Burlington Street in Central London. In 2005 it expanded, taking on adjacent premises designed by Caruso St John and in 2011 an additional gallery space was opened at No 11 Old Burlington St designed by David Kohn. The gallery hosts seven exhibitions each year alongside a project-based programme in the No 11. space. One person exhibitions and curated, group exhibitions are featured in the programme and have included the first exhibitions in the UK by leading artists such as; William Kentridge, Kara Walker, Beatriz Milhazes, Rivane Neuenschwander, Rudolf Stingel, Mira Schendel and Anne Truitt amongst others.

Cass Sculpture Foundation supports the Fourth Plinth programme and is a charitable foundation established in 1992 by Wilfred and Jeannette Cass, dedicated to commissioning new sculpture from emerging and established artists. The Foundation’s 26 acre grounds are home to an ever-changing display of 80 monumental sculptures, all of which are for sale with the proceeds shared evenly between the artists and the foundation to invest in new commissions. By combining the best of philanthropic and commercial commissioning models, Cass Sculpture Foundation is able to continually commission and show new sculpture; to date the Foundation has produced over 400 sculptural works. For more information, please visit: www.sculpture.org.uk
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