

## HMS VICTORY RETURNS TO TRAFALGAR

### Yinka Shonibare's Fourth Plinth Ship To Set Sail in May

The next commission for the Fourth Plinth, *Nelson's Ship in a Bottle*, by leading Anglo-Nigerian artist Yinka Shonibare will be unveiled in Trafalgar Square on the morning of **Monday 24 May 2010**.

Commissioned by the Mayor of London and supported by Arts Council England with sponsorship from Guaranty Trust Bank of Nigeria, *Nelson's Ship in a Bottle* is a scale replica of HMS Victory in a giant bottle.

The artwork will be the first commission on the Fourth Plinth to reflect specifically on the historical symbolism of Trafalgar Square, which commemorates the Battle of Trafalgar, and will link directly with Nelson's column. It is also the first commission by a black British artist.

The ship's 37 large sails will be made of richly patterned textiles commonly associated with African dress and symbolic of African identity and independence. The history of the fabric reveals that they were inspired by Indonesian batik design, mass produced by the Dutch and sold to the colonies in West Africa. 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 that Nelson's Victory provided.

Yinka Shonibare says his piece will reflect the story of multiculturalism in London:

*'For me its a celebration of London's immense ethnic wealth, giving expression to and honouring the many cultures and ethnicities that are still breathing precious wind into the sails of the United Kingdom. A ship in a bottle is an object of wonder. Adults and children are intrigued by its mystery. How can such towering masts and billowing sails fit inside such a commonplace object? With Nelson's Ship in a Bottle I want to take this childhood sense of wonder and amplify it to match the monumental scale of Trafalgar Square.'*

Yinka Shonibare's *Nelson's Ship in a Bottle* is sponsored by Guaranty Trust Bank who are also supporting Chris Ofili's mid-career survey exhibition at Tate Britain, on view until 16 May 2010. 2010 marks the 50th anniversary of Nigerian Independence. In London this will be marked by these two important exhibitions by leading international artists of Nigerian descent.

Boris Johnson, the Mayor of London, said: *'Set against the backdrop of one of the most iconic symbols of Britain's seafaring heritage, Yinka Shonibare's ship, with its riot of colour, makes a powerful statement that will intrigue and inspire in equal measure.*

*It is a stunning work, with history and culture from West Africa to East Asia, woven in its sails, much as the threads of those places and their people are woven in the fabric of the capital. It is also particularly timely, with its message of the complex relationship between Africa and Europe coming as Nigeria marks its 50th year of independence. This is clearly the work of an artist at the top of his game, and I'm sure Londoners will enjoy it greatly.'*

Tayo Aderinokun, CEO of Guaranty Trust Bank said: *'We are extremely proud to be sponsoring a unique artwork for an iconic location by such an accomplished Anglo-Nigerian artist. Yinka's work is being exhibited in the same year as Nigeria celebrates the 50th anniversary of its independence. The multiculturalism of London is a key component of the legacy of colonialism, and we hope that this high-profile and important work helps to create a similar debate in Nigeria in such an important year.'*

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# JAMES COHAN GALLERY

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## Notes to Editors

### 1. **YINKA SHONIBARE, MBE**

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 Central Saint Martins College 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 media of painting, sculpture, photography and, most recently, film. Using this wide range of media, Shonibare examines in particular the construction of identity and tangled interrelationship between Africa and Europe and their respective economic and political histories. Mining Western art history and literature, he asks what constitutes contemporary African identity today. Having described himself as a 'post-colonial' hybrid, Shonibare questions the meaning of cultural and national definitions.

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 Biennial 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.

### 2. **THE FOURTH PLINTH**

The Fourth Plinth Programme is funded by the Mayor of London and Arts Council England and sees new artworks being selected for the vacant plinth in a rolling programme of new commissions. The scheme was initiated in 1998 by the RSA with the support of the Cass Sculpture Foundation. In 1999 responsibility for Trafalgar Square was transferred to the Mayor of London and the Greater London Authority.

The first new commission for the Fourth Plinth under the auspices of the Mayor of London's Fourth Plinth Commissioning Group was Marc Quinn's sculpture, *Alison Lapper Pregnant*, unveiled in a public ceremony in September 2005. It was replaced in November 2007 by Thomas Schutte's *Model for a Hotel* and in 2009 by Antony Gormley's *One & Other*. Previous commissions have been *Ecce Homo* by Mark Wallinger (1999), *Regardless of History* by Bill Woodrow (2000) and *Monument* by Rachel Whiteread (2001). Arts Council England has been a funding partner supporting the programme since 2003.

The Fourth Plinth Programme is led by the Cultural Strategy team, within the Mayor of London's Office, under the guidance of the Fourth Plinth Commissioning Group (FPCG). The FPCG recommends contemporary works for the Fourth Plinth. More information is available at the website: [www.fourthplinth.co.uk](http://www.fourthplinth.co.uk).

The programme is part of the vision for Trafalgar Square to be a vibrant, public space and to encourage debate about the place and value of public art in the built environment. For more information visit the Greater London Authority website: [www.london.gov.uk/trafalgarsquare/index.jsp](http://www.london.gov.uk/trafalgarsquare/index.jsp).

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## **The Fourth Plinth Commissioning Group is:**

**Chair:** Ekow Eshun, Artistic Director, Institute of Contemporary Arts

### **Members:**

Michaela Crimmin Head of Arts, RSA

Iwona Blazwick Director of Whitechapel Gallery

Mick Brundle Principal, Arup Associates

Tamsin Dillon Head, Platform for Art, Transport for London

Grayson Perry, Artist

Sunand Prasad President, RIBA; Architect, Partner in Penoyre and Prasad

Richard Rieser Director, Disability Equality in Education

Jon Snow, Broadcaster

Bill Woodrow Artist (previously exhibited *Regardless of History* on the Fourth Plinth)

Julie Lomax Head of Visual Arts, Arts Council England, London

**Project Director:** Mayor of London: Justine Simons

## **3. GUARANTY TRUST BANK PLC**

Guaranty Trust Bank plc is a leading Nigerian and Pan African bank and was the first Nigerian bank to be listed on the London Stock Exchange. Awarded AA- rating by Fitch Ratings, Guaranty Trust Bank has the highest ratings for a Nigerian Bank. In March 2008 a UK subsidiary of Guaranty Trust Bank opened with a banking hall on Margaret St, London W1 to cater for their global clients. With branches throughout Gambia, Ghana, Liberia and Sierra Leone and initiatives such as SMS banking and Mobile banks, Guaranty Trust Bank has championed sustainable growth throughout West Africa.

At the 2009 Euromoney Awards for Excellence in London, Guaranty Trust Bank took the 'Best Bank' in Nigeria category. This accolade adds to numerous awards collected over the past ten years including the PricewaterhouseCoopers award in 2006 and 2007 as the most respected company in Nigeria.

Since inception, Guaranty Trust Bank has actively promoted creativity by championing various initiatives in support of the arts. The Bank's efforts towards promoting art and culture has enabled important heritage exhibitions such as the Edo Bronze Festival; which examined the lost art of Nigerian bronze casting and a survey exhibition of the 'Living Masters' in 1997 which showcased the works of internationally recognized indigenous artists; Abayomi Barber, Bisi Fakeye, Bruce Onobrakpeya, David Dale, El Anatsui, Isiaka Osunde, Kolade Oshinowo, Muraina Oyelami and Yusuf Grillo.

The Bank is also at the forefront of championing innovative African art to new audiences. This was evident in the sponsorship of the Prada Foundation's ambitious commission - 'The Double Club' by artist Carsten Höller – bringing together African and Western culture through food, dance, music, fashion and performance.