

PIPPY HOULDSWORTH GALLERY

Press Release

YINKA SHONIBARE MBE

Phallic Stalactites and Stalagmites

In THE BOX

13 March – 26 April 2014



Yinka Shonibare MBE, *Phallic Stalactites and Stalagmites*, 2014
MDF, glass, rubber, Dutch wax printed cotton textile and LED lights, 45 x 45 x 45 cm

Pippy Houldsworth Gallery is delighted to present a new commission for The Box by British-Nigerian artist Yinka Shonibare MBE. Exploring his West African heritage, Shonibare's practice is primarily concerned with disrupting conventional notions of race, class and cultural identity.

On first glance, the interior of Shonibare's box resembles a subterranean landscape; dimly lit, the top and bottom of the structure are lined with geological formations imitating stalagmites and stalactites. However, one soon realises that the rocky protrusions are dildos in disguise. Shonibare's sculptures frequently explore the tension between the public and private realms, seeking to reveal hidden intimacies and sexual fantasies repressed within everyday life.

In their abundance, the dildos are reminiscent of the phallic protrusions that adorn Yayoi Kusama's *Accumulation* sculptures. Seemingly infinite, the multiplicity of the phalli lends the work an intense, erotic quality as if experiencing a dream or fantasy. Charged with libidinal energy, this sense of profusion is exacerbated further by the reflection of the toys within the mirrors lining the box. In doing so, Shonibare establishes another affinity with Kusama's work by creating an infinity effect similar to that generated in *Gleaming Lights of the Souls*, a mirrored installation comprising hundreds of hanging LED lights.

In their plenitude, the artist idealises the phallus as an inexhaustible source of pleasure. However, there is something overwhelming in their copiousness. As the viewer peers into the space, one becomes drawn into the interior of the box as if falling down a hole or tunnel. The exotic Dutch wax textiles enfolding each of the dildos exaggerate this sense of disorientation. Printed in vibrant patterns synonymous with Shonibare's practice, the conglomeration of different designs induces a heady, optical effect which serves to confound the viewer.

Yinka Shonibare MBE (born 1962 in London, UK) moved to Lagos, Nigeria at the age of three. He returned to London to study Fine Art and received his MFA from Goldsmiths College in 1991. He gained notoriety on the international stage via his commission for Okwui Enwezor's Documenta 10, *Gallantry and Criminal Conversation* (2002), and was a Turner Prize nominee in 2004. In 2005 he was awarded the decoration of Member of the 'Most Excellent Order of the British Empire', a title that he officially added to his professional name. In 2011, the artist's sculpture *Nelson's Ship in a Bottle* was selected for the Fourth Plinth commission series in London's Trafalgar Square, now on permanent display outside the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich. In October 2013, he was elected a Royal Academician.

Shonibare's works were featured in the 52nd Venice Biennale (2007), and a mid-career survey toured from 2008 to 2009 at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney; Brooklyn Museum, New York; and the Museum of African Art at the Smithsonian Institution, Washington. In 2013, a major solo exhibition was mounted at Yorkshire Sculpture Park, which subsequently travelled to GL Strand, Copenhagen. Other recent solo museum shows include those at the Gdańska Galeria Miejska, Gdansk and Wrocław Contemporary Museum, Wrocław. Shonibare has upcoming solo museum exhibitions in 2014 at the Gerisch-Stiftung, Neumünster and Fondation Blachère, Apt. Shonibare's work is currently the subject of a large museum show at The Barnes Foundation, Philadelphia. He is represented by Stephen Friedman Gallery, London.