

Press Release

7 December 2001

Tate Britain Christmas Tree 2001 by Yinka Shonibare

Tate Britain has commissioned Yinka Shonibare to create its Christmas tree for 2001, which will be on display from 12 December. This is the fourteenth year that Tate has celebrated Christmas in this way.

Shonibare has wrapped 102 cane branches in densely shredded batik, in a variety of bold colours. The tree's trunk and base are made of untreated iron. The base is constructed so that the roots of the tree spread out on the ground, forming a sinuous pattern. A fluorescent tube is suspended through the centre of the trunk giving off intermittent light through holes in the ironwork. Shonibare's tree continues his exploration of national identity and tradition through the use of batik, a material associated particularly with West African national costumes. It has a curious history, born out of nineteenth-century economic practices. The designs originate in Indonesia, and the textiles are actually manufactured in Holland and England.

Yinka Shonibare works in sculpture, installation, painting, photography and video. He has had several solo exhibitions in the UK including at Camden Arts Centre, London (2000) and *Dressing Down* at the Ikon Gallery in Birmingham (1999), which later toured the country. In 1998 he completed a site-specific project on the London Underground entitled *Diary of a Victorian Dandy*. He has also contributed to numerous group shows including *The Short Century*, Museum Villa Stuck, Munich (2001); *Give & Take*, Serpentine Gallery and the V&A (2001); *Age of Influence: Reflections in the Mirror of American Culture*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (2000), and *Intelligence: New British Art 2000*, Tate Britain (2000).

Previously commissioned artists were: Catherine Yass (2000), Mat Collishaw (1999), Richard Wilson (1998) Michael Landy (1997), Julian Opie (1996), Cornelia Parker (1995), Cathy de Monchaux (1994), Shirazeh Houshiary (1993), Craigie Aitchison (1992), Boyd Webb (1991), Lisa Milroy (1990), Tim Head (1989) and Bill Woodrow (1988).

Yinka Shonibare's installation and the 2001 Christmas card are supported by the Patrons of New Art.

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