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PRESS RELEASE

Star Liner
Zak Ové

Private View: Monday, 19 March 2018 from 6.30 – 9 PM
Exhibition continues until June, 2018



Lawrie Shabibi is delighted to announce *Star Liner*, a major new show by British-Trinidadian artist Zak Ové, his first solo exhibition at the gallery and in the Middle East region, opening on 19 March to coincide with Art Dubai and the Dubai Art Week. Ové is known for his large-scale *Moko Jumbie* commissions at the British Museum (as part of the 2015 Celebrating Africa exhibition) and his installation *The Invisible Man and the Masque of Blackness* currently on show at Yorkshire Sculpture Park which travels to San Francisco's City Centre Plaza in July this year.

Central to Ové's work is the notion of *belonging* and what this means to him in a multicultural world. Of white Irish and black Trinidadian descent, raised in London, Ové's visits to Trinidad were a revelation, awakening his interest in the Trinidadian carnival – a mode of resistance and a way of memorializing a lost African culture and mythology for a diasporic people. Ové takes this one step further – bringing aesthetic and conceptual African/Caribbean elements into his UK – practice, incorporating materials and found objects available to him. His many themes come together in the exhibition, his most ambitious yet: space and time-travel, his passion for mask-making, for re-casting African sculpture from materials around him (rather than out of ebony), and his reinterpretation and revaluation of familiar and obsolete objects.

The title of the exhibition draws from these different sources, speaking of migration and return, both in an earthly and ethereal sense, drawing both from the Black Star Line of Marcus Garvey, a doomed shipping line of the early 1920s, whose role was to facilitate transport of goods and eventually African Americans throughout the African economy, and to the celestial-futuristic-psychadelic music of George Clinton. At Lawrie Shabibi, Ové presents all-new work, a blast of colour and wide-ranging materials, from kaleidoscopic "doily" paintings to his monumental *Invisible Men*, a spaceship, rockets and a new series of masks made from vintage car parts.

Ové's doily paintings are made from vintage European lace doilies as well as custom ones that have been made by Syrian refugees. The paintings, with their vibrant circular layers and patterns evoke the spirit and energy of the Trinidadian carnival whilst using a medium that is personally nostalgic – these items filled the homes of Trinidadian

communities when the artist was growing up. The two largest works in the series, *Heaven* and *Earth*, are essays in geometry between square and circular forms.

Ové's flocked *Invisible Men* (two of which from this series are in the Peres Museum, Miami) are based on casts of the African sculpture used for *Invisible Men and the Masque of Blackness*, shown at Somerset House in London, and again in Yorkshire Sculpture Park. One bears the Stars and Stripes, another in yellow and wearing a bow tie riffs of Robinson's racist golly, whilst a third has complimentary colours rebounding off each other. In his *Resistor Transistors*, Ové achieves a similar effect – brightly flocked 1980's boom boxes—red buttons, pink handles, turquoise bodies and coloured masks.



His new series of masks, seen here for the first time and composed from brightly painted vintage car parts, investigate how an artist can continue the tradition of mask-making to record the contemporary experience, making African or African diaspora sculpture without recourse to ebony wood. To Ové, works made of ebony carry some negative colonial connotations – looked down upon and seen as coming from a naïve outsider culture. In seeking to break this negative aspect, Ové uses materials that are true to the place where they are made – the UK. Morris minor bonnet, doors and grille come together in *Rumplesteelskin*.

As with all his work, the forms are unrestrained, even as the questions posed are profound. For example: "What was African culture prior to the onset of the major religions? How was it in ancient Egypt or the Dogon culture of Mali, both with a strong connection to space, an alien connection, and a belief that life comes from beyond the Earth? For post-colonial people, the question "Where did we come from?" connects to these people from the beginning of time who come from future time. Ové's *Sky Lark* spaceship and two *Star Child* rockets are his response. Known in recent years for his 3D bric-a-brac collages, these three sculptures are based on vintage fairground rides, modified almost beyond recognition. Describing these modifications as "embellishments", he explains that in the Caribbean, with no images of Africa nor objects from there, people relied on oral tradition. Trying to emancipate themselves from world, they built on the oral traditions, folkloric stories and improvised mythologies, and these became talismanic. These stories, not based on scientific reality, became *mythic* in their embellishments. These embellishments give a sense of purpose and self-belief, and it is these that Ové seeks to echo visually within his work.

ABOUT ZAK OVÉ

Zak Ové (b. 1966, London) graduated in 1987 with a BA in Film and Fine Art from the St. Martin's School of Art, London. Today he works in sculpture, film, painting and photography, often collaging the various elements through his use of found, cast and recovered materials. He has participated in numerous solo exhibitions including *Black and Blue: The Invisible Men and the Masque of Darkness*, 1:54 Contemporary African Art Fair, Somerset House (Courtyard), London, 2016; *Arms Around The Child*, No1 Mayfair London, 2014; *Speaker*, Vigo Gallery, London, 2013-14; *Past Future*, Fine Art Society, London, 2010; and *Black & White Nudes*, Carte Blanche Gallery, London, 2008.

In 2014 Ové became the first Caribbean artist to be commissioned by the British Museum, with his pair of seven-metre high *Moko Jumbie* sculptures exhibited in the Great Court as part of the *Celebrating Africa* exhibition. They are now permanently installed in their Africa gallery.

He has participated in other museum and institutional shows including *Black and Blue: The Invisible Men and the Masque of Darkness*, Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Wakefield, 2017; *Twice Is Too Much*, The Freies Museum, Berlin, 2010 and *Blue Devils*, Real Art Ways Museum, Connecticut, 2009. *Black and Blue: The Invisible Men and the Masque of Darkness*, will travel to City Hall Plaza in San Francisco for a period of three to six months from July 2018.

He is the recipient of the Cinit Award for Best Short Film at the Milan African Film Festival; the Black Film & TV Awards for Best Short Film, Best Short Film Director, and Best New Talent in 2002 and the SoHo Images award for Best Short Film in 2002.

His works are in several collections including Modern Forms, London, UK; 21 C Museum, Kentucky, USA; Beth De Woody Collection, New York, USA; British Museum, London, UK; David Roberts Art Foundation, London, UK; Frédéric de Goldschmidt, Brussels, Belgium; Jameel Collection, Saudi Arabia; Levett Collection, London, UK; Newark Museum, New Jersey, USA and the Pizzuti Collection, Columbus, OH, USA.

The artist lives and works in London, United Kingdom, and Trinidad, Trinidad and Tobago.

ABOUT LAWRIE SHABIBI

Lawrie Shabibi is a contemporary art gallery housed in Dubai's Alserkal Avenue. The gallery supports the long-term development of the careers of young international contemporary artists with a focus on those from the Middle East and North Africa. The gallery also organizes art historical exhibitions working with an older generation of artists from the region. Liaising with curators, institutions, museums and collectors the gallery has successfully introduced international artists to the region whilst at the same time presented Middle Eastern artists to the international contemporary arts community. By holding a regular programme of exhibitions, screenings and talks, publishing catalogues and participating in international art fairs, Lawrie Shabibi has in the space of six years been a forerunner in the development of the contemporary art scene in Dubai.

For more information on Lawrie Shabibi please visit:

<http://www.lawrieshabibi.com>

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