



**21c Museum and Speed Art Museum to Present Yinka Shonibare MBE's *The American Library* Opening
March 30, 2019**

**The monumental installation will be presented in the Speed Art Museum's historic library and
accompanied by key works by the artist from the 21c and Speed collections**

Louisville, KY – December 19, 2018 – Opening on March 30, 2019, 21c Museum and the Speed Art Museum in Louisville, KY will present a co-curated exhibition of British-Nigerian artist Yinka Shonibare MBE's *The American Library*, a large-scale installation of thousands of books covered in the artist's signature textiles with the names of people who have contributed to our collective understanding of diversity and immigration in the United States printed in gold on the spines. The immersive installation will be on view in the Speed Art Museum's original galleries from 1927, which formerly housed a library, activating the historic space. Additional works by Shonibare from the 21c Museum and Speed collections will provide further context. Commissioned by Front International: Cleveland Triennial for Contemporary Art, the work was recently on view at the Van Every/Smith Galleries, Davidson College, North Carolina ahead of its forthcoming presentation at the Speed Art Museum this spring. This exhibition marks the first time the Speed Art Museum and 21c Museum have co-organized a major exhibition.

The American Library is inspired by ongoing debates about immigration and diversity in the United States. The installation comprises bookshelves holding over 6,000 volumes covered in Shonibare's signature Dutch wax printed cotton, a material whose mixed origins reflect the history of colonization, and are printed with gilded names of figures who have made a significant contribution to American culture and/or have influenced public discourse on immigration. The selected names, which include W. E. B. Du Bois, Maria Goeppert Mayer, Steve Jobs, Bruce Lee, Ana Mendieta, Joni Mitchell, Toni Morrison, Barack Obama, Steven Spielberg, Carl Stokes, Donald Trump, and Tiger Woods, fall into the following categories: people who immigrated or whose parents immigrated to the U.S., African Americans who relocated or whose parents relocated out of the American south during the Great Migration, or people who have spoken out against immigration, equality, or diversity in the United States. In the gallery, visitors can access a website that provides additional information on each individual represented on the bookshelves.

"We at 21c are thrilled to collaborate with the Speed to present *The American Library*," says 21c Chief Curator and Museum Director Alice Gray Stites. "In the face of the growing refugee crisis and resistance to immigration across the globe, we feel an urgency to share this work that celebrates the spectrum of voices that have created our nation's culture and history, while simultaneously acknowledging that there are others who have spoken out against diversity. We hope this exhibition will provide opportunities to better understand the complexity of these political and cultural debates."

"It feels both timely and meaningful to be collaborating with 21c on an exhibition that acknowledges the many facets of the debate surrounding immigration and the innumerable ways that the United States has benefited from the contributions of migrants and immigrants," says Miranda Lash, Curator of Contemporary Art at the Speed Art Museum. "Empathy is often enhanced by education, and Shonibare's



masterful installation of books and his online database of names, illuminates that this country was built by individuals coming from many different backgrounds and places.”

Yinka Shonibare MBE’s work examines race, class, and cultural identity and explores the history of colonialism and post-colonialism within the contemporary context of globalization. Working across media, including painting, sculpture, photography, film, and installation, Shonibare’s work provides insightful political commentary on the tangled interrelationship between Africa and Europe and their respective economic and political histories. In addition to *The American Library*, the 21c and Speed exhibition will feature other works by Shonibare, including:

- ***The Three Graces (2001)***, depicting three headless mannequins dressed in Shonibare’s signature Dutch wax fabric, the *Three Graces* was inspired by a photograph of three women in Edwardian dress that the artist found in the archives of the Hendrik Christian Andersen Museum in Rome, Italy. As a trio, the sculptures allude to the theme of “The Three Graces” found in classical sculptures from ancient Greece. Their Edwardian styled dresses meanwhile, speak to the history of Great Britain’s colonization of Africa.
- ***The Age of Enlightenment - Gabrielle Émilie Le Tonnelier de Breteuil, Marquise du Châtelet (2008)***, a sculpture from Shonibare’s series inspired by key historic figures and thinkers from the 18th century, presented as headless mannequins dressed in his signature Dutch wax fabrics that question and interrogate the ideas embraced during the Age of Reason that supported and justified colonial expansion. This sculpture depicts female mathematician, physicist, and author Gabrielle Émilie Le Tonnelier de Breteuil, Marquise du Châtelet and comments upon her status and treatment as an intellectual woman in this period.
- ***Food Faerie (2010)*** is a sculptural representation of a winged child carrying mangoes in a leather pouch, with one arm held aloft as if holding a spear. Dressed in the style of Victorian England and Dutch wax fabric designed by the artist, this sculpture examines how identity is shaped by both mythology and by capital markets, alluding to England’s colonial control of regions and resources in West Africa.
- ***The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters (2008)*** combines references to Goya’s 18th-century critiques of the Spanish Church and State with allusions to Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*. Shonibare questions the ongoing impact of the theories of the Enlightenment period on world history and on contemporary geo-politics.

Public Programs presented in association with *The American Library* include:

- **Friday, March 29, 2019, 5-8pm**
Opening Night, Welcome by Alice Gray Stites and Miranda Lash at 6pm.
- **Friday, April 12, 2019, 3pm**
The Speed Art Museum will host a Compas Peer Mentor and Ambassador program for Latino students, presented in conjunction with the University of Louisville’s Cultural Center.



- **Friday, August 9, 2019, 11 am**
The Speed Art Museum will host a Naturalization Ceremony celebrating new citizenship for 100 immigrants in Louisville.
- **Friday, September 13, 6 pm**
Gallery talk with Alice Gray Stites and Miranda Lash on *The American Library*.

Please visit www.speedmuseum.org or www.21cmuseumhotels.com for more information.

Exhibition season support at the Speed Art Museum is provided by:

A. Cary Brown and Steven E. Epstein

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Debra and Ronald Murphy

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ABOUT YINKA SHONIBARE MBE

Yinka Shonibare MBE was born in 1962 in London and moved to Lagos, Nigeria at the age of three. He returned to London to study Fine Art, first at Byam School of Art (now Central Saint Martins College) and then at Goldsmiths College, where he received his MFA. Shonibare was a Turner prize nominee in 2004, and was also awarded the decoration of Member of the 'Most Excellent Order of the British Empire' or MBE, a title he has added to his professional name. Shonibare was notably commissioned by Okwui Enwezor at Documenta 11, Kassel, in 2002 to create his most recognized work *Gallantry and Criminal Conversation* that launched him on to an international stage. He has exhibited at the Venice Biennale and internationally at leading museums. In September 2008, his major mid-career survey commenced at the MCA Sydney and then toured to the Brooklyn Museum, New York and the Museum of African Art at the Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC. He was elected as a Royal Academician by the Royal Academy, London in 2013.

Shonibare's works have been exhibited in public spaces across the globe, including several notable locations in London, such as Trafalgar Square, the Royal Opera House, and the Royal Academy of Arts. His work is also included in prominent collections internationally, including the Tate Collection, London; Victoria and Albert Museum, London; National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institute, Washington, D.C; Museum of Modern Art, New York; National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; Moderna Museet, Stockholm; National Gallery of Modern Art in Rome and VandenBroek Foundation, The Netherlands.



ABOUT 21c MUSEUM HOTELS

A multi-venue contemporary art museum with eight locations across the U.S., 21c Museum is one of the largest contemporary art museums in the U.S., and North America's only collecting museum dedicated solely to art of the 21st century. It was founded in 2006 by Laura Lee Brown and Steve Wilson, philanthropists, preservationists, and contemporary art collectors, who were inspired by the idea that art can spur urban revitalization and catalyze civic connection. Envisioning a new way to expand access to contemporary art in urban centers, they created 21c Museum Hotels, which seamlessly combine a fully functioning contemporary art museum with boutique hotels and chef-driven restaurants.

From rotating, curated exhibitions to site-specific installations and cultural programming, 21c creates innovative cultural centers for experiencing thought-provoking contemporary art from all over the world. Open and accessible 24/7, 21c's exhibitions and programs are free to public. 21c presents a range of arts programming curated by Museum Director, Chief Curator Alice Gray Stites. 21c collaborates on arts initiatives with artists and organizations worldwide. 21c Museum Hotels are located in Louisville, Ky.; Cincinnati, Ohio; Bentonville, Ark.; Durham, N.C.; Lexington, Ky.; Oklahoma City, Okla.; Nashville, Tenn.; and Kansas City, Mo.

For more information visit 21cMuseumHotels.com.

ABOUT SPEED ART MUSEUM

The Speed Art Museum is Kentucky's largest art museum. An independent and encyclopedic museum located on the campus of the University of Louisville, the Speed celebrated its 90th anniversary in 2017. Louisville philanthropist Hattie Bishop Speed founded the Speed Art Museum, which opened in 1927, with a belief in the power of art to change people's lives.

The Speed reopened in 2016 following a 3-year, \$60 million renovation and expansion designed by Kulapat Yantrasast of WHY that doubled the museum's overall square footage and nearly tripled its gallery space. Free Owsley Sundays, sponsored by the Brown-Forman Corporation, draw large and diverse crowds every week. For more information, visit www.speedmuseum.org.

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