

The Courtauld

Press Release

7 July 2021

YINKA SHONIBARE CBE RA AND JULIAN AGNEW AWARDED HONOURS BY THE COURTAULD

The Courtauld is delighted to announce that the artist Yinka Shonibare CBE RA and the renowned art dealer Julian Agnew have been awarded prestigious honours by The Courtauld in recognition of their outstanding contributions to the visual arts.

Yinka Shonibare CBE RA has been awarded the degree of Hon. D. Lit. *honoris causa* of the University of London by The Courtauld. The artist was initially nominated by The Courtauld's student body for the honour, which was fully endorsed by the full Courtauld community. The honorary degree is given to individuals whose distinction and achievements are outstanding and of particular importance to the fields of art and art history, The Courtauld's specialisms.

Other artists to have received the honour from The Courtauld have included Martha Rosler and Rasheed Araeen: recipients of Courtauld honorary degrees in recent years include pioneering art historian Professor Griselda Pollock and current Chair of Arts Council England, Sir Nicholas Serota CH.

Working in painting, sculpture, photography, film and installation, Shonibare's work has become well known for his exploration of colonialism and post-colonialism within the contemporary context of globalization. This work, examining race, class and the construction of cultural identity is a visual political commentary on the complex interrelationship between Africa and Europe, using citations from western art from the periods of high colonialism to question the validity of contemporary cultural and national identities.

Nominated for the Turner prize in 2004, Shonibare's work was included in the 52nd Venice Biennale in 2007. In 2010, Shonibare's 'Nelson's Ship in a Bottle' was the Fourth Plinth Commission and was displayed in Trafalgar Square before moving to be permanently displayed outside the National Maritime Museum in London.

Shonibare was elected a Royal Academician in 2013 and awarded a CBE in 2019. In March 2021, he was the 8th recipient of the prestigious Whitechapel Gallery Art Icon Award. A major retrospective of his work is currently on show at the Museum der Moderne in Austria and later this year, he will co-ordinate the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition. His works are in notable museum collections internationally.

Julian Agnew has also been recognised, with the award of an Honorary Fellowship of The Courtauld, in recognition of his contributions to The Courtauld over many years as Treasurer, Chairman and Trustee of the Friends of The Courtauld, an organisation founded by his father Geoffrey Agnew in 1969 in support of The Courtauld and merged with it in 2020. Agnew's mother Doreen was one of the first cohort of students in 1932 when the Courtauld Institute of Art was founded as part of the University of London. His own professional career has been spent within the art trade, as Director and Chairman of his family company, Thomas Agnew & Sons, founded in the early 19th Century and a notable Bond Street gallery from the late 19th to the early 21st centuries.

Professor Deborah Swallow, Märit Rausing Director of The Courtauld, said: "We are delighted to be able to honour two people who have had such an impact on the visual arts and on The Courtauld's own mission to advance how we see and understand them. On behalf of all of our staff and students, I would like to offer Yinka and Julian our warmest congratulations."

Yinka Shonibare said: "It's a great honour to be bestowed with this Honorary Degree from an institute of such high esteem as The Courtauld. It is especially touching to know that I was nominated by the students, who are graduating this year under extremely challenging global circumstances."

Julian Agnew said: "I am delighted to accept this award, not only for myself and the small contribution I have been able to make to the work of The Courtauld, but also as a tribute to my parents for the long association that both of them had with the Institute."

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THE COURTAULD

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NOTES TO EDITORS

About The Courtauld

The Courtauld works to advance how we see and understand the visual arts, as an internationally-renowned centre for the teaching, research of art history and a major public gallery. Founded by collectors and philanthropists in 1932, the organisation has been at the forefront of the study of art ever since, through advanced research and conservation practice, innovative teaching, the renowned collection and inspiring exhibitions of its gallery, and engaging and accessible activities, education and events.

The Courtauld cares for one of the greatest art collections in the UK, presenting these works to the public at The Courtauld Gallery in central London, as well as through loans and partnerships. The Gallery is most famous for its iconic Impressionist and Post-Impressionist masterpieces – such as Van Gogh's *Self Portrait with Bandaged Ear* and Manet's *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère*. It showcases these alongside an internationally renowned collection of works from the Middle Ages and the Renaissance through to the present day.

Academically, The Courtauld faculty is the largest community of art historians and conservators in the UK, teaching and carrying out research on subjects from creativity in late Antiquity to contemporary digital artforms - with an increasingly global focus. An independent college of the University of London, The Courtauld offers a range of degree programmes from BA to PhD in the History of Art, curating and the conservation of easel and wall paintings. Its alumni are leaders and innovators in the arts, culture and business worlds, helping to shape the global agenda for the arts and creative industries.

Founded on the belief that everyone should have the opportunity to engage with art, The Courtauld works to increase understanding of the role played by art throughout history, in all societies and across all geographies – as well as being a champion for the importance of art in the present day. This could be through exhibitions offering a chance to look closely at world-famous works; events bringing art history research to new audiences; accessible and expert short courses; digital engagement, innovative school, family and community programmes; or taking a formal qualification. The Courtauld's ambition is to transform access to art history education, by extending the horizons of what this is, and ensuring as many people as possible can benefit from the tools to better understand the visual world around us.

The Courtauld is currently undertaking an ambitious transformation project that will make it accessible to even more people. The Courtauld's home in historic Somerset House – London's working arts centre - is closed for a major programme of renovation. The Courtauld's students and academic staff are based near King's Cross. The Gallery is scheduled to reopen in November 2021.