



Hybrid Mask (Baule/Yaure)

Shonibare, Yinka

On display

Title/Description: Hybrid Mask (Baule/Yaure)

Artist/Maker: Shonibare, Yinka

Born: 2021 - 2021

Object Type: Mask

Measurements: h. 360 x w. 184 x d. 180 mm

Accession Number: 50862

Credit Line: Purchased with support from Martin and Katharine Pinfold and the Art Fund, 2022

Shonibare based his *Hybrid Masks* on masks that were in the collection of Pablo Picasso. He carried out research from archival photographs and recreated their forms. Shonibare describes the series as 'Picasso in reverse', saying that 'Picasso was interested in appropriating from another culture, and I also appropriate from European ethnic art'. [1] With a human face and animal horns, *Hybrid Mask (Baule/Yaure)* is based on a ceremonial mask from the Baule or Yaure peoples of Côte d'Ivoire.

Shonibare engages with the complexities inherent in identity, describing his own as 'post-colonial hybrid'. The hand-painted pattern with pinks and greens on an orange ground references batik fabric, which is a common motif in Shonibare's work:

I am also interested in what happens when you buy fabrics associated with African and Afro-Caribbean communities (although the fabrics have their origins in Indonesia, and were produced by the Dutch for sale back to Africans!) from a Brixton market and display them in an art gallery such as Tate, bringing so-called cheap products into the art market economy and transforming them into very expensive objects. [2]

The human face topped with animal horns and enclosed by a zigzag design is common of masks from the Baule and Yaure cultures. Susan Vogel writes that the human-animal features of Baule masks, 'may be a veiled suggestion that the sharp distinction between humans and animals is artificial and sometimes blurred'. [3] The fact that Picasso owned the mask demonstrates his interest in hybridity, which is shared with Shonibare. Shonibare creates hybrid works across his practice, incorporating imagery and references from different time periods and cultures. Furthermore, as 'post-colonial hybrid', he positions himself in these terms: he 'may thus himself be considered as an example of the increasing hybridization of the once unequivocal cultural or national definitions'. [4]

Shonibare's *Hybrid Masks* were first shown as part of a broader body of work based on Picasso in Shonibare's exhibition *African Spirits of Modernism* at Stephen Friedman Gallery in 2021. *Hybrid Mask (Baule/Yaure)* was first exhibited in the Sainsbury Centre's exhibition *Pablo Picasso: The Legacy of Youth*. This was the first time that Shonibare's work based on Picasso had been presented alongside work by Picasso.

Tania Moore, April 2023

[1] Yinka Shonibare, <https://yinkashonibare.com/exhibitions/african-spirits-of-modernism/> accessed 22 April 2023.

[2] Yinka Shonibare, *Criminal Ornamentation* (London: Hayward Gallery Publishing, 2018), p.10.

[3] Susan Vogel, *Baule: African Art, Western Eyes* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), p.168.

[4] Hugo Bongers and Gerald Matt, 'Preface' in Yinka Shonibare: *Double Dutch* (Rotterdam and Vienna: Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen; Kunsthalle Wien, 2004), p.8.

Exhibitions

'Pablo Picasso: The Legacy of Youth', Sainsbury Centre, Norwich (13/03/2022-17/07/2022)
