

MOTUNRAYO AKINOLA: KNEES KISS GROUND

**8 MAR - 9 JUN 2024
GALLERY 4, FIRE STATION
FREE**

EXHIBITION GUIDE

MOTUNRAYO AKINOLA: KNEES KISS GROUND

Motunrayo Akinola (b.1992) is the SLG's 13th Postgraduate Artist in Residence. He is based in London and has had a studio at the SLG for six months. Akinola is interested in the function and qualities of materials, and how they can trigger emotions and memories. He uses images of the home and everyday objects to explore feelings of comfort and belonging. The artist is particularly drawn to familiar objects and how even objects we know well can contain knowledge beyond our understanding.

Akinola explores public attitudes towards migration. This stems from his dual upbringing in both London, UK and Lagos, Nigeria. By noting subtle gaps in cultural knowledge, his work aims to come to a new understanding about post-colonial dynamics and ownership of space.

LIST OF WORKS

1. **CARGO, 2024**

Cardboard, lantern, framed poster '*Plan and Sections of Slave Ship [the Brooks]*', torch

2. **Back at half past, I have my keys, 2024** Sound, 4 seconds, 13 minute loop

Akinola's work explores migration, connecting events from the past to the present to understand their ongoing impact. The large cardboard structure which visitors can enter is built to replicate the exact dimensions of a standard shipping container. The offence code for entering the UK without proper permissions is written on the wall. The poster *Plan and Sections of Slave Ship [the Brooks]* was purchased at Royal Museums Greenwich and is an item in the collection. The image was commissioned by abolitionists, first produced in 1789, and widely shared in their campaign to end slavery. Akinola says "The Brooks ship has been a reference to return to. When

thinking about the present, history can feel very far away or very near. I find it useful to collapse time." Lights inside the container make reference to the light given by God to the Israelites to ensure their safe passage through the desert, as recorded in the Old Testament of The Bible.¹ The artist places these histories in relation to one another, the reference to the Bible and the abolitionist movement, and the present-day associations of movement and migration. Through this work the artist questions how migrant stories are recorded and disseminated.

¹*Exodus 13:21* By day the Lord went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night.

Old Testament of the Bible

3. **BOOK of DREAMS, 2024**

Reclaimed wooden pulpit, light, ink, Shiramine paper

The majority of central and southern Nigeria is Christian. Akinola is interested in the relationship between religion, power, consumerism and control, drawing from his own experiences of Christianity in post-colonial Nigeria. In the UK, Church of England congregations are in decline and Black African church attendance is rising. Titled *BOOK of DREAMS*, this work explores how dreams and hopes come into being. The sculpture has been activated by the artist printing onto the surface using a Japanese wood block technique. In 16th and 17th century Japan, the state believed missionaries had political ambitions and many Christians were executed. Akinola highlights both Japanese resistance of Christianity and the subjugation and persecution of Christians.

4. *Back door - Peckham, 2024* Photograph

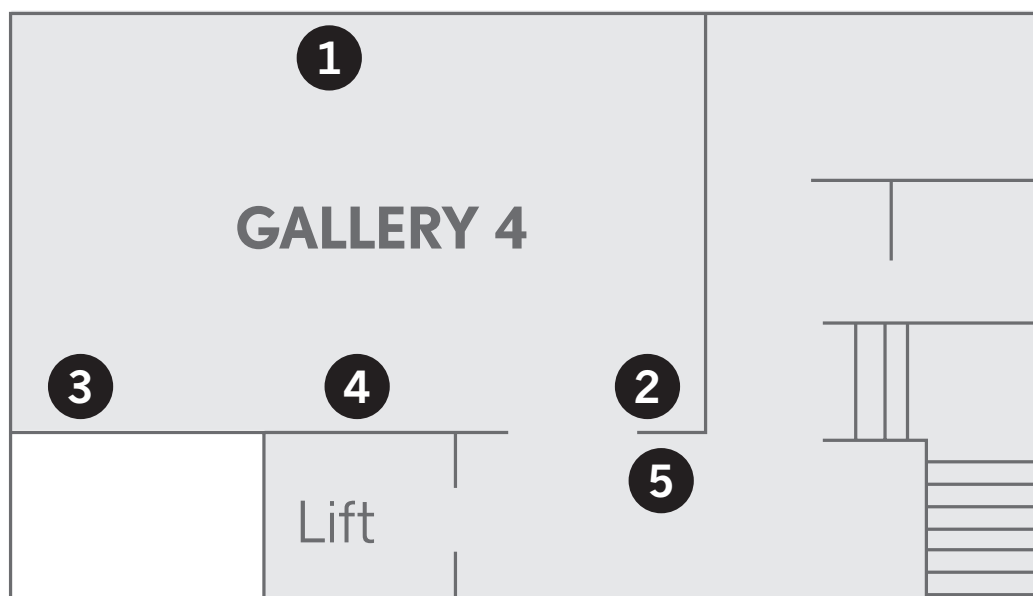
This photograph is the record of a performance that took place in north Peckham. The artist carries a door made from old shipping pallets which are used to transport objects around the world. The text on the door lists the street and building names of council-owned housing in Peckham. In the UK, council housing has specific conditions surrounding inheritance of property. It is more difficult to pass on to relatives than privately owned housing when a person dies. Akinola is interested in the distinction between housing and home. Here, he highlights the movement between physical places and cultural spaces that people who migrate have to navigate.

5. *Home – You must now make arrangements to leave, 2024* Wood

During his SLG residency, Akinola noticed the remains of an artwork by artist Klara Vith which was exhibited in the exhibition *New Contemporaries* at the SLG in 2019. The original text sticker read, 'You must now make arrangements to leave'. When the sticker was removed, the outline of the artwork was left behind. Part of Akinola's practice looks at the fabric of buildings and places them in context with his work.

Motunrayo Akinola will present a performance on Friday 31 May at the SLG. Visit the website for more details.

FLOORPLAN



EVENTS

Join the artist for a new participatory performance on 31 May. Visit the SLG website to find out more details.

ABOUT THE RESIDENCY

The South London Gallery Postgraduate Residency is an annual open submission six month residency opportunity, available to artists completing an MA, MFA, PGDip, MRes or equivalent programme of study (including alternative, peer organised and non-accredited programmes), from an institution, collective, or art school in the UK. The residency has been running since 2011. The Postgraduate Residency is supported by the Paul and Louise Cooke Endowment. The exhibition will tour to Bonington Gallery in January 2025.

ALSO ON AT THE SLG

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8 Mar - 9 Jun 2024
Main Gallery & Fire Station Galleries

Photography has long been associated with acts of resistance. It is used to document action, share ideas, inspire change, tell stories, gather evidence and fight against injustice.

SLG

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