



For Immediate Release:
Tikhonova Wintner Fine Art
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Olaniyi Rasheed Akindiya (AKIRASH)
OJU INU / INSIGHT
Mixed Media Tapestry Paintings 2015
Project Wall: Vumelani Sibeko
Recent Linocuts

Opening Reception Saturday February 13 4-7 PM

Gallery Hours: Saturday and Sunday 1-5 PM
(or by appointment)

Our new exhibit, OJU INU / INSIGHT, features the latest mixed media tapestry paintings by Nigerian artist Olaniyi Rasheed Akindiya (AKIRASH), accompanied by, on our Project Wall, recent linoleum prints by Vumelani Sibeko from South Africa. This exhibit marks the debut of our new focus on art and artists from the African continent. As a Harlem based gallery, we look forward to making an important new contribution to the cultural life of our community.



AKIRASH OPO / WIDOW 2015 Mixed Media Tapestry Painting 6 x 7 ft.

AKIRASH:

Oju Inu – insight or deep experience – is one of the central tenets of Yoruba philosophy. It describes the transformation of external experience into self-knowledge. In his tapestry paintings, ARIKASH's quest for deep meaning embraces traditional weaving re-imagined as mixed media paintings in three dimensions:

I wonder from where the experience, knowledge, and wisdom of the spider comes as it weaves its fascinating web; or that of a bird constructing its nest. I think the work of these creatures served as inspiration to our fathers and mothers in the invention of the cloth we wear today - spinning, twisting, and weaving cotton together; dying some into colors extracted from leaves, roots, and bark; sands and stones; animal dung and clay. Where and from whom did the idea of the loom come from? As time grows we forget how this was done in the past; how it was fascinating manual work, without all the machines of the 21st century now found in textile companies.

AKIRASH'S seemingly simple ambition finds its expression in a prolific exploration that weaves together paper, twine, and paint in a variety of intricate patterns and scale. Pieces range from just a few inches square to room size; from solid object mounted on the wall, to undulating landscape that creates architectural space. Craft and art are distilled into objects of both formal and exuberant beauty that invite a meditative gaze.

For this is not an art that exists solely on its surface. The large tapestries have at their heart the patient cutting of colored papers into small human figures that are then glued together into long strips and mounted and layered onto a delicate off-white substrate that peeks through the complex surface intersections. These, in turn, receive additional spider web-like layers of pure paint, followed by lightweight, paint-soaked twine. The richness of the final result belies the humble materials that were used in their creation: they are truly "painted tapestries," steeped in the artist's profound humanism and his search for *Oju Inu*.

In the smaller tapestry paintings, which are mounted on rigid stretchers, the small human figures have disappeared. Instead, their molded, painted, and webbed paper surfaces hide strange shapes that somehow recall small burrowing or hibernating animals; or, for those so inclined, shape-shifting spirits trapped against their will. It is unusual for static objects to be so alive.

Olaniyi Rasheed Akindiya, known as **Akirash**, is an interdisciplinary artist. Born in Lagos, Nigeria, he majored in biochemistry until he heard his calling for art. He began to study fine and applied art at the Institute of Textile Technology, Arts, and Design Oregun – Lagos State, Nigeria. He moved to the Republic of Benin after graduating in 1996 and, since settling down in Accra, Ghana, in 2001, he has traveled to many countries to feed his hunger for new ideas and techniques, taking part in seminars, biennials, workshops, and both solo and group exhibitions.

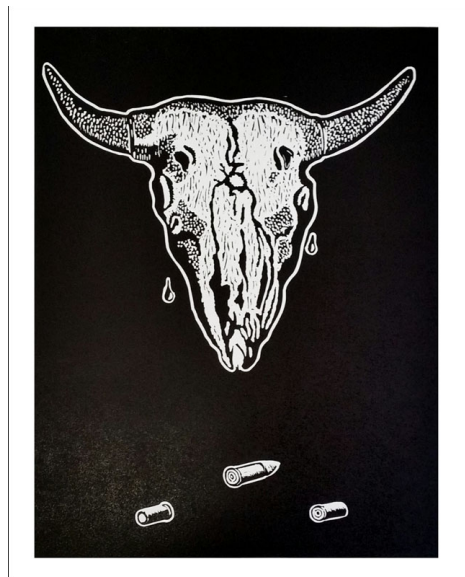
In 2000, he founded an art non-profit organization called ARTWITHAKIRASH and the intervention has contributed to the development of communities and allowed many women and children to get off the street. He allows the community to take control of his public art, believing the public will take care of the final result. His projects tend to incorporate performances to educate the community and share experiences. His project has had a chain effect – children have returned to school, women have taken up creative jobs to take control of their lives, and communities share the knowledge gained and live better lives.

Since 2011, Akirash has resided in Austin, Texas. [<http://www.artwithakirash.com>]

VUMELANI SIBEKO:

Vumelani Sibeko is a multi-disciplinary artist whose work includes drawing, painting, fabric collage, community-based art work, mural painting, bag design and print making. Originally from Johannesburg South Africa, his body of work speaks of social injustice and day-to-day life as he sees it on the streets.

His latest series of linocuts continue his commitment as a socially engaged artist who uses art as activism. Several of the prints in this series commemorate the notorious 2012 massacre of the Marikana Miners, when 34 striking miners were murdered by the South African police.



Tears of a Traitor 2015, Linocut 27 x 20 in.

Inspired by the first response of the South African police after the murders:
"Now it is not time to point fingers."

Born in Apartheid South Africa in the township of Soweto in 1975, Vumelani's childhood and family history was marked by racial tension. His father, who had escaped plantation labor, found refuge in Johannesburg, only to be forced to take on the last name Buthelezi by the government's Group Area Act, which was designed to restrict Black South Africans' freedom. In 2008, as an act of liberation, Vumelani took on his father's actual last name, Sibeko. These experiences have deeply impacted his work as a visual and performance artist. His work and activism analyzes and promotes awareness about issues including HIV/AIDS, child and domestic abuse, human trafficking, xenophobia and slavery. He is most known for his shocking public performances, paintings, and prints that provoke dialogue about subjects dear to his heart. Sibeko believes he has a duty to educate through his artwork, and considers himself a healer, who uses art to mend broken souls and fearful hearts.

He is a graduate of Vaal University of Technology where he gained deeper insight into racism and politics – as he says, "You were constantly reminded that you are Black." In 2005, Vumelani had his first exhibition with the Mofolo Arts Centre. He has since exhibited in numerous group and solo exhibitions in South Africa, Swaziland and New York. In 2012, he came to New York as an inbound

fellow with Apex Art. During his stay he was inspired by the city and determined to make his way back. In 2014, he returned with an ambitious solo project entitled "Get On The Bridge," which included creating a series of paintings in, and inspired by, various parks in NYC. These works garnered several exhibitions in New York alongside artists including Otto Neals, Dr. Izell Glove, James Hoston, Thabiso Phokompe, and others.

Recent exhibitions include "Power, Protest, and Resistance | The Art of Revolution", September 2015, Rush Philanthropic Arts Foundation and the Skylight Gallery at Restoration Brooklyn New York, "{re}Drawing the Lines: An Homage to Street Art", April 2015, Brooklyn, New York, "Studio Gangsters and Street Scenes", March 2015, Kalahari Gallery, Brooklyn New York, "Harlem Fine Arts Show", February 2014, New York, New York, "Where is the New Key?", November 2014 performance with Tikhonova & Wintner Fine Art Gallery, New York, New York, "SYMBOLS OF SPIRITS" (Celebrate Africa Month) October 2014, Borough Hall, Brooklyn, New York.

Thousands of passersby, and millions more online, have witnessed Vumelani Sibeko's painful performances where he channels ancestral spirits by walking the streets, nearly naked, hauling fifty-five pounds of iron ball, chains and shackles. The weight impedes his steps, and drags him, personifying the realities of slavery past and present. His apparent suffering and realism within this body of work has been compared to that of Marina Abramovic. Sibeko seeks to push audiences to revisit these atrocities by walking a few miles in the tracks of those who have been kidnapped, captured & held in physical, mental and emotional slavery for generations. The moving gallery of a slave in chains symbolizes the struggle of slavery's oppressive legacy. To date he has executed this performance in South Africa and New York. The next installation will find Sibeko accompanied by visual & performance artist Ernest Hood emerging from the shore of the Atlantic Ocean and reappearing through the door of no return at the notorious House of Slaves at Goree Island in Dakar, Senegal as well as IFAN Museum of African Art and le Monument de la Renaissance Africane.

<https://vimeo.com/141722682>

Tikhonova & Wintner Fine Art Gallery is delighted to welcome back Vumelani Sibeko and his compelling new series of prints.

http://colophon.com/tikhonovawintner/vumelani_sibeko/vumelani_sibeko.html
