



Romuald Hazoumè, *Romanella*, 2018.
Found objects. 50 x 45 x 15 cm. © R. Hazoumè.

Romuald Hazoumè: Carnaval

6th October – 26th November 2022

October Gallery is pleased to present Romuald Hazoumè's 5th solo exhibition in London, *Carnaval*, which opens on 6th October and will coincide with 1-54 Contemporary African Art Fair and Frieze London.

In this exhibition of new and much-anticipated work, Hazoumè returns to his signature *masques bidons* (*repurposed masks*), in which the artist keenly observes international concerns and the figures that populate the world's political stage. In this new series of 'masks' composed of miscellaneous found materials, Hazoumè's keen eye for detail coupled with his droll sense of humour percolate through to reinvigorate the form again, expanding its range to encompass new interpretive possibilities.

Hazoumè is careful to insist that the 'masks' he creates, 'in no way resemble those originally powerful African masks used for ceremonial purposes. Whereas such artefacts exist as mysterious power objects, each of my "masks" portrays a real-life individual or even a distinct personality type.' Indeed, some refer to specific African heads of state and the many politicians from that continent. Much of the enigmatic appeal of these masks is their ability both to conceal and yet reveal the hidden identity of their subjects.

The west African masquerade tradition exposes these pretentious public actors' affectations to the ridicule of spectators drawn from the ordinary citizens and common people. Herein lies the associative link to the shapeshifting, topsy-turvy world of masques and shadowy assignations associated with Carnaval — that time when the world turns upside down — and a subversive season of riotous excess is stage-managed by the Lord of Misrule. At such times, Truth speaks openly and directly to Power.

The discreetly titled masked portraits suggest how Hazoumè is not simply aiming to portray crooked continental politicians alone; the artist broadens the discourse to include 'the usual suspects' on the international stage who exemplify the wider system of global corruption. These masked actors have recently been 'outed' by the scandalous leaks of the Panama and Pandora Papers, which reveal the huge empires of tax-free, offshore wealth hidden

behind shell companies that are 'masks' constructed for the exclusive purpose of enriching the elites while further depriving the impoverished populace of their rightful share.

Hazoumè concludes: 'Taken altogether, my masks represent impromptu impressions of people I know of and have seen; some of them might even be people you may well recognise!'

About Romuald Hazoumè

Romuald Hazoumè (born 1962, Benin) has created one of the most iconic bodies of work in contemporary African art. Whether taking aim at endemic political corruption in Africa or addressing the global indifference compounding environmental disasters, Hazoumè creates visually striking works that leave little hiding room.

Hazoumè's work has been exhibited in major international galleries and museums across the globe including the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, UK; the Centre Pompidou and the Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris, France; and ICP, New York, USA. In 2018, Hazoumè was included in the KYOTOGRAPHIE international photography festival, Kyoto, Japan. Recent exhibitions including his works are *Ex-Africa*, Musée du Quai Branly, Paris, France, *Expression(s) décoloniale(s) #2*, Château des Duc de Bretagne, Musée d'Histoire de Nantes, Nantes, France and *Portable Sculpture*, Henry Moore Foundation, Leeds, UK.

His works are in prominent public and private collections around the world, including the permanent collections of the British Museum, London, UK; QAGOMA, Brisbane, Australia; National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., USA; MoMA, New York, USA; the Pigozzi Collection, Geneva, Switzerland; and the Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris, France.

For information contact Alana Pryce Tojcic and for press images click the dropbox below:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/zxkafvg7ettqamk/AACV3YVjB5tqoUGTXXOuLlm5a?dl=0>

Exhibition:	Romuald Hazoumè: <i>Carnaval</i>
Dates:	6 th October – 26 th November 2022
Private View:	Tuesday 11 th October, 2022, 6 – 8.30 pm
Venue:	October Gallery 24 Old Gloucester Street London WC1N 3AL
Telephone:	020 7242 7367
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Opening hours:	Tuesday – Saturday, 12.30 – 5.30 pm
Admission:	Free
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Buses:	19, 25, 38, 55, 168 and 188
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