

For immediate release



## **West African artists on show in *Out of Context* at the Horniman**

A new West African art exhibition at the Horniman Museum and Gardens takes its inspiration from the Benin 'bronzes', which were looted and displayed in Western museums such as the Horniman, and challenges perceptions of West African cultural practices.

**Out of Context** is curated by [Yellowzine](#) and features photographs, illustrations and AI-generated images by contemporary West African and diaspora artists Tamibé Bourdagné, Osaze Amadasun and HUMAN TAKES FLIGHT® by Oreoluwa Ayoade. The exhibition opens at the Horniman in South London on 6 December.

Photographer **Tamibé Bourdagné** focuses on Vodou traditions in the country of Benin. His images capture the humanity and beauty of Vodou followers and their traditions, presenting a deep and respectful insight into this often-misunderstood spiritual practice.

Lagos-based illustrator and designer **Osaze Amadasun** pays homage to the ancient kingdom of Benin in his series of works drawing on intricate designs from Benin Kingdom art, particularly the endless knot. His Bini Playing Cards, featuring key figures and iconography from Benin's classical art, offer a unique and playful way to engage with cultural history for his local audiences in Nigeria where access to the Benin 'bronzes' is limited.

**HUMAN TAKES FLIGHT® by Oreoluwa Ayoade** undertakes a creative AI exploration, reflecting on how the 'artification' of cultural objects diminishes their true meaning. Typical museum descriptions of eight objects from the Benin Kingdom, Cameroon, Nigeria, Ghana and Togo are used as text-to-image prompts, which then progressively depart from reality to experiment with alternate materials and forms. The result is a series of intriguing images including ice-sculpture heads and translucent glass masks.

**Out of Context** was conceived as a complementary exhibition to the Horniman's new The Great Kingdom of Benin display in the World Gallery. Benin 'bronze' plaques – returned to Nigerian ownership in 2022 and now on loan to the Horniman – appear in the display

alongside contemporary and community-produced artworks, telling a fuller story of the Great Kingdom of Benin and Benin City today.

Aisha Ayoade from *Yellowzine*, says: ' "Who are you to decide what is art?" This question lies at the heart of **Out of Context**, a response to the way cultural items – like the Benin Bronzes – are often perceived in the Western world. By framing these objects solely as “art”, Western institutions strip them of the rich cultural contexts they were created to inhabit. Through various mediums, the artists in this exhibition challenge the concept of context, shining a light on its importance and its role in how we engage with cultural traditions and objects.'

Contemporary West African artists are also represented in The Great Kingdom of Benin display, including:

- Osaru Obaseki's bronze sculpture Ame / Oyevbamen 'Like Water', made using the traditional lost wax technique
- 12th the Creator, who worked with Benin City schoolchildren to create a bespoke wallpaper backdrop to the display.

**Out of Context is free to visit and will be on display at the Horniman Museum and Gardens until the end of November 2025.**

**Ends**

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**Pictured:**

- Bini Playing Card, digital art 2019, © Osaze Amadasun, from Out of Context at the Horniman Museum and Gardens.
- Ice sculpture depicting a head, wearing an ornamental crown, © HUMAN TAKES FLIGHT® by Oreoluwa Ayoade, from Out of Context at the Horniman Museum and Gardens.
- Image from A Spirited Journey by Tamibé Bourdagné, © Tamibé Bourdagné, from Out of Context at the Horniman Museum and Gardens.

**Notes to Editors:**

- The Great Kingdom of Benin was centred around Benin City, in modern day Nigeria. The country of Benin, officially the Republic of Benin, borders Nigeria and was formerly known as Dahomey.
- [Yellowzine](#) is a platform and print publication that celebrates and amplifies the work of Black, Asian, and ethnic minority artists. Founded in 2017 by siblings Aisha and Oreoluwa Ayoade, Yellowzine began as a magazine aimed at addressing the underrepresentation of minority creatives in the art world. Yellowzine has become a vital space for challenging industry norms and highlighting the cultural contributions of ethnic minority artists.
- **HUMAN TAKES FLIGHT®** is a channel created by Oreoluwa Ayoade for open design exploration, using AI.
- **The Horniman Museum and Gardens** opened in 1901 as a gift to the people in perpetuity from tea trader and philanthropist Frederick John Horniman, to 'bring the world to Forest Hill'. Today the Horniman has a collection of 350,000 objects, specimens and artefacts from around the

world. Its galleries include a World Gallery of anthropology, music, an acclaimed aquarium, The Studio – a flexible arts and exhibition space, and a natural history gallery (closed until 2026 for redevelopment as part of [Nature + Love](#)). Indoor exhibits link to the award-winning display gardens – from medicinal and dye gardens to an interactive sound garden, Butterfly House and an animal walk – set among 16 acres of beautiful, green space offering spectacular views across London. [horniman.ac.uk](http://horniman.ac.uk)

- The Natural History Gallery closed for redevelopment from Monday 4 March 2024 as part of our [Nature + Love](#) project. The gallery will reopen in 2026.
- **The Horniman Museum and Gardens** was [Art Fund Museum of the Year 2022](#), the world's largest museum prize.
- The **Horniman Museum and Gardens** relies on income from ticket sales, memberships, the shop and the Café to help care for the Gardens, animals and Aquarium residents, to run events and to look after the collections. The support of our visitors and donors is hugely appreciated. [horniman.ac.uk/support-us](http://horniman.ac.uk/support-us)
- The **Horniman Museum and Gardens** is core-funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and since 1990 has been governed by an independent charitable trust, registered charity no. 802725.
- On 29 July 2019 the **Horniman Museum and Gardens declared an ecological and climate emergency**, pledging to place carbon reduction and environmental issues at the heart of its work. The declaration – and the subsequent **Climate and Ecological Manifesto**, published in January 2020 – is a consolidation of existing work and a commitment to renewed ambitions to reduce the Horniman's environmental and pollution footprint, increase biodiversity, and inspire others to do so. Find out more about the Horniman's manifesto commitments and progress so far at [horniman.ac.uk/climate](http://horniman.ac.uk/climate).