

Gallery 1957

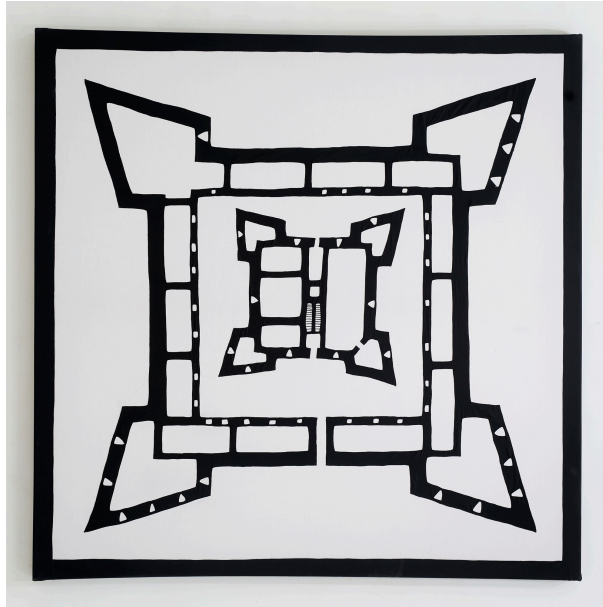
PRESS RELEASE - SAVE THE DATE

Langlands & Bell

The Past is Never Dead...

20 May – 2 July 2021

Opening 20 May, Cultural Programme 17-20 June 2021



Langlands & Bell, *English Fort, Komenda*, Cotton appliqué, 2021; Courtesy the artists and Gallery 1957

Opening on 20 May 2021, Gallery 1957, Accra presents a solo exhibition by artist duo Langlands & Bell. Titled, “The Past is Never Dead...” the exhibition explores the architecture of the ‘Slave Forts’ built on the coast of Ghana by European traders following the construction of Elmina Castle by the Portuguese in 1482.

Ben Langlands & Nikki Bell have conducted extensive research into Ghana’s historic European-built coastal architecture. Created as fortified trading posts, these structures quickly became ‘slave dungeons’, holding thousands of captives in appalling conditions before they were sold, and shipped in chains to the Americas for a life of bondage and servitude. Today the forts bear witness to a shared history linking West Africa, the Americas, and Europe, a history the artists describe as largely forgotten or ignored, subject to a “kind of wilful amnesia,” especially in Europe. Through site-exploration across Ghana, and further research at the Furley Collection, Balme Library, University of Legon, Accra, the Dutch National Archives, in The Hague, and The National Archives in London, their work for this exhibition reflects the artists’ continuing interest in the role strategic architecture plays in shaping all of our lives.

Working in a range of mediums and in collaboration with local artisans, Langlands & Bell will present a series of video, sculpture and appliqué works, some featuring the ground plans of the historic forts which bear similarity with Adinkra symbols - a traditional Akan visual language used extensively in Ghanaian fabrics and pottery. Restructuring the gallery space itself, the installation confronts the visitor to the exhibition with the ‘Door of No Return’ modelled on the door at Elmina Castle which marked the final departure point of enslaved people from Ghana.

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“These forbidding structures, of which more than 50 were built in Ghana and up to 20 remain, are concrete evidence of the relationships that existed between West Africa, Europe and the Americas over a period of almost four centuries. They are an important part of global history because they’re evidence of a global network of trade and economic and political relationships that evolved over centuries, and in many senses is still with us because it underlies so much of today’s world. They speak volumes; whether one is Ghanaian, European or American the forts have the power to connect each of us with our own past, our own history.”

The exhibition is curated by Jonathan Watkins, director of Ikon, Birmingham.



Castle of St George, Elmina, Ghana – The oldest European structure in sub-Saharan Africa.

Accompanying Cultural Programme

The weekend of the 17-20 June includes a cultural programme with visits to Cape Coast and Elmina castles on the coast of Ghana, an international talks programme and a VIP dinner. Preferential rates are available at the *Kempinski Hotel Gold Coast City* for international guests to the exhibition.

About Langlands & Bell

Ben Langlands and Nikki Bell are based in London and have been collaborating since 1978. Their art ranges from film and video to interactive digital media, sculpture, installation and full-scale architecture using a conceptual and aesthetic framework to explore the structures we inhabit and the networks of communication and exchange that surround us.

Langlands & Bell have shown widely internationally throughout their career including, Serpentine Gallery, Whitechapel Gallery, British Museum, Tate Britain, Tate Modern and V&A in London; Ikon, Birmingham; Kunsthalle Bielefeld, Haus Der Kunst, Hamburger Bahnhof, Germany; MoMA, New York, Yale Center for British Art, USA; Venice Biennale, Seoul Biennale, and CCA Kitakyushu and TN Probe, Tokyo, Japan.

In 2002 Langlands & Bell were commissioned by the Imperial War Museum, London, to visit Afghanistan to research “The Aftermath of September 11 and the War in Afghanistan”. They were nominated for the Turner Prize and won a BAFTA for “The House of Osama bin Laden” the trilogy of artworks they made after their return to London.

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Major permanent art works in the public realm by Langlands & Bell include *Moving World (Night & Day)*, 2008, London Heathrow Terminal 5; *Call & Response*, 2012, Porte de Vincennes, Paris, and *Beauty < Immortality*, 2016, Piccadilly Circus Underground station, London.

About Gallery 1957

Based in Accra, with a London outpost opened in 2020, Gallery 1957 has a curatorial focus on West Africa. Presenting a programme of exhibitions, installations and performances by the region's most significant artists, the gallery serves as a vital platform, promoting West Africa's presence within the art scene by hosting ambitious exhibitions, providing resources for residencies and participating in international art fairs. Founded by Marwan Zakhem in 2016, Gallery 1957 has evolved from over 15 years of private collecting. The gallery now hosts two spaces in Accra – one in the Kempinski Hotel and another in Galleria Mall – and a London outpost in Hyde Park Gate.

Ghana is not on the Red-list of countries and has a good record on public health and the pandemic. Accra is 6 hours direct from London with 1 hour time difference. For further details on the itinerary, travel and health requirements, please contact: info@gallery1957.com

NB: Visa, Yellow Fever vaccination and Covid PCR tests are required on arrival to Ghana

www.gallery1957.com

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Exhibition: Langlands & Bell: *The Past is Never Dead...*

Dates: 20 May – 2 July 2021

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