

**Exhibition:** *The Invisible Man and the Masque of Blackness*

**On View:** July 27–November 3, 2019

**Location:** B. Gerald Cantor Sculpture Garden



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The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) presents *The Invisible Man and the Masque of Blackness*, marking the artist Zak Ové's first solo exhibition in Los Angeles. Ové (b. 1966) is a British visual artist of Trinidadian descent who works in sculpture, film, and photography. His 40-piece sculptural installation *The Invisible Man and the Masque of Blackness* features a group of identical, 6 1/2-foot-tall reproductions of an African figure that the artist received as a gift from his father in his early childhood. Ové's figures, fabricated from resin and graphite, hold their hands up at shoulder level in an act of quiet strength and resilience, and are spaced evenly in rows to ironically recall the formation of either a group soldiers or political dissidents.

The exhibition title references two milestones in black history: Ben Jonson's 1605 play *The Masque of Blackness*, the first stage production to utilize blackface makeup, and Ralph Ellison's 1952 novel *Invisible Man*, the first novel by an African American to win the National Book Award. In addition to literary references, the artist draws inspiration from Caribbean Carnival, a festival that originated in the Mardi Gras celebrations of the region's French colonists, and Canboulay, a parallel celebration in which enslaved people expressed themselves through music and costume and paid homage to their African traditions. Overall, the sculpture encapsulates the complex history of racial objectification and the evolution of black subjectivity.

LACMA's presentation will be the first time *The Invisible Man and the Masque of Blackness* is installed at an encyclopedic institution. On view in the museum's B. Gerald Cantor Sculpture Garden, Ové's figures will be brought together in conversation with 12 works by the French sculptor Auguste Rodin (1840–1917),

which have been on display in the garden since 2009. The exhibition joins *Mineo Mizuno: Harmony*, on view August 10–November 11, 2019, on the Resnick East Lawn, and other permanent outdoor installations including Chris Burden's *Urban Light* (2008), Robert Irwin's *Primal Palm Garden* (2008), and Michael Heizer's *Levitated Mass* (2012) in extending the museum's gallery space beyond its walls, enriching the visitor's experience.

*The Invisible Man and the Masque of Blackness* is curated by Jennifer Cernada, Curatorial Assistant, Contemporary Art at LACMA. Prior to the presentation at LACMA, the work was on view at Civic Center Plaza in San Francisco (June–November 2018).

### **About Zak Ové**

Zak Ové graduated with a BA in Film and Fine Art from the St. Martin's School of Art, London in 1987. He has participated in numerous solo exhibitions including *Star Liner*, Lawrie and Shabibi, Dubai, 2018; *Black and Blue: The Invisible Men and the Masque of Darkness*, 1:54 Contemporary African Art Fair, Somerset House (Courtyard), London, 2016; *Arms Around The Child*, No.1 Mayfair London, 2014; *Speaker*, Vigo Gallery, London, 2013–14; *Past Future*, Fine Art Society, London, 2010; and *Black & White Nudes*, Carte Blanche Gallery, London, 2008.

In 2014 Ové became the first Caribbean artist to be commissioned by the British Museum, with his pair of seven-meter-high Moko Jumbie sculptures exhibited in the Great Court as part of the *Celebrating Africa* exhibition and now permanently installed in the museum's Africa gallery.

Ové has participated in other museum and institutional shows including *Reclamation! Pan-African Works from the Beth Rudin DeWoody Collection*, Tubman Museum of Art, Virginia, 2018; *Black and Blue: The Invisible Men and the Masque of Darkness*, Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Wakefield, 2017; *Twice Is Too Much*, The Freies Museum, Berlin, 2010; and *Blue Devils*, Real Art Ways Museum, Connecticut, 2009.

Ové's works are in several collections including British Museum, London, UK; Newark Museum, New Jersey; Pérez Art Museum Miami, Florida; Modern Forms, London, UK; David Roberts Art Foundation, London, UK; Jameel Collection, Saudi Arabia; Facebook Corporate Collection, London, UK; 21 C Museum, Louisville, Kentucky; Beth De Woody Collection, New York; Walid Kamhawi Collection, Dubai, UAE;

Frédéric de Goldschmidt, Brussels, Belgium; Levett Collection, London, UK; and the Pizzuti Collection, Columbus, Ohio.

The artist currently lives and works in London, United Kingdom, and Trinidad, Trinidad and Tobago.

### Related Programming

Artist Talk & Music Performance: *The Invisible Man and the Masque of Blackness*

Sunday, July 28, 2019 | 4–6 pm

B. Gerald Cantor Sculpture Garden at LACMA | Free and open to the public

In conjunction with the opening weekend of the exhibition, join us for an afternoon of art, music, and discussion with Zak Ové. A performance by Trinidad Steel Drum Band begins at 4 pm, followed by a conversation with Ové at 5 pm.

**Credit:** This exhibition is organized by the San Francisco Arts Commission, with the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

All exhibitions at LACMA are underwritten by the LACMA Exhibition Fund. Major annual support is provided by Mr. and Mrs. Anthony and Lee Shaw, Kitzia and Richard Goodman, Jerry and Kathleen Grundhofer, Meredith and David Kaplan, and Jeffrey Saikohn, with generous annual funding from the Judy and Bernard Briskin Family Foundation, Louise and Brad Edgerton, Edgerton Foundation, Emily and Teddy Greenspan, Marilyn B. and Calvin B. Gross, Mary and Daniel James, David Lloyd and Kimberly Steward, Kelsey Lee Offield, David Schwartz Foundation, Inc., Andy Song, Lenore and Richard Wayne, and The Kenneth T. and Eileen L. Norris Foundation.

### About LACMA

Located on the Pacific Rim, LACMA is the largest art museum in the western United States, with a collection of nearly 140,000 objects that illuminate 6,000 years of artistic expression across the globe. Committed to showcasing a multitude of art histories, LACMA exhibits and interprets works of art from new and unexpected points of view that are informed by the region's rich cultural heritage and diverse population. LACMA's spirit of experimentation is reflected in its work with artists, technologists, and thought leaders as well as in its regional, national, and global partnerships to share collections and programs, create pioneering initiatives, and engage new audiences.

**Location:** 5905 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA, 90036. [lacma.org](http://lacma.org)

**Images caption:** Zak Ové, *The Invisible Man and the Masque of Blackness*, 2016, installation view, Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Yorkshire, UK, 2016–17, © Zak Ové, courtesy Modern Forms, Vigo gallery, the artist and YSP, photo © Jonty Wilde

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