PAN
AMSTERDAM

GALLERY ILÉ



Women Of Power

Acrylic On Hand Carved And Assembled Timber Statuettes and Stainless Steel
238 x 195 x 23 cm
Year: 2026
Cotonou, Benin, West Africa

This work of art is unique, authentic and certified.

With his large-scale wall sculptures, the seminal artist Dominique Zinkpè creates expansive forms, which are assembled from hundreds of carefully hand carved Ibeji figurines, materialising the dualism and inter-connection between the self and society. Describing his artistic practice as a form of priesthood, Zinkpè seeks to preserve and animate the Vodun spiritual beliefs at the heart of traditional Yorúbà culture.

According to Orisha belief, the Ibéjì deity carries the powers of fertility and prosperity, which is embodied in the human form of twins. In the spiritual pantheon of Benin, twins are considered special beings whose birth portends great blessings. They are believed to share the same soul, or to be more exact, 'two persons that rhyme with each other, 'two persons that are the same'. When one dies, a figurine is carved to house the deceased twin's spirit, to

memorialise and venerate them through various rituals and ceremonies.

Zinkpè's fascination with Ibeji sculptures stems from the fact that each individually sculpted statuette "celebrate the unique essence of human beings and their distinct DNA".

His assemblage works pivot on the interrelation between the singular and the collective through the repetitive use of form. Working with master carvers from different regions of Benin to create the statuettes, he optains distinctive styles that reflected subtle shifts in scale, stance, facial details and head adornments. Gathered together in row upon row, the tiny figures begin to meld into one another, their facets and interstices creating a mesmerising, cohesive rhythm. Their magnetism derives from their multiplicity, a visual metaphor for the power inherent in communal action.