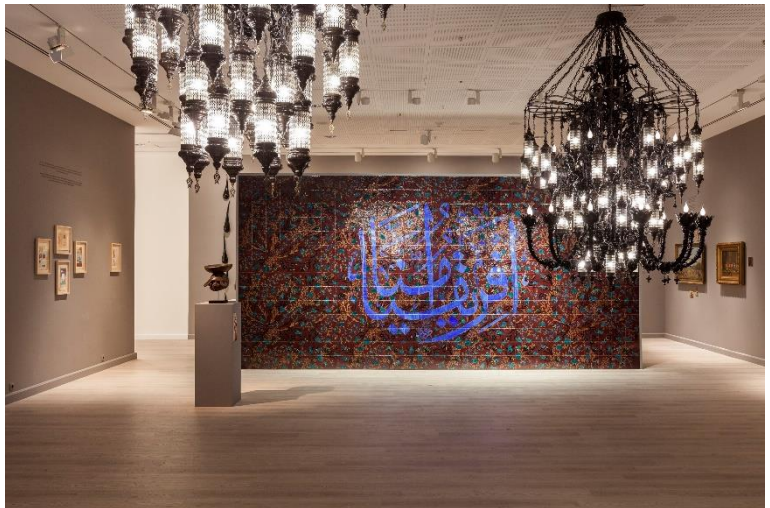


Fred Wilson *Afro Kismet*

6 Burlington Gardens, London W1S 3ET
23 March – 27 April 2018
Private View: Thursday 22 March, 6–8 p.m.

510 West 25th Street, New York
10 July – 17 August 2018
Private View: Tuesday 10 July, 6 – 8 p.m.

London—Pace Gallery is pleased to present *Fred Wilson: Afro Kismet*, an exhibition featuring the artist's most recent body of work originally produced for the 15th Istanbul Biennial in the autumn of 2017. The exhibition will be Wilson's first at Pace London. On the occasion of *Afro Kismet*, Pace will publish a catalogue that will include an introduction by artist duo and Istanbul Biennial curators Elmgreen & Dragset, an essay by the Biennial's Director Bige Örer, and an interview with the artist conducted by American novelist, playwright and essayist Darryl Pinckney.



The genesis of the exhibition stretches back to 1992 when Wilson presented *Re:Claiming Egypt*, at the 4th International Cairo Biennale and to 2003 when Wilson represented the United States at the 50th Venice Biennale with *Speak of Me as I Am*. Wilson's interest in Istanbul had been piqued for a long time; he conceived of the city as the third leg in a historically and culturally connected eastern Mediterranean triangle which also included Cairo and Venice. Through his research, Wilson developed a conceptual basis for the Istanbul project in which he contextualized pieces from the city's Pera Museum's Orientalist collection with new and existing works of his own. "My work is about an issue which is both personal and universal. [...] A new meaning emerges from the coming together of art and history [...] bring[ing] a fresh perspective to things we are used to seeing in museums. You can say that I tell a history which is not adequately discussed..." Fred Wilson, 2017.

For Pace, Wilson will reconfigure *Afro Kismet* which includes two chandeliers, two monumental Iznik tile walls, four black glass drip works, and a globe sculpture, as well as installations and vitrine pieces that gather cowrie shells, engravings, photographs, a Yoruba mask, and furniture, among other objects that the artist discovered in his frequent trips to Istanbul throughout 2016 and 2017. Since Venice Biennale in 2003, Wilson's Murano glass chandeliers, with their shifts in scale, color, and complexity, have become vehicles for the artist's meditations on blackness, death, and beauty. New chandeliers, included in the exhibition, combine black Murano glass with traditional metal and glass elements of Ottoman chandeliers, thus fusing two histories of craftsmanship and symbolizing the complex relationship between the Venetian and Ottoman Empires.

Throughout the exhibition, Wilson utilizes alluring materials—from richly coloured tiles walls to luminescent glass—to represent and investigate the long-ignored presence of communities of African descent in Turkey. In the two Iznik tile walls, the Arabic calligraphy translates in one case to “Mother Africa” and in the other “Black is Beautiful”. The new globe sculpture titled “*Trade Winds*” refers not to its original meaning, related to weather patterns, but to the complex and tragic global trade in human beings. The juxtaposition of recent works by Wilson with works from the 19th century – including Orientalist paintings with African subject matter by Alfred De Dreux and William James Müller – not only questions notions of universal knowledge and truth, but also sheds light on a history not thoroughly examined. By combining contemporary objects and museum-quality artefacts, Wilson challenges the assumptions of exhibition methodology and art historical scholarship.

Afro Kismet will be on view at Pace Gallery in London, from 23 March – 27 April 2018, with an opening reception on 22 March from 6 – 8 pm. The exhibition will be on view at 510 West 25 Street from 10 July – 17 August 2018, with an opening reception on 10 July from 6 – 8 pm.

Fred Wilson (b. 1954, Bronx, New York) challenges assumptions of history, culture, race, and conventions of display with his work. By reframing objects and cultural symbols, he alters traditional interpretations, encouraging viewers to reconsider social and historical narratives.

Since his groundbreaking and historically significant exhibition *Mining the Museum* (1992) at the Maryland Historical Society, Wilson has been the subject of many solo exhibitions, including the retrospective *Objects and Installations 1979-2000*, which was organized by the Center for Art and Visual Culture at the University of Maryland, Baltimore, and traveled to Saratoga Springs, Berkeley, Houston, Andover, Santa Monica, and Chicago before closing at the Studio Museum in Harlem. Other solo presentations include *So Much Trouble in the World—Believe It or Not!* at the Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College (2005); *Works 2001–2011* at the Cleveland Museum of Art (2012); *Local Color* at The Studio Museum in Harlem (2013); *Black to the Powers of Ten and Wildfire Test Pit* at the Allen Memorial Art Museum at Oberlin College (2016–2017); and *Fred Wilson* at the Neuberger Museum of Art, Purchase College, New York (2017). Selections from Wilson’s African and African Diaspora flag painting series will be on view at the Contemporary Art Museum at the University of Massachusetts Amherst through April 29, 2018. 28 works from Wilson’s flag series were acquired by the Tate collection in 2011.

Fred Wilson’s work has previously appeared in London at the Photographer’s Gallery and British Museum in *Collected* (1997); at the British Museum in *The American Dream: Pop to the Present* (2017); at Karsten Schubert in *Fred Wilson: Works 1993–2011* (2011); and at the Victoria and Albert Museum in *Uncomfortable Truths: The Shadow of Slave Trading on Contemporary Art and Design*, which traveled to: the Salford Museum and Art Gallery, June 30–September 2, 2007 and the Ferens Art Gallery, Hull, September 15, 2007–January 6, 2008.

In 2003, Wilson represented the United States at the 50th Venice Biennale with the solo exhibition *Speak of Me as I Am*. His many accolades include the prestigious John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation’s “Genius” Grant (1999); the Skowhegan Medal for Sculpture (2006); the Alain Locke Award from The Friends of African and African American Art at the Detroit Institute of Arts (2013); a Lifetime Achievement Award, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (2017); and an Art of Change fellowship from the Ford Foundation (2017). He was honored by The Black Alumni of Pratt Institute during their 2017 Celebration of the Creative Spirit.

Fred Wilson lives and works in New York City. He has been represented by Pace Gallery since 2004.

Image: Installation view of Fred Wilson’s work for the 15th Istanbul Biennale © Fred Wilson, courtesy Pace Gallery

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