

The Wealth of Nations, written by the 18th century philosopher and economist Adam Smith, is regarded as the theoretical framework for modern economics. Smith proposed the concept of 'rational self-interest' and competition as a self-regulating check against the potential evils of unethical business practices.

His concept of 'the invisible hand' was a reference to what he believed was an intrinsic characteristic of human nature, to recognize that one's own self-interest is bound to that of others and as such, one's choices would be regulated by that dimension of human personality.

This aspirational promise was undermined by the reality of the trans-Atlantic slave trade which placed money and power above the humanity of those trapped within the web of the diabolical enterprise. The enduring tension between Smith's utopian vision of the free-market enterprise and the practice of human bondage forms the conceptual basis for this work.

Text by *Masud Olufani* – partnered with *Ursula Christel* for the Take Care / E Tiaki project, Auckland, 2021

**'The Wealth of the Nation', 2021, a collaborative project
by Masud Olufani (USA) and Ursula Christel (NZ)**

**Repurposed metal birdcage and brass bell; framed digital
print of a drawing by Masud; framed digital print by Ursula;
NZ native timber, cut/burned/wrapped copy of Adam
Smith's 'The Wealth of Nations' (first published in 1776);
twine, shellac**

Installation dimensions variable

Accompanying text by Masud Olufani

**Project video by Ursula Christel, featuring Masud and
Ursula**

***This installation project is a cross-cultural reinterpretation
of 'The Wealth of the Nation (2019)', by Masud Olufani; re-
framed in New Zealand by Ursula Christel, in consultation
with Masud. Themes of colonialism, racism and
exploitation are also relevant in NZ - a country that is only
now introducing a bi-cultural History curriculum to be
taught in schools from 2022.***