

HYPERALLERGIC

October 26, 2025

Palais de Tokyo Says Martinique Flag Artwork Could Be “Illegal”

By Isa Farfan

Cameron Rowland’s work, which involved replacing the French flag with the Caribbean island’s, was briefly on view on the Paris museum’s facade.



The Palais de Tokyo in Paris (photo by Francisco Anzola via Flickr, CC BY 2.0)

A work by American artist Cameron Rowland was taken down from the facade of the Palais de Tokyo in Paris after the museum said the piece, which involves replacing the French flag with the flag of Martinique, “could be considered illegal” under French law, *Hyperallergic* confirmed.

The contemporary art museum determined that “Replacement” (2025), which comments on the colonization of Martinique, an “overseas region” of France in the Caribbean, could violate laws governing the public display of flags. Rowland’s work was part of the exhibition *ECHO DELAY REVERB: American Art, Francophone Thought*, which opened at the Palais de Tokyo on Wednesday, October 22.

A spokesperson for Palais de Tokyo told *Hyperallergic* that the museum had planned to include the work in the exhibition since the spring, but on September 18, they received a memorandum from the office of the French Secretary General of the Ministry of the Interior related to the public display of flags.

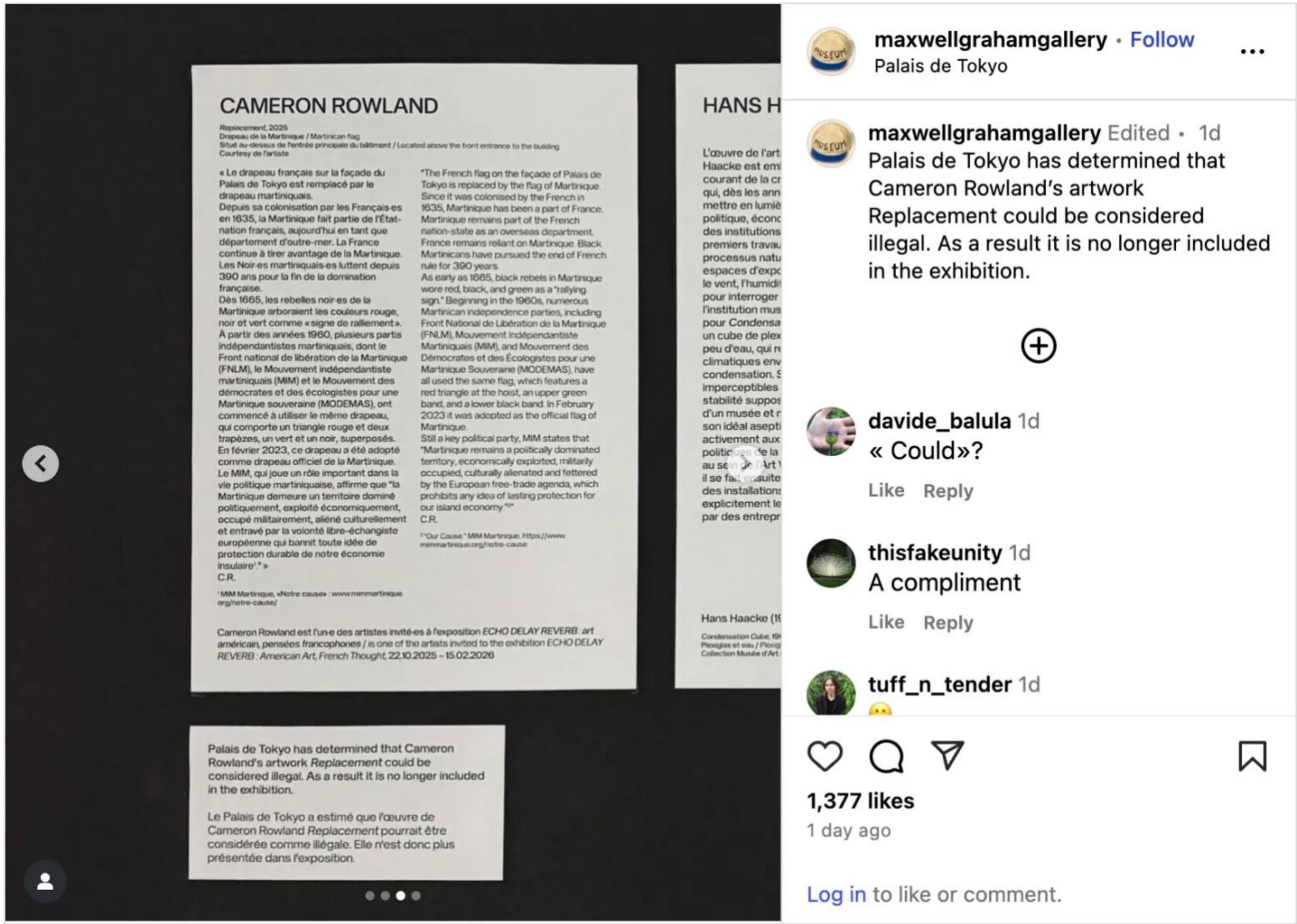
The memo reiterated the “principle of neutrality” of the Conseil d’État, France’s highest administrative court, which prohibits the display on public buildings of “symbols representing the advocacy of political, religious, or philosophical opinions.”

The notification came as the French government cracked down on the displays of Palestinian flags that had been flown at town halls in response to President Emmanuel Macron’s recognition of Palestinian statehood.

After consulting with Rowland and their gallery, Palais de Tokyo allowed the flag to hang during the exhibition’s opening day only,

and moved its accompanying text inside the museum afterward with a note that the flag had been excluded due to potential violations of French law.

“Following this note and in consideration of the principle of public service neutrality, the Palais de Tokyo sought several legal opinions regarding the presentation of the artwork,” the spokesperson said. “These opinions indicated that the artist’s original display would contravene the principle of neutrality in public service.”



A post from Maxwell Graham Gallery included photos of the updated museum labels. (screenshot *Hyperallergic* via Instagram)

Rowland’s New York-based gallery, Maxwell Graham, first announced the decision to exclude the piece on Instagram, posting images of updated labels inside the museum. The gallery has not yet responded to *Hyperallergic*’s inquiries.

Martinique, located southeast of Puerto Rico, has been a territory of France since it was colonized in 1635. It was the birthplace of Frantz Fanon, the widely influential psychiatrist and anti-colonial theorist. In 2024, France sent an anti-riot police force accused of excessive force to the island to quell protests against racial and social inequalities.

Rowland’s text recognizes the original colonization of the island and ongoing political movements. A plaque accompanying “*Remplacement*” alludes to ongoing liberation struggles in Martinique.

“Black Martinicans have pursued the end of French rule for 390 years,” the text reads. “As early as 1665, black rebels in Martinique wore red, black, and green as a ‘rallying sign.’”

Rowland received the MacArthur “Genius” award in 2019, a no-strings-attached \$800,000 grant given to artists based on creative merit.