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Press Release
Exhibition

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SERGE
ATTUKWEI
CLOTTEY
03.07—01.12.24
BEYOND
THE SKIN



Curator: Imma Prieto

Museu Tàpies

Serge Attukwei Clottey. *Beyond the Skin*
3rd July – 1st December 2024
Museu Tàpies, Barcelona

Curator: Imma Prieto

The Museu Tàpies presents the project *Beyond the Skin*, by Ghanaian artist Serge Attukwei Clottey, a reflection on the environmental crisis, migrations and the global economic system.

Through his installations, sculptures and actions, Clottey invites us to reflect collectively and transversally about the environment and the global economy, marked by inequalities and contradictions, and the migrations that result from these.

The artist's first project in Spain features an installation that will cover the front of the museum until December, as well as a public programme involving dialogue and collaboration with different communities living in Barcelona.

Beyond the Skin, a project curated by Imma Prieto, includes a range of actions and exhibits, starting with the major installation on the front of the Museu Tàpies, entitled *Afterlife Voyage*. It begins on Tuesday 2nd July at 6.30 pm with a public procession set up by the artist and entitled *Silent Steps, Dance, Memories Sound*, which will go round the centre of Barcelona to the Teatre Nacional de Catalunya with the collaboration of Periferia Cimarronas and *enaidea* Fundació Eina's research and cultural programming platform.

The Coal Men is an action to be run by Clottey at the venue Periferia Cimarronas as part of the Grec festival. After the summer, the project will continue with a season of films devoted to the work of Sarah Maldoror and the international seminar *Architectures of the Skin, from the Body to the Street*.

Beyond the Skin has forged a system of alliances with different institutions and bodies in the city, including the Teatre Nacional de Catalunya, the Grec festival, the Periferia Cimarronas venue, *enaidea* Fundació Eina's research and cultural programming platform, the Filmoteca de Catalunya and the Institut Français de Barcelone, among others.

Barcelona, 1st July 2024.

The project *Beyond the Skin* springs from the work of Serge Attukwei Clottey (b. Ghana, 1985) on what the artist calls *afrogallonism*, a concept that confronts global material culture by cutting, drilling, stitching and melting found materials. The mass of yellow plastic gallon containers in Africa, not necessarily manufactured there, makes visible not only its geopolitical history but also its neocolonial present. In Clottey's work, re-using parts of these containers serves as a system of redistribution and as a vehicle for reflection on the economic and migratory realities of Africa. This idea sets out from the possibility of re-using these materials as the starting point for an ecosystem in which they preserve a memory while at the same time rewriting or re-weaving it.

The artist explains that every gallon container has a complex origin story. These *Kufuor gallons* take their name from ex-president of Ghana John Agyekum Kufuor. They became symbolically infamous when the country was suffering from serious shortages in the years following 2000. Originally used as cooking oil containers and then re-used to store water or fuel, they represent a conscious effort to turn plastic waste into art.

With these yellow containers Clottey creates tapestries showing his concern for the culture and identity of the city of his birth, Accra, capital of Ghana, where he found the raw material for his work. The artist works through installation, performance, photography, painting and sculpture to explore personal and political narratives rooted in the histories of trade and migration.

The Museu Tàpies has invited Clotey to cover the front of its Art Nouveau building (designed by Lluís Domènech i Montaner) with a second skin, made up of pieces of waste material. The result covers 123 m² of the front of the museum, while leaving some of its architectural features visible in order to dialogue with them. As the artist puts it, the installation explores the rich tapestry of his family heritage, going back to his ancestors' migration from Jamestown to Labadi, making this work a proclamation both personal and political. This work, imbued with a combination of the complex impacts and influences of globalisation, as well as personal family narratives and universal experiences of migration, settlement and displacement, all intricately interwoven, also aims to connect with local criticism of the system. The work travels the world to capture the public's attention, boosting its resonance and its impact.

The materials used to cover the front of the museum are part of the original installation presented for the first time by the artist in Ghana, and used for his installation at the Venice Biennale of Architecture in 2023. After being cleaned, these pieces have taken on a new form for the front of the museum in an intensive three-week workshop shared by the artist and his team with participants from *einaidea* Fundació Eina's research and cultural programming platform and people linked to the Afro-descended community of Periferia Cimarronas. All of them worked together to construct the piece, a modular recycled plastic object conceived especially for the Museu Tàpies.

Beyond the Skin is a reflection on ecologism, the environment and the migrations imposed by the global economic system, marked by inequalities and contradictions. It includes an open, educational public programme run with various communities living in Barcelona and in a range of venues, making it possible to generate a system of alliances with different institutions and organisations in the city such as the Teatre Nacional de Catalunya, the Grec festival, the Periferia Cimarronas venue and *einaidea*, Fundació Eina's research and cultural programming platform, the Fílmoteca de Catalunya and the Institut Français de Barcelone, among others.

Imma Prieto, director of the museum and curator of the project, points out, 'One of the aims is to open up a space for reflection based on architecture, using the structure we inhabit. Thinking of it as a porous skin that brings us closer to stories from the past, to a collective memory that needs to breathe. In turn, the fact that it inhabits the public space, i.e. the work can be seen from the street, opens us up to other fundamental questions from a democratic point of view. Overall, the project deals with the concept of responsibility, from both environmental and colonial standpoints. Here we do not point the finger at anyone, here we are all freed. Recognition on a basis of humility and honesty liberates and unites.'

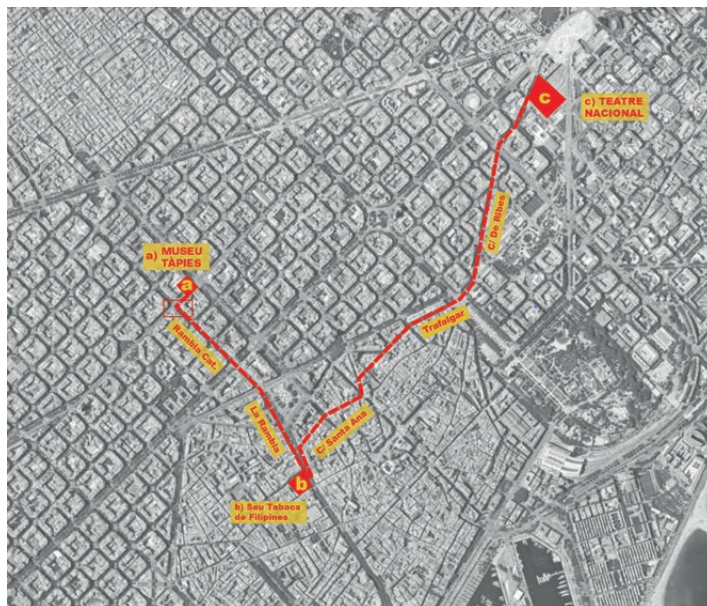
She also states, 'This project was also run together with great local historians, who will take part in the seminar to be held in autumn and who have helped to shed light on some historic silences, a question that falls within the responsibility of museums and any institution devoted to knowledge.'

The installation opens with *Silent Steps, Dance, Memories Sound*, a moving performance in the form of a procession that will cross the city centre at **6.30 pm on Tuesday 2nd July**. The route begins in silence at the **Museu Tàpies**, with the sound beginning at a stop before the former headquarters of the **General Tobacco Company of the Philippines on the Rambla**, activating narratives about the colonial past and delving into the city's urban memory, to end at the **Teatre Nacional de Catalunya**.

This artistic proposition is conceived as a ritual procession with Clotey at its head. The artist will mark changes in the rhythm of the procession with movements of his body and with sound. Some fifty people, professional dancers and percussionists, will accompany him with both body and music. Clotey, together with the same group who will be taking part in the creative process of covering the museum front, will plan the artistic action, designing and creating some visual elements involving identity to accompany the action, in order to establish a dialogue with the museum's new skin and to give it all aesthetic and conceptual coherence. It is therefore a collective, collaborative community project.

On arriving at the Teatre Nacional de Catalunya, the amateur actors appearing in the show *What the foc?!*, to be premiered at the theatre on 4th July, will play a special part in the artistic action, which is also part of the programme of the 2024 Grec festival. *What the foc?!* is the creation of artists Gerardo Salinas and Junior Mthombeni, telling a series of stories connecting Catalonia with Africa, Latin America and the world.

The route, open to the public and lasting an hour and a half, will end in the TNC gardens with a concert by the Senegalese musician Momi Maiga. A virtuoso of the kora, an accomplished vocalist and a self-taught composer, Maiga combines ethnic jazz, flamenco and touches of European classical music. He sings mainly in Mandinka and Wolof, and uses music to deal with important topics of our time. As part of Barcelona's Grec festival, Momi Maiga will be previewing his new album, *Kairo*, in which every piece is unique and contributes to the musical richness of the show to create a powerful, moving experience that transcends geographical and cultural borders. The audience can also taste some African products thanks to the collaboration of the Afro-descended women's cooperative Abarka Coop.



The opening event will end with the performance *The Coal Men*, staged by Serge Attukwei Clotey at the Periferia Cimarronas venue on Wednesday 3rd July at 7 pm and 8.30 pm, lasting 35 minutes. Within the programme of the Grec festival, the artist presents a show in Ghanaian and English focusing on the consequences of a migratory process or displacement in people's life.

Clotey offers a performance in which he asks how we can reconstruct family experiences when we do not live in our home because we have had to leave, how each individual deals with prejudice, cultural anxiety and the feeling of belonging when they live in a foreign country, and what physical and mental barriers a person must overcome in order to get used to living amidst unfamiliar elements. What new power relations arise in this situation?

The Ghanaian artist poses these and other questions in a performance in which he places his own body in a state of anxiety, the usual state of a subject affected by an identity crisis who seeks elements to allow him to regain the feeling of a home of his own, and is forced to struggle against anti-migrant prejudice.

Biography of the artist



Serge Attukwei Clottey (b. Accra, Ghana, 1985)

He studied at the Ghanatta College of Art and Design in Accra and at the Escola Guignard in Belo Horizonte (Brazil). Awarded an honorary doctorate in Art by the University of Brighton in 2019. In the course of his prolific career he has had individual exhibitions in Ghana, the Arab Emirates, the USA, the United Kingdom, Italy, Germany, Norway and Switzerland. He has also taken part in collective exhibitions around the world. Clottey has exhibited at art fairs including 1:54 New York and Miami Art Week (USA), 1:54 London and Brighton Festival (United Kingdom) and the Dakar Biennial (Senegal).

Clottey has earned residencies at DAAD Berlin, at the Royal Museums Greenwich in the United Kingdom and at the Kitakyushu Center for Contemporary Art (Japan). He has also won scholarships from the Dutch ministry of culture and the University of Maastricht (Netherlands).

Clottey's work forms part of public collection including the World Bank Collection and the Tucson Museum of Art (USA), the Museum of Contemporary African Art in Morocco and the Kunstmuseum Arnhem (Netherlands).

Clottey lives between Labadi (near Accra, the capital of Ghana) and Los Angeles, and is the founder of an organisation that sets out to change society through art.

Public Programme

The *Beyond the Skin* project will involve different kinds of event: some to take place outside the museum, both in public space and at other venues in the city, and others to take place entirely in the Museu Tàpies.

The exhibitions and performances will begin with the artist creating a new skin for the front of the museum building, to continue with the public procession and some performance to be staged at Periferia Cimarronas. This part will be in collaboration with the Teatre Nacional de Catalunya, *einaidea* Fundació Eina's research and cultural programming platform and the Grec festival.

The project will resume in autumn, with a stress on the educational side through a programme aiming to open up a space for reflection about the key issues of our time, including our colonial past, migrations and the environmental crisis. In line with this, a season of films will be presented, devoted to Sarah Maldoror, attended by her daughter, Annouchka de Andrade, and other film theorists specialising in the African diaspora, in collaboration with the Filmoteca de Catalunya and the Institut Français de Barcelone. There will also be an international seminar lasting three days.

The Museu Tàpies is to offer a range of activities encouraging us to look at history and historiographies, in order to question and think about the discourses that accompany us today.

Opening event

The Museu Tàpies approaches the opening event of the artistic project by Serge Attukwei Clottey as an occasion of an urban nature that invites the public to join in. This event, which forms part of the Grec festival programme, will consist of an artistic action that will begin at the museum and end in the gardens of the Teatre Nacional de Catalunya.

The procession, entitled *Silent Steps, Dance, Memories Sound*, will stop at the former headquarters of the General Tobacco Company of the Philippines at the Rambla 109, in order to activate narratives about the past and delve into the city's urban memory. Artistic direction of this activity falls to Serge Attukwei Clottey together with the same group of people involved in the process of creating the intervention on the front of the museum, participants from *einaidea* Fundació Eina's research and cultural programming platform and Periferia Cimarronas. This artistic proposition is to be conceived as a ritual procession led by the artist. Accompanied by some fifty people, Clottey will set the rhythm of the procession with movements of his body and with sound. The whole thing will present some visual elements involving identity to accompany the action, to establish a dialogue with the Museu Tàpies' new skin and to give it all aesthetic and conceptual coherence.

The route will end in the gardens of the Teatre Nacional de Catalunya with a concert by the musician Momi Maiga. The participants and the audience will be able to taste some African products thanks to the collaboration of Abarka Coop.

Date: 2nd July 2024 / Venue: public space / Time: 6.30 pm / Length: 3 h / Price: free /
In collaboration with Grec Festival de Barcelona, Teatre Nacional de Catalunya,
einaidea Fundació Eina's research and cultural programming platform, Periferia
Cimarronas, Institut Français de Barcelone and Abarka Coop

The Coal Men

The consequences of a migratory process or displacement for people's life is the central theme of the performance staged by Serge Attukwei Clottey as part of the Grec festival programme. The Ghanaian artist asks himself how we can reconstruct family experiences when we do not live in our home because we have had to leave, how each individual

deals with prejudice, cultural anxiety and the feeling of belonging when they live in a foreign country. What physical and mental barriers a person must overcome in order to get used to living amidst unfamiliar elements and what power relations arise from this situation are some of the questions Clottey asks himself as he places his own body in a state of anxiety, the usual state of a subject affected by an identity crisis who seeks elements to allow him to regain the feeling of home, and is forced to struggle against anti-migrant prejudice.



Date: 3rd July 2024 / Venue: Sala Periferia Cimarronas / Time: 7 and 8.30 pm / Length: 25 min / Price: free / In collaboration with Grec Festival de Barcelona and the Institut Français de Barcelone

Today is Tàpies Conversation

Chapter 8: Activism from the sidelines

Tàpies celebrates the moment when Europe finally comes up against 'other cultures up to then considered savage that shifted the hitherto untouchable centre of gravity away from the humanism of a shattered Europe for good.' The artist was clear that looking beyond Europe did not mean fleeing, and that in the art of some communities described as backward there was useful wisdom for modernity. In this conversation, Remei Sipi and Erick Beltrán will be discussing why some western values still seem untouchable to us and some forms of cultural expression are regarded as exotic, taking as a starting point Antoni Tàpies' thoughts on the Eurocentric bias in the art world and about the colonial inheritance in our culture.

Participants:

Remei Sipi is a writer, essayist, children's educator and activist, an expert in gender and development. She works to defend women, ethnic minorities and migrants, and has helped organise African women's associations to avoid the folklorisation of the intercultural events to which they are invited. Since the 1980s she has led different associations and been a member of groups like E'Waiso Ipola and the immigrant women's network in Catalonia. In 1995 she set up the publisher Mey, a landmark in Equatorial Guinean literature. She is currently the secretary of the association E'Waiso Ipola and promoter of the federation of African women's associations in Spain.

Erick Beltrán is an artist who explores and reflects on the concept of publishing and discourse construction. He takes an interest in the information that circulates and how it influences our view of the world. His work makes use of drawings, photographs, maps and other objects with the aim of linking public art and graphic languages. His aim is to reveal the mechanisms that define, assess, classify, select, reproduce and distribute images to create political, economic and cultural discourses in contemporary society.

Date: 30th July 2024 / Venue: Museu Tàpies / Time: 6 pm / Length: 1 h / Price: €3

Chapter 9: Environmentalism and other directions

Tàpies wrote time and again about nature. He did so in talking about the Montseny massif in particular to combat the degradation of this landscape he loved deeply. But every word he devoted to the Montseny actually referred to the natural environment, the life that surrounds us. For him, 'The environment is a material from which all of us are committed to constructing what should be the most beautiful and delicate of our works of art: life itself.' The concern to represent the landscape, care for it and value it is a constant in Tàpies' work, and in that of many other artists influenced by him. In this conversation, Perejaume talks to philosopher and environmentalist Marta Tafalla about the relationship between the environment and art, creation and nature and the commitment artists must have to this.

Participants:

Perejaume is an artist and writer who combines visual and literary creativity. Since the early 1980s he has produced an extensive body of work including books of poetry, essays, criticism and catalogues in which he constantly questions the relations between nature and culture with the aim of reformulating the relationship between art and territory. Joan Brossa, Joan Miró, J.V. Foix and Jacint Verdaguer are some of the figures whose creative work has influenced his artistic vision, which also draws on the popular culture of the Maresme area and the world of farming. In 2005 he won the national visual arts prize awarded by the Catalan government and in 2006 the national arts prize awarded by the Spanish ministry of culture.

Marta Tafalla is a philosopher who explores the relationship between animals, humans and nature from an ethical and aesthetic point of view. She considers environmentalism and animalism essential concepts in coping with today's challenges. She currently lectures in ethics and aesthetics at the Autonomous University of Barcelona, and is also a member of the scientific council of the Centre for Animal Ethics at Pompeu Fabra University. Her most recent publication is entitled *Estética ecoanimal* [Ecoanimal aesthetics] (Plaza y Valdés, 2019), an essay in which she rethinks our relationship with nature and sets out a multi-sensory, ecologist and animalist proposition that is essential to facing up to today's challenges.

Date: 27th August 2024 / Venue: Museu Tàpies / Time: 6 pm / Length: 1 h / Price: €3

Programme

Sarah Maldoror. An Alternative Identity



The film programme *Sarah Maldoror. An Alternative Identity* responds to the need to network with the city's institutions to develop a de-localised programme and the desire to highlight a pioneer of African film like Sarah Maldoror, who left us a wonderful legacy on the subject of negritude. The season sets out to revisit Maldoror's work, as a figure as yet little-known but essential in dealing with the decolonial movement and struggles for social diversity. The four sessions, designed by the Museu Tàpies with the special support of Annouchka de Andrade, the film-maker's daughter, will set out from Maldoror's visual poetics to portray a future society rooted in anticolonialism and pan-Africanism.

Sarah Maldoror (Condom, France, 1929 - Fontenay-lès-Bris, France, 2020) is considered the first black woman to make a feature-length film in Africa and represents a key figure in world and revolutionary cinema, firmly and unabashedly anti-racist. Over several decades, her prolific body of work includes more than forty films that combine fiction and documentary in the broadest sense of the term. Altogether it is a kind of poetry dedicated to translating the black cultural, social and political movement into images and sound.

The seminar, with the participation and collaboration of the Fílmoteca de Catalunya and the Institut Françaís de Barcelone, will invite film critics, activists and sociologists to help to construct a fruitful dialogue around concepts like colonialism, social justice and migration, but will also deal with broader terms in connection with possession, baggage, heritage or identity.

The films to be screened in this season are: *Monangambé*, *Ana Mercedes Hoyos*, the Carnival trilogy (*Carnaval dans le Sahel*, *Fogo, l'île de feu*, *Carnaval en Guinée-Bissau*), *Aimé Césaire, le masque des mots* and *Sambizanga*.

Full programme to be announced soon

Dates: 25th and 27th September, 1st and 2nd October, 2024 / Venues: Fílmoteca de Catalunya (25th and 27th September), Institut Françaís (1st October) and Museu Tàpies (2nd October) / Time: 6 pm / Length: Variable, depending on the screening / Price: Free / In collaboration with Fílmoteca de Catalunya and the Institut Françaís de Barcelone

Seminar

Architectures of the Skin, from the Body to the Street



Architectures of the Skin, from the Body to the Street is a seminar coordinated by Imma Prieto and Josep Ramoneda, and sets out from three main themes: the environment, migration and colonialism.

The programme will feature historians, architects, artists and thinkers who have stood out for their careers and their knowledge within the proposed theoretical framework, but also for their critical ability. This view will contribute to reflection about the work of Serge Attukwei Clottey and, at the same time, bring into play possible shared imaginations to which his purpose appeals: the reconstruction and re-use of works in the struggle for the ecosystem and as vestiges and memories of societies.

Featuring Josep Fradera, Paula Nascimento, Gustau Nerín, Laida Memba, M'Barek Bouhchichi and Mohamad Bitari, among others.

Full programme to be announced soon

Dates: 3rd, 4th and 5th October 2024 / Venue: Museu Tàpies / Length: Variable, depending on the screening / Price: €3 one screening and €6 the full programme

Educational Programme

Guided Tour

Aproximacions

Introduction to the history of the building and guided tour of the current exhibitions: *Serge Atukwey Clottey. Beyond the Skin* and *Antoni Tàpies. The Practice of Art*.

Date: From 4th September, 2024, every Saturday at noon in Catalan and Spanish and every Wednesday at noon in English / Price: Free with entrance to the museum

Family Activity

Let's Turn Objects into Skin

Where do the piles of boxes that protect our internet purchases end up? And what about disposable paper or plastic cups? How could we give them a new life? One of the concerns of artist Serge Attukwei Clottey is the excess of disposable objects that clutter up our everyday life. Both the work of Toni Tàpies and that of this Ghanaian artist involve giving a new life to everyday objects. All together we'll discover what the use was of the yellow containers that Clottey has turned into the new skin of the front of the museum. We propose a tour/workshop to think about the memory, uses and future of some of these elements. We'll take inspiration from Clottey's process to design the costumes for a critical tour of the museum.

Date: 10th November 2024 / Time: 11 am / Length: 1 h 30 min / Price: €4 / Age: Children aged 6 and upwards, accompanied by adults

Reading Club

Book-Wall

As part of the project *Beyond the Skin* a reading club will be offered with the collaboration of the bookshops Finestres, La Central and La Impossible. This time, the selection of books will be related to themes touched on by Clottey's work, such as ecology, climate change and the migrations imposed by the global economic system. The reading club is a place to pool thoughts about necessary readings in the context of social and climate emergency in which we live.

Llibre-mur [Book-Wall] (1990) is a work by Antoni Tàpies that lends its name to the series of reading clubs we have organised in recent years in collaboration with bookshops in the neighbourhood concerning our current exhibitions. Tàpies' interest in books, both as objects and as sources of knowledge, and the fact that the museum premises formerly housed a publishing company, Montaner y Simón, make dialogues like this about writing, reading and art appropriate.

Calendar and readings: consult the museum website

Tàpies' Year: 13 December 2023 —13th December 2024

On the occasion of the celebration of the centenary of the artist's birth, the museum is organising a programme of exhibitions, publications, educational activities and creative and research projects to be run over the whole year.

The purposes of the Tàpies' Year (www.museutapies.org/eng/any-tapies/) are to cement the museum's commitment to an in-depth approach to the artist's work and thought, to publicise this both nationally and internationally and to contribute to and update interpretations of them from new viewpoints.

The project *Serge Attukwei Clottey. Beyond the Skin* is part of this celebration and will coincide with the exhibition *Antoni Tàpies. The Practice of Art*, which opens on 19th July and will feature a wide selection of works from national and international museums and private collections, to explore the artist's long career from 1943 to 2011.



Co-production

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Find out more:

Museu Tàpies Barcelona / Press / +34 934 870 315
press@museutapies.org / comunicacio@museutapies.org

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