



Gallery[®]
Think Upside Down

What Lies Beyond the Visible

EUGENE OFORI AGYEI

“My work explores the sense of displacement I have experienced through themes of cultural identity, the concept of home, material ritual, and material history. By sharing my personal experience, I seek to address the experiences of displacement lived by others in contemporary society.”

Eugene Ofori Agyei

What Lies Beyond the Visible?

EUGENE OFORI AGYEI

What is found in the other, in the one who seems different, who arrives in a territory as a figure both unfamiliar and familiar? This other presents us with a series of reflections through traditional materials that belong to the cultural and artistic currents of all societies since their origins.

In times of globalization, the art of other territories seems to reach everyone without apparent depth. Yet this other art carries a long history shaped by memories and displacements, which today we may call diasporic art: marked by diffuse places, permeable borders, and experiences gathered under a single name, in this case, the African Diaspora.

What Lies Beyond the Visible? focuses on the mobile place of the diaspora to which Eugene Agyei belongs. The artist leads us into the terrain of a globalized time, toward the conception of the other contained within the self. This other is revealed through the affirmation of an individuality capable of expressing itself as multiple, through the sediments of the self, of culture, and of the matter that envelops his expression.

Something lies beyond the visible at the moment when the artist voices his place of narration through his individuality, where his artistic experience is nourished —as he himself affirms— by: “My condition as a Ghanaian who now lives in the United States. I grew up under the care of two mothers and, beyond the walls of my home, I am recognized as Akan, the people to whom I belong.

When I am outside Ghana, in another African country, my name is pronounced as Ghanaian. And when I cross the boundaries of the continent, as in the United States —the first foreign territory I set foot in— my identity is named African. Thus, my being is linked to spaces and places, whether intimate or distant, local or foreign, visible or invisible.”

Agyei’s continuous displacement, in its different definitions, has generated an artistic expression inseparable from his diasporic condition and from the multiple identity that defines him in movement. Through them, he allows us to see what lies behind the works: narratives built from memory and from an individual displacement that becomes collective.

The artist builds his narrative through clay, carried into the field of contemporary ceramic sculpture. His pieces are complexified by the addition of industrial elements —tires, steering wheels, umbrellas, shoes, rearview mirrors— resembling intervened ready-mades, confronted by time and by the harshness of the meaning of this forced union.

What Lies Beyond the Visible? expresses in his works a beyond-the-visible dimension through the action with which the artist protects and complements each ceramic element, symbols of the precarious movement of contemporary diasporas. This is evident in his *What's behind?* (2024), where he presents a complex object composed of hybrid materiality and a multitude of rearview mirrors that seem to have no belonging to the object upon which they are implanted, and at the same time represent the extension of the African at a global scale.

Each work, in the union of material ambiguity between the industrial and the traditional, shows these elements as a bridge between global and local traditions. This is expressed in his different *Return(ning)* (2024), covered with elements signifying the artist's identity and resilience, whether chromatic, material, or textile.

In these works, the fabrics used by the artist come from the *Akan* tradition of southern Ghana and eastern *Côte d'Ivoire*, close to the artist, while also dialoguing with batik —originating in *Java*, Indonesia, with records dating back more than 2,000 years— which Agyei reinterprets through his mobile and multiple knowledge.

What Lies Beyond the Visible? presents Agyei's works in a space of non-detention, for they unfold, coil, and open as gestures of memory and transit. Works that dwell beyond the visible, in the territory of what is remembered and imagined. They contain within their history the formation and expression of the artist, who, from his migration, works with complex notes of invention to safeguard memories and elements of identity shared by many in times of global transit.

Works



Install View
2024
Variable
measurements

What's behind?
2024
Earthenware clay, batik
fabric, calabash, mirror,
found object
53 x 30 x 11 in





What's behind?

2024

Detail

Earthenware clay, batik
fabric, calabash, mirror,
found object

53 x 30 x 11 in

Fruitful Umbrella
2024
Earthenware clay,
batik fabric, calabash,
found object
40x 28 x 30 in





Fruitful Umbrella
2024
Detail
Earthenware clay,
batik fabric, calabash,
found object
40x 28 x 30 in

Return(ing)
2024
Earthenware clay,
batik fabric, tree
branch, shoelace,
found object
41 x 8 x 72 in





Return(ing)
2024
Detail
Earthenware clay,
batik fabric, tree
branch, shoelace,
found object
41 x 8 x 72 in

Return(ing) II
2024
Earthenware clay,
batik fabric, tree
branch, shoelace,
found object
53 x 7.5 x 73 in





Return(ing) II
2024
Detail
Earthenware clay,
batik fabric, tree
branch, shoelace,
found object
53 x 7.5 x 73 in

Return(ing) III
2024
Earthenware clay,
batik fabric, tree
branch, shoe lace,
found object
52 x 8 x 72 in





Return(ing) III
2024
Detail
Earthenware clay,
batik fabric, tree
branch, shoe lace,
found object
52 x 8 x 72 in

Signpost
2024
Earthenware
clay, batik
fabric, shoelace,
found object
49 x 21 x 21 in





Signpost

2024

Detail

Earthenware clay,
batik fabric, shoelace,
found object

49 x 21 x 21 in



Eugene Ofori Agyei

Eugene Ofori Agyei is a Ghanaian-born artist and educator based in the United States whose interdisciplinary practice explores themes of migration, identity, cultural hybridity, and the concept of home through ceramics, textiles, wood, found materials, and performance. He holds a BA in Industrial Art from Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Ghana and an MFA in Ceramics from the University of Florida.

He has been honored with the Robert C. Turner Teaching Fellowship at the New York State College of Ceramic Art, Alfred University; two National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts (NCECA) fellowships; an Artaxis Fellowship; the Zenobia Award; and the 2022 Pathways: Carlos Malamud Prize, among others.

His work has been featured in group exhibitions across the United States, including the American Museum of Ceramic Art, the Black History Museum and Cultural Center of Virginia, the Harn Museum of Art, the Museum of Art–DeLand, the Art and History Museum of Maitland, and the Utah Museum of Contemporary Art, among others. Solo exhibitions have been presented at the Rollins Museum of Art (Florida), North Dakota State University, Kudos Shed Gallery (Connecticut), and Art Center Sarasota (Florida). In 2025, Agyei presented his first international solo museum exhibition at Die Neue Sammlung – The Design Museum in Munich, as part of the Duke Franz von Bayern Collection. A solo exhibition at the Alfred Ceramic Art Museum has also been presented.

Agyei has participated in prestigious residencies such as the Wassaic Project, Hambidge Center for Creative Arts and Sciences, Township 10, Watershed Center for Ceramic Arts, and Haystack Mountain School of Crafts.

He is represented by the Fernando Luis Alvarez Gallery in Connecticut.

What Lies Beyond the Visible?

EUGENE OFORI AGYEI

"Mi trabajo explora la sensación de desubicación que he experimentado a través de temas de identidad cultural, el concepto de hogar, el ritual material y la historia material. Al compartir mi experiencia personal, busco abordar las experiencias de desubicación que viven otras personas en la sociedad contemporánea."

— Eugene Agyei

¿Qué se encuentra en el otro, en aquel que parece distinto, que arriba a un territorio como figura desconocida y, al mismo tiempo, familiar? Ese otro que nos presenta una serie de reflexiones a través de materiales tradicionales que pertenecen a los caudales culturales y artísticos de todas las sociedades desde sus orígenes.

En tiempos de globalización, el arte de otros territorios parece llegar a todos sin una aparente profundidad. Sin embargo, ese arte otro posee una larga historia gestada en las memorias y los desplazamientos, y que hoy podemos nombrar como arte diaspórico: marcado por lugares difusos, fronteras permeables y experiencias atrapadas bajo un solo nombre, en este caso, la Diáspora Africana.

What Lies Beyond the Visible? se centra en el lugar móvil de la diáspora a la que pertenece Eugene Agyei. El artista nos conduce hacia el terreno de un tiempo globalizado, hacia la concepción del otro que se contiene en lo propio. Ese otro que se nos presenta desde la afirmación de una individualidad capaz de expresarse como múltiple, a través de los sedimentos de sí mismo, de su cultura y de la materia que envuelve su expresión.

Algo yace más allá de lo visible en el momento en que el artista expresa su lugar de narración a partir de su individualidad donde su experiencia artística se nutre — como afirma el mismo artista— desde “mi condición de ghanés que hoy habita en Estados Unidos. Crecí bajo el amparo de dos madres y, más allá de las paredes de mi hogar, soy reconocido como Akan, el pueblo al que pertenezco. Cuando me encuentro fuera de Ghana, en otro país africano, mi nombre se pronuncia como ghanés.

Y cuando cruzó los límites del continente, como en Estados Unidos —el primer territorio extranjero que pisé—, mi identidad se nombra africana. Así, mi ser se enlaza con los espacios y los lugares, sean íntimos o lejanos, locales o foráneos, visibles o invisibles.”

El continuo desplazamiento de Agyei, en sus distintas definiciones, ha generado una expresión artística inseparable de su condición diaspórica y de la identidad múltiple que lo define en movimiento. Con ellas nos permite ver lo que se encuentra detrás de las obras: relatos contruidos desde la memoria y el desplazamiento individual que se torna colectivo.

El artista edifica su narrativa mediante la arcilla, conducida al campo de la escultura cerámica contemporánea. Sus piezas se complejizan con la adhesión de elementos industriales —cauchos, volantes, paraguas, zapatos, retrovisores— que semejan *readymades* intervenidos, enfrentados por el tiempo y por la dureza de la significación de esta obligada unión.

What Lies Beyond the Visible?, expresa en sus obras un más allá de lo visible en la acción con la que el artista protege y complementa cada elemento cerámico, símbolos del precario movimiento de las diásporas contemporáneas, como es visible en su *What 's behind?* de 2024, en la que nos presenta un complejo objeto conformado por una materialidad híbrida y la gran cantidad de retrovisores que parecieran no tener pertenencia a ese objeto sobre el que se implanta y, al mismo tiempo, es la representación de la extensión de lo africano a escala global.

Cada obra en la unión de una ambigüedad material, entre lo industrial y lo tradicional, muestra todos estos elementos como puente entre tradiciones globales y locales, como se expresa en sus diferentes *Return(ning)*, cubiertos con elementos significantes de la identidad del artista y de su resiliencia, ya sea cromática, material o textil.

En estas obras las telas, utilizadas por el artista, provienen de la tradición Akan del sur de Ghana y del este de Costa de Marfil, cercana al artista que, al mismo tiempo, dialogan con el batik, originario de Java, Indonesia, con registros de más de 2.000 años, y que Agyei reinterpreta desde su conocimiento móvil y múltiple.

What Lies Beyond the Visible?, nos presenta a las obras de Agyei, en un espacio de no detención, pues ellas se despliegan, se enroscan, se abren como gestos de memoria y tránsito. Obras que habitan más allá de lo visible, en el territorio de lo que se recuerda y lo que se imagina. Ellas contienen en su historia la formación y la expresión del artista, quien, desde su migración, trabaja con notas complejas de invención para resguardar memorias y elementos de identidad comunes a muchos en tiempos de tránsitos globales.



Elizabeth Marin Hernandez, Ph. D

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