

Gallery 1957

Serge Attukwei Clotney

Distinctive Gestures

5 August – 30 September 2021

Gallery 1957 London

Gallery 1957 London is pleased to present **DISTINCTIVE GESTURES**, an exhibition of works by Serge Attukwei Clotney. Described as his immediate translation of the body observed on social media, this selection of work by Clotney explores themes of identity and the politics behind body language. Examining both subjects he knows personally and those parasocial relationships he's cultivated via social media Clotney compares the expression and gesture of subjects from the 1950's and 60's to those of today.

Showing for the first time in London, The Tondos series reinterprets the body language and facial gestures of mid-century black and white photography in intimate Ghanaian spaces such as barbering salons. These spaces are known even today, as spaces that foster uniquely intimate social relationships and serve as sites for community building and gathering. Through Clotney's work we are invited to reflect on the expressions of men at the middle of the century.

In the "Sex and Politics" pastel drawings Clotney reflects on his own social media engagement and its proliferation of one-sided relationships where on one end a persona can be cultivated by an "influencer" or "user" and is received on the other by a "follower." In "To Be A Man" the artist abstracts the tendency of western ideals of masculinity spread by social media to influence the preoccupation of contemporary men living in countries such as Ghana and the Congo with new ways of communicating wealth and virility.

This is Clotney's first solo show at Gallery 1957's London outpost and is part of the gallery's five-year anniversary celebrations, the exhibition continues until the 10th September.

About the artist

Serge Attukwei Clotney (Ghana, b. 1985) is known for work that examines the powerful agency of everyday objects. Working across installation, performance, photography and sculpture, Clotney explores personal and political narratives rooted in histories of trade and migration. Based in Accra and working internationally, Clotney refers to his work as "Afrogallonism", a concept that confronts the question of material culture through the utilisation of yellow gallon containers.

Cutting, drilling, stitching and melting found materials, Clotney's sculptural installations are bold assemblages that act as a means of inquiry into the languages of form and abstraction. Utilising flattened



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Kuffuor gallon, jute sacks, discarded car tires and wood pieces, he forms abstract formations onto which he inscribes patterns and text. In doing so, he elevates the material into a powerful symbol of Ghana's informal economic system of trade and re-use. While some surfaces resemble local textile traditions such as Kente - a key reference in west African Modernism throughout the 20th century - others refer to barcodes and feature Chinese characters in reference to the emergence of new power structures in Ghana. In Clotney's drawings, the artist explores a formalist approach, depicting disjointed figures and faces, not unlike the visions of nude women under Cubism, a European movement which drew heavily from traditional African tribal sculpture.

At the centre of Clotney's engaged dialogue with Ghana's cultural history is the notion of performance as a daily activity. Through his notable work, *My Mother's Wardrobe*, presented at Gallery 1957, Clotney used performance to explore traditional gender roles along with notions of family, ancestry and spirituality. In a personal work inspired by the aftermath of the death of his mother, the artist staged a performance exploring the concept of material possessions honouring women as the collectors and custodians of cloth that serves as signifiers of history and memory. Clotney's work sits at the intersection of making and action, drawing heavily on the artist's immediate and ever-changing environment.

Clotney, received an Honorary Doctorate of Art from the University of Brighton in 2019, his work has recently been presented in solo exhibitions at The Mistake Room, Los Angeles; Ever Gold [Projects], San Francisco; Gallery 1957, Accra; Gnyp, Berlin; Lorenzelli Arte, Milan; Vestfossen Kunstlaboratorium Foundation, Oslo. His works have been included in recent group exhibitions at Desert X, Palm Desert; Christie's Beverly Hills, Los Angeles; The Moody Center, Rice University, Houston; Iziko South Africa National Gallery, Cape Town; UTA Artist Space, Los Angeles.

About Gallery 1957

Based in Accra, with a London outpost opened in 2020, Gallery 1957 has a curatorial focus on West Africa. Presenting a programme of exhibitions, installations and performances by the region's most significant artists, the gallery serves as a vital platform, promoting West Africa's presence within the art scene by hosting ambitious exhibitions, providing resources for residencies and participating in international art fairs. Founded by Marwan Zakhem in 2016, Gallery 1957 has evolved from over 15 years of private collecting. The gallery now hosts three spaces in Accra – one in the Kempinski Hotel and two in Galleria Mall – and a London outpost in Hyde Park Gate.

Artist: Serge Attukwei Clotney

Title: *Distinctive Gestures*

Dates: 6 August – 30 September 2021

Opening: Thursday 5th August, 2021 - 6pm

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