

Mathieu Kleyebe Abonnenc In the Womb of the Glass Ship 08.09-04.12.22

EN

La Loge

Kluisstraat 86 - rue de l'Ermitage
B-1050 Brussels

An exhibition in collaboration with Thomas Tilly

Mathieu Kleyebe Abonnenc composes with different mediums, objects, and research methods to explore neglected areas and difficulties of (post)colonial history. The oblivion, exploitation, and violence of these narratives are the starting point for projects that combine testimonies, official facts, and fictions. Imagined in the continuity of his recent work on the Guyanese author Wilson Harris (Guyana, 1921-2018) and a series of exhibitions presented in France and Germany, *In the Womb of the Glass Ship* at La Loge is a subjective and sensory encounter with the identities, memories, and languages of the different Guyanas.

For the last several years, the artist has been blending autobiographical elements with Harris' worlds, whose ecological and decolonial visions he explores. In his poetic and theoretical writings, the author establishes a link

between the psyche and the landscape, drawing on an Amerindian cosmology based on the interconnection of beings, time, and place. He interprets the nature of the Amazon basin and its rainforest as an archive marked by “exploration”, loss, and fracture. His rich and colorful language decodes the “alphabet” of a natural world where we can rethink the postcolonial condition. For Mathieu Kleyebe Abonnenc, tracing the course of the natural and temporal territories evoked by Harris clears the way for a mental journey through troubled histories. He brings colonial relations to the fore through assemblages of images, objects, and individual figures.

At the entrance, a set of rusty utilitarian objects (*The river, the forest, the rain*) outline an eroded landscape horizon. Collected by the artist between 2013 and 2017, they originate from his mother’s house, which was purchased from former gold miner Joseph Bernes in the village of Wacapou. Located on the banks of the Maroni River in French Guiana, this once prosperous village was home to a community of gold miners. These objects constitute the minimum requirements for living in the forest, or as Édouard Glissant would say, “a naked life” which the Saint Lucia migrants had as they made their way into the Amazonian forest. As if found in the rubble of a ghostly habitat, the artifacts are also a reminder of the fallout that comes with environmental exploitation (property development, extraction, etc.).

The new sound installation presented in the temple takes inspiration from Wilson Harris’ text *The Music of Living Landscapes*. In the spirit of the author’s magical realism, the sounds and images produced in collaboration with Thomas Tilly generate a hallucinatory vision of an environment in the midst of metamorphosis. Broadcast in 1996 by BBC Radio 4, the radio recording of *The Music of Living Landscapes* recounts Harris’ experience of the landscape while surveying Guyana as a hydrographer. The author’s text interweaves creative, intimate, and philosophical reflections. For him, the landscape “is like an open book” that has a “resonance”. The work takes us on a journey to the heart of the forest through the narrative and the arrangement of raw recordings. The acoustic lines captured directly in nature test the complexity of this system. Here, the voices are overwhelmed by a variety of other living things, populating Harris’ text with their own lexical field. The video of a river descent by night (*Laurène Loharana*) completes the poetic and enigmatic vision of the landscape–archive in this room. Spectral forest images captured by the artist’s deceased sister evoke the loss and trauma that places can carry. The polyphony of sound that surrounds these images, however, gives them a vital and creative atmosphere, refusing the melancholy associated with mourning, which is treated here more like a form of healing.

For Wilson Harris, music is the thread that connects all elements of nature with the cosmos, the visible and invisible, the living and the dead. It is a sacred expression that brings the unfinished genesis of imagination to life. Legend tells us that indigenous Caribbean peoples used to make flutes from their enemies’ flesh, which led to the Spanish labelling them as “cannibals”. *A piece of flesh torn from an enemy’s bones* takes inspiration from the bone flutes of these pre-Columbian cultures. Here reproduced in metal,

the flute encapsulates the ambiguity contained in these culturally charged objects. *Gods Moving in Places*, also presented in the triangle leading to the basement, is a reproduction of a protection prayer that Joseph Bernes always carried with him. It symbolizes a form of cultural synchronicity between Christianity and Caribbean shamanic protection rituals.

On the lower floor, the diptych *Limbé* (2021) presents two views of a spider dance performed by Betty Tchomonga. A symbol of resistance and victory in Caribbean culture, her dance recalls “Anansi”, a small spider able to overcome many obstacles. They are also those of the limbo, a common dance which traces its roots back to the slave trade, where bodies had to stretch and survive the cramped spaces of the hold. Its title and inspiration come from a poem written in 1937 by Léon-Gontran Damas, in which the Guyanese author mourns the loss of identity as a consequence of the violent rupture and uprooting of human life during transatlantic slavery. Along with Aimée Césaire and Léopold Sédar-Senghor, Damas created Négritude, a literary and political movement from the interwar period which promoted the recognition of Black identity and culture.

Anthropologist Michael Taussig considers gold a fetish, a substance whose value exceeds its mineral nature, playing tricks on human intelligence. Made with cinnabar, a mercury oxide once used to extract gold, the two monochrome paintings (*Study for the Ransom Chamber (Atahualpa) 5 & 6*) exhibited on the second floor play with the alchemical transformation of the mineral on which gold extraction is based. Through the use of this unstable material, Abonnenc points out the versatile character of the component, which is both magical and polluting. Set against the collapse of the Inca empire through the figure of Atahualpa, their last great leader, the work also suggests the violence of gold mining, as well as the human and environmental impacts of greed and exploitation.

The magician is made from Abonnenc’s great-grandfather’s initiation ring from the Guyanese Masonic Lodge of Equinoctial France, and it questions the notion of heritage and transmission. The artist melted the original ring with its skull motif to produce a piece of jewelry that reveals the symbol through the inside of the ring. The initiatory and esoteric figure of the jewel disappears by the process of producing its negative. It becomes a sort of *memento mori* whose transformation also suggests an inversion. Like Harris, who moves back and forth between characters in his stories, the ring becomes a ghost of itself and indicates a tension between what is lost and what is kept, of absence and presence. Thus exhibited in an aseptic showcase, it also questions the way we look at the collection of ethnographic objects and their iterations.

Fossil and Psyché exhibits an ultrasound taken of a mule, or a person transporting cocaine between Guyana and France, highlighting the continued practice of commodifying bodies. Arrived as slaves, as “movable goods” in the holds of French, Dutch and English ships, some inhabitants of Guyana are still used as containers while making the inverse journey, centuries later.

In addition to being a researcher, artist, and explorer, Mathieu Kleyebe Abonnenc is also an alchemist. He transforms stories and memories into artistic material by way of poetic fiction. In keeping with Harris' vision of the landscape as a matrix where an infinite number of possible relationships intersect, Abonnenc attempts to materialize the traces, spectres, and disappearances that, taken together, allow us to escape feelings of geographical and cultural loss. *In the Womb of the Glass Ship* invites us to listen to multiple resonant narratives of living beings and territories as a sort of poetic reading of postcolonial thought.

The exhibition is organized in partnership with the CREDAC (Ivry) where it will be presented from January 15 to March 26 2023.

About the artists

Mathieu Kleyebe Abonnenc lives and works in Sète (FR). Through a multifaceted approach that includes activities as an artist, researcher, curator, and film programmer, Mathieu Kleyebe Abonnenc is committed to exploring areas neglected by colonial and post-colonial history. Absence, haunting, and the representation of violence are all themes addressed in the artist's work. By extraction and excavation he works to reinscribe personalities and cultural materials that have been silenced in collective history. Often involving collaboration with actors from various disciplinary fields and incorporating drawings, films, slideshows, and discursive devices, Mathieu Kleyebe Abonnenc's practise is defined in particular by terms of interrogation, a weaving of affiliations, and a reflection on the role of images in the formation of identity. Recent solo exhibitions include, *Gods Moving in Places; The Day Reader* at IFA (Berlin, 2022); *The Music of Living Landscapes* at Kestner Gesellschaft (Hannover, 2022); *Le palais du Paon* at the Musée départemental d'art contemporain (Rochechouart, 2018); *Concerning Solitude* at the Jumex Foundation (Mexico City, 2018); *Maintaining the Distance* at Guyane Art Factory (Cayenne, 2017); *Mefloquine Dreams* at MMK (Frankfurt, 2016); *Songs For a Mad King* at Kunsthalle (Basel, 2013); and *Préface à des fusils pour Banta* at Gasworks (London, 2011). Among his recent group exhibitions: *Le déracinement - On Diasporic Imaginations* at Z33 (Hasselt, 2021); *Rencontres Photographiques de Guyane* (St-Laurent du Maroni, 2019); *Que fût 1848?* at Frac Nord Pas-de-Calais (Dunkerque, 2018); *Stories of Almost Everyone* at Hammer Museum (Los Angeles, 2018); *Jiwa* at the Jakarta Biennale (2017); *Personne et les autres*, Belgian Pavilion, 56th Venice Biennale; *All the World's Futures* (2015); *Leiris & Co*, Centre Pompidou-Metz, (2015) and the 8th Berlin Biennale (2014). He was a resident at the French Academy in Rome - Villa Medici in 2016-2017, and a guest artist at the DAAD - Berlin in 2019. He is now a PhD candidate at EDESTA - Paris 8. He also writes and co-edits books with the publishing house B42.

Thomas Tilly is a musician who uses the microphone and loudspeaker as his main instruments of creation. Focusing on the study of the sound environment and its confrontation with space, his work borrows from both experimental and scientific musical research. Thomas Tilly has presented his work in numerous countries and international festivals dedicated to experimental and improvised music: Audible Festival (Paris), Météo (Mulhouse), Bruisme (Poitiers), Elektricitey (Reims), Avant avant-garde (Krakow), Simultan (Timișoara), Magnetic Traces (Melbourne), Observatori (Valencia), Synthèse (Bourges), Bridge Festival (Bulgaria), and Densités (Fresne en Woëvre). He has managed the Fissür music label since 2001 and occasionally writes articles on his theory and practise of phonography.

WORKS

Lobby

The river, the forest, the rain, 19.. – 2018

Mooring buoy, coffee pot, gas stove, gas cylinder, cast iron pan, scale pan, candlestick, earth.

Variable dimensions

Jean-Jean Residence on the Wacapou Creek, 19..

Archival document, collection Mathieu K. Abonnenc

Temple

Mathieu Kleyebe Abonnenc & Thomas Tilly,

The Music of Living Landscape (A revisitation/1), 2022

Sound installation, 8 speakers, audio archives, field recordings, electronics
34 minutes 10 seconds.

Excerpts from:

The Music of Living Landscapes, BBC archives, 1995

Thomas Tilly, *Script Geometry*, 2014

Thomas Tilly, *A semiotic Survey*, 2019

Thomas Tilly, field recording in French Guiana, Nouragues nature reserve, Ouanary, Saül, Kaw Mountain

Laurène Loharana, 2007-2022

Film Hi8, variable length

Triangle

Gods Moving in Places, 19.. – 2022

Heliogravure, frame

55 x 69 cm

A piece of flesh torn from the enemy's bones, 2018

Bronze copy of a bone flute, folded fabric

17 x 3 x 3 cm

Untitled, 2022

Snake molts, tin box, silver leaf

Variable dimensions

Basement

Limbé, 2021

16mm film transferred in 2K, 10 minutes.

Choreography : Betty Tchomanga

Images : Victor Zébo

Production : Grande Halle de la Vilette – Ròt-Bò-Krik

Second floor

Study for the Ransom Room (Atahualpa) 5 & 6, 2021

Oil tempera, cinnabar, copper frame,
144 x 96 x 2cm (each)

The magician, 2022

Silver ring, brushed stainless steel base, glass
150 x 50 x 50 cm

Fossil and Psyché, 2018

Black and white A4 print, plexiglass
21 x 29,7 cm
ed 51

All works are courtesy of the artist.

PUBLIC PROGRAMME

Heritage Days : Guided tour about the history of La Loge

17-18.09.22

10:00 : french; 11 : 00 dutch ; 12:00: english

Upon reservation via the website of Heritage Days

Through the eyes of Silvia Franceschini

22.09.22, 19:00

Subjective guided tour of the exhibition.

Free entrance

Tour in english

Silvia Franceschini is a curator, researcher, and writer working across the fields of visual arts, design, and architecture. Currently she is a contemporary art and architecture curator at CIVA in Brussels. Previously she served as a curator at Z33 in Hasselt where she conceived (among others) the exhibitions *Le Déracinement. On Diasporic Imaginations* and co-curated *Lives of Forms* (Kamrooz Aram, Iman Issa), *Grounds for Return. Mae-Ling Lokko* and the research platform *Hostile Environment(s). Designing Hostility, Building Refugia*. Her selected curatorial projects include: the research programme *The Politics of Affinity: Experiments in Art, Education and the Social Sphere*, Cittadellarte-Fondazione Pistoletto, Biella (2016–18); the participation on the curatorial team of The School of Kyiv – Kyiv Biennial 2015; the exhibition, symposium, and educational program *Global Tools 1973 – 1975: Towards an Ecology of Design*, SALT, Istanbul (2014); the exhibition *The Way of Enthusiasts*, V-A-C Foundation, 2012. Since 2009 she has been involved in exhibitions in various institutions including The Moscow Biennale for Young Art; Futura – Center for Contemporary Art, Prague; and the Centre Pompidou, Paris. Franceschini is an editor of *Curator Without a System. Viktor Misiano: Selected Writings*, Sternberg Press, 2022; *The Politics of Affinity. Experiments in Art, Education and the Social Sphere*, Cittadellarte – Fondazione Pistoletto, 2018, and *Global Tools 1973–1975. When Education Coincides With Life*, Nero Publishing, 2019. She holds a PhD in Design and Visual Culture from the Polytechnic University of Milan and was a research fellow at the Liverpool John Moores University and at the Strelka Institute for Media, Architecture, and Design in Moscow. She has lectured at the Sharjah Biennale, Istanbul Design Biennale, Triennale Milano, MAXXI Museum in Rome, Konstfack University in Stockholm, and the Architectural Association in London, among others. She is part of the faculty of the masters program in Design, Creativity and Social practises at the Fondazione Pistoletto in Biella.

Silvia Franceschini has authored the text “The Landscape as Archive: On Poetic Inheritance and Cross Cultural Imagination” on the recent works of Mathieu Kleyebe Abonnenc published in *Camera Austria* number 155, 2021.

Water & Ghostfriends by Castélie Yalombo

22.10.22, 20:00–01:00

A performance by Castélie Yalombo organized as part of Museum Night Fever. Admission by reservation via the Museum Night Fever website: www.museumnightfever.be

Castélie Yalombo Lilonge is a Belgian–Hispano–Congolese artist born and residing in Brussels. She graduated from the ULB and the Institut Supérieur des Arts and Choreography of the ArBa–Es in 2020. Her artistic practise is situated at the intersection of choreography, poetic writing, and installation. She questions identity, otherness, and relationships as well as the subject/object status of the body. She has collaborated as a performer and dancer with artists Clément Thirion (2016), Fabian Barba (2017), Ingrid Midgard Fiksal (2019), Faustin Linyekula (2019), Louise Vanneste (2021), and No Mosquito Pas collectif (2020–22). Her participation in Faustin Linyekula's work has contributed to her awareness of decolonial issues, and more specifically the need to re-articulate our narrative identities in the great mesh of forgotten, confiscated, hidden, and dominant histories. Since 2018, she has been working on the creation of several performances, mostly solo or in duet. *Close your eyes and This is my body delivered for you are* works that led her to the creation of *Water, l'atterrée des eaux vives* presented at Kunstenfestivaldesarts in 2022.

The event takes place in the continuity of the launch of two books co-edited by Mathieu Kleyebe Abonnenc:

La sphère de Planck by Lionel Manga (Éditions Ròt–Bò–Krik), and *Decolonization is not a metaphor*, coll., (Éditions B42)

21.10.22, 19:00

Independent bookstore Météores, Brussels
in the presence of Mathieu Kleyebe Abonnenc

Concert by Thomas Tilly

10.11.22, 20:00

By reservation

Recommended price: 8 euros

Reduced price: 5 euros

Limbé

25.10–30.10, from 20:00

video screened in the framework of *Studio STUK at Manhattan*
Studio STUK, Leuven. For more information and tickets, see stuk.be

Lab Loge

An activity kit for children aged 6 to 12 will be available at the entrance of the exhibition *In the Womb of the Glass Ship* by Mathieu Kleyebe Abonnenc
Free Kit available in english, french and dutch

Thank you

In the Womb of the Glass Ship would not have been possible without the close collaboration with Mathieu Kleyebe Abonnenc and Thomas Tilly.

La Loge would also like to thank the team of Le CREDAC (Ivry).

The realization of this exhibition was made possible thanks to the professional and dedicated work of Arthur Jules, Leonor Gomez, Marielou Laforest, the audiovisual technical assistance of Ludo Engels, as well as the special contribution of Beth Gordon, Jesse van Winden and Pauline Miko.

The artists would like to thank Wim Waelput, Antoinette Jattiot, Castélie Yalombo, Nathalie l’Herroux, Sandra Doublet, Ulysse Billaud, Pierre Judon, Giulia Baldorilli, Violeta Kreimer, Betty Tchomanga, Claire Le Réstif, and Silvia Franceschini.

The opening is supported by Vedett.

The team of La Loge:

Director and curator: Wim Waelput

Communication and curator of public programmes: Antoinette Jattiot

Intern: Marielou Laforest

Visual identity: Antoine Begon, Boy Vereecken

Production: Léonor Gomez, Arthur Jules

Audio & vidéo: Ludo Engels

Photography: Lola Pertsowsky

Translations and proofreadings: Martine Wezenbeek, BLURBS, Marianne Doyen

First Sight ambassador : Laure Decock

Lab Loge coordinator : Lisa Man

Volunteers: Sara Daniel, Marielou Laforest, Alice Nataf, Mary Szydłowska, Lila Poimboeuf-Mahieu, Bertille Michelet.

Opening hours

From Thursday to Sunday

13:00 - 18:00

Free entrance.

Visit our website for more details about our programme and events.

www.la-loge.be

La Loge is a privately initiated non-profit association founded by architect Philippe Rotthier. La Loge is supported by Philippe Rotthier Foundation, the Flemish Government, the Flemish Community Commission (Vlaamse Gemeenschapscommissie - VGC) and First Sight, La Loge's community of engaged individuals and organizations. La Loge receives additional support from the Municipality of Ixelles and the French Community (FWB). La Loge is a member of 50° nord Réseau transfrontalier d'art contemporain and Brussels Museums.

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