



(b. (1996), lives and works in Barcelona)

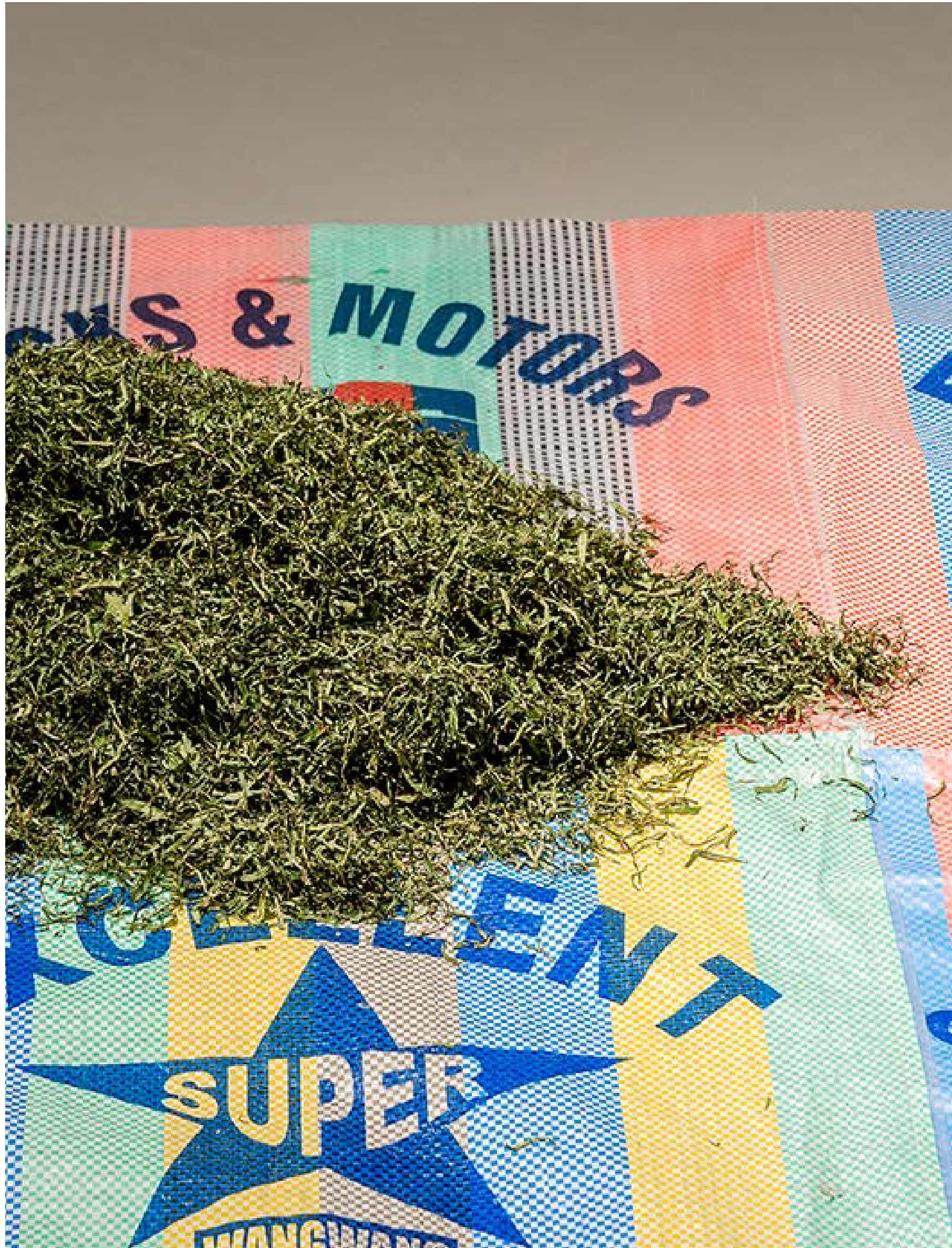
Agnes Essonti Luque is a Cameroonian-Spanish artist and curator whose practice is inspired by postcolonial and Black feminist thinkers as well as themes of ancestral connection, her own childhood memories, story-telling and nostalgia. Her body of work has encompassed numerous mediums, including lens-based media, textile, installation and performance.

For the past few years, she's been exploring the construction of Afro-diasporic identities, especially in the Spanish context. She's interested in the multifaceted nature of identity and the processes of layering, hybridation and pidginisation, seeing her own work as the

possibility to re-imagine both history and her personal memories by dreaming about post-colonial futures.

Essonti's work has been shown in different national and international exhibitions, including Foodscapes, the Spanish Pavilion at the 18th edition of the Venice Architecture Biennale (2023), *1384 Days Wide* at Bamako Encounters (2015), the 14th Dakar Biennale OFF and OZANGÉ I Biennale of African Photography in Spain (2022), the XI Biennale of Art of Lanzarote and Something Else in Cairo (2023). She presented her performances *Bayam Sellam* at the Thyssen-Bornemisza National Museum and *La Bissaperie* at the MNCARS.

WHEN I WAS LITTLE THEY GAVE ME NOSTALGIA BY THE SPOONFUL (2024)

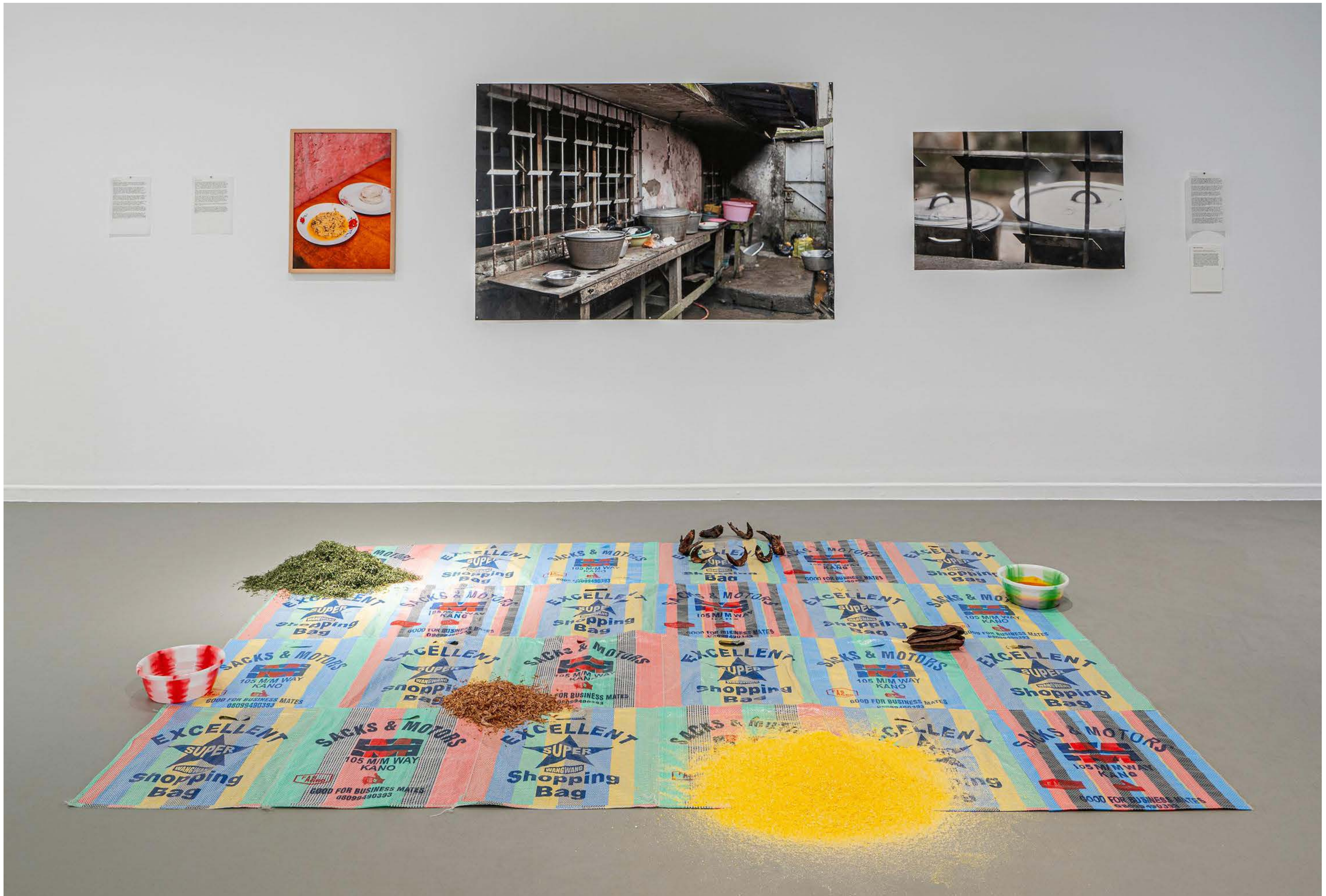


When I was little they gave me nostalgia by the spoonful (2024) exhibition detail

La Casa Encendida, Madrid, ES

“I come from a market. My family home is in the heart of a market, although it wasn’t always that way. At the beginning, there was nothing, and over time, it was built around the house, creating labyrinths and inviting people to inhabit it. There, you find people and spirits, those who have died and those who haven’t been born yet. They come to the market to buy, sell, and explore. No people live in our house anymore, though some come and go. Instead, spirits live there that were supposed to come to buy and return to heaven, but couldn’t. That’s why the courtyard has been turned into a restaurant open to the public. In it, food from the SW and NW regions of Cameroon is served, and every day, children, elders, street vendors, petty traders, motorcycle taxi drivers, as well as the occasional spirit, come.”

—Agnes Essonti



When I was little they gave me nostalgia by the spoonful (2024) exhibition view



Spoons of nostalgia (2024) exhibition detail



When I was little they gave me nostalgia by the spoonfu (2024) exhibition detail

A JOURNEY (2024)



A Journey (2024) installation detail

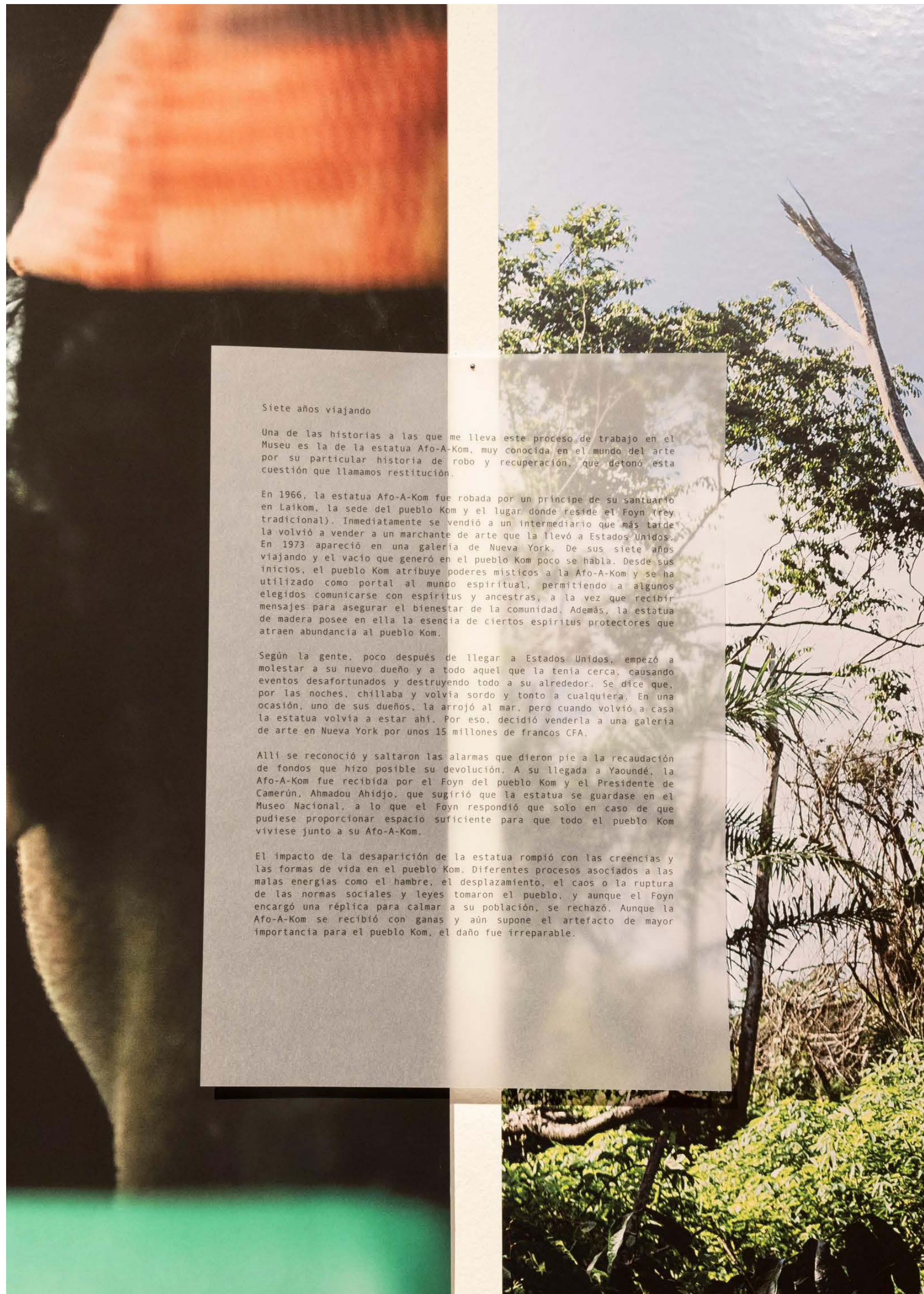
Museu Etnològic i de Cultures del Món, Barcelona, ES

“Essonti has chosen a wooden statuette from Central Africa to revisit questions focused on ethnographic concepts —because ethnography is a fundamentally European science— contrasting them with notions of ancestry and spirituality from African cosmologies. This statuette, currently in the reserve, is a protected piece with heritage status and can only be seen in exhibitions. But if, beyond the authenticity of the object, what interests us is its meaning, it could be presented in a different way, in this case through a replica. The artist photographed the original statue in the museum and commissioned a copy from Ibrahima Seydi, a Senegalese artisan living in Barcelona. This replica is “reenchanted” and travels with the artist to Cameroon, engaging with both place and family and friends. It is captured in a photographic series.”

—Rosa Lleó



A Journey (2024) installation detail



Siete años viajando

Una de las historias a las que me lleva este proceso de trabajo en el Museo es la de la estatua Afo-A-Kom, muy conocida en el mundo del arte por su particular historia de robo y recuperación, que detonó esta cuestión que llamamos restitución.

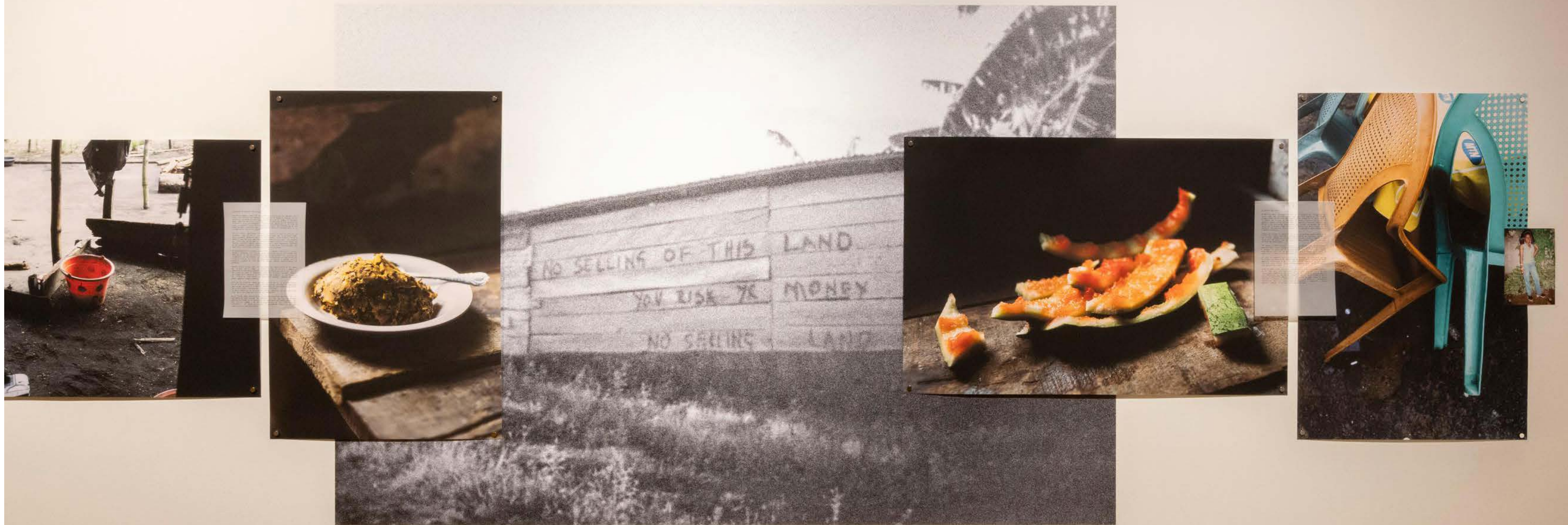
En 1966, la estatua Afo-A-Kom fue robada por un príncipe de su santuario en Laikom, la sede del pueblo Kom y el lugar donde reside el Foyn (rey tradicional). Inmediatamente se vendió a un intermediario que más tarde la volvió a vender a un marchante de arte que la llevó a Estados Unidos. En 1973 apareció en una galería de Nueva York. De sus siete años viajando y el vacío que generó en el pueblo Kom poco se habla. Desde sus inicios, el pueblo Kom atribuye poderes místicos a la Afo-A-Kom y se ha utilizado como portal al mundo espiritual, permitiendo a algunos elegidos comunicarse con espíritus y ancestros, a la vez que recibir mensajes para asegurar el bienestar de la comunidad. Además, la estatua de madera posee en ella la esencia de ciertos espíritus protectores que atraen abundancia al pueblo Kom.

Según la gente, poco después de llegar a Estados Unidos, empezó a molestar a su nuevo dueño y a todo aquel que la tenía cerca, causando eventos desafortunados y destruyendo todo a su alrededor. Se dice que, por las noches, chillaba y volvía sordo y tonto a cualquiera. En una ocasión, uno de sus dueños, la arrojó al mar, pero cuando volvió a casa la estatua volvía a estar ahí. Por eso, decidió venderla a una galería de arte en Nueva York por unos 15 millones de francos CFA.

Allí se reconoció y saltaron las alarmas que dieron pie a la recaudación de fondos que hizo posible su devolución. A su llegada a Yaoundé, la Afo-A-Kom fue recibida por el Foyn del pueblo Kom y el Presidente de Camerún, Ahmadou Ahidjo, que sugirió que la estatua se guardase en el Museo Nacional, a lo que el Foyn respondió que solo en caso de que pudiese proporcionar espacio suficiente para que todo el pueblo Kom viviese junto a su Afo-A-Kom.

El impacto de la desaparición de la estatua rompió con las creencias y las formas de vida en el pueblo Kom. Diferentes procesos asociados a las malas energías como el hambre, el desplazamiento, el caos o la ruptura de las normas sociales y leyes tomaron el pueblo, y aunque el Foyn encargó una réplica para calmar a su población, se rechazó. Aunque la Afo-A-Kom se recibió con ganas y aún supone el artefacto de mayor importancia para el pueblo Kom, el daño fue irreparable.

A Journey (2024) installation detail



A Journey (2024) installation detail

TAYM WE TAYM BI BIN TAYM (2023)



Taym we taym bi bin taym (2024) exhibition detail

Bombon Projects, Barcelona, ES

“Agnes’ use of Pidgin is, in part, a commentary on the violent oppression of languages, and therefore communication, by colonial forces (as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o wrote “The bullet was the means of the physical subjugation. Language was the means of the spiritual subjugation”), ø Contrary to the perception of Pidgin as a broken or bastard language, Agnes understands it is a living language that is continually shaped by the experiences and needs of its speakers, making it a unique form of assemblage in its own right.

Whilst it is clear that Agnes’ practice is undeniably intertwined with the pleasures of food, these works reveal that her interest goes far beyond the essential needs for sustenance, or frivolously Instagrammable dinners. More than just visual depictions of food and implied eating, they highlight the importance of the shared experience while taking into consideration complex emotions and ideas related to culture, tradition, and identity. Collectively, the works transcend the sum of their parts in order to become something much more cogent and significant.”

—Tsering Frykman-Glen



Taym we taym bi bin taym (2024) exhibition detail



Taym we taym bi bin taym (2024) exhibition view

CHOP, CHOP, CHOP (2023)



NA CHOP A CHOP (2023) performance detail

Biennale Architettura, Venice, IT

Our kitchens are battlefields. Far more than a space for cooking and preparing meals, they are sites of profound social and political significance where our social realities are constructed. Here, we witness the normalisation of gender roles, domestic labour, family structures, and even architectural typologies. Yet, if we are to rethink these domestic laboratories, we can unlock their potential as tools for constructing alternative imaginaries and forging new models of community building and collectivity. This episode delves into the power of the kitchen as a site for political and social transformation and how their redefinition can challenge established norms and hierarchies, creating more just and equitable social and ecological structures in the process.

Chop, Chop, Chop is a collaboration with MAIO and part of the *FOODSCAPES* project. Presented at the Spanish Pavillion of the Biennale Architettura 2023: The Laboratory of the Future, Venice.



[Chop, Chop, Chop](#), (2024) film still



NA CHOP A CHOP (2023) performance detail

LA BISSAPERIE (2023)



La Bissaperie (2023) performance detail

Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid, ES

In 1951, Fanon worked alongside Tosquelles in France. Later, he moved to Algeria to become the head of service at the Blida-Joinville Psychiatric Hospital, where he discovered that many diagnoses did not consider the human, social, and cultural consequences of colonization and decolonization. There, his treatment methods evolved, connecting therapies with the cultural context of the patients.

Influenced by decolonial theorist Frantz Fanon, *La Bissaperie* is a durational performative piece by Agnes Essonti, grounded in the passage of time. Through this action, the artist proposes a friendly and horizontal community meeting place centered around the experiences of Afro-Spanish individuals, providing a platform for them to connect with their identity, heritage, and community. The audience is free to enter and leave during the performance. *La Bissaperie* was my proposal within the research and activism group on art, mental health, and decoloniality *Deconstructing the Museum*, in which I participated between October 2022 and March 2023.



La Bissaperie (2023) performance view

BAYAM SELLAM (2023)



Bayam Sellam (2023) performance detail

Museo nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid, ES

In this performance, the artist recites historical newspaper ads selling enslaved black people in Spain and its colonies. The piece aims to spotlight shared experiences of identity, race, and belonging through a collective memory exercise. The artist wears a dress resembling a gypsy-flamenco style, made of “African wax fabric” and symbolizing the Spanish flag. The dress is printed with Shell’s logo, highlighting the company’s human rights violations in the Niger Delta. During the performance, the artist drinks palm oil, symbolizing the purification and healing of this liquid often referred in African spiritualities as “plant blood”. The title *Bayam Sellam* references Cameroonian women who buy food in rural areas to resell in big cities. This work honors victims of the slave trade and examines the role of memory in the construction of identity.

Bayam Sellam was the opening performance for *Visión y Presencia 2023*, curated by Semíramis González in Thyssen-Bornemisza National Museum. Images: Laura C. Vela.



Bayam Sellam (2023) performance detail

CASA MBIXI (2023)



Casa Mbixi (2023) installation detail

Centre d'Arts Santa Mónica, Barcelona, ES

Casa Mbixi (In the search of home) is an immersive installation designed to be experienced and enjoyed. The artist uses a variety of objects including prints, textiles, books, and personal items to transport visitors to her unique universe where themes of Afro-descendence, ancestry, and self-representation take center stage. The installation is flexible and adaptable, growing and changing with each new object and story added to it. This intimate space is perfect for gathering and sharing and is activated through the hosting of dinners.

During different exhibitions of the space, different activations were made: *Identities: How do we build home when we feel far from our home?*, *Care: Who sustains our lives?*, *Housing: Are there other ways of understanding, living and reclaiming home?*, *Wi get ears, mek wi hye, wi get eyes, mek wi nye* and *Homecoming*.



Casa Mbixi (2023) installation detail

AGNES ESSONTI LUQUE

(b. 1996, L'Hospitalet, lives and works in Barcelona)

INDIVIDUAL EXHIBITIONS

2023 *Taym we Taym bi bin Taym*, Bombon Projects, Barcelona, ES

2022 *Beta a kale fo ma on mapane*, Tangent Projects, Barcelona, ES

2016 *Nadie lo quiso así*, CC Pati Limona, Barcelona, ES

COLLECTIVE EXHIBITIONS

2024 *Origens Africae*, Pep Llabrés Art Contemporani, Palma, ES

Foodscapes, Universidad Torcuato Di Tella, Buenos Aires, AR

Embodying the Sacred, Voices, UNIT London, Londres, UK

Foodscapes, La casa de la Arquitectura, Madrid, ES

Reencantamientos, Museu Etnològic i de Cultures del Món, Barcelona, ES

Generación 2024, La Casa Encendida, Madrid, ES

Un cambio de paradigma, Sala Arte Joven, Madrid, ES

2023 *Something Else at The Citadel*, El Cairo, EG

Dozing on the accidental provocation, CC

Blanquerna, Madrid, ES

Fragmentos en Bozal, CCE Bata, Bata, GQ

In dreams I walk with you, Silver Eye,

Pittsburgh, US

Cuidar, Sanar, Recordar, Resistir,

MAC Panamá, PA

Las palabras que aún no poseemos, XI Bienal de Arte de Lanzarote, ES

2022 *Mapes d'allò que no podem oblidar*, SAJ, Barcelona, ES

Dozing on the accidental provocation, Arts Santa Mònica, Barcelona, ES

Fragments en Bozal, Dak'Art OFF, Dakar, SN

2021 *Eres menos tú de lo que piensas*, Centro de Arte Contemporáneo Rafael Botí, Córdoba, ES

2020 *Healing*, Bienal MAV, ES

PERFORMANCES AND GATHERINGS

2024 *Inventing Recipes to be (together)* with SAJ BCN, AER Summer Academy, Bodø, NO

2023 *NA CHOP A CHOP*, *Something Else at The Citadel*, El Cairo, EG

Wi get ears, mek wi hye; wi get eyes, mek wi nye, Tangent Projects, ES

Wi get ears, mek wi hye; wi get eyes, mek wi nye, Bombon Projects, ES

La Bissaperie, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, ES
Bayam Sellam, Thyssen-Bornemisza National Museum, Madrid, ES

2022 *Essonti must nyongo*, Arts Santa Monica, Barcelona, ES
Essonti must nyongo, Tangent Projects, Barcelona, ES

BIENALES

2024 *MANIFESTA 15*, Barcelona, ES

2023 *Foodscapes*, Pabellón Español, Biennale Architettura, Venecia, IT
Las palabras que aún no poseemos, XI Bienal de Arte de Lanzarote, ES

2022 *OZANGÉ*, I Bienal de Fotografía Africana en España, Málaga, ES

2015 *1384 Days Wide*, Rencontres de Bamako, Bamako, ML

ART FAIRS

2024 *Art-o-rama*, Bombon Projects, Marsella, FR

2023 *OTHERNESS*, Art Madrid '23, Madrid, ES

2022 *SWAB Barcelona Art Fair*, Tangent Projects, Barcelona, ES

RESIDENCIES, WORKSHOPS AND TALKS

2024 *Les Ongles Noires*, Dakar, SN

2023 *Les Ateliers NADAR*, Musée National de Yaoundé, CM
Artist Residency, Dëkandoo, Gandiol, SN
La Cordobayangue, Instituto Cervantes, Bremen, DE

2022 Plat(t)form Fotomuseum Winterthur, mención especial, Winterthur, CH

2021 *Cuatro X Tres Botí Abierto*, Centro de Arte Contemporáneo Rafael Botí, Córdoba, ES
RARA Residencia, Villanueva del Rosario, ES
Más Visibles, Más Feminismos: Diversidad, estrategias y redes en tiempo de pandemia, MAV, ES

2017 *Descolonizando la Mirada, Lo Afro está en el Centro*, CA2M, Madrid

CURATING

2024 *Miradas ecofeministas en el arte ecuatoguineano*, CCE Bata, GQ

COLLECTIONS

Fundación Montemadrid

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