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Gagosian Le Bourget to Present *Black Mystic*, an Exhibition of Large-Scale Works by Theaster Gates



Theaster Gates, *Black Mystic*, 2024 (detail), industrial oil-based enamel, rubber torch down, bitumen, and steel, 105 7/8 × 84 5/8 inches (269 × 215 cm) © Theaster Gates. Photo: Thomas Lannes

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LE BOURGET, April 9, 2024—Gagosian is pleased to announce *Black Mystic*, an exhibition of new works by Theaster Gates at the Le Bourget gallery, on view from April 13, 2024. Employing industrial roofing materials, Gates develops tar paintings or “torch works” into monumental tapestries that are installed in the expansive venue at Le Bourget. Encapsulating the entirety of his tar practice, this body of work sees Gates further his ambitious experiments with drawing at the scale of a roof. He introduces a new chromatic range and compositional complexity, developing means of incorporating imagery and text into these works.

Concurrent with the exhibition at Le Bourget, *Theaster Gates: Afro-Mingei* will be at the Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, from April 24 through September 1, 2024. The artist’s first solo exhibition in Japan and his largest ever in Asia, *Afro-Mingei* centers on the cultural hybridity that informs Gates’s work, combining Black diasporic culture with Japanese craft traditions. Together, the exhibitions in France and Japan present interrelated aspects of his wide-ranging oeuvre, bridging both the works’ individual significance and the modes of public address that are fundamental to his practice.

Made with roofing material of bitumen-infused polyester mats known as torch down, these complex, collage-like compositions of layered and juxtaposed color bear the marks of flame and tar used to bind them together. These transformative processes are charged with significance both as vital infrastructure that usually goes unnoticed and as the artist's familial legacy. Included in the exhibition at Le Bourget is the tar kettle that he inherited from his late father, a professional roofer. For Gates, working with tar is a means to produce art that engages with modernist abstraction as well as modes of craft and labor, while serving to commemorate his father.

For the first time, Gates incorporates words into his tar paintings, using large stencils to apply them and competing with the scale of billboards. "1-800 ROOFING" is a slogan that advertises a fictive company, reinforcing the artist's conception of art as a collective endeavor. In addition, he incorporates silkscreened imagery from the archives of the Johnson Publishing Company, the Chicago-based publisher of *Ebony* and *Jet* magazines, which Gates has preserved in their entirety through his Rebuild Foundation. The silkscreened image of a singer signifies the central role of Black music and musicians in defining American culture.

Theaster Gates was born in 1973 in Chicago, where he lives and works. Public collections include the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Kunstmuseum Basel; Pinault Collection, Venice; and Tate, London. Solo museum exhibitions and projects include *An Epitaph for Civil Rights*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2011–12); *Processions*, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC (2016–19); *True Value*, Fondazione Prada, Milan (2016); *Black Archive*, Kunsthau Bregenz, Austria (2016); *How to Build a House Museum*, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto (2016); *The Minor Arts*, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC (2017); *Black Madonna*, Kunstmuseum Basel (2018, traveled to Sprengel Museum Hannover, Germany); *Black Image Corporation*, Osservatorio Fondazione Prada, Milan (2018–19, traveled to Gropius Bau, Berlin, 2019); *Amalgam*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2019, traveled to Tate Liverpool, England, 2019–20); *Assembly Hall*, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (2019); *Black Chapel*, Haus der Kunst, Munich (2019–20); *Slight Intervention #5*, Victoria & Albert Museum, London (2021–22); *A Clay Sermon*, Whitechapel Gallery, London (2021–22); *Vessels*, Benaki Museum, Athens (2022); *Young Lords and Their Traces*, New Museum, New York (2022–23); and *Min | Mon*, LUMA Arles, France (2023). In 2022, he designed *Black Chapel* for the Serpentine Pavilion in London. He participated in the Whitney Biennial, New York (2010); Documenta 13, Kassel, Germany (2012); the 56th Biennale di Venezia (2015); and the Chicago Architecture Biennial (2015 and 2019).

Gates is the founder and executive director of Rebuild Foundation, a nonprofit platform for art, cultural development, and neighborhood transformation that supports artists and strengthens communities through free arts programming and innovative cultural amenities on Chicago's South Side. He is a professor in the Department of Visual Arts and serves as the Special Advisor to the President for Arts Initiatives at the University of Chicago. Gates is the recipient of international honors including the Artes Mundi Prize (2015), the Kurt Schwitters Prize (2017), the Nasher Prize (2018), the Crystal Award (2020), the Frederick Kiesler Award for Architecture and the Arts (2022), the Isamu Noguchi Award (2023), and the Vincent Scully Prize (2023).

#TheasterGates

THEASTER GATES

Black Mystic

Open from April 13, 2024

Opening reception: Saturday, April 13, 11am–6pm

26 avenue de l'Europe, Le Bourget

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