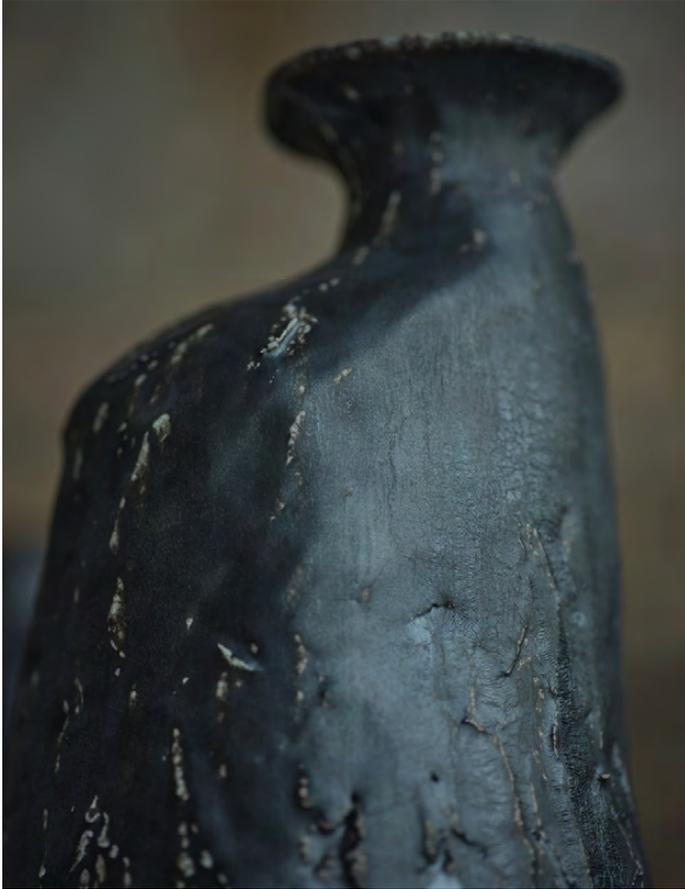


GAGOSIAN

Gagosian to Present *ASHEN*, an Exhibition of Ceramic Works by Theaster Gates, Opening in Basel on June 13



Theaster Gates, *Untitled (King #3)*, 2022 (detail), high-fired stoneware with glaze, 45 1/8 × 15 1/4 × 16 1/4 inches (114.5 × 38.7 × 41.3 cm) © Theaster Gates. Photo: Chris Strong, courtesy the artist

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The flame is a principal ally in my work. Flame and time, and the materials themselves, including wood, bitumen, and metal, allow for the transformation of surfaces and, often, the total reformation of the molecular structure of a material.

—Theaster Gates

BASEL, June 9, 2022—Gagosian is pleased to announce *ASHEN*, an exhibition of new ceramic works by Theaster Gates that emerged from the artist’s exploration of heat, pressure, time, and material accumulation through the form of the vessel. The exhibition represents a return to Basel for the artist, who presented *Black Madonna* at Kunstmuseum Basel in 2018.

ASHEN records Gates’s reflections on the pyrogenic through the tenacity and metamorphosis of clay when transformed by flame. The presentation features glazed stoneware fired in a traditional Japanese anagama wood-burning kiln. The calefaction causes accumulations of ash and kiln particulate to build up on the surfaces of the works, exposing the nature and order of the alchemical processes. These material transmutations result from extreme heat maintained over extended time, with labor-intensive firings lasting from four to seven days.

Sculpture is a vital component of Gates's multifaceted practice, which also encompasses architectural intervention, performance, and the preservation and redeployment of collections and archives, with principles of cultural recovery and artistic interrogation at their core. The ceramic vessel has been important to Gates since he studied pottery with masters including Koichi Ohara in Tokoname, Japan, early in his career.

Pushing the physical limits of clay while he explores histories of making, Gates has conceived an array of ceramic forms, such as tea bowls and water storage jars, along with larger vessels. He is called to a material legacy that extends from anonymous potters throughout history to modernist practitioners such as Michael Cardew, Shōji Hamada, Bernard Leach, Lucie Rie, and Peter Voulkos. A particular touchstone is David Drake, known as Dave the Potter, who incised poems into ceramic jugs and plantation storage pots while enslaved in Edgefield, South Carolina. Drawing on worldwide cultural traditions, Gates endows ceramic vessels with transcendent meaning derived from cycles of creative labor and experimentation. His transformative use of the flame links these works to his tar paintings, which honor his father's craft as a roofer. A new large-scale tar painting will also be featured in the exhibition.

ASHEN is the latest of Gates's recent international exhibitions exploring his interrogation of process, form, and temporality in the plastic arts, including *Black Vessel* at Gagosian New York (2020–21) and *Vessel* at the Benaki Museum of Greek Culture, Athens. In London, his multi-venue project *The Question of Clay*, taking place through 2022 with exhibitions at Whitechapel Gallery (*A Clay Sermon*) and the Victoria & Albert Museum (*Slight Intervention #5*), culminates with *Black Chapel*, Gates's commission for the Serpentine Pavilion, scheduled to open on June 10, 2022. Realized as a cylindrical form illuminated by a single oculus, *Black Chapel* mirrors the artist's sculptural practice and deepens his engagement with the architectural typologies of chapels; the bottle kilns of Stoke-on-Trent, England; the beehive kilns of the western United States; and traditional African structures such as the Musgum mud huts of Cameroon and the Kasubi Tombs of Kampala, Uganda.

Beginning June 11, Gates will share his interest in small wares, as well as the histories of Korean and Japanese pottery, at the Gagosian Shop in Burlington Arcade, London, with a selection of his tea bowls, sake cups, and other ceramic vessels. Also on view will be books and materials that inform his current bodies of work.

Theaster Gates was born in 1973 in Chicago, where he lives and works. Public collections include Kunstmuseum Basel; Pinault Collection, Venice; Tate, London; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; and Los Angeles County Museum of Art. 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); and *A Clay Sermon*, Whitechapel Gallery, London (2021–22). 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 the Harris School of Public Policy at the University of Chicago, and the recipient of international honors including the Artes Mundi Prize (2015), the Kurt Schwitters Prize (2017), the Nasher Prize (2018), and the Crystal Award (2020). On June 15, 2022, he will be presented with the twelfth Frederick Kiesler Award for Architecture and the Arts in Vienna.

#TheasterGates

THEASTER GATES

ASHEN

Opening reception: Monday, June 13, 6–8pm

June 13–July 30, 2022

Rheinsprung 1, Basel

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