

THE GALLERY OF

EVERYTHING



THE DIVINE THEATRE OF SEYNI AWA CAMARA

THE GALLERY OF **EVERYTHING**

SUNDAY 6TH OCTOBER TO SUNDAY 17TH NOVEMBER 2024

THE GALLERY OF **EVERYTHING**
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IN 2015, THE SENEGALESE FILMMAKER FATOU KANDÉ SENGHOR RELEASED *GIVING BIRTH*, A DOCUMENTARY PORTRAIT OF THE SCULPTOR **SEYNI AWA CAMARA**. IN IT, **CAMARA** - WHO WAS BORN IN 1945 IN BIGNONA, WHERE SHE STILL LIVES - EXPLAINS:

I AM THE FIRST FEMALE ARTIST TO PRODUCE THIS KIND OF POTTERY IN CASAMANCE (SOUTH OF THE GAMBIA). EACH YEAR, MY INSPIRATION CAN CHANGE IN ANY DIRECTION. I AM MULTI-FACETED. MY PRACTICE IS MYSTICAL. I AM NOT JUST ANY ARTIST. I HAVE A GIFT FROM GOD.



UNTITLED, 2010
TERRACOTTA
87 x 22 x 24 CM, 34¹/₄ x 8³/₄ x 9¹/₂ IN



UNTITLED, 2022
TERRACOTTA
150 x 34 x 34 CM, 59 x 13½ x 13½ IN



UNTITLED, 2010
TERRACOTTA
109 x 33 x 25 CM, 43 x 13 x 10 IN

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SEYNI AWA CAMARA

*THERE IS SOMETHING EXTREMELY FAMILIAR YET
TOTALLY OTHER WORLDLY ABOUT **CAMARA'S**
SCULPTURES.*

MICHAEL ARMITAGE, ARTIST

LIKE MANY SENEGALESE PEOPLE, **CAMARA** IS A MUSLIM BUT AS A WOLOF WOMAN, SHE ALSO HAS DEEPLY FELT ANIMISTIC BELIEFS. SHE PRAYS TO SPIRITS EMBEDDED IN CERTAIN OBJECTS AND REGULARLY SPEAKS WITH, AND TAKES GUIDANCE FROM, AN OX HORN IN HER STUDIO. IT MIGHT, FOR INSTANCE, ASK HER TO PERFORM A SACRIFICE FOR A SCULPTURE SHE'S MAKING.



UNTITLED, 2009
TERRACOTTA
95 x 69 x 4 CM, 37½ x 27⅛ x 1½ IN





UNTITLED, 2024
TERRACOTTA
194 x 42 x 30 CM, 76½ x 16½ x 11¾ IN



UNTITLED, 2024
TERRACOTTA
202 x 43 x 33 CM, 79½ x 17 x 13 IN

THE GALLERY OF **EVERYTHING**

SEYNI AWA CAMARA

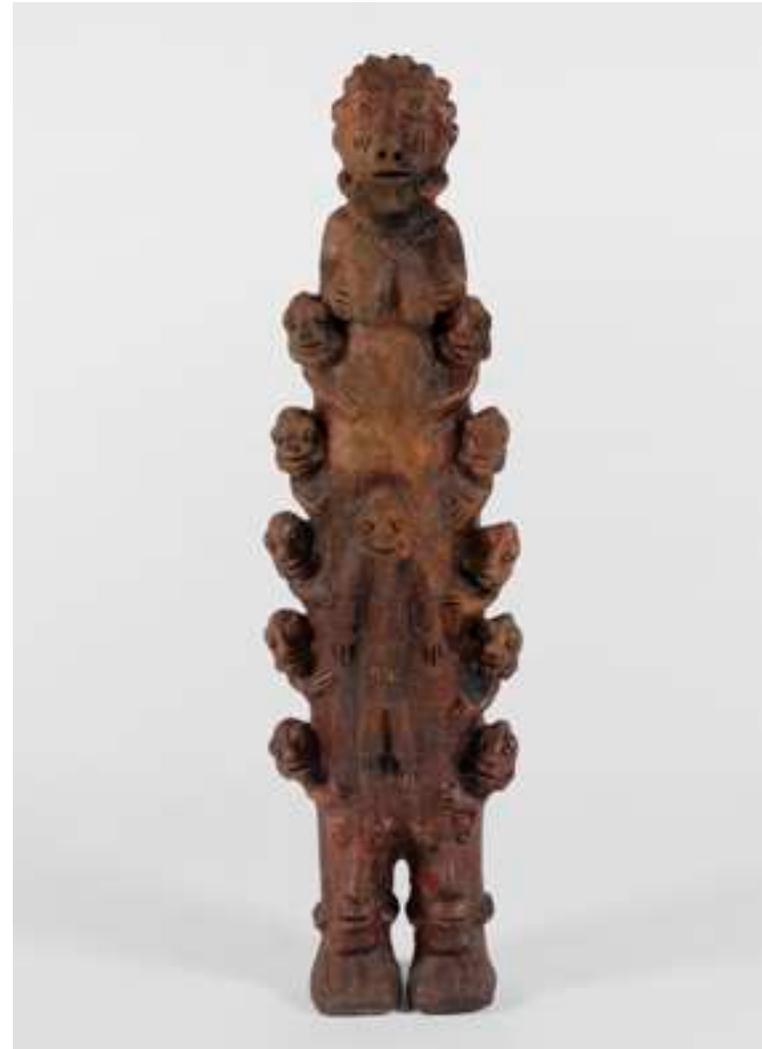
*WE WERE SHELTERED BY GOD'S SPIRITS, WHO
TAUGHT US TO WORK WITH CLAY.*

SEYNI AWA CAMARA

IN SENGHOR'S DOCUMENTARY, WE SEE CAMARA AT WORK, SITTING ON THE GROUND, DEEPLY ABSORBED IN THE FREESTANDING CLAY FIGURES WHO EMERGE FROM HER SWIFT HANDS: BEJEWELLED WOMEN WITH SCARIFICATION MARKS, SWOLLEN BELLIES AND BREASTS AND LEGS LIKE TREE TRUNKS; HYBRID VISIONS OF ANIMALS - LIZARD, MONKEYS, FROGS, PIGS, HORSES AND BIRDS. SOME FIGURES, INCLUDING THE OCCASIONAL MALE, HAVE MULTIPLE HEADS; SOMETIMES, FACES APPEAR ON LIMBS.



UNTITLED, 2010
TERRACOTTA
161 x 36 x 28 CM, 63½ x 14 x 11 IN



UNTITLED, 2003
TERRACOTTA
124 x 30 x 29 CM, 48¾ x 11¾ x 11½ IN



OCCASIONALLY, THE MODERN WORLD IS INDICATED WITH REFERENCES TO MOTORBIKES AND TRACTORS. THE SCULPTURES OFTEN FEATURE CROWDS OF CHILD-LIKE CREATURES THAT CLING TO THE CENTRAL TRUNK OF THE FEMALE BODY.

THIS VAST CAST OF CHARACTERS STARES OUT AT THE WORLD, OPEN-MOUTHED WITH ENORMOUS EYES AND EXPRESSIONS WHICH RANGE FROM THE BENEVOLENT TO THE SINISTER. THEY'RE AT ONCE ANCIENT AND MODERN, TOTEMS, SENTRIES, IMAGINARY BEASTS; HOMAGES TO MOTHERS, SPIRITS, COMMUNITY, CULTURE. POWERFULLY EXPRESSIVE, AT EVERY TURN THEY RESIST SIMPLE READINGS.



UNTITLED, 2010
TERRACOTTA
113 x 42 x 28 CM, 44½ x 16½ x 11 IN



UNTITLED, 2024
TERRACOTTA
199 x 40 x 38 CM, 78¹/₄ x 15³/₄ x 15 IN



UNTITLED, 2024
TERRACOTTA
192 x 48 x 38 CM, 75¹/₂ x 19 x 15 IN

IN 1990, THE AMERICAN ARTIST AND FILMMAKER PHILIP HAAS VISITED BIGNONA TO DOCUMENT CAMARA'S PROCESSES. THE FILM IS INTIMATE, QUIET, OBSERVATIONAL. WE FOLLOW THE ARTIST AND DIALLO AS THEY DIG CLAY FROM THE HARD GROUND AND MIX IT WITH SAND AND WATER UNTIL IT'S READY TO BE SHAPED; CAMARA CHECKS ITS CONSISTENCY AND BALANCE BY TASTING IT. WHEN SHE SITS DOWN TO WORK, SHE NEVER HESITATES; FIGURES EMERGE RAPIDLY - SOME ARE TALLER THAN SHE IS WHILE OTHERS FIT INTO HER PALM.

HER CONCENTRATION IS FIERCE; AT TIMES, SHE SMOKES A LONG THIN PIPE. ONCE FINISHED, THE SCULPTURES ARE FIRED IN AN OPEN-HEARTH KILN; AFTER THREE HOURS, THEY ARE IMMERSSED IN WATER INFUSED IN PUTREFIED SEED PODS, WHICH LENDS THE TERRACOTTA ITS DISTINCTIVE COLOUR AND TEXTURE.

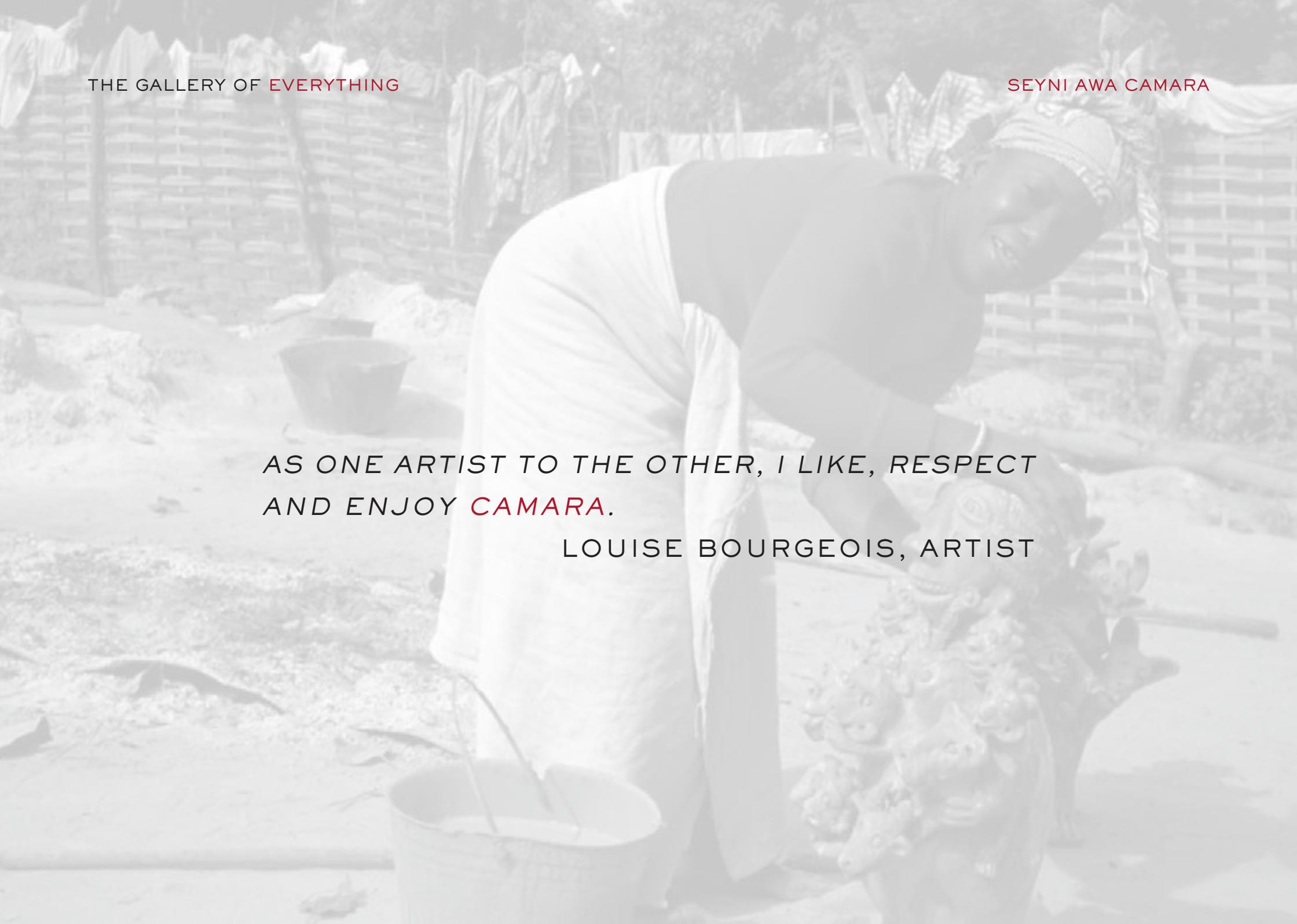


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SEYNI AWA CAMARA

*AS ONE ARTIST TO THE OTHER, I LIKE, RESPECT
AND ENJOY **CAMARA.***

LOUISE BOURGEOIS, ARTIST



ASKED ABOUT THE EVOLUTION OF HER CRAFT, CAMARA EXPLAINS SHE WAS TRAINED BY HER MOTHER, WHO MADE TERRACOTTA WATER JARS; WHAT THEN TRANSPIRED IS LESS STRAIGHTFORWARD.

STORIES ABOUND ABOUT AN EXPERIENCE THAT HAPPENED TO CAMARA WHEN SHE WAS AROUND 12: SHE RECOUNTS THAT SHE AND HER TWO BROTHERS WERE KIDNAPPED BY FOREST GENIES WHO TAUGHT THEM HOW TO MODEL CLAY. WHEN THEY EMERGED FROM THE TREES FOUR MONTHS LATER, CAMARA BEGAN SCULPTING HER SPIRITUALLY INSPIRED CREATURES.



UNTITLED, 2009
TERRACOTTA
90 x 35 x 23 CM, 35½ x 13¾ x 9 IN



UNTITLED, 2023
TERRACOTTA
104 x 33 x 28 CM, 41 x 13 x 11 IN

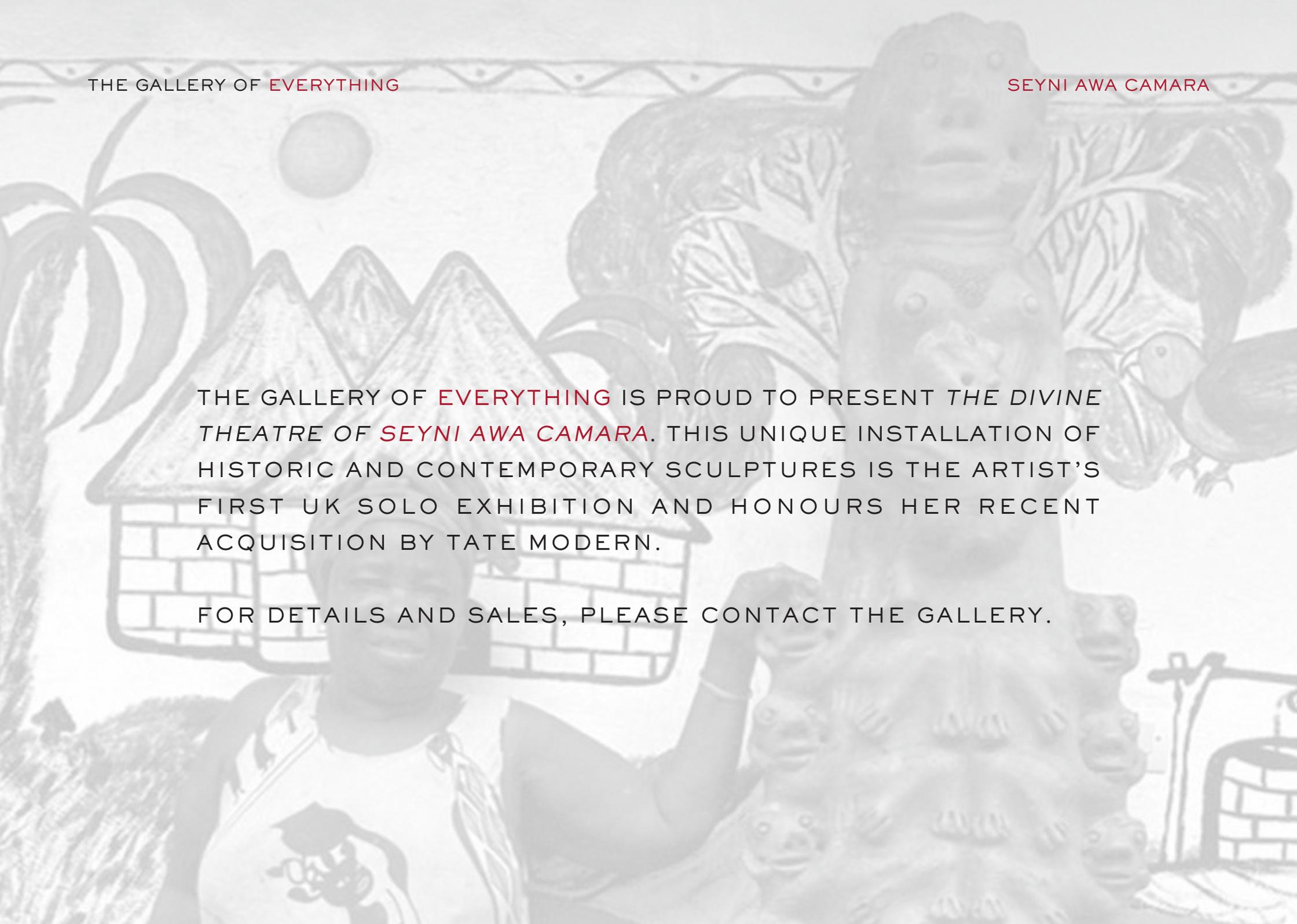


DESCRIBING HER APPROACH TO ARTMAKING, **CAMARA** SAYS: *I JUST THINK AND I THINK AND THEN I MAKE SOME WORK. GOD GAVE ME THIS WORK. EVEN MY RELATIVES CAN'T UNDERSTAND IT. I CHANGE MY FORMS ALL THE TIME.* SHE INDICATES ONE SCULPTURE AND SAYS: *THIS IS A RIVER ANIMAL WITH ANIMALS AND HUMANS CLINGING TO IT.* LOOKING AT ANOTHER, HER EXPLANATION IS BLUNT: *IT'S JUST A SCULPTURE OF A WOMAN AND HER CHILDREN.*

AS FATOU KANDÉ SENGHOR OBSERVES: *THE MIX BETWEEN MYSTIQUE AND PERSONAL DESPAIR: IT'S ALL THERE.*



UNTITLED, 2009
TERRACOTTA
69 x 37 x 37 CM, 27 x 14½ x 14½ IN



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SEYNI AWA CAMARA

THE GALLERY OF **EVERYTHING** IS PROUD TO PRESENT *THE DIVINE THEATRE OF SEYNI AWA CAMARA*. THIS UNIQUE INSTALLATION OF HISTORIC AND CONTEMPORARY SCULPTURES IS THE ARTIST'S FIRST UK SOLO EXHIBITION AND HONOURS HER RECENT ACQUISITION BY TATE MODERN.

FOR DETAILS AND SALES, PLEASE CONTACT THE GALLERY.



THE GALLERY OF **EVERYTHING** IS LONDON'S FIRST COMMERCIAL SPACE DEDICATED TO ARTISTS AND MAKERS BEYOND THE CULTURAL MAINSTREAM.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT THE GALLERY.

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