

Biography

Barthélémy Toguo was born in 1967 in Cameroon. In 1993 after studying at the School of Art, Abidjan, Ivory Coast he moved to Europe and began exhibiting and performing while finishing his studies at the Higher School of Art, Grenoble (France) and Kunstakademie of Dusseldorf (Germany). He currently lives and works between New York, Bandjoun (Cameroon) and Paris. Toguo recently founded the Bandjoun Station Art Centre, Bandjoun to allow international artists from all disciplines to develop their work in collaboration with local communities. He refused an invitation to participate in the 52nd Venice Biennale "African Pavillion".

Further Information

To find out more about Barthélémy Toguo and our other exhibitions visit BALTIC Library & Archive online database <http://archive.balticmill.com>

The database contains over 100 films and audio files documenting the artists and their work.

Free Daily Guided Tours

From Monday 4 February this exhibition will be included in the Daily Guided Tours at 11.00 and 16.00, meeting at the Information Desk, Ground Floor. No booking required.

BALTIC Podcasts

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BARTHÉLÉMY TOGUO

Heart Beat

29 January – 13 April 2008

BALTIC
www.balticmill.com

BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead Quays, South Shore Road, Gateshead NE8 3BA UK Tel +44 (0) 191 478 1810.
Opening Times: daily 10.00-18.00 except Tuesday 10.30-18.00. Free Admission.
info@balticmill.com
www.myspace.com/balticmill



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BARTHÉLÉMY TOGUO

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29 January – 13 April 2008

Cameroon-born Barthélémy Togo presents *Heart Beat* at BALTIC, his first solo exhibition in the UK. Togo is an artist who works in drawing, painting, photography, sculpture, ceramics, performance and video. Motivated by social and political concerns, focusing on themes of migration, location and identity, his approach is provocative and often humorous. Life and its celebration are Togo's obsession and inspiration. He is a keen observer of the absurdities of everyday life and sees his work as an interactive platform for communication. Togo views himself as a storyteller, both the subject and the narrator. He cites influences ranging from artists such as Martin Kippenberger, the Viennese Actionists and Fluxus through to street art and theatrical staging.

Togo's visual language also draws its inspiration from his travels and encounters. He makes reference to ideas of distance and to overcoming the political and social boundaries that limit our movement and imagination. His work has often focused on notions of exile and of transit, of both goods and human beings. Togo's own experiences have provoked emotions and sensations but also exposed deceptions, lies and violence and provide him with inspiration for his work.

Heart Beat at BALTIC comments on the use, control and overdose of information in the era of global exchange. Togo believes that the media is all consuming, even intoxicating. He explains: "For me information is primordial. I've got the radio on all day. I like to read newspaper headlines and compare them according to their political sympathies. It's a vital need to know what's going on in the entire world. That overdose of information, scoops, scandals, disinformation naturally inspires me a lot. You need to step back, however vis-à-vis the information, the press, precisely in order to disassociate the real info from the disinformation. But disinformation is a wonderful source of inspiration!"

For *Heart Beat*, Togo, in collaboration with local students has "censored" pages from a UK daily broadsheet newspaper, removing the text and leaving only the images. This "democratic" action creates a new face for the newspaper page, allowing for new readings and asking us to question the information we receive. The project is a development of his previous work, *Die Tageszeitung: conversation avec Frau Schenkenberg*. As a student in Düsseldorf, Germany unable to speak the language, Togo communicated with his elderly German neighbour by removing sections of text from her

daily newspaper. At BALTIC the "censored" newspapers cover the walls creating a backdrop for works including watercolours from the ongoing *Dreamcatcher* series.

Dreamcatcher depicts bodies expressing universal emotional experiences, including pain, suffering and violence as well as sex and pleasure. The fluid, sensuous depiction of forms in diluted colours, celebrate the human body. Watercolour is a medium that Togo believes "you cannot cheat" and produces paintings that are intimate and sincere.

The exhibition also includes new sculpture for BALTIC alongside work from the ongoing *Head Above Water* project, already executed in Serbia, Lagos, Cuba, Hiroshima, Johannesburg, Saint-Denis (France) and Kosovo. The project, described by Togo as a "referendum", involved asking local people to send him a postcard with their own personal message to the world. For *Heart Beat* at BALTIC, Togo has asked people from NewcastleGateshead to give their opinions about the presence of the UK Armed Forces in Iraq.

Purification, 2007. Courtesy the artist.



No7 The Magic Breath of life Installation, 2006, Courtesy the artist

