

La Luna Productions & AKA Entertainment



FESTIVAL DE CANNES  
SHORT FILM  
2022 OFFICIAL SELECTION

# TSUTSUE

A film by Amartei Armar



# Technical sheet

## ORIGINAL TITLE

Tsutsu&

## PRODUCTION

La Luna Productions (France) / AKA Entertainment (Ghana)

## DURATION

15 minutes

ORIGINAL VERSION: Ga – YEAR OF PRODUCTION: 2022

FORMAT: Digital 2K / RATIO 1.85

## CREW

Director: Amartei ARMAR

Scenario: Amartei ARMAR

Directors of photography: Fiifi MENSAH, Joy WILLIAMS

Editors: Nobuo COSTE, Nicolas MILTEAU

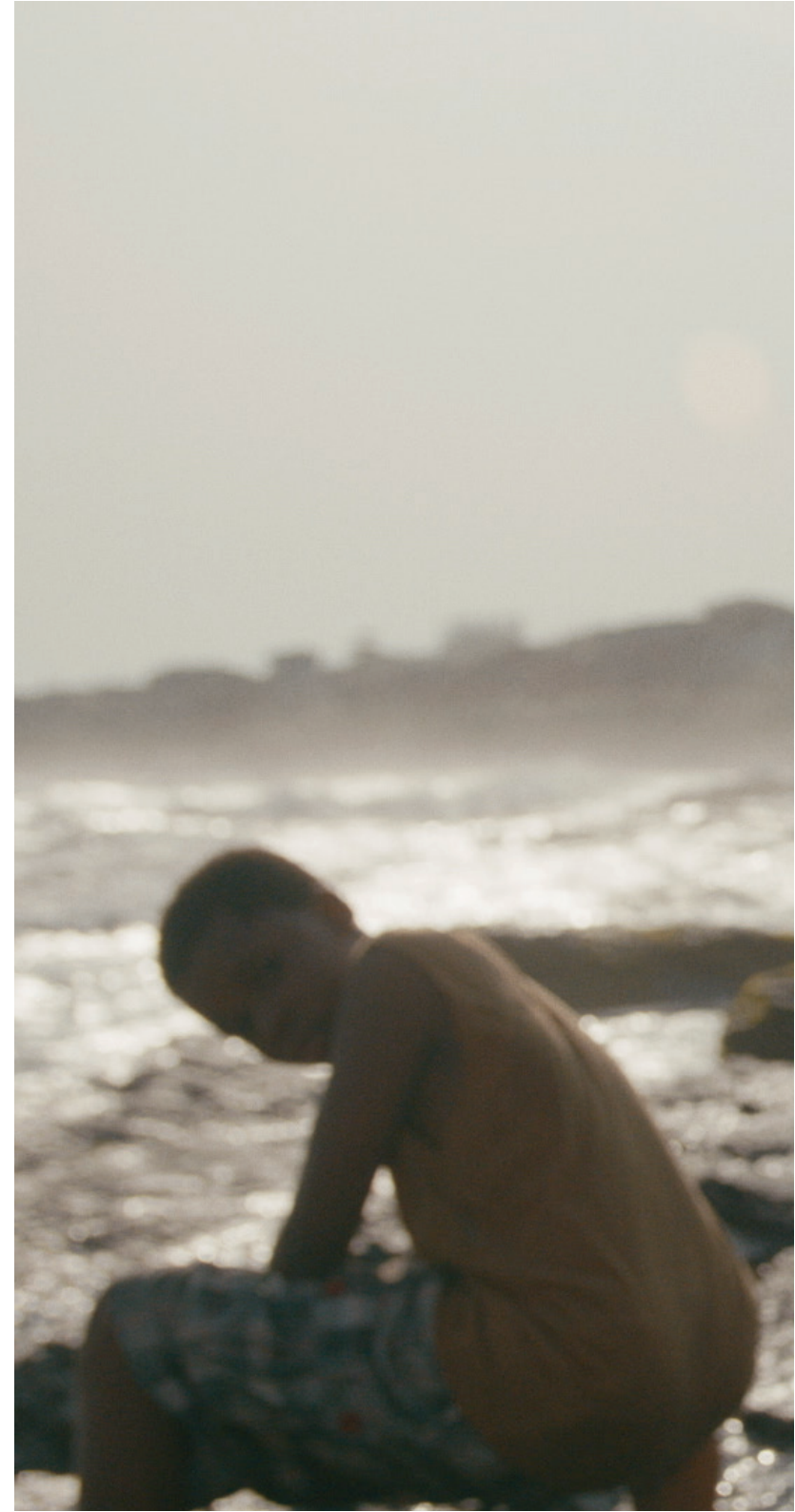
Sound editors: Stéphane RIVES, Jan VYSOCKY

Mix: Gilles BENARDEAU

Producers: Sébastien HUSSENOT, Yemoh IKE

CASTING: Kirtson-Acquah ELISHA, Idrissu TONTIE JR., Victor INCOOM and Gabriel NARH ADDO

With the support of: CNC - Aide avant réalisation  
PROCIREP ANGOA





## Synopsis

Set in a small Ghanaian town at the edge of a large land-fill site that spills into the ocean, the sons of a fisherman, Sowah and Okai, struggle to cope with loss of their eldest brother who drowned during a fishing expedition. Haunted by his demise, Okai believes their brother is still out there...

## Production history

AKA Entertainment contacted La Luna Productions two years ago with a short film directed by Amartei: **Vagabonds** (2018 - 15 minutes). Already in this short, Amartei's singular vision, his sensitivity and the strength of his cinema were present. In addition, the film opened the doors to a Ghanaian cinema that is too little known.

La Luna Productions was immediately interested in Amartei's next projects, in collaboration with Yemoh Ike, Ghanaian producer at AKA.

Two short films were born: **Tsutsué** (World Premiere at the Cannes Film Festival in the Official Competition) and **Yaa** (currently being finished).

The projects were developed jointly, each receiving support from the CNC (respectively Aide avant réalisation and Aide au programme) and PROCIREP ANGOA. Shooting took place entirely in Ghana and post-production in France. In this way, the two films benefited from an intense technical and artistic collaboration from their conception to their completion.

**Tsutsué** is the first Ghanaian film to be selected in the Official Competition of the Cannes Film Festival and sheds light on a little-known cinematography internationally.

This collaboration continued with the development of Amartei's first feature film: **Vagabonds**.

**Vagabonds** has been selected for the FOCUS COPRO feature at the 2022 Cannes Film Festival. Filming is scheduled for a shooting in 2023 in Ghana.



## Interview with the director

### ***How did the Tsutsue project come about?***

Tsutsue was born through three spiritually interwoven true stories.

The first was from an experience our Producer had when a neighborhood boy discovered a dead body in an open sewer. As he went to tell others, it rained a great thunderstorm. By the time he managed to get everyone to the spot he saw the body, it wasn't there. No one believed him and was labelled crazy. It wasn't until some three days later, that the body was discovered in the ocean near where the sewer connects to the sea and the boy was exonerated.

The second story comes from within my own family. Some years ago we lost the eldest brother of my father. He is survived by ten children, all grown except for the last born who also happens to be the only male of his children. His father passed and even buried in the UK whilst he was still in boarding school here in Ghana. Because my cousin never got to see his father buried, he couldn't emotionally comprehend the loss when he was told. This manifested him believing on numerous occasions that he saw his father constantly in the streets and in the faces of other men. The spiritual connection to his late father and the mental toll it took on him during his formative years is something that has stuck with me since.

The third true story came from a documentary we were doing on the fishing industry in Ghana. How 70% of what the fisherman take out of the ocean with their nets is just trash. Because of this, they must go deeper out into the ocean and into harsher, sometimes life-endangering, fishing conditions. It is a fearsome task for them, because in Ghanaian culture to drowned at sea is to have a spirit condemned to wandering the earth without knowing where is home.





**After Vagabonds (short film - 2018), where we followed already two brothers, we are back in a film at the height of a child. Why this choice? And what does this allow you to offer as a view of contemporary Ghana?**

I value the perspective children very much in cinema because I believe through their eyes exists the purest form of emotional subjectivity. There is a universality within them that transcends all cultures and races. They have an immediacy and presence in what they do. Their very essence is to see humanity in its most natural form. Things to them in this world are still strange and not normalized in their minds yet. They have not already conformed to their surroundings and are still open to exploring new possibilities. For this reason, they are ideal characters to introduce an audience to a new culture and even a societal dilemma.

**Idrissu Tontie jr. (Sowah), was already featured in your previous short film and is set to play the older brother again in your upcoming feature film (Vagabonds). How do you work with these young actors? And how do you adopt their look?**

It's all about trust and friendship with my cast, especially the younger ones. We have to develop true emotional empathy where they feel they can share and even safeguard their secrets with me. And, more importantly, I will keep those secrets to my grave. On set, I have to be their confidant, their father, their coach, their drill sergeant, and their friend. I have to know their various personalities and adapt my directorial techniques to suit their needs whenever possible. By getting to know them in such a way they look at me as family, then it is easy to know their strengths and even the type of characters they can play are even transform into. In Tontie's case, I've known him for five years now. I have watched him go from a ten year old boy to a young teenager. His core personality is there, but the depth of his character is more multifaceted and expansive than before. I'm excited for the world to see his growth as an actor in this film and the upcoming feature.

**Your films are imbued with a certain mysticism and reference to Ghanaian mythology. What is your relationship to the latter? And more globally to Ghana's identity?**

My youth was filled with Ghanaian folklore and our mystical approach to storytelling. Because of this, I often find the lore behind a story just as fascinating as the story itself. Where the ideas come from and how the mythology shapes a society to tell stories in a certain way. For Ghana, I believe there lies a deep spiritual connection with the natural elements and the ancestral gods that inhabit them, which permeates in the construction of each narrative. Nothing appears just as it is. There is an energy that is connected to the mystique that causes events to happen. It is not chance, but by design. And yet, there seems to be so much chaos in our society. Such paradox is fascinating to me and highlights the contradiction of Ghana existing as a young developing modern nation, that holds within it a land and a people much older culturally than the confines of these relatively new borders that make up Ghana.

**How do you fit into Ghanaian cinema?**

I look at my role in Ghanaian cinema as one that brings empathy to a culture and people that are often characterized in a voyeuristic way. I want to help others see the beauty and intrinsic value I see in the culture, albeit different, and how the people are quite similar in character to the rest of the world. Stories, and particularly films, have the power to create deep emotional tethers to a people from all over the world. It is my hope that Ghana and its people can add our collective voices to the arena of world cinema as Africa must be involved in the creation of global citizens.





**Tsutsué is your first collaboration with France. How does this fit in with your background, international in its roots? Indeed, you describe yourself as “the product of a Ghanaian father and an American mother”.**

I think it fits perfectly in line with who I am and what matters most to me. My existence is an example of belonging to different worlds and exploring the differences and similarities between two worlds. Such is the gift of being a “third culture kid” where due to having one immigrant parent I was exposed to more ways of viewing life. The curse, however is never feeling a true sense of belonging to either culture. Instead, I believe that I and others like me exist more as a global citizen. One that is invested in the “globality” of the human experience. What connects us all? So it means a lot to me to see how a Ghanaian story can connect so deeply with France that it unites us to want to tell this story. There is a beauty in this type of collaboration. When two cultures come together to create a story that can touch both respective societies it is truly special.

**The environmental aspect is an important theme of the film. In particular the relationship between the natural and the artificial, expressed here in the superimposition of the open-air landfill facing the ocean. How did you work this in your direction?**

The entire film was trying to visualize the contradiction of the artificial and the natural in a search for some type of harmony. Whether it was seeing a national, perhaps global issue (the artificial), and localizing it to a small town told through the eyes of a child (the natural). The vastness of the ocean, a natural resource infinite in its scope, to be visually paired against a formidable “sea of artificial waste”. To put a young perspective in contention with a heavy concept like death, which grappling and coming to terms with such an idea often signifies the end of a period of innocence.



## Amartei Armar's biography

The product of a Ghanaian father and an American mother, Amartei Armar is a writer/director who gravitates towards topics surrounding identity, immigration, and the human need to feel a sense of belonging having spent most of his life moving back and forth between the two countries and cultures. He is currently based in Accra, Ghana.

After studying cinema in Canada, he directed several short films, notably in Ghana. *Tsutsué* (15' – Fiction), a Franco-Ghanaian co-production, is selected for the Cannes Film Festival in official competition in 2022. He is currently developing his first feature film, *Vagabonds*, following on from the eponymous short film he wrote and directed in 2018.



## Production companies

### *La Luna Productions*

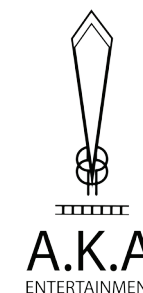
La Luna Productions was created in 1994 and has been working for more than twenty-five years in the purpose to discover new talents, to assist filmmakers in their first steps and built a strong collaboration. La Luna Productions has produced and co-produced over 90 short films, mostly fiction, but also numerous documentaries and more recently animation, 4 feature films and 9 documentaries for television.

These films have been selected in over 1500 festivals around the world, including Cannes (in Official Competition, Directors' Fortnight and ACID), Toronto TIFF, Locarno, Venice, Clermont Ferrand, Dubai etc. more than 300 awards and one short film nominated for an Oscar in 2009 and César in 2022.

Our production development activity is opened worldwide and we are doing more and more international coproduction. Since 2014, we coproduced films with Italy, Tunisia, Burkina Faso, Iran, El Salvador, Lebanon, and more recently Belgium, Poland and Ghana.

### *AKA Entertainment*

AKA Entertainment Ltd. is a Ghana-based film production company, founded by Amartei Armar and Yemoh Ike in 2017, which passionately seeks to produce quality visual content in the creation of Ghanaian and African stories for the benefit of the country and world markets. Our mission is to highlight and showcase Ghana's rich cultural and industrial sectors through narrative films, documentaries, and promotional multimedia content. Each film will be made with the intent to further project an image of African/Afro-centric creativity, inspiration, and innovation currently existing within the African continent.



## Contacts

LA LUNA PRODUCTIONS  
2 rue Navoiseau 93100 Montreuil - France  
Tel: +33 1 48 07 56 00  
Sébastien Hussenot  
sebastien@lunaprod.fr

DISTRIBUTION / FESTIVALS  
LA LUNA DIFFUSION  
Tel: +33 1 48 07 56 00  
festival@lunaprod.fr

AKA ENTERTAINMENT  
Tel: +233 544 708 525 / +33 7 53 80 73 60  
Yemoh Ike  
nexmed@ymail.com

