King Seppy’s Dream of the Tree of Life, an installation by Grenadian Tailor Thaddeus LaCrette, on exhibit at Clark Atlanta University’s Art Galleries Sunday, Feb. 14 – March 31, 2010, is comprised of two complementary yet distinctly intriguing works, the installation is a spectacle of beaded regalia multilayered upon two life-size figures, King Seppy and Queen Enid, each exuding the consecration of love, creativity, and life.

LaCrette’s ingenious odyssey began 12 years ago, two decades after immigrating from the Southern Caribbean island of Grenada to the United States, where he married and fathered nine children. Redirecting his passion for creativity to care for his family, Thaddeus established LaCrette Fashion and Design, sewing for clients such as internationally acclaimed actor, choreographer, costume designer, painter, vocalist and voiceover artist Geoffrey Holder.

Inspired in 1984 by Angela Fisher’s publication *Africa Adorned*, LaCrette envisaged *King Seppy and Queen Enid*, named in honor of his parents, who themselves raised 15 children. Having become enamored by the bejeweled and traditional ceremonial attire prevalent across the continent, LaCrette immediately responded by creating costumes for New York’s West Indian Labor Day Celebrations, which eventually lead to the fabrication of *King Seppy* and *Queen Enid*.

The history and symbolism behind LaCrette’s parental homage is as rich and colorful as the works of art themselves. According to LaCrette, *King Seppy* and his wife, *Queen Enid* are likened to the descendants of the Masai tribe of East Africa. King Seppy and Queen Enid are very religious, and believe that the kingdom of heaven is on earth. King Seppy had a vision, and believes that from the beginning of life, when God created the world he created the tree of life, a black tree situated in Africa. This tree bore fruits of various colors, sizes, forms, and textures which comprise his multicultural kingdom. Hence, the millions of beads used in these artistic figures are multicolored, multi-shaped, multi-sized and multi-textured. The kingdom consists of many mansions. The entire mansion is gold, which is represented by over 40 pounds of golden beads.

The tree of life consists of four roots, with three roots representing the father, the son and the Holy Spirit. The fourth root symbolizes the tree of choices for which, LaCrette explains, “human beings are provided with the ability to use their knowledge of the world around them to make choices.”

The work also celebrates hallmarks of the Christian tradition. The top of the golden beaded kingdom, is surrounded by seven temples, and above the throne stands a cross in red beads which represent the crucifixion of his son Jesus Christ. Surrounding his kingdom is a large beaded rainbow consisting of twelve colors, which represent the twelve tribes of Israel. Attached to that massive rainbow are seven smaller rainbows which represent the seven days he took to create the world.

King Seppy believed that he is not just an African, but where the slaves disembarked from the slave ships in the western world, he possesses the souls of the enslaved Africans. On his garment he wears the colors of the flags of each island or country in respect or in honor of the blood (red) that these enslaved humans shed; yellow beads represent love, peace and forgiveness for those who enslaved others; green beads represent nature and all that it gives to humans on earth; black beads represents dominance and strength; and the white beads symbolizes purity and calmness. On his shoulder, King Seppy carries a symbol of his beloved wife, Queen Enid. This symbol is shaped somewhat like a circular candle, with its colors of red, white and black beads. Around his neck he wears a peace symbol, which characterizes his belief system.