

Mousse Magazine

AJARB BERNARD ATEGWA “THE NEW DIALOGUE” AT PERES PROJECTS, BERLIN



Peres Projects is pleased to present the first solo exhibition of Ajarb Bernard Ategwa (b.1988, Cameroon) in continental Europe. Ategwa's large format works mimic the scale of cityscapes and public spaces, and his vivid color palette and graphic style speak the language of advertising familiar to inhabitants of Douala, Cameroon's largest city and economic capital. Historically, Douala has had a wide range of foreign influences. More recently, the city has had an influx of migrants from both within the country, as well as from neighboring regions. This has shaped Douala into the diverse and contemporary city that is the source of inspiration for Ategwa's work.

Ategwa's painting style is based on complex line drawings on canvas, which are executed free-hand. They imply a movement and momentum reflective of his rapidly transforming city. In this sea of change, fish are depicted swimming in the sky and women in open air hair salons are shown in front of skyscrapers which appear to sway in the wind like palm-trees. Equal parts representation and storytelling, the paintings lead us sequentially through a larger narrative which describes the frenetic bustle of Ategwa's adopted hometown, and provide us with a singular visual experience.

Moving between the taxi stands, newsagents, bars, roadside markets, hair salons, and citizens in fleeting moments of respite, the artist offers snapshots of everyday life. With a unique use of line and color, Ategwa weaves together these urban scenes, sounds and smells to create a rich sensory immersion. As we pan through the tableaux, each painting adds a line to a larger story which is unfolding in real-time. Employing these narratives, Ategwa is part of a new generation of Cameroonian artists who are pushing the medium of painting forward by adding their own imagery to the lexicon of painting where it has not previously existed.