

PERES PROJECTS ARTLAND



The Blue Man of Njombé

February 2020

This series looks at the population of a Cameroonian agricultural region called Haut-Penja. Coffee is produced there, but above all bananas for export to Europe. It is in this region that I studied at the school of fine arts. During the years that I spent there, I was in contact with families who work in the banana plantations. Some families work there over several generations, the father and then his children. This banana from Cameroon is very popular in Europe, but no one there knows the faces of the people who produce it.

Religion is also something very present in this region of Cameroon. These peasant populations are very religious. You will see in my works there is a painting that I reference often, 'The Incredulity of Saint Thomas' which is a well-known painting by Caravaggio. I am passionate about history, as a form of narration and testimony. Playing with this visual memory allows me to produce allegories where symbols and signs can open up several universes of meaning for the viewer.

In my painting, there is a blue character, a young man who has worked for several years in banana plantations. Maybe he was exposed too much to chemicals, perhaps he is a banana martyr. Some characters have orange hair, also linked to the chemicals used to produce bananas. One thing is certain, the repetitive use of these chemicals has an impact on the bodies of these families and my work talks about that. There are also questions surrounding consumer society, globalization through different brands, the banana of Penja being much appreciated in the same way as a branded shoe or a sports car, the ubiquity of religion, the working of the land and trade. Above all else, this project is a work about these people of Haut-Penja and their daily lives.