

Featured Artist

Cyprien Tokoudagba



Houéda vodoun dangbé, 2007, acrylic on canvas, 51 x 69 5/16in (129.5 x 176cm)

A painter whose career was largely focused on wall paintings, Tokoudagba is credited with restoring the National Museum of Abomey and the palace of King Glele, and throughout his lifetime painted a number of Vodun buildings, temples and institutions in his native Benin. His wall-based work - both in fresco and relief - paid tribute to the rich cultural heritage of Beninese and Vodun art, depicting symbolic and religious figures in a distinct style that was at once identifiable for its origins, yet uniquely his own. In 1989 he created a series of non-commissioned works on canvas that freely interspersed the symbols of the King of Abomey, religious iconography, cultural objects and the Four Elements. These enigmatic paintings were a departure not towards the secular per se, but perhaps away from specific historical or religious tribute and towards an artistic autonomy in his work. These paintings were exhibited as part of the "Magicians of the Earth" exhibition in the Pompidou in Paris in 1989, and his canvas based work was subsequently exhibited internationally until his death in 2012.