



Vodou Scene

Date

1950-1959

Primary Maker

Préfète Duffaut

Medium

Oil on masonite

Description

This painting depicts a figure, most likely the artist Préfète Duffaut himself, performing a ritual to invite the lwa, the primary spirits of Vodou, into his life to help him achieve greatness. Vodou is an African diasporic religious practice and worldview that developed during the Atlantic slave trade, the product of the merging of West and Central African religions and Roman Catholicism. The white vèvè, or symbol, that can be seen on the bottom right is drawn during a ritual to invoke the lwa and compel specific spirits to reveal themselves. The three snakes that appear in the painting are manifestations of the divine energies of two of the most important lwa, Damballah, the powerful serpent deity, and his partner spirit Ayida Wedo, known as the Rainbow Serpent. The two snakes that appear from the bottom of the central figure's clothing in place of legs suggest that this sacred energy is fundamental to the artist's progression in life, while the green snake emerging from his upper chest symbolizes supreme knowledge and wisdom, the result of these energies combined. By depicting these snakes together, Duffaut collapses different stages of spiritual progression into one image, showing himself in the process of undertaking a ritual, moving toward greatness, and having attained what he seeks. This painting is also a depiction of a ritual and part of the ceremony itself: these images and symbols carry such energy that the painting serves as a tool for manifestation.

Dimensions

Overall: 23 × 10 in. (58.4 × 25.4 cm) Frame: 25 3/4 × 11 3/4 × 2 in. (65.4 × 29.8 × 5.1 cm)