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Papay Solomon

**DILUTING DREAMS:
PORTRAIT OF ALLESENE NTWALI**



DILUTING DREAMS: PORTRAIT OF ALLESENE NTWALI (2017, oil on canvas, mirror, 40 x 40 in.)

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Allesene Ntwali (b. 1996) is a prolific basketball player, born in Rwanda. Before immigrating to the United States with his family in 2005, Allesene lived in Uganda for nearly a year. As the oldest of five siblings, he had to mature faster than his brothers and sisters. Upon graduating high school in 2015, Allesene received an athletic scholarship to Grand Canyon University but had to take a break from school the following year. Currently, Allesene is a father to a one-year-old daughter and is working towards becoming a businessman.

The colorful garment that Allesene is wearing is referred to as a wrapper, *lappa*, or *pagne*. It is widely worn in west Africa by both men and women. It can simply be tied around the head as a head-wrap, around the waist, and also fully tailored. The *lappa*, as Liberians refer to it, can be used formally or informally; its formality depends on the fabric used to create it. Solomon is using this garment in such a way that reads as a bandanna to most westerners.

Papay Solomon is a Phoenix-based artist who is best known for his meticulous and guileless investigation of identity, culture, migration and multilingualism through paintings, sculptures, and videos of young African emigres. As a Liberian war refugee born in Guinea, in 1993, Solomon was raised between borders. At the age of five, his family ended up in a refugee camp where he discovered his artistic abilities. In 2008, his family migrated to the United States where he completed his secondary education. Solomon studied at Herberger Institute of Design and Arts at ASU (BFA, 2018) and he was named the Outstanding Undergraduate student of his class. He is also a recipient of the Contemporary Forum Emerging Artist Grant from the Phoenix Art Museum, the Erni Cabat Award from the Tucson Museum of Art, and a few others.