


Director's Statement

A photograph of a vineyard during harvest. In the foreground, there are rows of grapevines with green and yellowing leaves. In the middle ground, a person wearing a dark shirt and a wide-brimmed hat is bent over, working in the vines. In the background, a tractor is visible, and the landscape is hazy with rolling hills under a bright sky with lens flare effects.

I have wanted to film the grape harvest in Tuchan, my village in France, for over twenty years. The gift of the pandemic gave me this chance.

No one could leave France for months during 2020, and when I arrived I had no equipment with me, so I borrowed an old camera and made do with what I had which meant I had to work alone, against elements such as wind, rain, and blinding sun while running from one side of the vines to another.

However, Tuchan's nature is a living portrait. I had a perfect backdrop, a tapestry of sounds and colours. Visually rich, dense with different light, and abundant with heavy vines. Entwined is the vibrancy, mystery and wonderful moments of hilarity with the grapepickers which was so delightful to film.

The *vendangeurs* - *pickers* in Alain Perez's team are locals and migrant travellers. They start their day at 7.30 am and finish around 4.30 pm. For three weeks they work, side-by-side climbing the stoney paths tucked away along winding mountain hillocks which lead to his vines, often only assessable by foot. The sun blasts, then the rains come and mists; a chill in the air, to blazing heat again. Tempestuous and volatile. This Cathar land produces an earthy heavy wine of 14 degrees called *Fitou*.





How to document my friends without being intrusive?

I decided to stand back and watch and gently dance around them as they worked. It was paramount that I was there for the entire pick, for this is where the story is formed. The essence of documentary filmmaking is TIME, and where magic happens.

I thank them for the proximity they allowed. I thank them for their generosity in sharing their moments of intimacy and accepting the camera and never forcing anything for me and allowing me this privilege to document them so closely.