



circle art gallery



Addis Contemporary

17 June - 12 July 2015

## Circle Art Gallery

Circle Art Gallery aims to be the foremost exhibition space in East Africa. We exhibit carefully curated, challenging and thought-provoking contemporary art, and provide a venue for presentations from local and international artists, curators, art critics, collectors and academics.

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### Opening times:

weekdays 10am – 5pm, weekends 11am – 4pm

or by appointment outside these hours, closed on public holidays

Dawit Abebe  
Nebiat Abebe  
Dawit Adnew  
Kerima Ahmed  
Surafel Amare  
Tesfaye Bekele  
Dereje Demissie  
Addis Gezahegn  
Tamrat Gezahegn  
Yosef Lule  
Ephrem Solomon

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Painting has always been the predominant medium for artists in Ethiopia. The development of the modern art movement in the country can be traced to the deeply rooted and influence of church paintings. However, in every generation, artists have addressed socio-cultural, historic, economic and political issues and this is even more evident in the contemporary art scene.

As most contemporary artists live and work in Addis, their work depicts what is happening all over Ethiopia; the turbulence caused by the dramatic development and transformation of the country. These changes are a source of inspiration for most of the artists exhibited

The 11 artists showing in the exhibition 'Addis Contemporary' at the Circle Art Gallery, Nairobi describe their experience of a fast changing Addis during this critical period of its history. Through imaginative, conceptual and perceptual frameworks, the happenings in the city can be traced in their art:

Dawit Abebe's concepts of *In Between*; Yosef Lule's *Past + Future*; Tesfaye Bekele's *Cross Roads*; Surafel Amare's impressions arising from banana displays; Addis Gezahegn's nostalgic fantasies of *Old Town* and Ephrem Solomon's social commentary are critical reflections of Addis life.

Other artists' work reflect more artistic preoccupations: Dawit Adnew's obsession for patterns; Kerima Ahmed's portrayal of contorted forms; Nebiat Abebe's exploration of movement, light and balance; Dereje Demissie's search for the link between identity and landscape and Tamrat Gezahegn's meditation on indigenous knowledge and practice.

There is a large community of artists in Addis who persevere despite a still-limited art audience in the country. Exhibitions like 'Addis Contemporary' that address the essence of the contemporary art scene of Addis in depth, will create a new platform to expose Ethiopian artists who have not received proper attention either at home or abroad.

It is my belief that a lot will come out of 'Addis Contemporary'!

Mifta Zeleke, Curator

## አዲስ ዘመንኛ

በኢትዮጵያ የሥነ-ጥበብ ታሪክ የቀለም ቅብ ለዘመናት የዘለቀ ኪነ-ቁስ ነው። በዘመናዊው የኢትዮጵያ የሥነ-ጥበብ እንቅስቃሴና እድገት ውስጥም የቤተ-ክርስቲያን የቀለም ቅብ ሥራዎች ስር የሰደደና ወሳኝ ተጽዕኖ አላቸው። ሆኖም ግን በእያንዳንዱ ዘመናዊ የኢትዮጵያ የሥነ-ጥበብ ታሪክ ውስጥ ያለፉ ሠዓልያን የሃገሪቱን ማህበራዊ፣ ባሕላዊ፣ ታሪካዊ፣ ኤኮኖሚያዊና ፖለቲካዊ ርዕስ ነገሮችን ሲያነሱ ቆይተዋል። ይህ ደግሞ በዘመንኛው የኢትዮጵያ ሥነ-ጥበብ ሂደትና ዓውድ ውስጥ በአያሌው ይንጸባረቃል። አብዛኛዎቹ የሃገራችን ዘመንኛ ሠዓልያን ኑሮና ሥራቸው በመዲናችን የመሆኑን ያህል ተመስጦና ከናዊ አትኩሮታቸው በከተማዋና በሃገሪቱ እየታየ ካለው ክስተት ላይ ያተኩራል ይመነጫል። የኢትዮጵያችን የእድገትና የለውጥ ትዕይንታዊ ነውጥ በቀጥታም ሆነ በተዘዋዋሪ፣ ሲያልፍም ሆነ ሲያገድም፣ ዕይታዊ-እውነታዊ-ሃሳባዊም በሆነ መንገድ ይከተራቸዋል። የጥበባዊ መነቃቂያ ምንጭና መዳረሻ በመሆን ለአያሌዎቹ የሃገራችን ዘመንኛ ሠዓልያን የማርያም መንገድ እየሆነ ይገኛል።

ይህ በኬንያ ናይሮቢ፣ በሰርክል አርት ጋለሪ የተከወነው የአስራ አንዱ ሠዓልያን ‘አዲስ ዘመንኛ’ የተሰኘው ትርዒት ሠዓልያኑ ወሳኝ በሆነ የታሪክ ምዕራፍ ላይ የምትገኘው የአዲስ አበባ ልምዳቸውንና ከተማዋና ሃገሪቱ ውስጥ በመኖራቸው ያዳበሩትን እሳቤ አንጸባራቂ ነው። ሃሳባዊ ምጥቀትን፣ ስሌተ-ሃሳብንና ስሜትን የሚከተሉ ሃሳቦቻቸውን መሰረት በማድረግ የኪነ-ቅብ ሥራዎቻቸውን ፈለግ ከከተማዋና ከሃገሪቱ ነባራዊ ክስተቶች ጋር የሚወራረሱበትን መስመሮች መንቀስ ይቻላል።

የዳዊት አበበ ‘በመሃከል’ ፣ የዮሴፍ ሉሴ ያለፈው + የወደፊቱ ፣ የተስፋዬ በቀለ ‘ጥልፍልፍ መንገዶች’ ፣ የሱራሬል አማረ ‘የመዝ ድርድሮች’ ፣ የአዲስ ገዛኝኝ ህልማዊና ትዝታዊ ‘ያረጁ ከተሞች’ እንዲሁም የኤፍሬም ሰለሞን ማህበረሰብ ተኮር አስተያየቶች ሁሉ በአዲስ አበባና በኢትዮጵያ ያለውን የሕይወት ገጽ ሠዓልያኑ ከሚሰማቸውና ከሚያስቡት ማዕቀፍ በመነሳት የሰላ ሂሳቸውን ያንጸባረቁበት ስሌተ-ሃሳባዊ የሥነ-ጥበብ ሥራዎቻቸውን እነሆ በረከት ብለዋል።

የሌሎቹ ሠዓልያን ሥራዎች ይበልጡት ወደ ሥነ-ጥበባዊ ዝንባሌዎቻቸው በማተኮር ከላይ የተጠቀሰውን የመዲናችንንና የሃገራችንን እውነታዎች እንድናሰላስል፣ እንድናዘጋጅና እንድናስተነትን እድል የሚሰጡ ናቸው። ዳዊት አድነው ለተሰናኙ የመስመሮች የቀለማትና የቅርጾችን ውህደት ለመጠቆም የሚያሳዩው መብሰክሰክ፣ ከሪማ አህመድ ለተርጎረባበጡና ለተጠመዘዘዙ ዝርገ-ቅርጾች የምትሰጠው አጽንኦት፣ ነቢያት አበበ እንቅስቃሴ ብርሃንና ሚዛን ላይ የምታደርጋቸው ዳሰሳዎች፣ ደረጃ ደምሴ በሰው ልጅ ማንነትና በመልክዓ-ምድር መሃከል ያለውን ቁርኝት ለመግለጥ ሚያከናውናቸው ሙከራዎችና ጥናቶች፣ ታምራት ገዛኝኝ ሃገር በቀል ዕውቀት ጥበባትና ተግባራቶች ላይ የሚያቀብሉን ተመስጦቶቹ ሁሉ ከከተማችንና ከሃገራችን ወቅታዊ ሁኔታ በመነሳትና ኃያል የሥነ-ጥበብ ተሰጥኦቻቸውን በመጠቀም ቀላልና ወዛም በሆነ የሥነ-ጥበብ ለዛ ከፍታቸውን እንድንቋደስ የጥበብ ሥራዎቻቸውን እንካችሁ ብለውናል።

የሥነ-ጥበብ ተመልካችና አድናቂ በእጅጉ ውስን በሆነባት በኢትዮጵያችንና በአዲስ አበባችን ለሙያቸው በጽንኦት የቆሙ በርካታ ሠዓልያን ይገኛሉ። ስለ ዘመንኛው የሃገራችን ሥነ-ጥበብ በጥልቀት የሚዘጋጁ እንደ ‘አዲስ ዘመንኛ’ ፣ ያሉ ትርዒቶች በሃገር ቤትም ሆነ በባህር ማዶ ተገቢውን ትኩረት ለተነፈገው ለዘመንኛው የኢትዮጵያ ሥነ-ጥበብና ለሠዓልያኑ አዲስና አማራጭ መድረክ ከመፍጠር አኳያ ታላቅ ሚና ይጫወታሉ።

‘ አዲስ ዘመንኛ’ ፣ ለአያሌ ትሩፋቶች በር ከፋች እንደሚሆንም በጽኑ አምናለሁ!

ሚፍታ ዘለቀ፣ የሥነ-ጥበብ ትርዒት አጋፋሪ

(ሰኔ 2007 ዓ.ም)

## Dereje Demissie



Dereje Demissie, *Belonging*, acrylic on canvas, 200 x 100 cm

Dereje Demissie was born in Addis Ababa in 1982. He graduated from the Addis Ababa University, Alle School of Fine Arts and Design in 2002 in Mural Art and in 2012 received a BFA in Painting. He has been a studio artist in the Nubia Visual Art Studio since 2002. Dereje has participated in various group shows in Ethiopia, Uganda, Sudan, Dubai and Germany and has had three solo shows in Ethiopia. Dereje's experiments with various media such as murals, sculpture and mosaic has enabled him to enrich his artistic experience. Scrutinizing the essence of the relationship between landscape and identity is his inspiration.

“One’s identity is highly influenced by the landscape where one lives. The notions of belongingness are deeply rooted in our being; our relationship with landscape proves to be part of our identity.”

Dereje Demissie



## Addis Gezahegn



**Addis Gezahegn**, *The end of Summer*, acrylic and collage on canvas, 110 x 95 cm

Addis Gezahegn was born in 1979 in Addis Ababa. He graduated from the Addis Ababa University, Alle School of Fine Arts and Design with Diploma in Graphic Design. In 2011, he returned to the school and graduated with a BFA from the same department. Addis has had four solo shows and participated in thirteen group shows in Ethiopia and one in New York. Addis has been a studio artist at the Ethiopiawi Art Studio since 2001.

“Towards the Old Towers, with mother earth giving off heat, one sees a mirage of floating towers; blurred elements of human evolution, growth, chaos and timelessness that intermingle to create a dizzy mirage in one’s being.”

Addis Gezahegn

## Tesfaye Bekele



**Tesfaye Bekele**, *Searching for Life*, acrylic on canvas, 50 x 50 cm

Tesfaye Bekele was born in 1982. He graduated from the Addis Ababa University, Alle School of Fine Arts and Design in 2011 with a BFA in Art Education. Tesfaye currently teaches at the same school and has participated in numerous art exhibitions and activities in Ethiopia and abroad. Most of his earth-muted paintings map out abstract landscapes from a topological viewpoint, to show how nature is being intruded on by humans and how we can trace different stories and dramas on earth.

“The most important point for me is creating connections and starting conversations with my physical space and then converting it to a surreal space. This dream space is a place for me to reflect on memories and translate them into physical echoes.”

Tesfaye Bekele

## Tamrat Gezahegn



**Tamrat Gezahegn**, *Adorn Nude IV, VI, I & VII*, acrylic on canvas, 40 x 40 cm

Tamrat Gezahegn was born in 1997 in Addis Ababa. He graduated from the Addis Ababa University, Alle School of Fine Arts and Design in 2000 with a Diploma in Painting. He is the founding member of Netsa Art Village. As well as various exhibitions in Ethiopia, Tamrat has shown his works in Egypt, Germany, Spain, USA, UAE and Sweden. Tamrat's work as an artist ranges from his studio practice, landscape and portrait painting to installation and performance. However, his enthusiastic research on indigenous knowledge has inculcated his meditations for some time.

"The enlightened one enables the culture, the societal knowledge and aura of the society to be the counterpart of his life; my art aspires to be part of the journey."

Tamrat Gezahegn

## Ephrem Solomon



**Ephrem Solomon**, *Untitled (Forbidden Fruit)*, acrylic and woodcut plate, 80 x 80 cm

Ephrem Solomon was born in Addis Ababa and graduated from the Entoto Art School in 2009. He observes and presents socio-political works using woodcut and mixed media. Views of the city and the people that inhabit the spaces around him inform his work, as does a fictional world that exists beyond the present. Using black and white to symbolize this ambiguous juncture in reality, he produces bold figures and portraits that capture both personal and public power relations in society.

The Forbidden Fruit series presented here, explores and celebrates the importance of living in the moment. The figures that look to the left, are focused on the past, those facing the right are looking to the present whilst those facing the front are confronting the present. The repetitive motifs resemble natural patterns found in nature; where the beginning and end are difficult to establish. From birth to death, life's journey creates shapes as we make decisions and coincidences and accidents take place. The works remain untitled to allow for limitless readings.



## Kerima Ahmed



**Kerima Ahmed**, *Untitled*, acrylic on canvas, 100 x 100 cm

Kerima Ahmed was born in Addis Ababa. She graduated from the Addis Ababa University, Alle School of Fine Arts and Design in 2002 with a Diploma in Painting. Kerima has participated in more than twenty group exhibitions in Ethiopia, Djibouti, Uganda, Sudan, USA and France. She has been a studio artist at the Nubia Visual Art Studio since 2002. Kerima's practice ranges from painting landscapes to depicting aspects of daily life and the interplay of contorted forms with figures and objects.

"My entire endeavour in the arts is exposing my emotions and ideas that I obtain from the daily life."

Kerima Ahmed

## Nebiat Abebe



**Nebiat Abebe**, *Untitled III*, acrylic on canvas, 110 x 130 cm

Nebiat Abebe was born in Addis Ababa. She graduated from the Addis Ababa University, Alle School of Fine Arts and Design in 1999 in Painting. She is currently a studio artist based in Addis Ababa. Nebiat has had three solo shows in Addis and ten group shows in Ethiopia and Belgium. Her compassion for the life she perceives is reflected in diverse perspectives in her work.

"What I feel and think about life is depicted in my works. I communicate through using forms of movement; arising out of my observations of life."

Nebiat Abebe

## Dawit Adnew



**Dawit Adnew**, *Characters I*, acrylic on canvas, 80 x 73 cm

Dawit Adnew was born in Addis Ababa in 1973. He graduated from the Addis Ababa University, Alle School of Fine Arts and Design in 1995 with a Diploma in Graphics. He worked at Adwa Textile Factory as a professional printing designer where he implemented flat form art techniques. He was a member of the Kitab Studio where the interactions with members of the studio enriched his career. Dawit is also a founding member of Netsa Art Village where he experimented with found objects and recycling, making work from plastic bottles. Dawit has participated in more than thirty group shows and one solo exhibition in Ethiopia and Uganda.

“My inspiration arises from movements, I always perceive movements in patterns, forms and colour. My intention is to transform this perception into paintings using visual language.”

Dawit Adnew

## Surafel Amare



**Surafel Amare**, *Shemsu's Kiosk*, oil on canvas, 90 x 70 cm

Surafel Amare was born in 1987 in Gondar. He graduated from Addis Ababa University, Alle School of Fine Arts and Design in 2010 with BFA in Graphic Design. He has participated in ten group shows and one solo show in Ethiopia.

“My art is an attempt to breathe life into the mechanically arranged nature of our world; it's about revealing the hidden, to nourish the spirit by creating rhythm from the redundancy through the depiction arising out of the day to day life.”

Surafel Amare



## Yosef Lule



**Yosef Lule**, *Past + Future I*, oil on canvas, 100 x 70 cm

Yosef Lule was born in 1978. He graduated from the Addis Ababa University, Alle School of Fine Arts and Design in 2001 with Diploma in Painting. He is co-founder of the Habesha Art Studio established since 2001. He has had five solo exhibitions in Ethiopia and France and has participated in twenty nine group shows in Ethiopia, Switzerland, France and the US. Yosef's present day concepts deal with the recent changes in Addis Ababa.

For Yosef, the changing faces of Addis have led him to develop several mathematical equations that question and reflect in his work. Here are some of them:

"Human made forms - natural forms = horizontal and vertical forms

Future City + Our Existing Social Life = ?

Culture + Believing + Life Style + Social Life + Identity + Identities + Job Type = ?"

## Dawit Abebe



**Dawit Abebe**, *In Between I*, oil on canvas, 180 x 140 cm

Dawit Abebe graduated from the Addis Ababa University School of Fine Art and Design with a Diploma in painting, sculpture, graphics, photography and industrial design. Since 2001, he has been a member of the Habesha Art Studio in Addis Ababa. Abebe's solo exhibitions include 'X Privacy' at the Alliance Ethio-Francaise, Addis Ababa in 2012.

Group shows include the touring exhibition 'Silver Sea Cross-Ship' in 2013-2014 as well as the display of the Habesha Art Collection at the National Museum in Addis Ababa in 2014, along with exhibitions in France, the UAE, and the USA. His work features in the Saatchi Collection and a solo exhibition opened at Kristin Hjellegjerde gallery in London in March 2015.

## Circle Art Gallery

Circle is an art agency set-up to provide a highly professional consultancy service for art institutions and the contemporary art market. We are passionate about contemporary East African art.

Through our gallery, advisory service and annual auction we aim to give the region's most talented artists greater visibility and opportunities, ultimately increasing access to the region's lively and fast-developing art scene.

## Collecting Art

Circle offers individuals and corporations advice on creating, presenting and managing an art collection. We source appropriate works of art and give curatorial advice on the installation, presentation, storage and cataloguing of a collection. We are able to advise clients on art philanthropy and sponsorship of the arts.

We spend time with clients gaining an understanding of their particular taste and requirements, introducing them to artists, exhibitions and events that they might not otherwise encounter. We act on a client's behalf in negotiations to ensure prices are at market value and act in the strictest confidence on the dispersal of whole collections or individual works.

## Commissioning Art

Circle is the first company in Kenya to provide an advisory and management service for commissioning art. We believe that urban and domestic environments should be enhanced by well-considered artworks that relate to the social and cultural experiences of the viewer. Circle supports artists creating landmark pieces for our clients that provide interest and entertainment to locals, visitors and workers.

## Artists

Circle works with both emerging and established artists across East Africa. We have a large artist database, wide networks across the region and have shown over 150 artists in the last 2 years.

We are always looking for new and exciting research-based art, visiting artists' studios regularly, attending regional and international events that relate to contemporary African art exhibitions. We are currently working with artists in the East African region: Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Sudan, Rwanda and Burundi.



inside back cover: **Addis Gezahegn**, *Floating Tower*, acrylic and collage on canvas, 80 x 60 cm  
back cover: **Tesfaye Bekele**, *Itibit III (Umbilical cord)*, acrylic on canvas, 50 x 50 cm





circle art agency

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