

# Addis Fine Art

Addis Ababa / London

Art Dubai | 21 - 24 March 2018 | Booth A13

***Paintings by Wosene Worke Kosrof & Photography by Girma Berta***



Wosene Worke Kosrof, *America: The New Alphabet*, 2017 Acrylic on canvas 200 x 355 cm. Image Courtesy of the artist and Addis Fine Art.

Addis Fine Art is pleased to announce our inaugural participation in Art Dubai, Contemporary 2018. As the very first gallery from Ethiopia to ever take part in Art Dubai, we are delighted to present works by two leading Ethiopian artists from opposite ends of the generational spectrum. Wosene Worke Kosrof (b.1950) and Girma Berta (b.1990) are two internationally renowned artists whose artistic practices are informed heavily by their experiences with Ethiopia.

Addis Fine Art will present an artist-led talk, “WordPlay: The Art of Wosene Worke Kosrof” as a part of Art Dubai’s VIP Program on Friday 23 March 2018 from 2:30-3:30 pm, where the artist will discuss his art practice and featured current series. This two-person exhibition of works by Wosene Worke Kosrof and Girma Berta presented by Addis Fine Art will be on display at Art Dubai, Contemporary 2018 at Booth A13 from 21-24 March 2018.

In 1972, Wosene received a degree with distinction in painting, drawing, and design from the School of Fine Arts in Addis Ababa. In 1980, he took his MFA in painting and drawing from Howard University in Washington, D.C., where he studied under the sponsorship of the Ford Foundation. Since the early 1970s, Wosene has been an actively practicing studio artist in both painting and sculpture; he has spent considerable time in America. He is the first painter to transform Ethiopian Amharic script forms into what can be described as contemporary abstraction. The painter’s career, spanning four decades, has encompassed five major painting series: “Graffiti Magic” (1980-87); “Africa: The New Alphabet” (1988-94); “Color of Words” (1995-2003); “Words: From Spoken to

Seen” (2004-08); and the current sequence, entitled “WordPlay” (2009-present). Interestingly, Wosene’s creativity adjoins American painting without fully belonging to it. The Amharic script he orchestrates in his art is original enough visually to establish a style that originates outside of American painting culture. Wosene is also influenced by American jazz, its improvisational depth and its ongoing innovation as a contemporary art forum.

Girma Berta is an award-winning young artist based in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. In 2016, Berta won the Getty Images Instagram Award. In 2017, he was given the CAP Prize. Both awards demonstrate the growing interest in and admiration for Berta’s photos, which merge street art with a fine art conceptualism. His recent series “Moving Shadows I and II” consists of isolated persons, often carrying bundles, set against a large field of a single color. Berta works digitally in both the formulation and the presentation of his photos. But his art is hardly distant, in either a technical or emotional sense. His esthetic, as he has expressed it, is direct: he wishes to capture what he calls “the beautiful, the ugly, and all that is in between.” Working in Addis Ababa, Berta confirms the immediacy and depth of experience where he lives. Images may portray people given to manual work or clothed in traditional dress, but the isolation of the figures, intensified by the single-color background behind them, can be read as an imaginative statement as well as a documentary one. Berta’s esthetic can be described as visionary and globally aware. His view of things may start in the specificities of his life in Ethiopia, but he conveys an awareness that moves far beyond that.

In 2016, Wosene put up a solo show at Skoto Gallery in New York City, and the year before, he had a single-person show at the Gallery of Fine Art (GAFRA) in London. Also in 2015, Wosene had a solo show in Japan, in Kochi. Other solo exhibitions have occurred in Mexico, the United Arab Emirates, and the National Museum of Ethiopia in Addis Ababa. His work has been reviewed by the New York Times, the Washington Post, and the Financial Times, as well as the San Francisco Chronicle, Winston-Salem Journal, and the Philadelphia Tribune. Museums with his works in their permanent collections include the National Museum of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa; the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art (DC); the Newark Museum (NJ); the Neuberger Museum (NY); the Indianapolis Museum of Art (IN); the Birmingham Museum of Art (AL); and the Fowler Museum of UCLA (CA).

Berta’s photographs have been widely exhibited - in La Gacilly Photo Festival (2017); in Nataal/Red Hook Labs New York (2017); and in the Cape Town Art Fair (2017). Other shows in which the artist has participated include PhotoVille New York (2016, 2015); the Look Festival (2016); the 1:54 Contemporary Art Fair London (2016); the Also Known as Contemporary Art Fair Paris (2016); and the Bamako Photo Fest (2015). In addition to winning the Getty Images Instagram Award and the CAP Prize, Bert was asked to participate in the New York Times Portfolio Review in 2017.

## **Addis Fine Art**

Founded by Mesai Haileleul and Rakeb Sile, Addis Fine Art is a gallery specializing in contemporary African art, with a particular focus on art from Ethiopia and its diaspora. In January 2016, AFA opened its main gallery space in the heart of Addis Ababa, launching an innovative programme of exhibitions, talks and events. In October 2016, AFA opened a project space in London, to provide an additional international platform for the gallery’s artist and programme. Addis Fine Art is quickly becoming the leading gallery in the region and continues to strengthen its cross-continental presence at prominent art-fairs, supporting its artists in exhibitions around the globe.

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