

# WORKING GIRLS

Michael Tsegaye

22 June – 14 July

Opening reception: Thursday 21 June 2018, 6-8 pm  
Addis Fine Art Project Space, 47-50 Margaret Street W1W 8SB, London



Michael Tsegaye, *Working Girls II, IX*, 2009 60 x 90 cms, Edition of 5+1AP

Addis Fine Art is proud to present Michael Tsegaye's important photographic series, 'Working Girls', which documents the lives of a group of female sex workers in Addis Ababa, at the AFA project space at TAFETA 47 – 50 Margaret Street, London, UK between 22 June – 14 July 2018.

Ethiopia has recently seen unprecedented economic growth, with its capital being home to some of the fastest rates of urbanisation and development in the world; yet amongst its impressive achievements lies a darker reality: a conspicuous and burgeoning illicit sex trade. It is within this context that Tsegaye's remarkable take on documenting the lives of sex workers became a reality.

For two weeks, Tsegaye coexisted with a group of women in their claustrophobic, dingy communal homes. Finding them in a state of stillness and vulnerability, in a deeply intimate environment, he spent full days with them. Arriving in the morning and leaving after dark when they started work, he won their trust and approval, before taking the sensitive and striking images. The resultant black and white photographs, speak of this trust that developed

between the spectator and observed subject, as the photographer's presence is reticent. When the women in the candle-lit rooms look directly at the lens, they ostensibly look at observer and not at the camera. The intractability of his subject-matter is reflected by the low angle shots of the series, many of which hesitate to move above waist level, refusing to tower over these women in an overbearing manner as a client might outside these walls. This, however, only offers a snapshot of the wider setting, and when the backdrop is observable it is dominated by the opaque darkness, which makes up the majority of the space. This alludes heavily to the oppressive and dangerous circumstances in which they find themselves. In spite of this, the darkness is juxtaposed with a constant reminder of the importance of a family atmosphere in the face of adversity.

Tsegaye's purpose is simply to be the vehicle transporting the story to the observer.

**Michael Tsegaye** (b.1975), is arguably the most important Ethiopian photographer of his generation, has lived and worked in the capital Addis Ababa his entire life. Tsegaye originally trained as a painter and received his diploma from Addis Ababa University's School of Fine Art in 2002. As a fine art photographer, Tsegaye's work has an attentive voice in recording and documenting the change and shifting typography of his country. His style is a product of his own personal aesthetic and his long-term historic approach to his work.

**Addis Fine Art** - Founded by Mesai Haileleul and Rakeb Sile, Addis Fine Art (AFA) is a gallery specialising 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.

**For more information or interview requests please contact Rakeb Sile at [raku@addisfineart.com](mailto:raku@addisfineart.com).**

IMAGE DOWNLOAD LINK: <https://we.tl/cgnXkPQqqp>



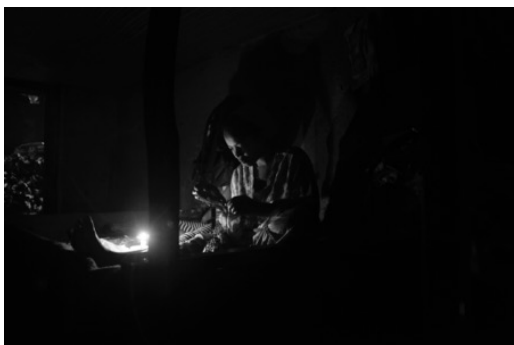
Michael Tsegaye  
*Working Girls II, IX*  
2009  
Digital archival print  
60x90 cm  
Courtesy of the Artist & Addis Fine Art



Michael Tsegaye  
*Working Girls II, XI*  
2009  
Digital archival print  
60x90 cm  
Courtesy of the Artist & Addis Fine Art



Michael Tsegaye  
*Working Girls II, XXI*  
2009  
Digital archival print  
60x90 cm  
Courtesy of the Artist & Addis Fine Art



Michael Tsegaye  
*Working Girls II, XXIII*  
2009  
Digital archival print  
60x90 cm  
Courtesy of the Artist & Addis Fine Art

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