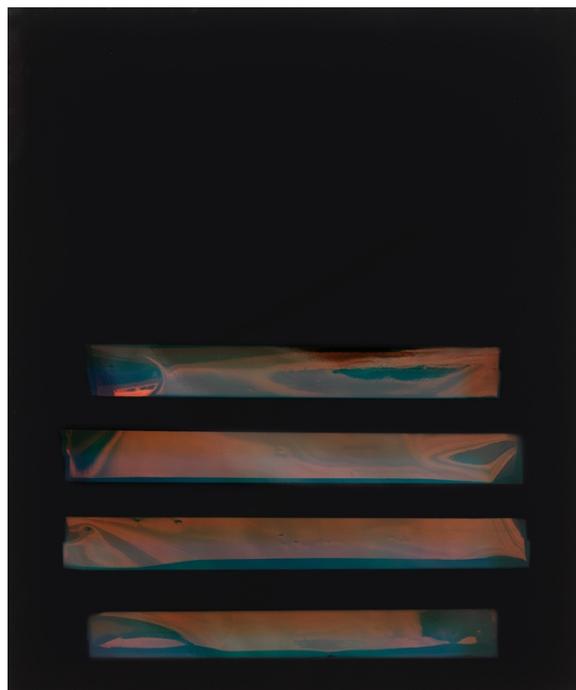


# TARIKU SHIFERAW

## VOLTA NY | Booth B11

Pier 90, New York  
6 – 10 March 2019



Tariku Shiferaw, *Love (Kendrick Lamar)*, spray paint, iridescence film, vinyl, 61 x 51 cm, 2018

Addis Fine Art is thrilled to announce its inaugural participation at VOLTA NY 2019, presenting a solo exhibition by emerging artist, Tariku Shiferaw.

In the presented series, *“One of These Black Boys”* Shiferaw explores painting and societal structures through mark-making. Mark making in his words is “following in the traditional conversation of painting and making marks and gestures that interrogates the space. A mark, as physical and present as cave-markings, which says, “I am here” or “I was here.” It reveals the thinker behind the gesture - an evidence of prior markings of ideas and self onto the space. The identity of the mark-maker is equally important as the mark itself. Or else, the context can be blurred and forgotten behind the physical aesthetics.”

Taking the names of songs from Hip-Hop, R&B, Jazz, Blues, and Reggae music, Shiferaw makes paintings that embody the experiences and struggles expressed through music by Black artists and composers. He often explores a spectrum of topics ranging from the notion of Black bodies in a white social construct to the popular idioms of romance, sex, and daily life –

existence. Appropriating song titles as points of reference for his paintings, the works automatically inherit musical references, identities and histories. Every song used to title his paintings relays a story that refers to a specific reality. Shiferaw explains, "the piece titled, *If I Rule The World (Nas)*, embodies the 1996 track by Nas featuring Ms. Lauren Hill and what the song accomplished in the American society at the time of its release. It was poetic with deep content and spoke to current circumstance of the everyday life for the Black body. It was a song that helped imagine an alternative reality, similar to what Afrofuturism did in the visual arts world." It is important to understand that the works are not a visual representation of these songs. The titles are, in their own way, an addition to the physical mark-making, one of the many layers the paintings are composed of. Thus, Shiferaw utilizes repetitive patterns both aesthetically and conceptually. Subtle, yet intricate, the works inhabit a distinct space and powerful authority, acting as placeholders for Black bodies; they establish, quite literally, a way of being "seen" in a society that often prefers overlooking the "Other."

Using a variety of materials like tape, plastic, vinyl and wood, his works are formally minimal, and inherently abstract. Initially, the geometric horizontal and vertical bands were inspired by the forms of stacked shipping pallets he encountered on the streets of New York City. Then he began to think about music structures as well as censorship, which later translated to the censorship of Black existence. According to Adrienne Edwards, Curator at the Whitney Museum of American Art, abstraction traditionally wasn't perceived as an option for artists interested in "blackness". But Shiferaw is part of a growing group of Black artists using abstraction as a way to engage questions of equity, justice and race related questions but also to embed them in an art historical framework that was previously inaccessible. With his paintings of black bars rendered as elements within a cultural score, Shiferaw asserts, he does indeed belong here, in this tradition.

*One of These Black Boys*, in the artist's words, "interrogates the act of mark-making and the identity and role of the author of these marks. I use geometric forms because of their ambiguous nature. Placing these forms against the atavistic painterly gestures of art history's abstract movements results in marking oneself into a history that has largely been dominated by the white male. These marks act as redactions that refute that exclusionary discourse in the art world."

Shiferaw did not always make abstract works, but his encounter with a variety of cultures such as the "song-dance" patterns of Australian natives, the Islamic geometric patterns, and mid-nineteen-century geometric-abstraction within the western art world inspired him to investigate deeper in how these forms were used as a form of language and expression. His "*Mark Making*" series were his first steps into abstraction. He was working with patterns but not just for the sake of patterns. Exploring the meanings of patterns and symbols used in everyday life. The study of geometric forms led him eventually to the layered meanings of the symbol X. The use and Interpretation of this symbol in different cultures over the centuries have been countless. His current series "*One of These Black Boys*" evolved out of his explorations into the deconstruction of the symbol "X".

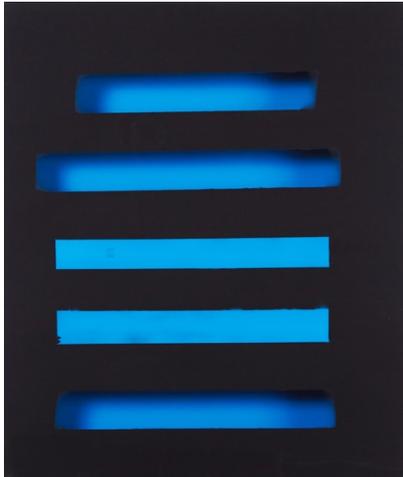
Raised in Los Angeles, Shiferaw earned his BFA from the University of Southern California. In 2015, he received his MFA from Parsons School of Design. Solo exhibitions include, *"This Ain't Safe"*, Cathouse Proper, New York (2018); *"Only God Can Judge Me"*, Vault Gallery, Montpelier, VT; *"Erase Me"*, at Addis Fine Art, London (2017); *"One Of These Black Boys"*, Anthony Philip Fine Art, New York (2017). Selected group exhibitions include *"Men of Change"*, with the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Service (upcoming 2019); *"To Dream Avant-Garde"*, Hammond Harkins Galleries, Ohio (2018); *"If I go there, I won't stay there"* Ltd Los Angeles, Los Angeles (2018); *Without Qualities*, Addis Fine Art at Private View, New York (2018); The 2017 Whitney Biennial as part of Occupy Museum's Debtfair; *"A Poet\*hical Wager"* at the Museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland (2017); Tariku is currently participating in the Independent Study Program at the Whitney Museum of American Art. His work has been featured in Hyperallergic, the Washington Post, and Art In America, among a variety of other publications. Shiferaw currently lives and works in New York.

### **Addis Fine Art**

Founded by Rakeb Sile and Mesai Haileleul, Addis Fine Art is the very first local space and international platform based in Ethiopia. The gallery focuses on highlighting fine art from the Horn of Africa region and its diaspora. In January 2016, Addis Fine Art opened its main gallery space in the heart of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia launching an innovative programme of exhibitions, talks and events, showing a diverse set of modern and contemporary artists from Ethiopia and the diaspora. In October 2016, the AFA Project Space was opened in London, to provide an additional international platform to the gallery's 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 press information contact Judith van Helden on [hello@addisfineart.com](mailto:hello@addisfineart.com)

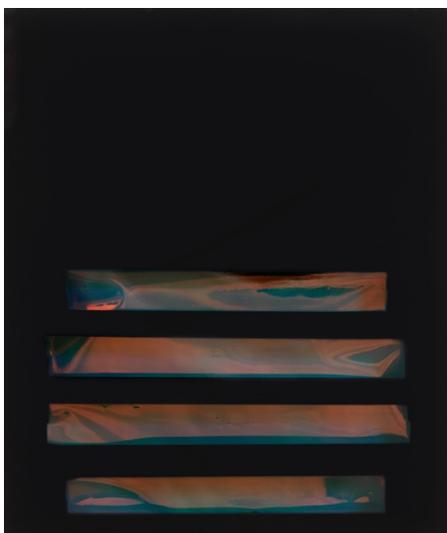
IMAGE DOWNLOAD LINK: <https://we.tl/t-IfykQZM3hT>



Tariku Shiferaw  
*Love Can Be (Vince Staples)*, 2018  
Spray paint, vinyl  
61 x 51 cm  
Courtesy of the artist and Addis Fine Art



Tariku Shiferaw  
*Black Friday (Kendrick Lamar and J Cole)*, 2018  
Spray paint, plastic, wood, screws  
80 x 76 x 8 cm  
Courtesy of the artist and Addis Fine Art



Tariku Shiferaw  
*Love (Kendrick Lamar)*, 2018  
Spray paint, iridescence film, vinyl  
61 x 51 cm  
Courtesy of the artist and Addis Fine Art