

## TADESSE MESFIN & ADDIS GEZEHAGN

Art Dubai | Booth C15

20 – 23 March 2019



Tadesse Mesfin, *Pillars of Life: Strength II*, 2019 150 x 120 cm

Addis Fine Art is pleased to return to Art Dubai for a second time to present an exciting joint exhibition by two Ethiopian artists; rising star Addis Gezehagn (b.1978) and his teacher, legendary modernist painter and veteran professor, Tadesse Mesfin (b.1953).

Mesfin's recent works are contemporary interpretations of frontal figures in columnar arrangements, influenced by ancient Egyptian sculptures and mythological drawings, infused with local colours, hinting at eastern Ethiopian cities like Harar. This sculptural arrangement celebrates the women who work as small-holder vendors in several markets around Ethiopian cities. These women typically sit with their goods laid out on the ground in front of them hoping for a custom from the crowd. These current works are reductive and minimal with the women being the sole inhabitants of the canvas. There is a rhythm, a playfulness, between these women, their neutral expressions welcoming interaction with the viewer.

Winner of the prestigious Mid-American Arts Alliance (MAAA) fellowship in 1998, Tadesse Mesfin attended the Addis Ababa University School of Fine Arts and Design where he was taught by Gebre Kristos Desta, receiving a Diploma with a distinction. He then attended the Repin Academy of Painting, Architecture & Sculpture in St. Petersburg, Russia in 1984, where he graduated with Honours in a Master of Fine Arts Degree in Painting. Tadesse Mesfin has spent the last thirty-three years teaching at the Alle School of Fine Art, where he has influenced a generation of painters including, Dawit Abebe, Merikokeb Berhanu and fellow Art Dubai exhibiter Addis Gezehagn.

In his *"Floating Cities"* series, Addis Gezehagn depicts dreamlike deconstructed and layered renderings of the urban landscapes rising above the ground. These compositions made by layering magazine cut outs with acrylic paint, blend the boundaries of fantasy and reality of urban life, blurring the lines between the past, present and future. Flattened and reductive, Gezehagn's works imagine cityscapes as towers, or patchworks of colourful doors and gates, the architectural structures seeming to signify a natural, organic network of living spaces. The rootless and ephemeral nature of the layered towers, call into question the lives of the inhabitants. Examining the personal and public spaces, the works archive walls and towers destined to crumble, tracing a pattern of classism and social injustice. Gezehagn's works urge us to think beyond homes as functional entities and offer commentary on the socio-economic context of urban life. Gezehagn currently lives and works in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

He graduated from the Alle School of Fine Arts and Design with a Diploma and BFA in 2011. He has long been a strong artistic presence in Addis Ababa, and is renowned for his abstracted portrayals of the multifaceted characteristics of the city's architectural structures. His first international showing was in 2017 at 1:54 Contemporary African Art Fair in London which was received with great acclaim. Since then, he has gone from strength to strength, garnering more international interest after having his first sold out solo show at Addis Fine Art's main gallery in Addis Ababa in 2018.

### **Addis Fine Art**

Founded by Rakeb Sile and Mesai Haileleul, Addis Fine Art is a pioneering gallery based in Addis Ababa and London. The very first local space and international platform based in Ethiopia, the gallery focuses on highlighting modern and contemporary fine art from the Horn of Africa region and its diasporas.

January 2016 saw the opening of the gallery's main space in the heart of Addis Ababa, launching its innovative programme of exhibitions, talks and events, showing a diverse set of modern and contemporary artists. In October 2016, the AFA Project Space was opened in London, to provide an additional international platform to the gallery's programme. Soon, the London programme will move to Cromwell Place, a first-of-its-kind exhibition space in Kensington, London.

Addis Fine Art has quickly become one of the leading galleries from Africa, facilitating critical engagement with the local and mainstream art markets, championing an underrepresented, yet rich space in modern and contemporary fine art.

**For more press information contact Raku Sile/Judith van Helden on [hello@addisfineart.com](mailto:hello@addisfineart.com).**

**IMAGE DOWNLOAD LINK:** <https://we.tl/t-W4l1rKe6IM>



Addis Gezehagn  
*Floating City XIII*, 2019  
Acrylic and paper on canvas  
170 x 150 cm  
Courtesy of the Artist and Addis Fine Art



Addis Gezehagn  
*White Floating Tower II*, 2019  
Acrylic and paper on canvas  
162 x 130 cm  
Courtesy of the artist and Addis Fine Art



Tadesse Mesfin  
*Pillars of Life: Grace II*, 2019  
Oil on canvas  
150 x 120 cm  
Courtesy of the artist and Addis Fine Art



Tadesse Mesfin  
*Pillars of Life: Market Day II*, 2019  
Oil on canvas  
130 x 180 cm  
Courtesy of the artist and Addis Fine Art