

BENEATH THE SURFACE: The Mysteries of Living and Dying

MERIKOKEB BERHANU

24 April – 11 May 2019 | Tues – Sun 12 - 6 PM
Opening Reception: Tuesday 23 April 2019, 6 - 9 PM

Addis Fine Art Project Space, 47-50 Margaret Street W1W 8SB, London



Merikokeb Berhanu, Untitled XLII, 2019, acrylic on canvas, 67 3/8 x 67 3/4 in, 171 x 172 cm

Addis Fine Art is pleased to present *Beneath the Surface: The Mysteries of Living and Dying*, Merikokeb Berhanu's second solo exhibition with the gallery. The show will take place at the Addis Fine Art Project Space in London, opening on Tuesday 23 April from 6 – 9 PM, and on view from 24 April to 11 May 2019, Tues – Sun 12 – 6 PM.

Merikokeb Berhanu (b.1977) creates an aloof, almost subterranean atmosphere in her paintings. An array of life bearing forms, such as orange seed pods, embryos, fallopian tubes, and pulsing cells, appear set against a vibrant coloured background of predominately intense blues and greens, forming surreal yet earthly structures. Merikokeb makes much of the vertical ascent of saplings, plants bursting through the surface, as well as the forces that resist and suppress their efforts. Both growth and decay appear in equal measure: a flower climbs through a dense rock, if only to blossom and droop into the appreciative embrace of an exhausted and bonelike human figure. Her work at once appears to be a celebration of these life-bearing forms, as well as something more decidedly complex - in her words, "*The life that we are passing through. The light, line, the complexity and density of what surrounds us, the thick fog and smoke, happiness and hope, misery and bliss.*" She deeply communicates the visual equivalent of her feelings and thoughts, wanting the viewer to 'hear' the images through their own visual power.

Merikokeb was born in Addis Ababa, where she attended the Addis Ababa University Fine Arts and Design School. She graduated in 2002 with a focus on mural design. Engaging with a long and deeply rooted tradition of Ethiopian painting, Merikokeb's works feature abstract forms and dense backgrounds, which interact with recurring organic symbols. Informed by the physical structures of Addis Ababa as well as the artist's psychological musings, the rich imagery within these works renders a complex understanding of contemporary personal and collective life through all-encompassing, complex compositions.

She currently lives and works in Maryland, USA. She previously worked from the Nubia studio, which she set up with a group of fellow artists. Nubia studio is a dynamic cultural centre and studio space in the heart of Addis Ababa. Her work has been shown at numerous exhibitions, including solo exhibitions at the Ethiopian National Museum (2011), RedHill Art Gallery, Nairobi (2015) and Addis Fine Art Gallery (2016). Her group showings include the 1.54 African Art Fair, London (2016, 2015), Art of Ethiopia, Sheraton Addis, Addis Ababa (2010, 2011, 2012, 2013), Art Lab Africa, Cape Town Art Fair, Cape Town (2017, 2015), My Self Portrait, Asni Gallery, Addis Ababa (2011), and Ashara, Laphto Gallery, Addis Ababa (2013).

Addis Fine Art

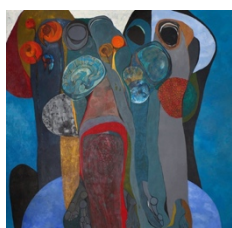
Founded by Rakeb Sile and Mesai Haileleul, Addis Fine Art is a pioneering gallery based in Addis Ababa and London. The very first local space and international platform based in Ethiopia, the gallery focuses on highlighting modern and contemporary fine art from the Horn of Africa region and its diasporas.

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.

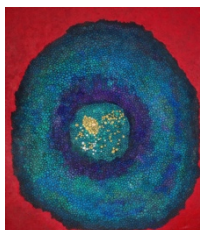
Addis Fine Art has quickly become one of the leading galleries from Africa, facilitating critical engagement with the local and mainstream art markets, championing an underrepresented, yet rich space in modern and contemporary fine art.

For more press information contact Raku Sile/Judith van Helden on hello@addisfineart.

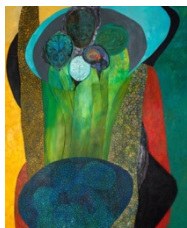
IMAGE DOWNLOAD LINK: <https://we.tl/t-r7GzphnwV5>



Merikokeb Berhanu
Untitled XLII, 2019
Acrylic on canvas
67 3/8 x 67 3/4 in
171 x 172 cm



Merikokeb Berhanu
Untitled XXXIII, 2019
Acrylic on canvas
57 7/8 x 50 in
147 x 127 cm



Merikokeb Berhanu
Untitled XXXVI, 2019
Acrylic on canvas
59 7/8 x 48 1/8 in
152 x 122 cm

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