



Atong Atem, *Ruth with Veil*, 2020 & Tadesse Mesfin, *Pillars of Life: Saturday Market VII*, 2021

Addis Fine Art X CFHILL Art Space Presents:

## **From Modern to Contemporary: Artists from the Horn of Africa and Diaspora**

Stockholm, Sweden

10 June - 17 August 2021

Addis Fine Art in partnership with CFHILL Art Space are pleased to present *From Modern to Contemporary: Artists from the Horn of Africa and Diaspora*, a multi-generational survey featuring artists of Ethiopian, Eritrean and Sudanese descent. These artists are brought together in CFHILL Art Space in Stockholm, for a first of its kind large-scale exhibition of artists hailing from this region of Africa to take place in Scandinavia. Nineteen artists' work will be on display, each of whom work in a range of mediums including sculpture, painting, textiles, video and photography.

In the past few decades, the international art world has responded to cultural pressure and turned its gaze to Africa. However, despite this surge of interest, artists hailing from the Horn of Africa are still largely overlooked. Addis Fine Art was founded in 2016 with precisely this raison d'être: to illuminate primarily artists from Ethiopia, but also from neighbouring countries which share cultural ties. It is at this key moment of interest in African contemporary art, that this exhibition shines a spotlight on some of the finest talents from this region and diaspora.

The exhibition is structured along thematic and chronological lines, divided into four sections: **The Modernists, The Contemporary (mid-career), The Diaspora, and Emerging Artists**. The CFHILL X Addis Fine Art collaboration is a continuation in CFHILL's exhibition programme, providing a large-scale platform to international curators, artists and galleries.

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The exhibition begins with **The Modernists**, the highly regarded Ethiopian artists who first emerged from the Alle School of Fine Arts and Design, the oldest art school in East Africa. Artists such as Tadesse Mesfin and Lulseged Retta began their careers as youthful and eager students who upon graduating were quickly confronted with a rapidly changing nation under the communist DERG regime. With the new regime came artistic restraints, but also opportunities with the possibility of studying in the USSR's art schools as the two communist states formed a cultural bridge between one another. Many Ethiopian artists opted to leave and study in the Soviet Union, where they adopted artistic influences and styles from their time in the USSR. Upon their return to Ethiopia, these artists would take up teaching positions at the university and set about moulding the next generation.

Many of the following generation of artists (**The Contemporary**) were taught by the Modernists. Male artists like Addis Gezehagn produced era-defining works, and a few female trailblazers such as painter Merikokeb Berhanu carved out careers in a male dominated art space. With very few accolades to be won at home, many artists eventually migrated to other countries with a more robust visual arts infrastructure. By the late 90s and early 2000s, artists like sculptor Adiskidan Ambaye, and painters Tesfaye Urgessa, Ermias Kifleyesus, and Nigatu Tsehay, moved to countries around the world and artists from the Horn of African began emerging in places as far-flung as Israel, Belgium, Germany, USA and elsewhere.

As a result of this mass migration, **The Diaspora** artists eventually emerged around the world. Artists such as Tariku Shiferaw, Helina Metaferia and Atong Atem use their art to negotiate the complex issues of identity and what it means to exist between two cultures as first, second diaspora, as well as contending with the realities of racial caste systems and migrant attitudes in the Western world.

Today a new vanguard of **Emerging Artists** are working and responding to a rapidly developing continent back at home. At the helm of this new movement are women artists in their 20s, including Selome Muleta and Tizta Berhanu, who fearlessly broach once controversial topics, such as emotionality and sexuality.

*"This exhibition is a dream after a year of lockdowns, presented over two floors in all our five galleries, allowing for the many works to interact in a broad narrative. Our aim is to create new connections by presenting exciting artists that may be new to our audience and the artworld."*

— Michael Elmenbeck, Co-founder CFHILL

*"Africa is a diverse and rich space with countless cultural multiplicities. African artists have always produced astounding and innovative work, but only recently has this truly been appreciated on the international stage. We are so proud to partner with CFHILL Art Space in Stockholm to bring together all of our artists in one space and showcase our collection of world-class artists from this incredible region on the continent."* — Mesai Haileleul, Co-founder Addis Fine Art

Participating artists: **Tadesse Mesfin, Lulseged Retta, Merikokeb Berhanu, Tesfaye Urgessa, Addis Gezehagn, Adiskidan Ambaye, Ermias Kifleyesus, Tsedaye Makonnen, Daniela Yohannes, Tizta Berhanu, Selome Muleta, Girma Berta, Helina Metaferia, Tariku Shiferaw, Atong Atem, Girmachew Getnet, Nigatu Tsehay, Tegene Kunbi, Yasmeen Abdullah**

## NOTES FOR THE EDITOR

### About Addis Fine Art

Founded in 2016 by Rakeb Sile and Mesai Haileleul, Addis Fine Art is a pioneering gallery based in Addis Ababa and London. Described as one of the "Most Important Young Galleries in the World" (Artsy 2019) and the "Ethiopian Gallery Enriching a Global Art Conversation" (New York Times 2019), it is the very first white cube 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. Addis Fine Art has 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. In November 2020, Rakeb Sile was also named one of Apollo Magazine's 40 Under 40 Africa, a project dedicated to 40 of the most influential and talented people in the art world born or based in Africa. For press enquiries please contact [zara@addisfineart.com](mailto:zara@addisfineart.com).

### About CFHILL

CFHILL is an international art space in central Stockholm, situated in a 17th century palace from 1643. Since its inception in 2015, CFHILL has presented over 50 exhibitions and artists – emerging as well as mid-career and art historical icons such as; Hilma af Klint, Math Bass, Carsten Höller, Sheila Hicks, Jonathan Lyndon Chase, Aaron Garber, Olafur Eliasson, Annie Morris, Yayoi Kusama, Donna Huanca and Amoako Boafo. CFHILL's philosophy is to operate as an independent open source in a global network of curators, artists, and galleries with the ambition to create a dialogue between generations for new art and artists. Previous shows have been curated in collaboration with; Melanie Lum (US/China YUZ Museum), Francesca Gavin (UK, Manifesta), Sandra Weil (Tel Aviv, Magasin 3), Rick Herron (US, New Museum), Sophie Mörner (US, Company), Javier Peres (Berlin, Peres Project), Destinee Ross (New York) and revolved around themes such as gender, sexuality, politics, and race. CFHILL was founded and is led by Michael Elmenbeck, Anna-Karin Pusic and Michael Storåkers. For press enquiries please contact [sofia.johanson@cfhill.com](mailto:sofia.johanson@cfhill.com).

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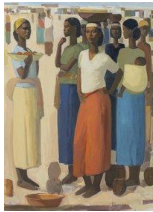
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Atong Atem  
*Ruth with Veil*, 2020  
Photography, Ilford smooth pearl print

Courtesy of the artist and Addis Fine Art



Tadesse Mesfin  
*Pillars of Life: Saturday Market VII*, 2021  
Oil on canvas

Courtesy of the artist and Addis Fine Art



Tariku Shiferaw  
*Sky Walker (Miguel)*, 2021  
Acrylic on canvas

Courtesy of the artist and Addis Fine Art



Selome Muleta  
*Tsédal XI*, 2020  
Acrylic and oil pastel on canvas

Courtesy of the artist and Addis Fine Art



Rakeb Sile & Mesai Haileleul, Addis Fine Art Founders

Courtesy of Bandele Zuberi and Addis Fine Art