



Ermias Kifleyesus, *Early Marks*, 2021.

## CASCADE OF KNOWLEDGE | ERMIAS KIFLEYESUS

Addis Fine Art, London

12 November - 04 December 2021

In November 2021, Addis Fine Art presents *Cascade of Knowledge*, a solo show of new paintings by Ethiopian artist Ermias Kifleyesus.

Born in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, where he studied painting formally at the Alle School of Fine Arts and Design, Ermias Kifleyesus (b. 1974) now lives and works in Brussels, Belgium. In his latest body of work, informed by his experience as an immigrant inhabiting the liminal point of intersection between two dramatically different cultures, Kifleyesus explores the complex and tense relationship between Africa and the West – particularly the way in which European and North American countries have appropriated African aesthetics and commodities.

*Early Marks*, for example, speaks to the discovery of coffee in Ethiopia, while *Glasshouse and Ants Hill* references the transport of flowers from East Africa into Europe through Holland. *Picasso* points to the adoption of African art into the mainstream Western canon, although Kifleyesus wittily plays with a reversal of this narrative in the Courbet-inspired *Regard*.

Although his work is rich with folkloric narrative, art historical allusion, and socio-political reference, Kifleyesus ultimately seeks to place the power of interpretation in the hands of the viewer. In his words, *'the works are not*

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*about politics, they are politics themselves.* Through their representation of the specific, the works address the universal, and transcend time in doing so. By interweaving abstractive and figurative elements, Kifleyesus generates complex surfaces that bear meaning beyond the stories they portray.

The materials that Kifleyesus employs to fabricate his works stand as further testament to his fascination with timelessness. Oil paint is an ancient medium – even the cave painters mixed animal fat with pigment to bring images to life in their stone dwellings. The canvases that he uses are frequently found, gifted, or even recycled from older works. They possess their own unique background and energy, into which Kifleyesus intervenes to create a new history. The final paintings are thus an amalgamated archive of the physical materials used, the social and political events depicted, and the eternal stream of the human subconscious that is brought to light under Kifleyesus' brush.

At their core, Kifleyesus' works are an exploration of painting itself. As an artist, he does not seek to teach, but rather to create paintings that have the capacity to teach for themselves. By immersing himself into the process of creation, he finds he is able to unearth the depths of life itself, discoveries which he offers generously to any viewer who will take the time to pause and reflect in the presence of his canvases.

### NOTES FOR THE EDITOR

#### *About Addis Fine Art*

In 2016, Rakeb Sile and Mesai Haileleul co-founded Addis Fine Art, creating the first white-cube gallery space for modern and contemporary art in Ethiopia. Described as one of the "Most Important Young Galleries in the World" (Artsy 2019), the gallery has since then grown to become one of the leading galleries in Africa, establishing a prominent international platform for artists from the Horn of Africa.

In October 2021, the gallery will move into expanded premises in London, opening a two-storey gallery space in the heart of Fitzrovia. The London gallery programme will encapsulate Addis Fine Art's commitment to heightened international exposure for, and critical reappraisal of, African art on the world stage. The gallery's Addis Ababa space will continue to be an incubator for emerging talent, facilitating critical engagement within the local market and encouraging the growth and development of the artworld ecosystem on the continent. The gallery will also serve as a space for artists from the diaspora to return to the continent and share and develop their practice.

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IMAGE DOWNLOAD LINK: <https://we.tl/t-At3bpCBojv>

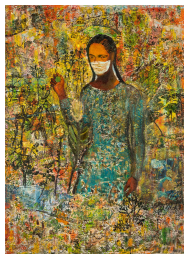
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Ermias Kifleyesus  
*Early Marks*, 2021  
Mixed media, collage, oil on canvas  
Courtesy of the artist and Addis Fine Art



Ermias Kifleyesus  
*Denkenesh*, 2021  
Mixed media, collage, oil on canvas  
Courtesy of the artist and Addis Fine Art



Ermias Kifleyesus  
*Exit*, 2021  
Mixed media, collage, oil canvas  
Courtesy of the artist and Addis Fine Art



Ermias Kifleyesus in the studio,  
Courtesy of Michael De Lausnay and Addis Fine Art



Ermias Kifleyesus in the studio,  
Courtesy of Michael De Lausnay and Addis Fine Art