



Installation view of *I Surrender My Body to Water and Fire* by Daniela Yohannes. Courtesy of Lucy Emms.

I SURRENDER MY BODY TO WATER AND FIRE

DANIELA YOHANNES

Addis Fine Art, London

21 January - 19 February 2022

Addis Fine Art presents *I Surrender My Body to Water and Fire*, a solo show of new paintings by Ethiopian- Eritrean artist Daniela Yohannes.

Yohannes' latest body of work is a response to contemporary migration discourse, rendered through a personal, emotive, and Diasporic lens, and meditates on issues surrounding politics of place, freedom of movement, and the desperate actions people take to survive. The artist explores the hardship of a severed connection with homeland and community, while also confronting the devastating impact of treacherous migratory journeys. These paintings bear particular witness to the perils of the Eritrean people, with whom she shares an identity and a homeland.

Yohannes has stated that observing these events from afar "would trigger in me a physical response to the hostilities and violence, creating an intense fear that would overtake me." These emotions would surface in the quiet, stillness, and darkness of the night. As she lay awake, her body would speak through dreams and nightmares. Nights would transform into voyages where Yohannes would be transported into the middle of the sea, submerged into the depths of the ocean, or lost in an arid desert – both observing and in action, simultaneously the migrant and the bystander. For example, *I Surrender My Body to Water and Fire*, the artwork that inspired the exhibition title, portrays a single figure fleeing from the flames.

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In both fury and despair, Yohannes has watched as the media presents images and stories that reinforce the notion of otherness and feed the rhetoric of nativism, divisively reinforcing a denial of humanity by presenting the migrant as an inconvenience, or a potential danger to Europe and the broader Western world. In parallel, her work reveals herself as a central figure who calls into question her reality and physical environment. When all that she represents is under attack, her very existence is presented as inconsequential.

A recent move into film has seen Yohannes anchor these themes in the tensions of her real world surroundings. Yohannes currently lives and works in Guadeloupe in the French Caribbean and the country's terrain has provided rich means to consider her body and consciousness, the survival stories of displaced people, and atopia (the title of her film trilogy) – the inhospitable environment where society cannot be built. The exhibition will feature a screening of one of the films in the trilogy titled, *The Homeless Wanderer*.

Together, these latest paintings and video works reflect upon the racialised movement and conditional belonging of the African diaspora, and constitute a journey, a protest, and a declaration of hope.

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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Tel: +251 980 635 696

Addis Fine Art London
21 Eastcastle St
London, UK
Tuesday - Friday 11 am - 6 pm & Saturday 12 - 6 pm
Monday by appointment only
Tel: +44 203 488 0822

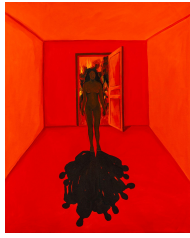
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Daniela Yohannes
In the Shadows, 2021
Courtesy of Addis Fine Art



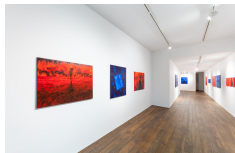
Daniela Yohannes
Black Bodies Floating in the Dead of Night, 2021
Courtesy of Addis Fine Art



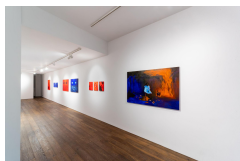
Daniela Yohannes
I Surrender my Body to Water and Fire, 2021
Courtesy of Addis Fine Art



Daniela Yohannes in the studio
Courtesy of the artist



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