Installation View #museumshutdown

Tadesse Mesfin: Pillars of Life

Hundreds of independent art and museums spaces are forced to close again due to the Corona-Crisis. In this series we are celebrating the fantastic artistic events that are right now sitting behind closed doors, when they actually could contribute to a better climate in times of crisis and political polarization. Cromwell Place London presents the newest work by the giant Ethiopian modernist painter Tadesse Mesfin.

Installation View of "Tadesse Mesfin, Pillars of Life" at Cromwell Place, London. Photo: Lucy Emms

11. November 2020

Tadesse Mesfin (b. 1953) holds a unique position as both a figurehead of the Ethiopian modernist movement, and as a long- time educator through his role as a professor at the influential Alle School of Fine Art and Design in Addis Ababa. Among the generations of painters he has taught are Addis Gezehagn, Ermias Kifleyesus, Meirkokeb Berhanu and Tesfaye Urgessa.

Mesfin shows his latest work as a continuation of his ongoing series celebrating the women who work as small-holder vendors in markets found across Ethiopian cities. They can be often found crouched down amongst their agricultural produce, as they wait for customers to approach. In Mesfin's work these women are visually eulogised, their occupations and their personae are front and centre, and the observer is persuaded to appreciate their importance to the communities they serve. The paintings defy the limitations of perspective, as the figures seem to float in their crouched positions, their forms often abstracted through loosely defined brush strokes. Only their regal, statuesque poses and facial expressions are clearly discernible.

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