

A surreal painting featuring a woman with long, dark, curly hair lying on her back on a large, white, wrinkled sheet. She is looking directly at the viewer with a neutral expression. The sheet is set against a dark, swirling, and textured background that resembles water or smoke. Several faces are visible in the background, some appearing to be part of the swirling patterns. The overall color palette is dominated by dark blues, blacks, and the stark white of the sheet. In the top left corner, there is a logo consisting of a white circle with the letters 'AFA' inside, followed by the text 'ADDIS FINE ART' in a white, sans-serif font.

AFA ADDIS FINE ART

**I SURRENDER MY BODY
TO WATER AND FIRE**

DANIELA YOHANNES

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Daniela Yohannes (b. 1982) lives and works in Guadeloupe, in the French Caribbean. Yohannes' latest body of work is a response to contemporary migration discourse, rendered through a personal, emotive, and Diasporic lens. These paintings meditate on and lament 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 and Tigray 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, fleeing from flames, or lost in an arid desert – both observing and in action, simultaneously the migrant and the bystander.

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. Guadeloupe's terrain has provided rich means to consider her body and consciousness, the survival stories of displaced people, and atopia – the inhospitable environment where society cannot be built. 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.



I SURRENDER MY BODY TO...

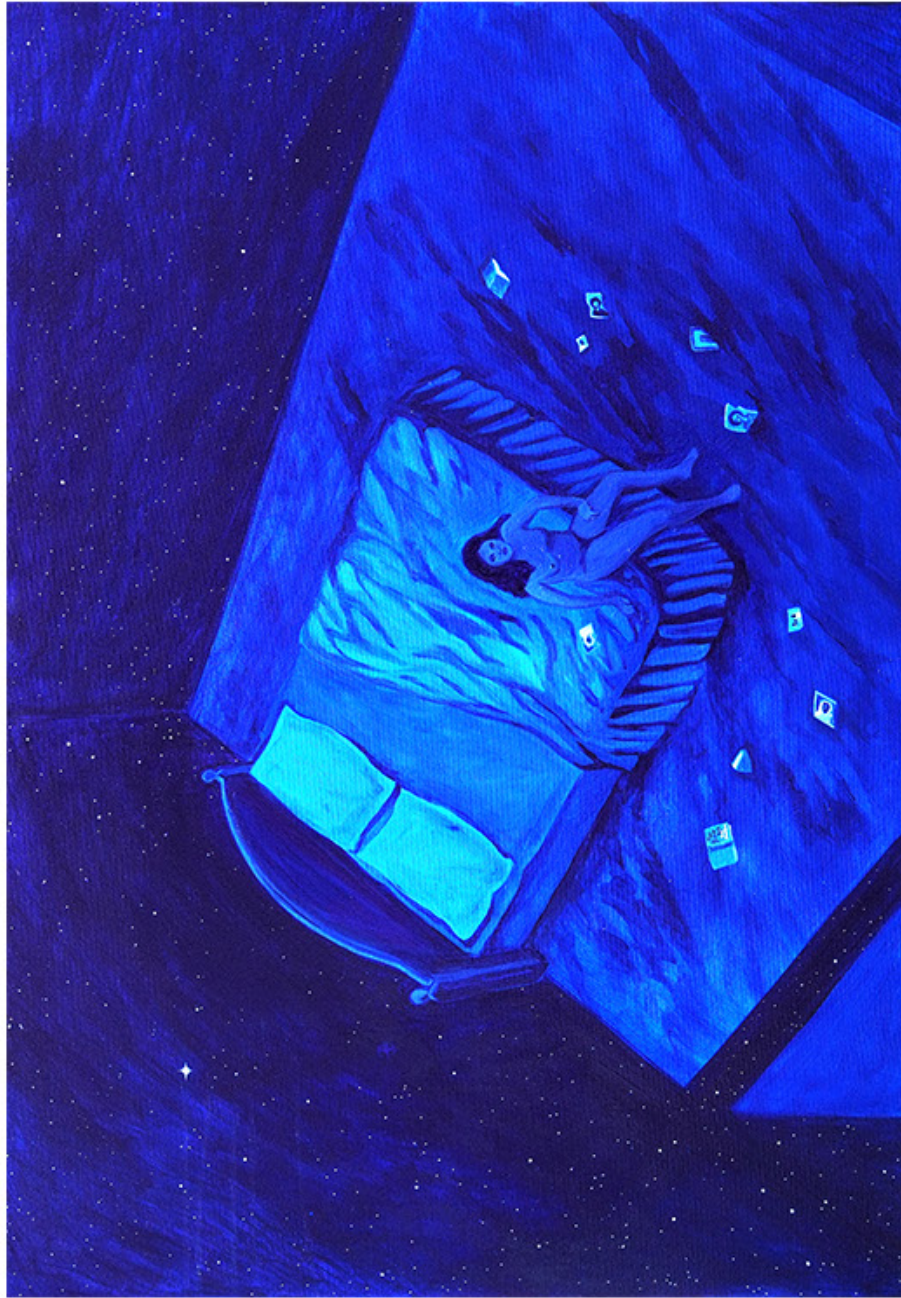
WATER



Then by the Sea Swallowing us up Whole, 2021
Acrylic on canvas
81 x 100 cm.



Crevice of the Unconscious, 2021,
Acrylic on canvas
100 x 81 cm.



When Dreams Turn into Nightmares, 2021,
Acrylic on canvas
100 x 210 cm



Beneath the Pelagie, 2021
Acrylic on Canvas
90 x 90 cm



Black Bodies Floating in the Dead of Night, 2021
Acrylic on Canvas
100 x 81 cm.



My Nights are Filled with Thoughts and Questions that Never Resolve 2021
Acrylic on Canvas
100 x 81 cm.



There's a Fire Burning Inside, 2021
Acrylic on Canvas
100 x 81 cm.



We See It, 2021
Acrylic on Canvas
40 x 90 cm.

I SURRENDER MY BODY TO...

FIRE



If We Are Not Claimed By The Desert, 2021
Acrylic on Canvas
100 x 81 cm.

In the Shadows, 2021,
Acrylic on canvas
100 x 80 cm





I Surrender my Body to Water and Fire, 2021
Acrylic on Canvas
80 x 100 cm



Drifting, 2021,
Acrylic on canvas
70 x 100 cm



Through the Fire, 2021
Acrylic on canvas
100 x 91 cm



Dallol Raging Fires, 2021,
Acrylic on canvas
81 x 100 cm



But Don't Believe It, 2021
Acrylic on canvas
40 x 90 cm



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, Addis Fine Art London moved into expanded premises in Eastcastle Street, 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.

Credits

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