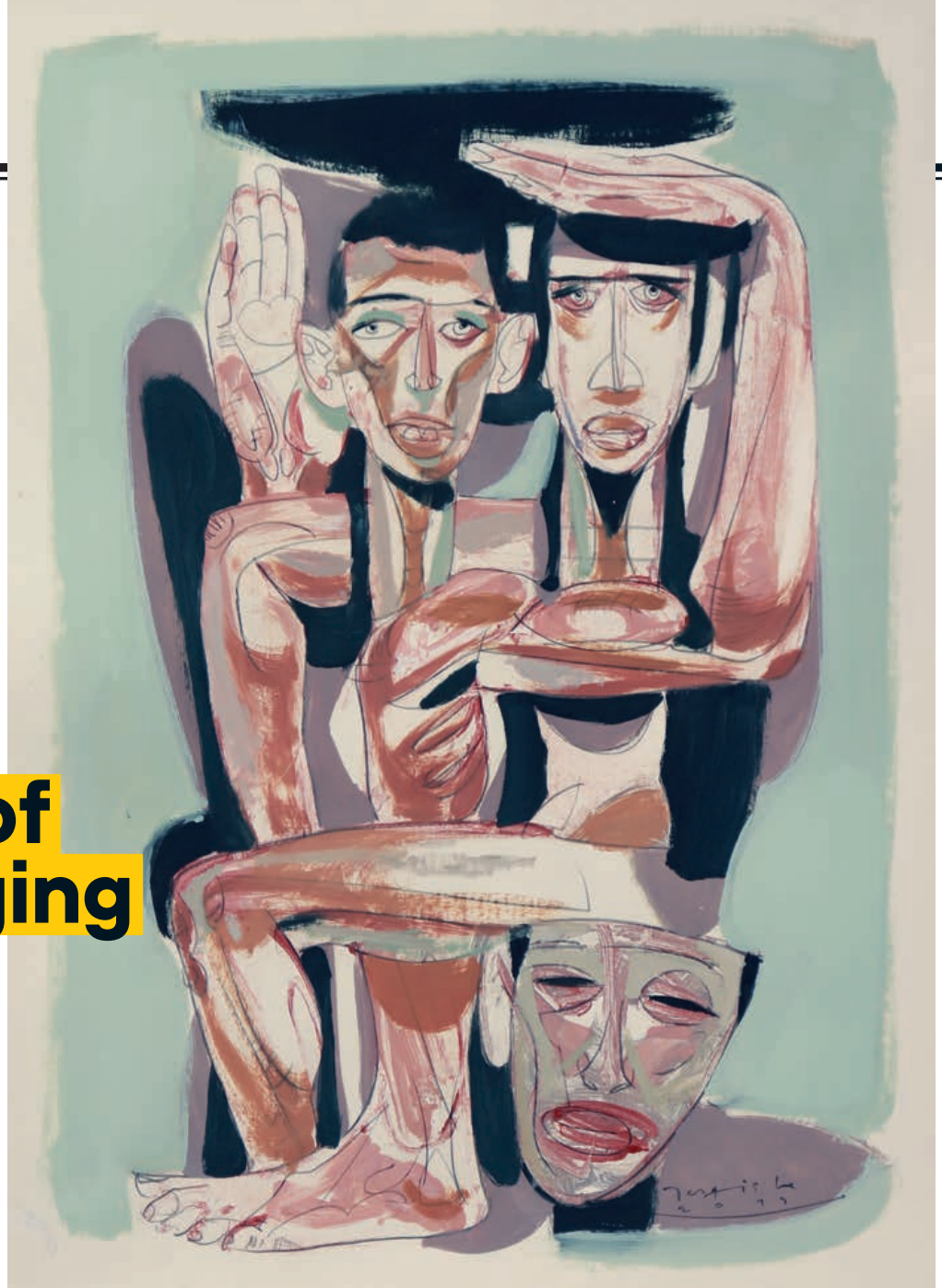




A sense of unbelonging

After a decade in Germany, one of Ethiopia's prominent young artists returns home with his first exhibition in Addis Ababa. Tesfaye Urgessa's No Country for Young Men examines the thorny issue of migration and what it means to be the "other" in a foreign land



This is your first exhibition in Addis Ababa; how significant is this for you?

It's very exciting to be back. This is something I have yearned for over a long time. My career as an artist is currently developing in Europe, and I deem it necessary to close the gap between the two continents and have a voice at home.

You call this show *No Country for Young Men*. What are you saying about migration and the reality of being "othered"? The inspiration came to me in 2006, while listening to the news: 56 million African people

had left the continent in search of a new home and a shocking 80 per cent of them were young men. That figure hit me like a ton of bricks. After that, random, fragmented images started to slip into my dreams. This went on for a couple of weeks before I decided to start painting them.

You are influenced by traditional Ethiopian iconography and 1980s German Neo-expressionism. How do the two combine?

In Ethiopia, I used to paint what I saw around me, and the things that affected me. Regardless of where I am,

The experience of being "other": Tesfaye Urgessa's A-Way (2019)

I absorb new influences and let go of the past to some extent. The development in my art has been gradual and slow. I wasn't necessarily planning to take my paintings in any particular direction. I was extremely lucky to study at the Alle School of Fine Arts and Design in Ethiopia, and to be trained by amazing artists. This, of course, is a fundamental pillar of my practice and will always be. For me, it's a bit like always having an Ethiopian accent, no matter what language I'm speaking. *Tesfaye Urgessa's No Country for Young Men is at Addis Fine Art Gallery until 15 February*

