

# Nigatu Tsehay

ADDIS FINE ART

# Nigatu Tsehay

*Pace of Life*

13 May – 11 June 2022



ADDIS FINE ART







## Nigatu Tsehay

*This summer the roses are blue; the wood is of glass. The earth, draped in its verdant cloak, makes as little impression upon me as a ghost. It is living and ceasing to live which are imaginary solutions. Existence is elsewhere.* – André Breton, excerpt from the First Manifesto of Surrealism.

For Nigatu Tsehay, art is a fundamentally interrogative process. While it may not always yield definitive answers, painting allows him to grapple with important questions, and to use his own visual language as a means of reflection and communication. The specific characters and objects that come to life on his canvases serve primarily as a means of exploring universal themes, like individual silken threads which when woven together reveal the recognisable pattern of a spider's web.

It is through his portrayal of the precise that Nigatu seeks to explore general truths of existence and human experience, blending the distinct with the abstract to create surrealistic realms that swim with visual nonsequiturs. In *Hidden Hands*, the viewer's mind is pushed to almost acrobatic feats – made to swing between a colossal warped needle, an elongated Dali-esque clock, and a menacing bird mask which balances on the shins of the steely-eyed protagonist. In *Pace of Time XI*, Nigatu's psychic automatism forces his audience's focus to dart between a paper fan, a strategically placed banana peel, bloodied bandages, and the bared teeth of an eyeless face whose grimace is reminiscent of the snarling popes of Francis Bacon.







Rich with human form, Nigatu's canvases could be likened to a suddenly paused film scene, an instant in time bearing the weight of existence. His works are replete with distorted characters, who frequently gaze in disparate directions, a sense of psycho-physical collaging at play in the disjuncture of their expressions. There is an intentional lack of clarity as to where one body ends and the next begins. The hands and feet that punctuate forested twists of limbs seem to co-exist on separate temporal planes, never to truly touch. An elegant sofa, a house plant, a collection of cigarettes squashed in an ashtray – these still-life-like elements of the everyday become spliced and diced in a cubistic manner, and the contemporaneous portrayal of different perspectives evokes their – and henceforth our – participation in the passage of time.

*Tranquility in Action, 2022*  
Acrylic on canvas  
210 x 140 cm







*Pace of Time IX*, 2022  
Acrylic on canvas  
150 × 150 cm



*Pace of Life VI*, 2021  
Acrylic on canvas  
208 × 208 cm





*Will You Come Back?*, 2022  
Acrylic on canvas  
148 × 100 cm





*Peace with Self IV, 2022*  
Acrylic on canvas  
153 × 148 cm





*Pace of Time XI*, 2022  
Acrylic on canvas  
150 × 150 cm





*Pace of Life VII*, 2021  
Acrylic on canvas  
209 × 283 cm



*Peace with Self VI*, 2022  
Acrylic on canvas  
152 × 93 cm





*A Fragile Vessel, 2022*  
Acrylic on canvas  
151 x 146 cm







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.

Published by Addis Fine Art on the occasion of  
**Nigatu Tsehay *Pace of Life***  
13 May – 11 June 2022

Addis Fine Art  
21 Eastcastle Street  
London W1W 8DD

© 2022 Addis Fine Art

**Credits:**

Kate Kirby  
Ikenna Malbert

All images © 2022 Nigatu Tsehay  
Text © 2022 Kate Kirby  
Artwork and studio photography: Dieter Schwer

All Rights Reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of Addis Fine Art

Designed by Lucy Harbut  
Printed by Dayfold



