

FACE2FACE

Ethiopian Contemporary Arts

**Facing
Opposite
Across from**

each
other

proposed by
**European Commission
& BOZAR**

featuring

Tewodros Hagos

Tamrat Gezahagne

Mulugeta Tefesse

Mulugeta Gebrekidan

Michael Tsegaye

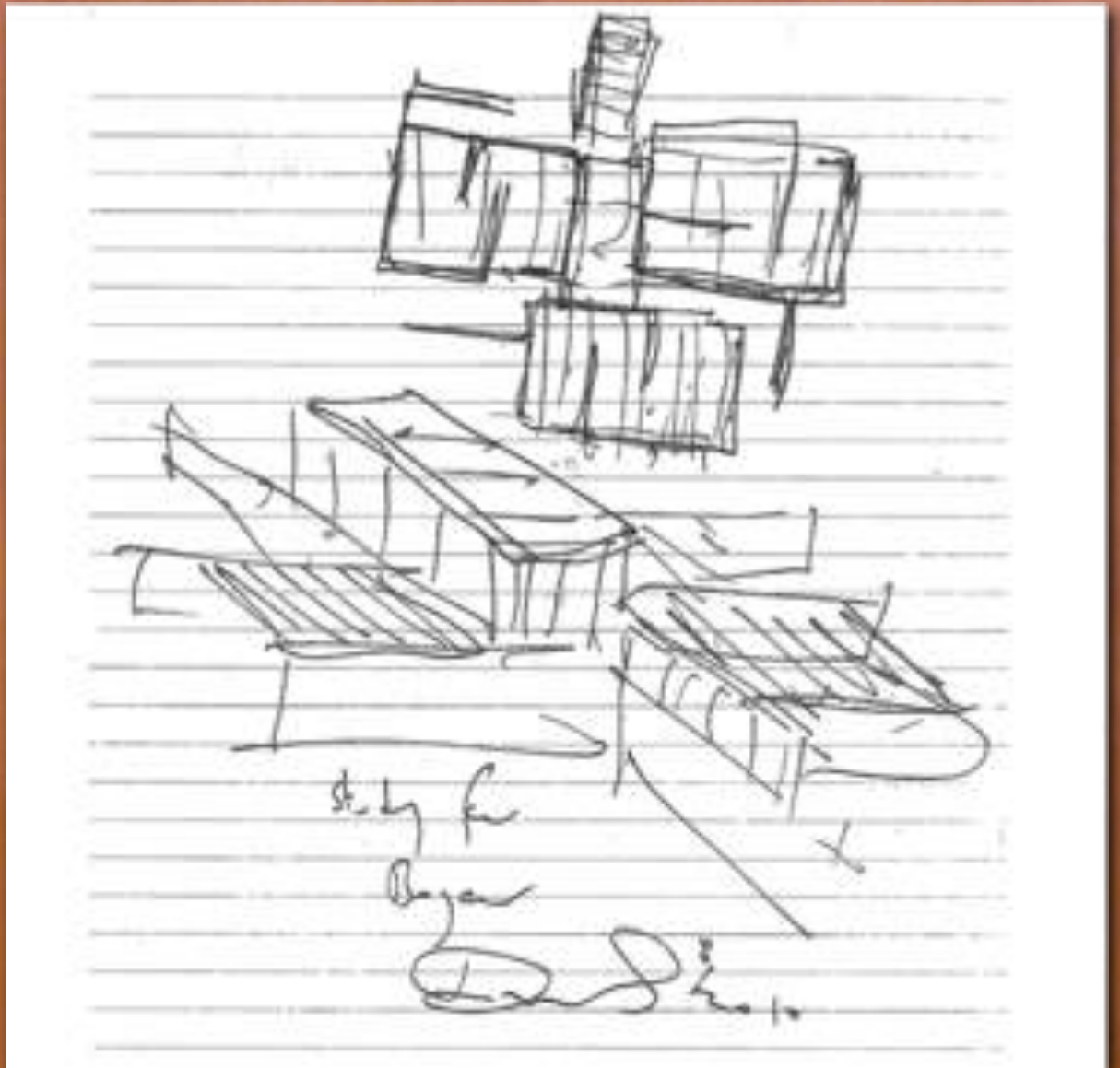
Ermias Kifleyesus

Behailu Bezabih

curated by
Leo Lefort

"The best way to understand the architecture of the pavilion is to think of a modernist ruin that is still capable of providing a frame for habitation. The idea is that the basic structure of the pavilion —the ruin—is easy to tune up to meet the exact needs of the people who will use it."

David Adjaye,
in *Visionary Africa : Art @ Work*
Ed. BOZAR BOOKS 2010



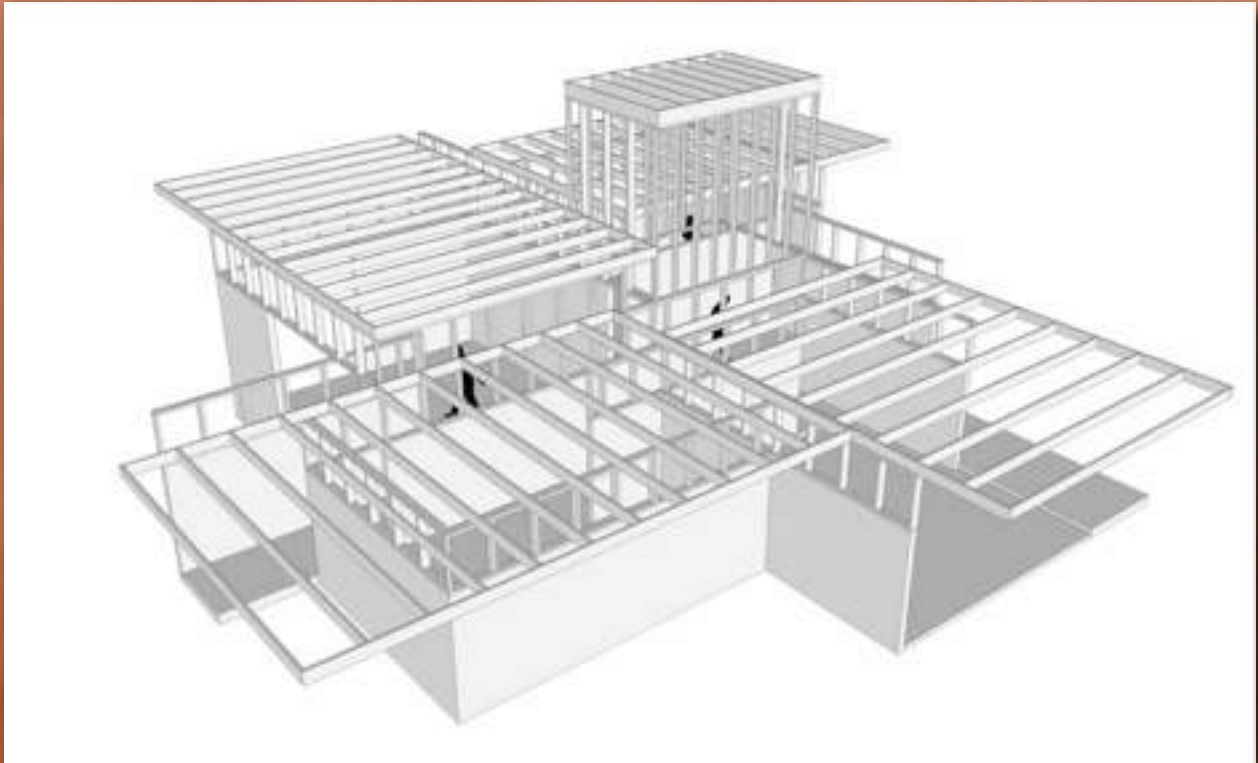
Sketch by David Adjaye
Study of the pavilion, 2010

An Itinerant Laboratory

by *Simon Njami*



Art at Work aims to be, beyond an exhibition, a manifesto for the twenty first century. A space both material and virtual in which society's stakeholders are invited to debate questions which not only touch on creativity, but also on the organisation of the city. Among the many questions which concern the world, and in particular countries labeled of the South, the question of living together is one of the most crucial ones. What will be the input of culture in this debate? How do we avoid bi-polar societies in which there is an impassable barrier between those who have access to cultural goods and those who have not? Artistic creation is a vector of transformation and social cohesion. At the heart of this questioning lies the museum. Not an elitist museum closed to movement but on the contrary, a museum conceived as a space of mediation and dialogue. *Art at Work* could therefore be defined as an itinerant research laboratory which solicits audiences, in its largest definition, in other words, civil society, to rethink its environment and cultural practices. It is an invitation to build a future, not in an abstract and detached manner, but in the heart of the city and among its citizens. An attempt to respond to what German philosopher Ernst Bloch has called '*the unconstructible, absolute question, the issue of the Us*'.



Axonometric views
All plans and renderings
© Adjaye Associates

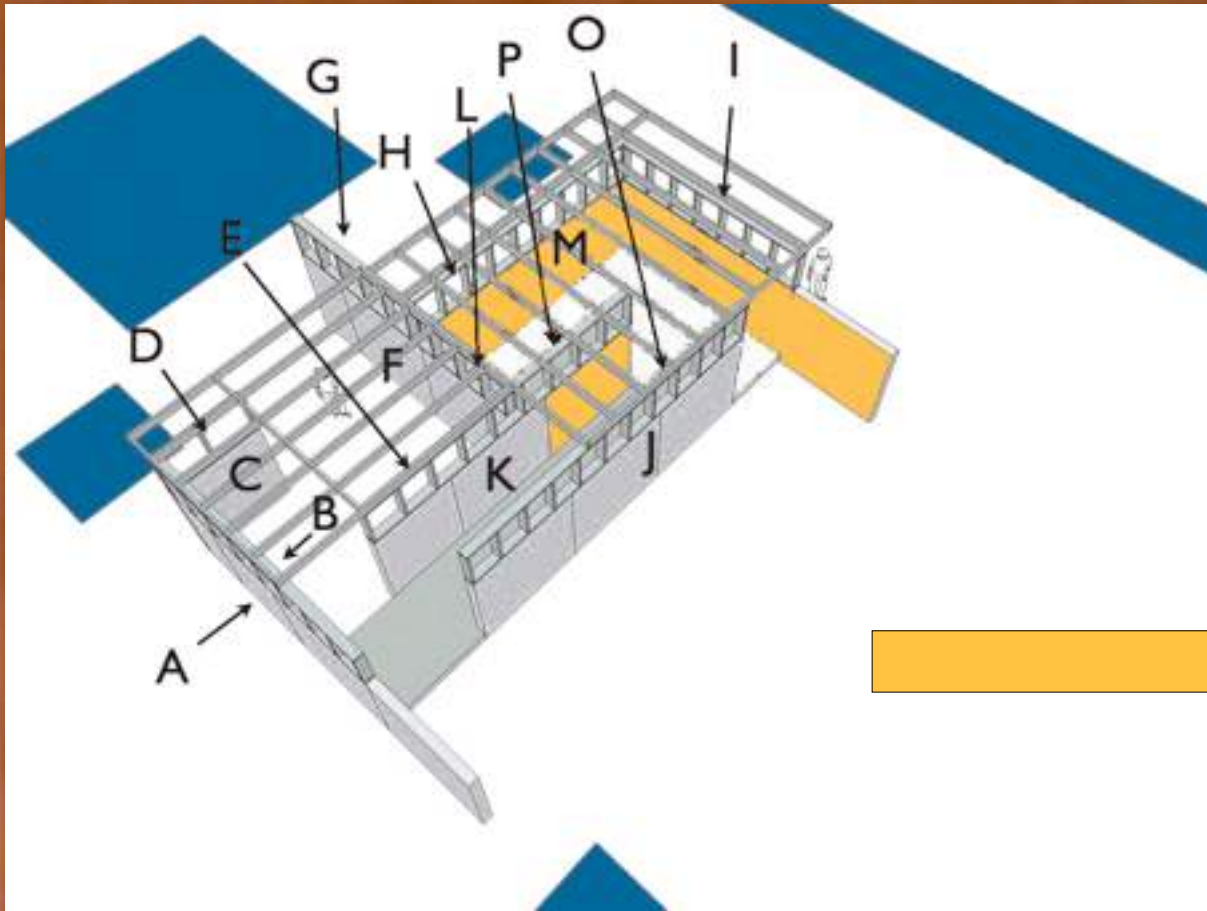
EACH / OTHERNESS

by Leo LEFORT

The curator is like an unprofessional acupuncturist who inserts needles while not knowing if they will heal or cause pain.

Pier Luigi Tazzi, *The Good Shepherd*,
Bangkok Post, 11/01/12

Engaging in the contrapuntal phenomenon of vacuity, FACE2FACE has been conceived as an open multilayered dialogue between audiences, artists, institutions, action and momentum. Upon the invitation to 'invade' the ruin/pavilion and its itinerant laboratory, conceived by visionary architect David Adjaye and independent curator Simon Njami, this exhibition participates supremely to the incremental platform, by opening a space for seven Ethiopian contemporary artists. Based in Addis or working in Belgium, their works meet in this informal space and collide, offering visual responses in their own singular manner to the '*absolute question*'. Under the cosmopolitan current trends and the confusing zones of tensions impacting both the real world and its virtual extensions, it felt important to them to seize hold of this room as an ultimate attempt to face the audience with images that matters. The Trojan horse under consideration is emblematic as well as symbolic, allowing the artists to ostensibly perform some innocuous functions in the compound of the new gem of *Alem Bekagne*: the monumental head office of the African Union. May this needle inserted into the restless body of The Capital of Africa, be a means of continuing the discussion and debates on *eachotherness*, but also be a useful pedagogical tool and reference on a complex, yet vibrant scene.



FACE2FACE *display zone*



View of the Pavillion,
Works of Michael Tsegaye ©
Photographies © Michael Tsegaye, 2012



View of the Pavillion,
Works of Ermias Kifleyesus & Tewodros Hagos ©
Photographies © Michael Tsegaye, 2012



View of the Pavillion,
Works of Michael Tsegaye & Tamrat Gezahagne ©
Photographies © Michael Tsegaye, 2012



View of the Pavillion,
Works of Michael Tsegaye & Mulugeta Gebrekidan ©
Photographies © Michael Tsegaye, 2012



View of the Pavillion,
Works of Mulugeta Tafesse ©
Photographies © Michael Tsegaye, 2012



View of the Pavillion,
Works of Ermias Kifleyesus, Tewodros Hagos & Behailu Bezabih ©
Photographies © Mulugeta Gebrekidan , 2012

TEWODROS HAGOS

Born in Addis Ababa in 1974, Tewodros Hagos graduated from the School of Fine Arts and Design, Addis Ababa University in 1995. In 1998, Tewodros left to Belgium, where he stayed for over ten years living and working in Antwerp. Since his return to Addis Ababa, Tewodros has managed to carve out a distinct style and is now regarded as one of the most promising Ethiopian painters of his generation.

He has been exhibited at the Studio Amschloss, Berlin, Boulevard Amandla, Antwerp, Bek Gallery Leuven, KN10 Gallery, Antwerp, Futuro Center, Rome & Atelier gallery Addis Ababa.



Injured Man
2010

TEWODROS HAGOS

Tewodros Hagos' most recent paintings can be described as both portraits and mask paintings. Figuratively, the subjects are mainly inspired by models, but Tewodros incorporates an ambiguity, a subtle sense of impending tension lurking just under the surface of the canvas. Tewodros works in the double space where representation and abstraction confront one another. Highly diverse format and subject-matter, the works represent the artist's unorthodox views on figure, scape and society. Being larger than human size, the figures realistically depicted in the canvases are turned into monumental objects that intimidate, demand attention and inspire awe.



Ill Woman
2011

MULUGETA TAFESSE

Based in Antwerp since 1994, Mulugeta Tafesse has engaged his pictorial investigations walking a narrow path of the complex balance of his sophisticated theoretical knowledge and his painter activity. From acrylics, oil or prints the universe of Mulugeta invites the human figure to stand with poetic beauty and striking simplicity. May it be a supple hand, a curved silhouette of a woman, or a standing nude the attitude is here - a vibrating and sincere tribute to the surroundings. *"I am not looking for any symbolical power neither the emblematic summit of art's imagery ... I love simple things, with a twist of humor and a light-full esthetic that can touch anybody"*.



Belly + Fig. in Madder Red
2000

MULUGETA TAFESSE

*In life we all are poorly equipped; deprived souls; we seek stronger shoulders constantly. We need each other's consolation as we have akin attitudes of /dis/organisations, share of work /(skill; like flying and crawling insects)/, systems of life encounters in the health care, social welfare, etc.. In art; the nude is a tiny theme, but so undiscerningly undisguised it is genuine and barely exposed. (...) The nude does not to all of us counterfeits (forges) the conventional knowledge of any society. If you ask me let's remain obstinate and don't contemplate- interpret the human figure (and the notion of unclothedness) in our work; I stubbornly say 'no'. It is so boring; not to see the nude; which, the ancient Ethiopians, Egyptians and Greek Classicists have seen, measured and capitulated as an art trend out of it. They made it central to their work. What is it then the naked body in a social sphere, science, psychology & philosophy? It remains to be seen later, perhaps, bound with urges of the physically real seeing; the retina experience. It is about /is it not?/ life after all. Or 'let's remain; (as) the treacherous Byzantines; dogmatic magicians and secretive societies shrewd. Shrewd and proudly befitted.
BENEFIS WOKEF!*



Akalina Woha

2000

MULUGETA GEBREKIDAN

Born in 1970 in Addis Ababa, Mulugeta Gebrekidan studied at the Addis Ababa University School of Fine Arts & Design and graduated with a diploma in painting in 1992. His works have been exhibited widely in Ethiopia, but also in Dakart 2010, in Cape Town, Studio Am Schloss & Gallery Peter Herrman, Berlin, Afrika Institut, Hamburg, Casoria Art Museum, Italy. He recently enjoyed a residence at the Virginia Creative Art Center, USA.



Transformation
2011

MULUGETA GEBREKIDAN

I make art for two main reasons. The first is because I love to be engaged in creativity and enjoy the process of making art. The second reason is that I have an unquenchable thirst for expressing my feelings, life experiences, and interpretations of the natural world. The driving force behind my art has been my ongoing search for knowledge and experimentation for more effective artistic expression.

Currently I feel that the painting process is becoming an act of meditation and contemplation, whereas the use of multi-media is becoming a flexible tool of artistic expression. When I experiment with different forms of media such as photography, installation, video or performance art, I always learn something new that leads to a greater awareness of my surroundings and myself. My artistic goal is to keep flowing like a river that picks up sediment, continuously incorporating new life into its own as it moves, changes and expands.



Transformation
2011

MICHAEL TSEGAYE

Michael Tsegaye grew up in Addis Abeba where he attended Cathedral High School. He enrolled in the Economics Department of Addis Abeba University before transferring to its School of Fine Arts and Design. There, he received his diploma in painting in 2002, but soon gave up painting after he developed a severe allergy to oil paint. He subsequently found his passion in photography.

In his photographic work, Michael focuses on social documentary projects as well as art photography.



非洲聯盟

2011

MICHAEL TSEGAYE

Michael Tsegaye's work can also be found in a number of international magazines and various catalogues including Snap Judgments: New Directions in African Photography, edited by Okwui Enwezor, and published by the International Centre for Photography in New York City in 2007.

He participated in many exhibitions in 2011 including the Rencontres de Bamako, the African Photography Biennial 9th Edition Bamako, Mali, the Photoquai 2011, Musée du Quai Branly, Paris, France.

*Previously his works were featured at the Galerie Sanaa, Utrecht, Netherlands ; the Selam Arts Festival, Toronto, Canada ; Luanda, Angola ; Arte invisible/ARCO, Madrid, Spain ; H*tel Dystopia Room #25/55: Al Bastakiya Art Fair, Dubai, UAE ; UNESCO House, Paris, France ; GTZ House, Berlin, Germany ; Spot on ... Bamako VII, Rencontres Africaines de la Photographie ; Snap Judgments / New Positions in Contemporary African Photography, Het Stedelijk 2008, Amsterdam, Netherlands, Museum of Art. Memphis, TN, U.S.A ; Tour & Taxis, World Press Photo Exhibition, Brussels, Belgium, Museo Tamayo, Mexico City, Mexico.*



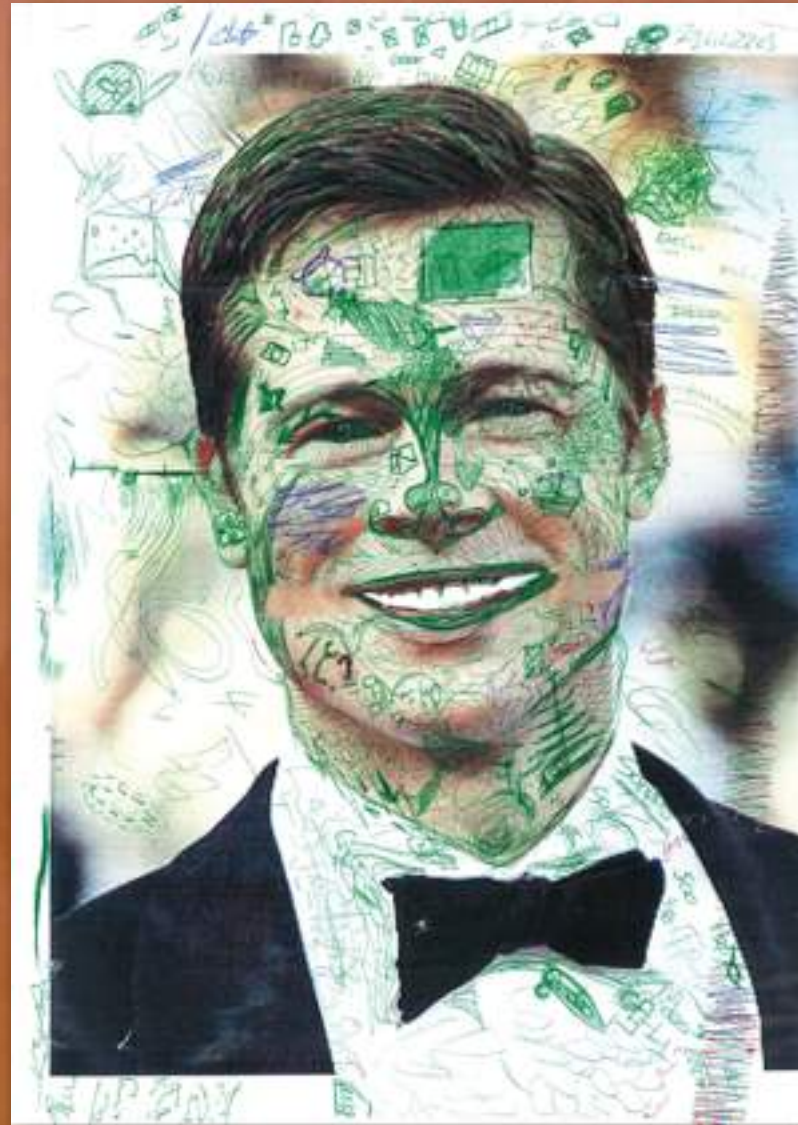
非洲聯盟

2011

ERMIAS KIFLEYESUS

I live in Brussels. I like to draw and paint. I was invited to make something for this space. Because it looks like something between a shop window and a publicity box, I chose those works.

Those magazine covers, advertisements and photos were found in streets and flea markets. I gathered doodles and scrabbles from telephone booths, graffiti from streets, marks from markers and pen shops, *fluo* spray from Bob The Builders' brand to work on walls, adds and photos, interacting with the dynamic multicultural energy of Brussels...



Global Meets Local
2010

ERMIAS KIFLEYESUS

When I came back to Addis after being away for some years, one of the things which impressed me while I was walking in the streets was the publicities and texts written on the walls. Unexpected ugly photoshopped posters in odd places.

Naked stars next to religious icons. Manchester united footballers framed on the walls of tela bët (local bars).

The way people write on walls or on doors looks like artists made it: while the form they give to their message is very free, they also use poetic language and subversive humour.

It looks like the city is witnessing a fight between those texts and imported images. Negotiating with them...

I picked up some publicities or posters and went to bars and khat houses with them. There, I engage into conversation with clients about the images and I write the fruit of our discussions. People also write and draw on them sometimes. I also leave the posters in bars with a pen, to let them be transformed, until they tell me a new story.



A Tall Tree Attracts The Wind

2010

BEHAILU BEZABIH

Behailu Bezabih, born in Gojjam, Ethiopia studied for 5 years and was awarded a DFA from the School of Fine Arts, Addis Ababa in 1981. After 20 of teaching, he pursued his studies, and recently graduated from the Transart Institute New York / Berlin, with a Masters degree in Fine Arts and New Media.

His work has been exhibited in solo and group shows in Ethiopia, South Africa, Kenya, France, Germany, Ireland, Spain, Belgium and the United States. Behailu is a recipient of numerous national and international awards. Recently, he was awarded the well-respected Pollock-Krasner Foundation grant award.



Blindfolded
2009

BEHAILU BEZABIH

School desk graffiti connect the two realms of my life: artist and teacher. They record my knowledge and ideas and feelings, and become an archive for my life, much like my students' graffiti-ed desks are an archive for their lives.

“At a glance, Behailu BEZABIH’s artwork bears the deceptive appearance of a children’s storybook with it’s vibrant and daring palette and abstract figuration. A closer examination, however, reveals kaleidoscopic associations and layerings bound together by a magical painterly technique and complex compositions which sing about life’s simplicities. The zest for life permeates Behailu’s work. He is widely travelled and yet modest about his stature as a painter in the continent.”

David Koloane



Desk
2011

TAMRAT GEZAHAGNE

Scrutinising everyday life while creating his delirious mythology, Tamrat Gezahagne creates moments of forceful irony by constantly reinventing the language of Ethiopian contemporary fine art, introducing a straightforward style that deliberately rejects sophisticated artistic techniques, preferring the bold directness of bright colours, or minimalist ink pen and the meticulous repetition of motifs. A new wide world is under construction under the genuine intervention of this artist with exceptional skills.



Face To Face
2012

LEO Lefort

Through varied collaborations Leo Lefort has proved to be a singular voice in the Ethiopian contemporary art scene for the past thirteen years. Founder and director of ATELIER art gallery, Leo has an extensive curatorial background having worked for reputable galleries, public and private institutions, non-governmental organisations, and government.

A recipient of the prestigious “AFAA Prize”, awarded annually by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs to five cultural entrepreneurs living abroad, for the creation of the Taitu International Art Centre, Leo taught Art Theory & Aesthetics at the School of Fine Arts & Design, Addis Ababa University for three years and was then affiliated for another two years with the Institute of Ethiopian Studies, Addis Ababa University as an independent researcher documenting the development of Ethiopian contemporary arts. In 2006, he co-founded with Lilly Sahle the LeLa Art Gallery where he curated 13 acclaimed solo and group shows featuring local and international artists. Mentored by art historian, theorist & curator Denys Zacharopoulos, Léo Lefort holds a Master Degree in Fine Arts from the Université de Haute Bretagne, Rennes, France.



When the concept of **ATELIER** emerged, one of the critical concerns was the lack of exposure for artists whose work challenged attitudes, concepts and aesthetic norms or values. Since its opening in December 2010, **ATELIER** has been committed to programming that directly reflects and reacts to the needs of the two interrelated communities it serves: the artists whose work are supported and presented, and the audience that looks to us to interpret that work within the broader cultural context. **ATELIER** mounted a series of exhibitions with accompanying *ePublications* which helped bring public attention and critical acclaim to various ethiopian artists. Remaining free from any particular school or category of creation and an open laboratory for the convergence and cross-pollination of different media, disciplines and audiences, **ATELIER** also organises art events and shows in various venues in Addis, the regions and abroad as well as providing consulting services and expertise to public institutions, non-governmental organisations, government and the private sector.

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