

## **ARTLabAfrica**

Merikokeb Berhanu, born in 1977, is a contemporary artist living and working in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Drawn to painting from an early age, she attended the University of Fine Arts and Design in Addis from which she graduated in 2002. She has since set up the Nubia Studio with a group of fellow artists, a dynamic cultural centre and studio space in the heart of Addis Ababa that has been instrumental in supporting and promoting contemporary art practices in the Ethiopian capital.

Whilst deeply rooted in the strong tradition of painting that informs much of the current art teaching in her native country, Berhanu's practice transcends the easily recognizable figurative "Ethiopian style" brought about by the country's long artistic, cultural and political isolation.

In her paintings, abstract forms and dense backgrounds intertwine with reoccurring recognizable elements, ripened fruit, blooming flowers and stylised human forms. Inspired by everything that surrounds her as well as delving deep into her emotional state, her works explore a rich imagery that draws on elements of every day life, connecting them to our present.

"I have never tried to communicate my paintings with words; I am always after the forms, lines and arrangement that can express the visual equivalent of my feelings and thoughts. I want the viewers of my work to hear what the images have to say through their own power. Sensation can be experienced through elements of art. The life that we are passing through, light, line, the complexity and density of what surrounds us, the thick fog and smoke, happiness and hope, misery and bliss, all elements push me to think and paint. And let my perception be crystallised through visual elements as a form of language."

Berhanu has travelled and exhibited in Ethiopia, Germany, France, Uganda, Sudan and Djibouti.

### **Selected Solo Exhibitions:**

*Merikokeb Berhanu*, Ethiopian National Museum, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 2011

### **Selected Group Exhibitions:**

*Ethiopics*, Institut Français, Bamako, Mali, 2015

*Group Show*, LeLa Art Gallery, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 2014

*Group Show*, Laphto Art Gallery, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 2013

*Art In Embassies Program*, U.S. Embassy, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 2011

*Ethio Pics*, Exposition d'Art contemporain d'Afrique de l'est, Lourmarin, France, 2010

*Meet Here*, German House, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 2009

*Group Show*, Listros Galerie, Berlin, Germany, 2009

*Group Exhibition*, Deyellah Rhose, Djibouti, 2009

*Group Exhibition*, Sudan University Khartoum, Soudan, 2009

*Group Exhibition*, Together Art Centre, Khartoum, Soudan, 2009

*Group Exhibition*, Alliance Ethio-Française, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 2009

*Group Exhibition*, Ethiopian National Museum, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 2006

*Group Exhibition*, Italian Cultural Institute, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

*You Saw One - You Know All*, Peter Herrmann Gallery, Berlin, Germany, 2005

### **Books & Group Exhibition Catalogues:**

Makda Teklemichael, *Contemporary Women Artists in Ethiopia*, MIT press, Issue I, Spring 2009

*Brana*, Winter 2009, Volume I, Issue 2