

Tiwani Contemporary
16 Little Portland Street
London W1W 8BP
+44 (0) 20 7631 3808
www.tiwani.co.uk
info@tiwani.co.uk

Robel Temesgen
Confluence
26 January - 3 March 2018

Tiwani Contemporary is pleased to present *Confluence*, Robel Temesgen's second solo exhibition at the gallery. In recent years, Temesgen's practice has been concerned with developing a visual language for the spiritual and depicting the lived experiences of particular Ethiopian landscapes. In the current exhibition, the artist creates a convergence of seemingly disparate concepts, the spiritual and the political, which, on closer examination avail themselves to the possibility of a nuanced allegiance. The exhibition is an investigation into the appropriation of spiritual gatherings, such as the Ethiopian Irreecha thanksgiving holiday, into occasions for political protest. Temesgen takes his longstanding depiction and influence of the sacred place Hora Harsadi, which often culminated in representations of a spiritual and mental landscape, and imagines the natural progression of the space as an occasion for necessary acts of activism.

The exhibition sees Temesgen return to his motif – with the use of acrylic, ink, pencil, permanent marker and nail polish – to depict abstract biological matter in different states of growth. The diptych, *Untitled*, is an ambiguous exploration of the subjectivity of place, landscape and form. Its resemblance of either a human form, internal organs or natural matter depicts a dreamlike entity through bold representative colours such as green, black and red, to speak to issues of fertility, godliness and rebirth. In addition to his customary paintings and works on paper, *Confluence* sees an inclusion of handwritten newspapers that assist the union of the spiritual and the political. Due to the use of the specifically Ethiopian language Ahmaric in the publications, Temesgen grapples with the context specificity of his subject matter and imagines its ability to traverse geographical confines and communicate meaningfully to a broader audience. By so doing, he activates a moment of detaching the subject matter from the form to the extent that the form becomes the content itself. The handwritten newspapers, and the broader exhibition, invite issues of access, the possibility for public gathering, and the need for a self-imposed censorship that is influenced by the fear of the state.

About Robel Temesgen

Born in 1987 in Ethiopia, Robel Temesgen received an MFA from Tromsø Academy of Contemporary Art, University of Tromsø, Norway in 2015, and a BFA in Fine Art (Painting) from Addis Ababa University in 2010. In 2016, he took part in the Junge Akademie Program of the Akademie der Künste, Berlin, and in 2017 he was a resident artist and grant holder at IASPIS, Stockholm, the Swedish Art Grants Committee's International Programme for Visual and Applied Arts. Temesgen's work has been exhibited at the Marabouparken Art Gallery, Stockholm (2017), Akademie der Künste, Berlin (2016), Kurant Visningsrom, Tromsø (2015), Addis International Video Art Festival, Addis Ababa (2015), Art Future/Future Signs, Riga (2015), RomeAfrica Film Festival, Rome (2015), Lumen Festival, New York (2015), Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin (2014) and Modern Art Museum/Gebre Kristos Desta Center, Addis Ababa (2013). He currently lives and works in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.