

Robel Temesgen - Adbar

7th January - 6th February 2016

Private view: Wednesday 6th January 2016, 18.30 - 20.30

Artist talk: Robel Temesgen in conversation with Hans Ulrich Obrist on Friday 8th January, 7pm



Robel Temesgen, *Adbar*, 2015 mixed media on paper, 500 x 214 cm

Tiwani Contemporary now represents Robel Temesgen (b.1987, Ethiopia) and is pleased to announce his first UK solo exhibition.

The exhibition comprises a series of new paintings and works on paper inspired by the longstanding Ethiopian belief of *adbar* and its associated rituals. In Amharic, the term '*adbar*' refers to the embodiment of protective spirits within various elements of the natural landscape, such as lakes, mountains, rocks or trees. Trees possessing *adbar*, for instance, are strictly protected and believed to act as a link between people and the spirit world. They can serve as shelter, places of worship and meeting points around which to discuss community matters. Temesgen grew up in Dessie, north-east Ethiopia, where *adbar* was commonly practised.

Adbar marks a return to painting for Temesgen after experiments in video, installation and participatory projects. The series includes over twenty works depicting shimmering imaginary landscapes in Temesgen's characteristic symbolic, lyrical style. The works vary greatly in scale, with the largest paintings measuring over five metres in length. Suspended from the ceiling and presented as floating rolls of paper partially covering the floor, their appearance recalls Chinese scroll paintings or Ethiopian healing scrolls.

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Tiwani Contemporary

Temesgen's paintings and works on paper display a luminescence achieved through the use of enamel, spray paint and acrylic on high-gloss paper. They depict water, land and air in various states of fusion and transformation – turbulent or calm, bathed in a surreal, scintillating light. These ethereal landscapes are patterned with soft-coloured nebulous haloes and areas of pointillist detail. The blur of spray paint contrasts with an intermittently miniaturist approach, evoking an element of the sublime in nature, which can bring joy, comfort, fear and torment in equal measure.

Adbar is touring from Kurant Visningsrom (Tromsø), where it was on display in October 2015.

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Notes to Editors

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 with high distinction in Fine Art (Painting) from Addis Ababa University in 2010. Engaged in the Ethiopian art scene, Temesgen has participated in exhibitions, workshops, residences, festivals and conferences, both locally and internationally. He taught drawing, painting and composition at Alle School of Fine Arts and Design, Addis Ababa University from 2010 to 2013. Temesgen's work has been exhibited at 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.

About Tiwani Contemporary

Tiwani Contemporary exhibits and represents international emerging and established artists, focussing on Africa and its diaspora. The gallery presents work through its exhibition programme and participation in art fairs.

In addition to its commercial activities, Tiwani Contemporary runs a public programme, Art Connect, supported by the A.G. Leventis Foundation. This provides a platform for discussing contemporary artistic practice through publications, talks and projects.

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Opening hours: Tuesday - Friday, 11am - 6pm, Saturday, 12pm - 5pm