



# Eyob Kitaba Feyissa

Multidisciplinary Ethiopian Visual Artist |  
Educator | Researcher

## Profile

Eyob Kitaba Feyissa, is a multidisciplinary visual artist, researcher, and lecturer based in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. He coordinates the MFA Program at the Ale School of Fine Arts and Design, Addis Ababa University, and serves on the Academic Council. With an MFA from the same institution and a background in joinery and carpentry from General Wingate College, Eyob bridges traditional craftsmanship with contemporary art practices rooted in the lived materiality of African cities.

For Eyob, the city is both subject and medium. His practice spans painting, sculpture, photography, sound, and installation, all drawn from the material, social, and political fabric of Addis Ababa. Through demolition sites, fences, fabrics, and ruins, he engages the city as an active archive, transforming fragments of urban life into layered narratives of memory and transformation.

## Artistic Practice

Eyob's work is grounded in the belief that materials carry memory. He collects and reworks objects discarded from Addis Ababa—corrugated iron fences, Madaberiya (grain sack fabrics), and salvaged ceilings from demolished homes. These materials are more than surfaces; they are witnesses to displacement, resilience, and the paradox of development.

By reconfiguring such fragments, Eyob situates Addis Ababa as both a personal city and a metaphorical one, where everyday matter embodies the fragile continuity between past and future. His art makes visible the hidden politics of urbanization, probing how identity is continuously reshaped by erasure and renewal.



## **Exhibitions & Recognition**

Eyob has exhibited extensively across Africa, Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. His works resonate as both deeply rooted in Addis Ababa and connected to global conversations on urbanization, memory, and belonging.

### **Selected Exhibitions:**

- The Paradox (Hodina Jeba ስድስና የዕድን) – Solo exhibition, Gebre Kristos Modern Art Museum, Addis Ababa (2024)
- Addis Art Fair, Addis Ababa (2024)
- Ale Legends – Addis Fine Art Gallery, Addis Ababa (2023)
- Lahore Biennale, Between the Earth and the Moon, Pakistan (2020)
- Musings on Change – Lela Art Gallery, Addis Ababa (2019)
- HERE and HERE – ASIKO International, Asni Gallery, Addis Ababa (2016)
- CHESS – Residency project, 32° East | Ugandan Arts Trust, Kampala (2016)
- Sound of Change – Gebre Kristos Modern Art Museum, Addis Ababa (2014)
- Ethereal (Kiremit) – Lela Gallery, Addis Ababa (2013)
- Fair Play – Austria (2012)
- Al Bastakiya Art Fair – Dubai (2010)
- Filling the Gap – Lela Art Gallery, Addis Ababa (2007, debut exhibition)

## **Artistic Themes & Visual Language**

Eyob's visual language grows directly from the contradictions of urban life. In Addis Ababa, construction colors such as green and yellow once signaled progress, but now also embody fragility and loss as the city turns to gray concrete and glass. His works probe this uncertain future, questioning the cost of transformation and the erasure of memory.

## **Public Works & Ongoing Projects**

Eyob extends his practice into public and socially engaged contexts. His sculptures for the Yenegewa Women's Rehab and Training Center in Addis Ababa embody art as part of community care.

Currently, he is developing a long-term research-based series that explores urban memory as both archive and metaphor. By painting and reconfiguring ceiling fabrics and fragments from demolished homes, he creates works that serve as visual diaries of Addis Ababa. These works document the shifting identity of the city while addressing universal questions of history, belonging, and continuity.

## **Artistic Statement**

My work serves as a visual testimony to the beautiful, chaotic, and often contradictory process of urban metamorphosis. Focusing on Addis Ababa as a primary locus, my practice expands to engage with the shared fate of Africa's megacities, where the promise of progress collides with the enduring presence of tradition.

I critically examine the city's physical and ideological unraveling through its changing architecture, landscapes, and human interactions. Central to this inquiry are the materials of this new modernity: the corrugated iron sheets that skin the city's rapid expansion, the discarded canvas ceilings of demolished buildings, and the imported fertilizer sacks (\*madaberiya\*) that arrive as foreign aid only to be recycled into the very fabric of the urban environment. These objects are not merely found materials; they are potent symbols of a complex, often dependent, socio-economic reality.

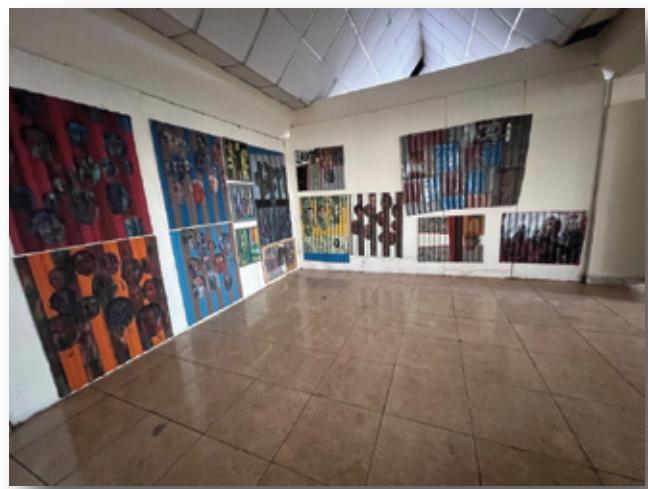
This material study extends to the systems that animate the city. Public transportation fascinates me as a futuristic, metallic package that contains and directs the rhythms of daily life. These buses and trains become mobile metaphors for the nation itself—vessels of collective aspiration hurtling forward, often at the expense of the communities they traverse.

As an Ethiopian from a historically uncolonized nation, my work probes a broader paradox of post-colonial identity. I investigate the tense dialectic between national pride and a contemporary reality of dependence—on foreign aid and the pervasive ideologies it carries. This leads to a fundamental questioning of what true independence means within a globalized framework.

To ground this expansive exploration, I incorporate and re-contextualize the sacred iconography of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church. By integrating these revered images into a contemporary visual lexicon, I forge a critical dialogue between the eternal and the ephemeral, the sacred and the secular. This strategy allows me to build a resonant practice that speaks from within the very traditions it examines, using the iconic as a lens to focus on the ironic.

Through this multidisciplinary approach, my art maps the contours of urgent questions rather than providing simple answers. It is an ongoing chronicle of a society in flux, capturing the profound gravity and subtle poetry of its perpetual becoming





Works on corrugated ironsheet 2011-2020



**Works on corrugated ironsheet 2011-2020**

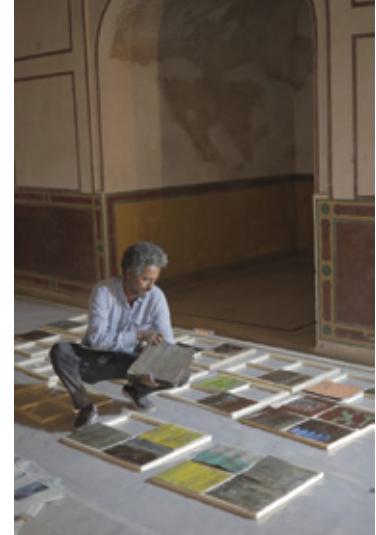
Book Review: Modernist Art in Ethiopia, by Elzabet W/Giorgis

<https://share.google/2g6UE347GaWfWg58R>



Kampala Uganda 2016

<https://share.google/foMy6Jw5rC0KDNHB0>



**Works on corrugated ironsheet 2020**

Lahore, Pakistan, Biennale Foundation  
<https://share.google/Og3AaNYtvYdEsqwBy>



Workson printed plate between 2020-2022

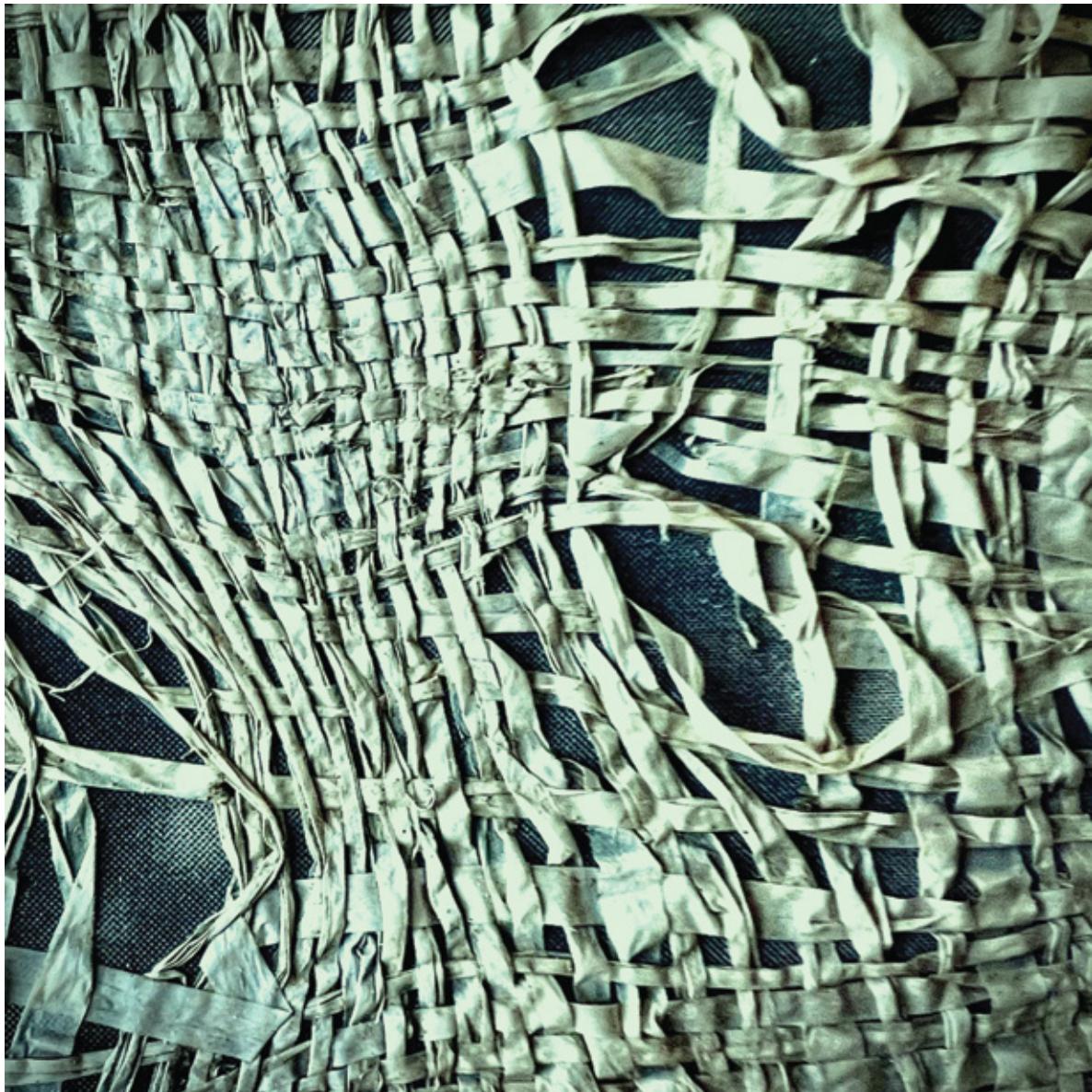


NOV 24 - DEC 24  
2023  
@ 5:30 PM

@ MODERN ART MUSEUM  
GEBREKRISTOS DESTA CENTER



**S O L O   E X H I B I T I O N   B Y**  
**E Y O B   K I T A B A**



**L+P+S+E+C+N**  
**T H E   P A R A D O X**

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# The Paradox

Belly [**የፋ**-Ho'od-Amharic] : front part[of the body] holding food and drink: container. Concurrent to a vessel.

Belly: thought, demeanor (Desta Teklewold: Amharic Dictionary: 1970E.C, PP 403)

After shifting from working on canvas, the material that primarily grabbed my attention and the one I worked a lot with is corrugated iron. The corrugated iron, both new and old, enabled me to question the stories of the individual, the neighborhood and the city that are simply demolished and dismantled. Through the process, I observed these demolished houses and neighborhoods being covered by the plastic fabric, locally named MADABERIYA, that is predominantly used as a sack for holding grains and flour. This has laid the foundation for the shift in subject matter apparent in my recent body of works over the past few years.

Beyond thinking its functional use as a cover or fence; the versatility and spectrum of the material MADABERIYA catered and forced me to examine the range of national and continental issues that persisted from our past to our future. I found the MADABERIYA conveying burning issues that usually remain undisussed. This line of thought led me to discover other similar materials used to packaging mass produced and consumable goods. Packaging cans, textiles, images, even quotes and proverbs posted in shops, taxis and in different places, images...etc. are abundant in our day-to-day activities as well as in our sacred places. Some of these materials especially the MADABERIYA and the packaging cans are even used as one of our units of measurement. The MADABERIYA triggered all of these insights and escorted me to revisit our history and identity.

Ethiopian societies miraculously battled for their identity and effected a symbolic monumental history for oppressed people. Yet, our yearly budget is determined based on aid funds. Following the funds, we are forced to comply to the ideology behind the politics of aid. Such a genealogy reveals the riddle that we are yet unable to resolve. This exhibition deals with aspects related to being able or unable to feed oneself typified by a belly or **የፋ**-Ho'od [in Amharic] whose back entails a shadow encompassing wide-ranging paradoxes. Using this show as a starting point, it's my aim to recurrently and exhaustively work on the subject using artistic research in as much depth as possible.

The belly or **የፋ** as in the above Desta Teklewold's definition, entangles the consumption of food with digesting ideas and related to its churning character. Ethiopian literary giant, Sebhat GebreEgziabher speaks about belly or **የፋ**, its bottomless pit, as an insatiable desire akin to devilish cravings through his character who lost five of his family members to hunger in the renowned novella Amist Sidist Sebat (Five Six Seven አምስት ማድረሻ ስባት) saying:

"....Five Six Seven! Satan is [our] belly. An astounding void is the belly, it's the one that can never be filled up. Satan is the belly. Satan allied with the serpent, misled Eve; blended with the fruit, entered Eve's stomach. Fused in her stomach, [the consequence] ensued to her offspring. [if] Satan is thrown to hell, it means it's tossed to the belly. Then what? Then, it reigns over our lives, he makes us prostrate, staying within that darkness [of the belly]"

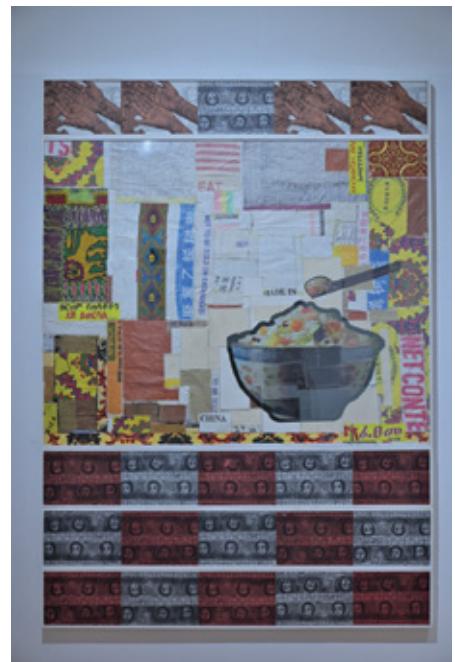
I also took a glimpse of Ethiopian proverbs related to the subject. The extent and depth of our proverbs related to belly or **የፋ** doesn't allow me to ignore the subject as the saying goes «**የፋ የፋኝው**» 'HOD YIFJEW' which translates "let the belly deal with it [the issue you grapple with]" Rather, it made me think of questions. How deep the belly knows its back, the structure that holds it upright? Beyond the means on how we contain in feeding ourselves, why can't we think of the burdens behind the inability to feed ourselves? Is it because of the degree of our layered problems? Is it because of being insatiable towards the questions of our belly or is it because of our appeal to only be concerned about filling our belly? I'm forced to question what really enforced us to be highly associated with hunger, poverty and as aid liquidators despite all these associations could not be more than anecdotes in some chapters of our titanic history. Because of all these, my body of works in this exhibition do mostly focus on identity and narratives of identity.

Identity is woven by narratives. Identity is not only constructed by narratives that we produce about ourselves. It is also based on the narratives that others devise about us. The images that recorded our history are full of "Paradoxes" which repeatedly evoke and could not seemingly reconcile with the images created by these two narratives. Even if we do not deny the fact that all these are part of our history; what have we done to expunge these narratives and images? Amid the viciously recurring and paradoxical images of identity; to try to look for a possible cure that serves the present day, the future and the generation to come is all what I and this exhibition crave for.

Eyob Kitaba

November 2023

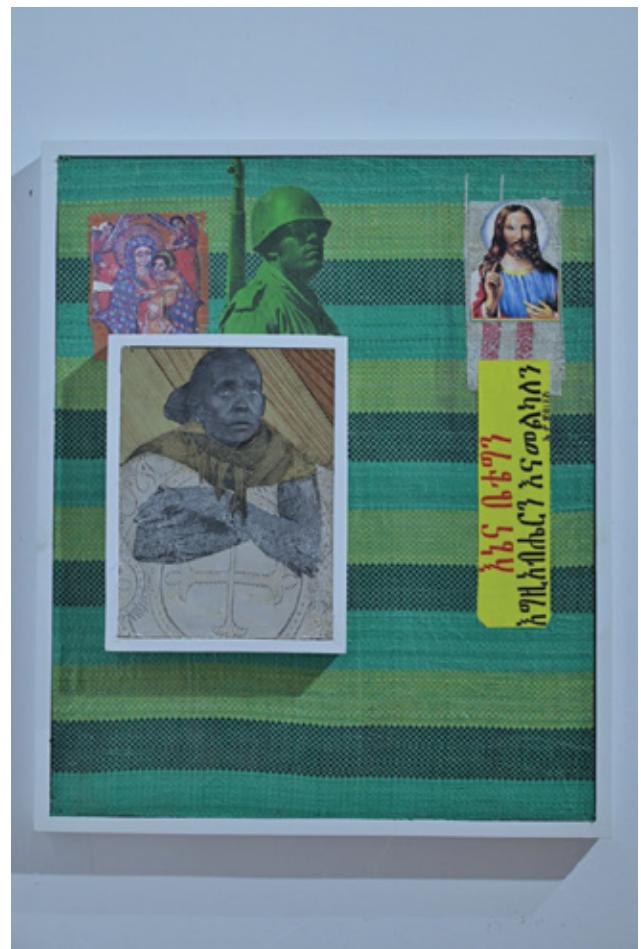
Addis Ababa



Works on Madaberia (wheat sack) since 2024



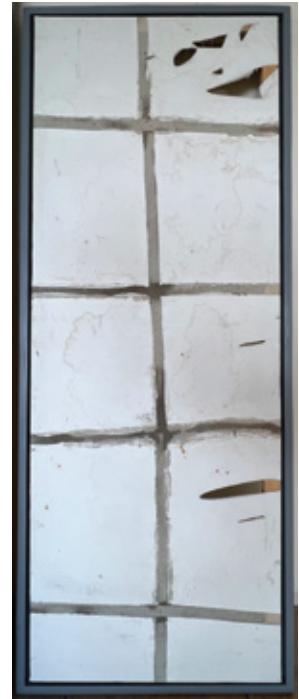
**Works on Madaberia (wheat sack) since 2024**



Works on Madaberia (wheat sack) since 2024



Works on Madaberia (wheat sack) since 2024



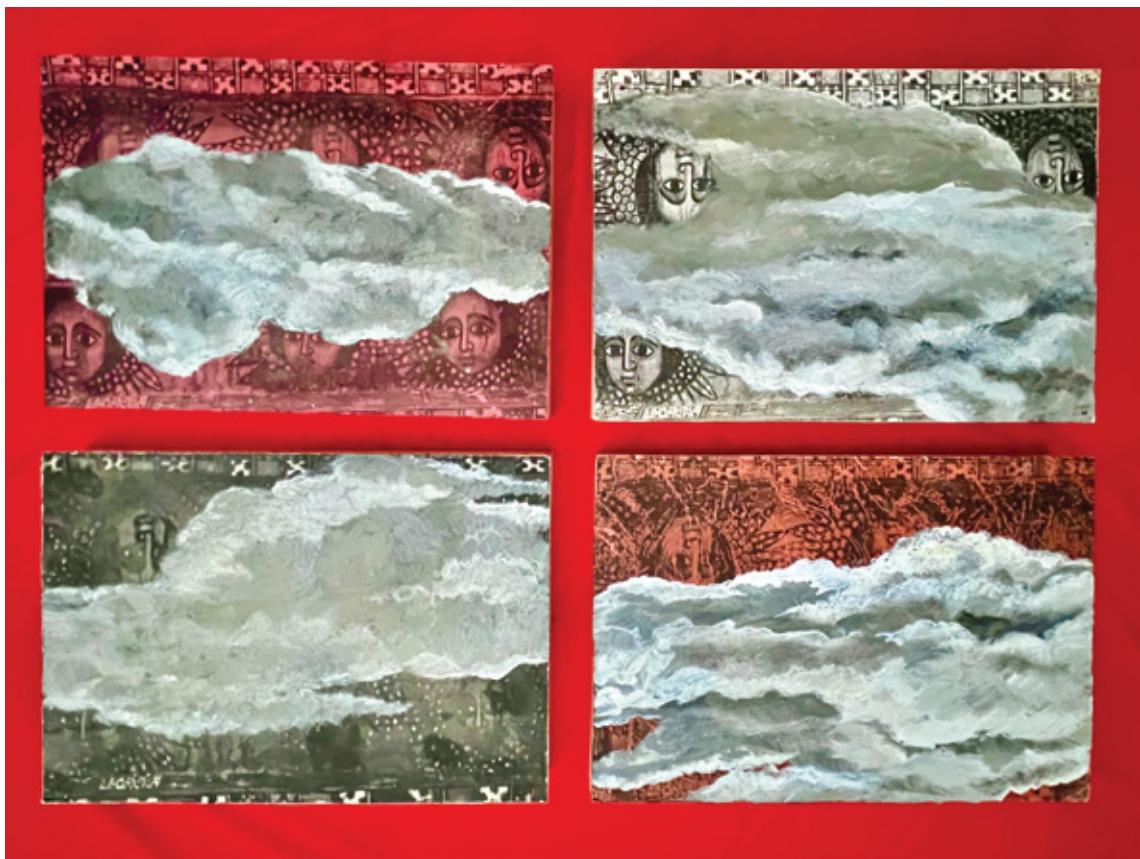
**Works on found ceiling canvases and on Madaberia(wheat sacks)  
since 2024**



**Works on found ceiling canvases and on Madaberia(wheat sacks)  
since 2024**







**Current work**