

Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery open forth gallery space this weekend

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by Mark Westall

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The Shrimp Factory in Nevlunghavn, Norway

Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery are opening of their fourth gallery space at The Shrimp Factory in Nevlunghavn, Norway with a solo exhibition by Ethiopian artist Wendimagegn Belete. Entitled Moment 2.0, the show is a continuation of Belete's recent London exhibition and presents a new collection of textural collage paintings that weave together archival materials and memories to create rich and complex visual landscapes, illustrating the continued murmurations of the past within the present.



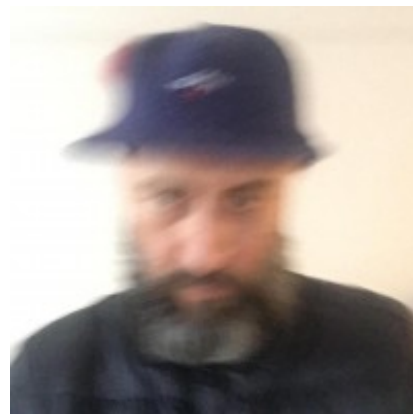
Moment (21), 2020, Mixed media (200 x 180 cm/ 78 3/4 x 70 7/8 in)

Despite the challenges currently facing the art world, Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery continues to support its artists with a dynamic programme of exhibitions across its three existing spaces with the new Norway gallery set to host an annual exhibition each summer. Situated in a former shrimp factory in the atmospheric fishing village of Nevlunghavn, the gallery invites new audiences to appreciate art in an unusual and historic setting. ‘The space itself is not a conventional artist space. It was never intended to be an art gallery, but through art, it is transformed,’ comments Belete whose practice similarly repurposes found materials, such as newspaper articles, archival letters, recorded conversations and traditional Ethiopian ceremonial garments as artistic mediums. Fragments of these sources are reassembled to create the artist’s vibrant collages, which reference his own Ethiopian heritage and personal memories as well as collective experiences and historical events, specifically, Italy’s attempts to colonise Ethiopia. Much like the gallery’s re-contextualising of a traditional industrial space, Belete’s art revives historic narratives in the present as a means to both reclaim the past and understand the shaping of identities.

Viewed together, there's a sense of fluidity between the artist's works as the colours, imagery and brushstrokes transcend the boundaries of a single canvas; often, the artist cuts sections from one painting and adds it to another, creating a further layer of intertextuality and visual coalescence. This method of working is an essential part of Belete's process as he engages in a deeply psychological exploration of time and memory. The half-formed shapes, abstract patterns and lines convey a sense of creative spontaneity and urgency, whilst the distinctive colour palette reflects the intensity and energy of Ethiopian culture. The effect on the viewer is immediately striking on an aesthetic level, but closer observation reveals the subtle layers that contribute to the work as a whole. In this way, Belete encourages us to consider our both cultural and personal identities as an accumulation of past experiences, events, and decisions that continue to pervade and define the present.

Belete's artistic explorations are more prevalent than ever as we consider the possible visions of our future and how we might take action. Whilst Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery's opening in Norway at this time marks not only an expansion of the gallery's international presence, but also the continuation of the art world and its power to bring about change.

www.kristinhjellegjerde.com



About Mark Westall

Mark Westall is the Founder and Editor of FAD magazine Founder and co-publisher Art of Conversation and founder of the platform @worldoffad