

General portfolio

Workneh Bezu Kassa

Born on 8th March 1978, Workneh Bezu Kassa grew up in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Workneh began drawing from a very young age, taking drawing lessons in elementary school and showing great artistic ability. Although his family encouraged him to become an auto mechanic, Workneh was destined to follow his passion for art and enrolled at the prestigious Addis Ababa University School of Fine Art and Design, to study under some of the masters of Ethiopian painting and sculptor.

For Workneh, art is his life, his passion and his dreams. Receiving formal training gave Workneh the techniques and academic skills he needed to bring his dreams to reality. Workneh experiments with different artistic forms and has become one of the pioneers of children's puppet film and short animation film in Ethiopia. Included in his creations are rug puppets, paintings in oil and watercolors, sculptures and graphics art.

In 2001, Workneh established **Habesha Art Studio** with other emerging Ethiopian artists.

Habesha Art Studio

Workneh Bezu Kassa is one of four founding members of Habesha Art Studio. In 2001 in Addis Ababa, the opportunity for young, emerging artists to show their artistic work did not exist. The old art galleries in the city exhibited well-known Ethiopian artists and rarely presented the work of unknown artists. Having encountered this problem, Workneh and colleagues decided to bypass these traditional avenues of showing their work and founded their own studio/gallery to reach the public. The establishment of Habesha Art Studio has been a real phenomenon in the Ethiopian modern art world. The studio has become the prototype for many young artists, who have followed in the footsteps of the founders of the Habesha Art Studio and opened their own studios to display their work directly to the public. Amongst artists in Addis Ababa, the founders of Habesha Art Studio have been called 'icons' who opened a new chapter in the Ethiopian art world.



The four artists at the Habesha Art Studio have their own distinctive style and identity. Despite working in the same venue, each maintain their own individual painting style, conveying their different philosophy of life through their art, whereby the public can recognize the individual artist and his work. With the use of different materials and sequential themes, the artists have their own identity within the one group that defines them.

In this studio group, Workneh artistic style has evolved as he built up relationships with his audience and the other artists in the studio. These relationships have provided feedback, personal suggestions and have challenged his style, forcing him to keep reviewing his work, his ways of expression and to try different techniques, constantly ensuring that he grows and improves as an artist. These relationships are catalysts of radical change in his artistic style, allowing Workneh to evolve, explore and grow as an artist.

Material choice

Workneh's preference is to work with oils and acrylic but he is equally competent in watercolor and pencil. He has the talent to convey almost any texture, ranging from crude sketches to incredibly detailed pictures. He works in a variety of materials: acrylic, oil, charcoal, pastel, pencil and watercolor for his paintings while he uses fiberglass, glass, gypsum and other materials for his sculptures. For his films, Workneh works with cloth and fabric to create the puppets and wood to design and construct the film set. He also enjoys being a graphic artist.

Exhibitions series

Throughout his artistic career, Workneh has chosen themes and messages that are easy to understand and perceive. He likes simple themes, which entertain the audience. Below is an outline of themes in Workneh's art:

Circles

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In Workneh's early paintings, circles were a predominate theme. Deriving from expressions of powerful things in life, Workneh's early paintings were semi-figurative composition art, depicting powerful signs and elements that affect and have an interdependence with living things- the sun, moon, eye. His technique involved painting dark pigments onto white canvas, energetic brush strokes and the use of dots to make the circle visually appear powerful and source of energy. He disassociated himself from the conventional technique of adding highlights to a dark background.



circle
120cm x 120cm
oil on canvas

Beauty of women



beauty of women
21cm x 29 cm
pastel on paper

As the artist progressed over time, his attention shifted from circles, to the theme of women.

"Women have played an important role in my life and have left a deep impression."

Mother and child

The artist became very drawn to the emotional behavior of mother and child. Using contemporary expressional art, he jointed both figures (mother and child) to emphasize how they are attached physically from the reactions of mind sets, sadness, joy, interdependence, pride, frustrations, loyalty, faithfulness.....



mother and child
14cm x 14cm
acrylic on canvas

Once upon a time, there was a girl.... (Andit Iij nebech)

Many stories start with this line, and it implies to everyone that one girl could be your lover or sister or, so was there some point of your life? His intention was not only want to show for the audience the story he only know of.

Workneh began to develop a curiosity in how children see the world and to realize their perspective in his work: big, happy, oval faces with oversized eyes, huge smiles and hands interlinked holding each other, irregular forms of hands and legs, simple bright colors and innocent characters. He derives inspiration for this theme from the saying "if you look after children, angels will look after you." He concludes that "*if you give joy or fun to children, the kid's angel will be happy and save you.*"

Workneh has a collection of more than 40 pieces of art in different sizes and shapes, based on this theme.



once up on a time
75cm x 75cm
oil on canvas

Eve and the Apple Tree

Workneh's latest work is inspired by the theme of Eve and the apple tree. Trees are protectors and providers, offering shelter, wood and fruit. In his paintings, Workneh represents the female form and her willingness to embrace the tree and eat of its fruit. His idea is to express women sharing respect and emotions with nature, symbolized by the tree and affirms that she is not directly having sex with it." *I perceived that the woman is so much in love with the tree that she offers herself and in return the tress offers its fruit to her.*" While this version of the story differs from that in the Holy Bible, Workneh accepts that he has artistically interpreted the story "*it's just an idea that arose out of my little knowledge and perception of religion. I felt like the tree did a favour for Eve and she, in return, left like she had to do a favour, it was a mutual love. She took the bite and offered it to her husband too.*" Many believe that this story is a battle between good and evil and resulted in the human race being tarnished with evil sin. However, Workneh believes that "*once something is done it becomes perfect and there is no perfection in undoing it*".

Workneh works with two dominant colours in this series- purple and violet. They express his thought of purity and the clear consciousness of the woman.



EVE AND APPLE TREE
120cm x 120cm
Acrylic on Canvas

I do what I think/love

These themes his very recent work, a collection of more than 130 paintings in different size and shapes acrylic on canvas in both side. it was exhibited at Alliance Ethio-Francaise, Adddis Ababa , Ethiopia in February 2011 He expressed “*Address to those who reads without stress... this is about a small light smaller than needle’s eye, but intense full of knowledge equivalent to truth. I believe this fraction of right overpowers full darkness, wins. Beyond impossibilities outside of this knowledge full of light in and out, noting is possibly visible nor melody to sound a rethym of music. However, this small right makes things happier, color harmonizes to even more beauty, even noised harmonized to greatness.*

May be we all know this small light as a child when everything was nothing but great certainty we want this unforgettable innocent knowledge to come once again. The light is pure, truthful and innocent yet its warmth is beyond horizon and known limits. Thus is my small light, full of innocence happiness the one which makes my life true love. I live a love, I love my life and I paint what I love.

.....I do what I love.....”



ARTIST	WERKENEH BEZU
TITLE	ANGLE FROM HEAVEN
MEDIA	ACRELIC ON CANVAS
SIZE	120/120 CM

Sasase fable Puppet film

In various degree of success Workneh dabbled in many creative endeavors, he executed a fable and staged sets, also designing and producing a puppet film.

This first children's puppet film in Ethiopia, entitled sasase fable "ye sasase teret", was written, directed and produced by Workneh Bezu.

The film features scenes of Ethiopian traditional legends' stories told in the past. The film is named after two Ethiopian alphabets 'sa' and 'sae' which also the name of the central character. He also added that the film featured two kinds' puppets, finger puppet and masked puppet which have shown his artistic skill to create a different characteristic.

As a multi-talented artist Workneh written many scripts but this is the first to hit the stage. He has been children's art when he was in college and that has helped him a lot in writing and working in this film." Teaching kids has been a learning experience for me, as well it helped me to understand the psychology of children This is done to make children know and love the traditional materials as they grownup "

He is also made different cartoon advertisement film and graphics art. And he has a plan to make a cartoon,animation, puppet animation and children movie.

Exhibitions

Feburary 2011	Alliance Ethio- Francaise, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
June 2007	Africa Child Day, Alliance Ethio- Francaise, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
July 2007	Habesha Art Studio, Lela gallery Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
July 2007	Addis Ababa University School of Fine Art and Design, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

May 2007	Residence of First Secretary of USA Embassy, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
January 2007	SPEAK AFRICA, UNICEF. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
June 2006	“Once There Was A Girl”, Residence of USA Embassy’s Secretary, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
June 2005	America Community School, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
December 2004	Addis Art Gallery, Los Angeles, USA
December 2004	Friendship, Saron Art Studio Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
November 2004	Photography Exhibition, German School, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
May 2004	Habesha, Alliance Ethio-Française, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
November 2002	Gizawi No.1. Presentation of Experimental Ideas of Zoma Contemporary Art Space, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
November 2002	Habesha Art Studio, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
May 2002	Habesha Art Studio, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
August 2001	Residence of First Secretary of Spain Embassy, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
July 2001	Addis Ababa University School of Fine Art and Design, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Workshops and participation

Comment [FO1]:

Ethiopian Books for Children & educational Foundation (EBCEF)	He has been rendering a voluntary service to Ethiopian Books for Children & educational Foundation (EBCEF) in art teaching for 2 month (June-August 2003). This program carries on during the summer break for children who are under 14 years old.
The East Africa Art Biennale Association (EAABA)	He has participated in the 7 th international computation of illustration on October 24 th 2001 in addis ababa which is organized Eitta di Ehioggia by collaboration with UNICEF and TEATRIO
residence work shop with two Ganians Ganna organized by Alliance Ethio-Française in	He has participated in for submitting children’s art. this program was to promote the welfare of

langanno southern part of Ethiopia	the elderly in Help Elderly Associates
He has participated in an international children's drawing competition. Ethiopian Red Cross Society organized in connection with the world campaign for the protection of victims of war,	Workshops and teaching and sharing art in ARBA MINCH, JINKA,ADDIS ABABA. In collaborate with UNICEF

Artistic statement

Art is the fundamental necessity for me Art is the modality that reflects a thought. My life is art, art is nature. Through art, my soul is expressed in this world; I don't think I could survive without art. For me I need art like the air I breathe, my dreams are reveled through my art, my paintings are like prayers, they give me relief when I'm feeling low. They allow me to speak-to people.

My greatest satisfaction is to know that somebody has hung my painting on their walls, appreciating its beauty and exploring its deeper level of meaning this encourages me to continue to express myself and my inner feelings.

People's emotions, feeling and perceptions vary from time to time. My style of drawing and the themes I chose to draw depend on my emotions and feelings too. I draw until I get relief and release all thoughts from inside.

I believe fine art should be observe or express by all human beings from this concept I want to emphasize that my paintings and sculpture can be observed and perceived by all sense of organs.

Work proposal

It is my pleasure to work in your residency project and it create for me an opportunity for my current new imaginative development of themes.

I want to create an image which conveys my personal experience and social value expression by visual element/art work and sculptures which are also can be simply identify or perceive by blind and deaf person

Methods and materials for the painting

Oil and acrylic on canvas, different elements of collage, adding printing materials(Braille), creating textures by applying energetic brush strokes and knife in different direction and by using symbols and materials that can be easily perceived by a blind person and also give an aesthetical composition for any audience

Methods and materials for the sculptures

Creating forms, texture, and scale of the sculpture that can be easily to reach to touch.

To create what thoughts and feelings does the sculptures can express through touching it or listening

Using glass, bottles, spoons, plates, nails, fibers and other materials.

Made from different materials hung on ceiling which is create harmonic sound that can express feelings and emotions, it is more like mix media

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