

Galerie Lelong & Co.

FICRE GHEBREYESUS

MAP / QUILT



8 September - 22 October 2022
Opening 8 September from 6:00 pm
38, avenue Matignon, Paris 8e

Galerie Lelong & Co. is pleased to announce the first exhibition in France of the Eritrean-American artist Ficare Ghebreyesus (1962-2012), from September 8 to October 22.

Unknown during his lifetime, Ghebreyesus having declined most exhibition offers, it was only after his sudden death in 2012 that his work really began to be researched, exhibited, and the subject of increasing interest.

Featured in this year's exhibition at the 59th Venice International Art Biennale at the *Arsenale*, his work was previously exhibited at the Museum of the African Diaspora in San Francisco in 2018 and is now in the collections of the Baltimore Museum of Art, the Glenstone Museum, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Studio Museum in Harlem, the Rollins Museum of Art, as well as the Yale University Art Gallery.

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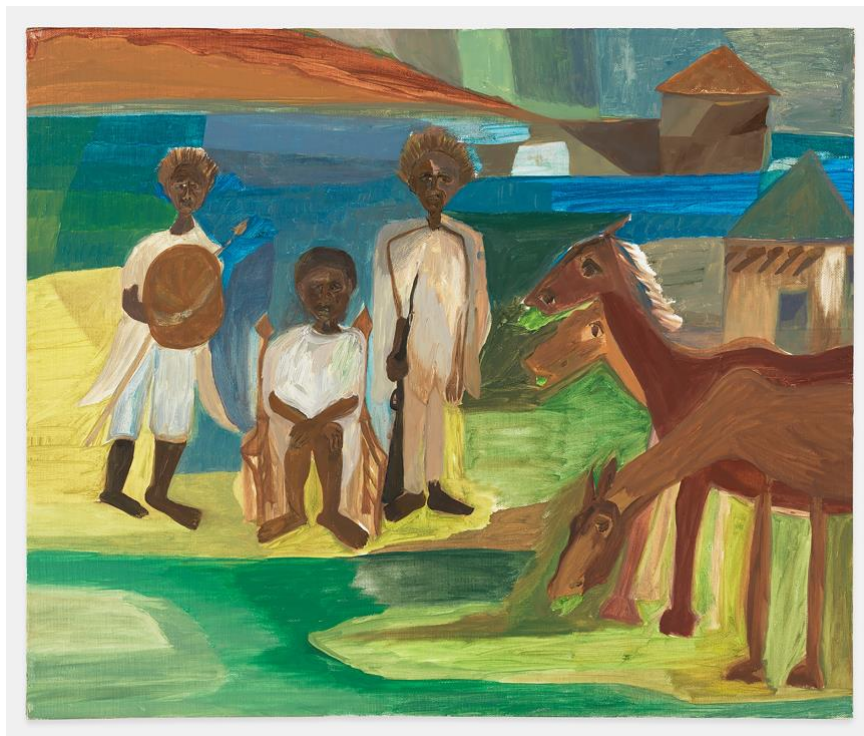
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Galerie Lelong & Co. represents Ghebreyesus' work since 2019 and is at the initiative of his first solo show in New York in 2020. This first exhibition in Paris is centered around two large abstract, vividly coloured *Map Quilt* paintings from 1999 and as their titles suggest their imagery simultaneously evokes an abstracted geography or landscape and the patterns and colours of Eritrean textiles. Around these two major canvases, floral pastels from the 90's and a series of small delicate canvases of almost abstract landscapes are alternating with scenes depicting characters and animals.



Operating between figuration and abstraction, smoothly passing from the one to the other, Ghebreyesus' oil or acrylic paintings evoke the fluid and serpentine forms of dreams, memories, and folk tales. Transient figures can be glimpsed, caught in the midst of vividly colourful constructions. A school of fish suggests a group of human figures, a boat emerges from intertwined shapes reminiscent of Eritrean weavings. Ghebreyesus' refusal of borders and of divisions seems to stem from an identity and a home that were continually mutating and on the move.

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Ghebreyesus was born in Asmara, Eritrea, in 1962; he passed away in New Haven, Connecticut (USA), in 2012. As a teenager, his mother urged him to flee the ravages of the War of Independence (1961-1991), becoming a refugee in various successive countries, Sudan, Italy and Germany, where he lived in difficult conditions. He finally managed to settle in the United States where he graduated from the Yale School of Art (at the graduation ceremony he received the Carol Schlossberg Award for Excellence).

Ghebreyesus was actively engaged in Eritrea's struggle for independence, while studying art at the Art Students League and Robert Blackburn Printmaking Studio, both in New York. Ghebreyesus spoke seven languages, played multiple instruments and earned a living as the chef of the now legendary *Caffé Adulis* in New Haven, Connecticut, that he co-founded and co-owned with his brother. While living there, he married the writer and poet Elizabeth Alexander and had two sons.

Alexander's award-winning memoir *The Light of the World* chronicles her husband Ghebreyesus's life and work. The *Ficre Ghebreyesus: Gate to the Blue* exhibition catalogue is published by Galerie Lelong & Co. includes an interview by Elizabeth Alexander with jazz pianist Jason Moran and a text by critic Tausif Noor.



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Images:

Ficre Ghebreyesus, *Map / Quilt IV*, 1999, Acrylic on unstretched burlap, 157,5 x 164 cm

© The Estate of Ficre Ghebreyesus / Courtesy Galerie Lelong & Co.

Ficre Ghebreyesus *Untitled*, circa 2011, Acrylic on canvas, 51x61cm

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