



# ART-iculation: Contexts of climate change

## Introductory Remark

Climate change is not a new phenomenon. Global warming, natural disasters and their growing effects on the earth have been observed and studied already for many years from different perspectives and disciplines and with different interests.

But climate change also has an impact on many aspects of cultural life for people all over the world, ranging from methods of agriculture and the use of resources to environmental migration and health issues. At the same time our greatest chance for addressing climate change and initiating changes in our habits is by including cultural dimensions into the debate.

The Goethe-Institut worldwide is looking at the cultural dimension of climate and climate change and addresses this subject through films, exhibitions, symposiums, blogs and talks.

I would like to thank the curator Mifta Zeleke for putting together the exhibition “ART-iculation: Contexts of climate change” for the Goethe-Institut Addis Ababa – and both participating artist, Tamrat Gezahegn and Dereje Demissie, for developing and producing new ideas for the show.

**March 2016**

**Dr. Julia Sattler**

**Director of the Goethe-Institut, Addis Ababa**

## ART-iculation: Contexts of climate change

The breadth of climate change touches upon various aspects ranging from scientific discoveries to historical and archeological evidences to artistic outlooks and farther more. The enormous understandings that these realms attempted to construct about climate change, its causes and consequences are helping to develop stronger impacts on people today and the future. Specific to art, overflowing concepts and exhibitions on climate change has so long become a significant and controversial theme in the art world. This exhibition addresses the issue of climate change from the perspectives of two Ethiopian artists namely Tamrat Gezahegn and Dereje Demissie.

Tamrat's recent works are focused on the essences of indigenous knowledge and practices. As one of the least acculturated forms of life, indigenous way of living demonstrates its own peculiar characteristics. The features of the indigenous culture, wisdom, knowledge, aura, its resonance and dissonance with the modern thinking... etc with regards to climate change is one aspect of the exhibition from the vista of Tamrat's works . In so doing, he poses questions as to how his symbolic portrayal (using indigenous sky and clouds) of the indigene can be scrutinized counter to climate change. Tamrat says, "When I deal with indigenous sky, it entails the context on how the indigene peoples live in accordance with nature; their contribution to the realm of medication and farther to the social, economic, cultural essence of humanity; how their culture served as source of wisdom to other societies and also a means to the realization of their role in yielding health to the world".

Dereje's artistic grip has so far been focused on the realization of the liaison among landscape, identity and human influence. The way one's identity is shaped; the role of the landscape (not limited to the landform but also related to vegetation, sea level, temperature...etc); and the dimensions of human influence are all apparent in the works of Dereje in which he persistently managed to resolve the mystery. Specific to this show, Dereje contextualizes the intricate complexities of the liaisons in relation to climate change by conceptualizing motifs taken from the various facets of the spectrum. Dereje explains, "The nature that surrounds enables us to understand ourselves in many ways. The destructions in the cosmos lead to lose humanity and our home. But, above all is existence. In my art, I look for spaces to enjoy beauty and possibilities of reconciliations with nature through natural emotions of light, color, form that embrace the traditions and the laws of understanding about air, water, fire, plant and earth. The unification and the balance with one to the other enable to float and to be a shelter for every creature".

In short, through the compellingly spectacular manifestation of the issue of climate change in the works of artists Dereje Demissie and Tamrat Gezahegn, this show is aimed at providing profound insights. Most importantly, conveying aspects of climate change in a much more contextually conceptualized approach is the quintessence of this exhibition.

**Mifta Zeleke, Curator**

**March, 2016**



Tamrat Gezahegn, Ethiopia



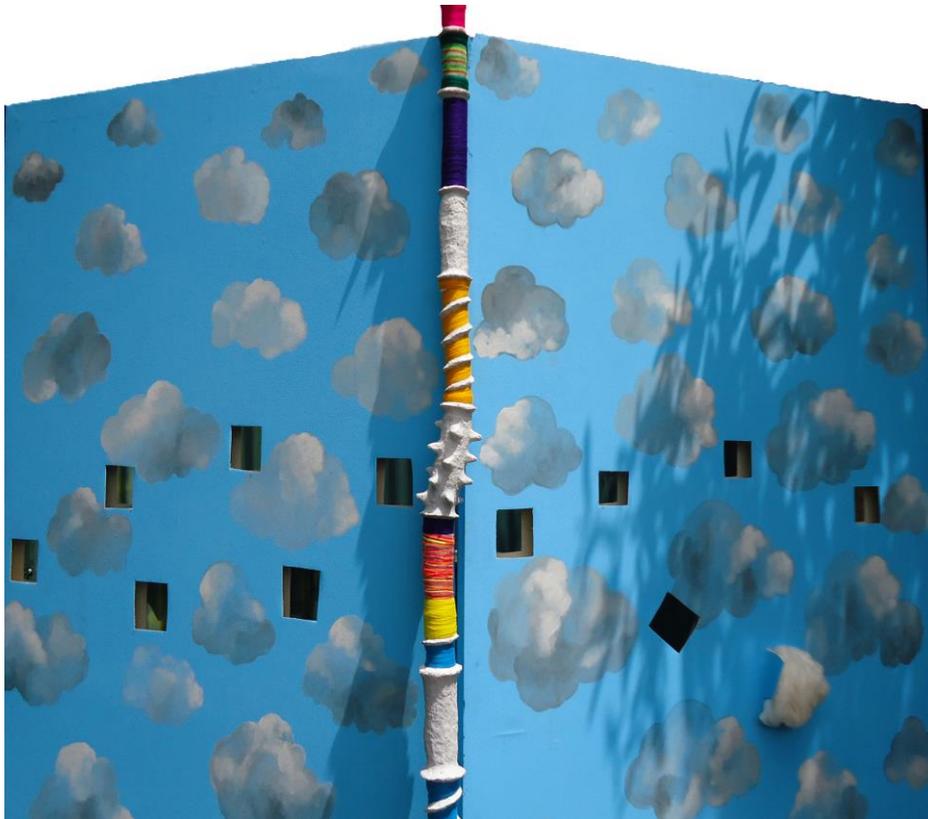
*Indigenous Sky*, 2016  
160 x 150 cm, Acrylic on Canvas

Tamrat Gezahegn, Ethiopia



*Indigenous Sky II*, 2016  
140 x 140 cm, Acrylic on Canvas

Tamrat Gezahegn, Ethiopia



*Indigenous Sky III*, 2016  
200 x 200 cm, Installation

Dereje Demissie, Ethiopia



*Mountain Side*, 2016

124 x 80 cm, Acrylic on Canvas

Dereje Demissie, Ethiopia



*Nostalgia I*, 2016

200 x 100 cm, Acrylic on  
Canvas

Dereje Demissie, Ethiopia



*Nostalgia II*, 2016

120 x 120 cm, Acrylic on Canvas

Dereje Demissie, Ethiopia



*Village*, 2016

70 x 80 cm, Acrylic on Canvas

# Biographies

## Artists

### Tamrat Gezahegn

Tamrat Gezahegn was born in 1977 in Addis Ababa. He graduated from the Addis Ababa University, Alle School of Fine Arts and Design in 2000 with a Diploma in Painting. He is the founding member of Netsa Art Village which was the most dynamic venue for the flourishing of the contemporary art in Ethiopia. In addition to the numerous group and solo shows in Ethiopia, Tamrat has shown his works in Egypt, Germany, Spain, USA, UAE and Sweden.



Tamrat's work as an artist ranges from being a landscape and portrait painter to his relentless studio practice and experimentation, and as well as to installations and performances. Currently, his enthusiastic research on indigenous knowledge has inculcated his meditations. Tamrat believes that an artist's endeavor is just like an enlightened one who enables the culture, the societal knowledge and the aura of the society to be the counterpart the life that one lives. He also aspires for his art to be part of the journey that the society travels through.

### Dereje Demissie

Dereje Demissie was born in Addis Ababa in 1982. He graduated from the Addis Ababa University, Alle School of Fine Arts and Design in 2002 in Mural Art and in 2012 he received a BFA in Painting. He has been a studio artist in the Nubia Visual Art Studio since 2002. Dereje has participated in various group shows in Ethiopia, Uganda, Sudan, Dubai and Germany and had three solo shows in Ethiopia. Dereje's experiments with various media such as murals, sculpture and mosaic has enabled him to enrich his artistic experience. Scrutinizing the essence of the relationship between landscape and identity is his inspiration. Dereje believes that one's identity is highly influenced by the landscape where one lives. Moreover, he states that the notions of belongingness are deeply rooted in our being; our relationship with landscape proves to be the integral part of our identity.



## Curator

### Mifta Zeleke

Mifta Zeleke was born in 1984 in Gainbe near Jimma in Ethiopia. He graduated with BA in English Languages and Literature in 2010 and with MA in TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) in 2013 from Addis Ababa University. Brought up in the ever changing capital, his witness to the various deviations of the city in the course of developments enabled him to focus on possible outlets of the changes. While Mifta's passion for literature was limited to translations of essays, "The Stranger" by Albert Camus and irregular articles on paper backs; his growing interest on visual arts was supplementing his urge to reflect on the changes of the city and the nation. Consequently, his affiliations to the visual arts in the country began to force him to get involved. Collaborations with artists, taking part in Public Relation works in exhibitions and festivals, organizing talks, working for the establishment of Galleria TO.MO.CA and founding the Guramayne Art Center where he mainly practices curating can be traced in his journey. The consecutive shows that are the results of the concepts he develops with artists are fostering his career as a curator. Moreover, his participation in international venues like Berlin Art Week (2015), Residency in AiR Bergen (2016) and Addis Contemporary (Nairobi, 2015-Curator) are helping him to expound the notions of the contemporary art in Ethiopia. Mifta is also a lecturer in the Alle School of Fine Arts and Design, Addis Ababa University since 2014.

