

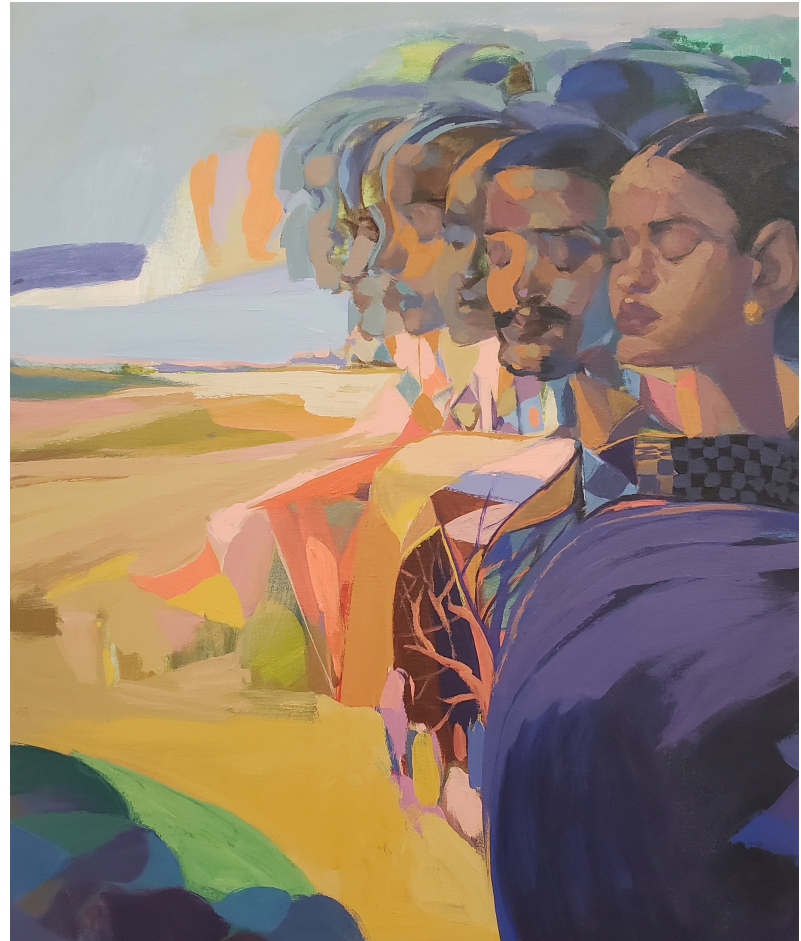
Africa On My Mind

Dereje Demissie and
Johnson Uwadinma

April 17 - June 30, 2021
410 S Main Street | Memphis

Saturday, April 17, 6:30 - 8:30 PM
Public opening

Image: Dereje Demissie: Floating Memorie #6, 2021, Acrylic
on canvas, 36 x 24 inches



Memphis, TN – Urevbu Contemporary is honored to present, “Africa On My Mind” a duo exhibition featuring new and recent paintings by Ethiopian artist Dereje Demissie and Nigerian artist Johnson Uwadinma. While formally very different, Demissie and Uwadinma’s works are visually connected through their shared use of bright color and loosely figurative compositions. Deeper than visual affinity, Demissie and Uwadinma explore a number of common themes from issues of history, memory, and humanity’s place in both the physical and cultural landscape. Staging an artistic dialogue between the work of an artist from East Africa (Ethiopia) and an artist from West Africa (Nigeria), examines the nuances of African identity. With origins in a continent whose history is tinged with centuries of colonialism and imperialism, renewed independence and political revolution, urbanization and globalization, Demissie’s and Uwadinma’s paintings represent inflections of different viewpoints of the vast continent. Taken together, Demissie and Johnson present a spectrum of experiences and narratives of the contemporary global African diaspora.

Dereje Demissie Ethiopian artist Dereje Demissie is a graduate of Addis Ababa University Alle School of Art. He has internationally exhibited his paintings in both solo and group exhibitions. In Demissie's paintings the natural landscape is prominent, to the point that it is almost a character on an equal plane with his human subjects. His painting is greatly inspired by memories of growing up in Gullele, a suburb of Addis Ababa that was once renowned for its abundant flora and fauna. Demissie considers the changes that urbanization and government intervention, among other factors, have brought to his childhood home. Captivated by the relationship between humans and nature, Demissie argues that in much the same way that humans shape their environments, they are influenced by their surroundings. Demissie's richly colorful paintings are reflections on the geography and culture of his homeland.

Johnson Uwadinma Nigerian artist Johnson Uwadinma holds an MA in Painting from the University of Port Harcourt in Nigeria. He has exhibited his work internationally in both Africa and Europe. *Africa on My Mind* marks his debut exhibition in the United States. Uwadinma's paintings are characterized by stylized human figures whose bodies are formed from dynamic colors, patterns, and symbols. Set against backgrounds of fractured text inspired by historic newsprint, Uwadinma's compositions consider the body in relation to social and political events. He is especially attentive to the phenomenon of memory and its capacity to shape historical and social narratives. In Uwadinma's bold paintings, the body is a reservoir of powerful memories.

Urevbu Contemporary represents emerging and mid-career artists with the primary purpose of supporting the practice and work of artists from Africa and its Diaspora while increasing opportunities for artists to introduce their artwork to new geographies. The gallery is deeply committed to presenting culturally significant exhibitions, programming and curated experiences that spark cross cultural dialogue to inspire an appreciation for diversity. Urevbu Contemporary also commissions artists who work in a variety of mediums on corporate and independent projects. The gallery is celebrated for its innovative exhibitions and artists who engage in critical social and cultural dialogue of the day that transcends boundaries between Western and non Western cultures.

Urevbu Contemporary was originally founded as Art Village Gallery in 1991 on historic Beale Street, in Memphis, TN by Nigerian artist, Ephraim Urevbu. In 1998 the Gallery relocated to South Main Street in a converted 14,000 square foot warehouse that Urevbu single handedly renovated. Soon after, the artist also founded the South Main Arts District and later established the monthly art walk (locally referred to as the Trolley Art Tour), both still in existence today. Following the transition of ownership to Sheila Urevbu in 2015, the Gallery's name changed to Urevbu Contemporary in 2020.



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Gallery hours are Friday & Saturday from 12:00 pm to 5:00 pm and by appointment |
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