

TARIKU SHIFERAW BIOGRAPHY

Tariku Shiferaw is known for his practice of mark-making that explores the metaphysical ideas of painting and societal structures. This formal language of geometric abstraction is executed through densely layering material to create “marks,” gestures that interrogate space-making and reference the hierarchy of systems. Shiferaw’s work may be understood in the framework of midcentury abstraction, but the artist also infuses this formal vocabulary with critical observations from popular culture.

Born in Ethiopia, and growing up in Los Angeles, Shiferaw finds inspiration from the diverse cultures in his environments, particularly in the areas of music and language. Taking the names of songs from Hip-Hop, R&B, Jazz, Blues, and Reggae music, Shiferaw makes paintings that embody the experiences and struggles expressed through music by Black artists and composers. He often explores a spectrum of topics ranging from the notion of Black bodies in a white social construct to the popular idioms of romance, sex, and daily life – existence. Appropriating song titles as points of reference for his paintings, the works automatically inherit musical references, identities and histories.

Apart from paint on canvases, Shiferaw also incorporates ready-made objects and materials in his installations, often using transparent and colored mylar, and subverting their utilitarian characteristics in assembly or hanging to create a body of evocative works that question perception and space.

“Mark making is following in the traditional conversation of painting and making marks and gestures that interrogates the space. A mark, as physical and present as cave-markings... reveals the thinker behind the gesture - an evidence of prior markings of ideas and self onto the space.”

– Tariku Shiferaw

Tariku Shiferaw (b. 1983, Addis Ababa, ET) received his BFA from University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA, US; and MFA from Parsons School of Design, New York, NY, US. Shiferaw’s work has been featured in solo exhibitions at Galerie Lelong & Co., New York, NY, US; Southampton African American Museum, Southampton, NY, US; Cathouse Proper, Brooklyn, NY, US; Addis Fine Art, London, UK, and Anthony Philip Fine Art, Brooklyn, NY, US. The artist has participated at group shows at Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, MD, US; Saint Louis Museum of Art, St. Louis, MO, US; Superposition Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, US; Bloom Galerie, Geneva, CH; project8, Melbourne, AU; Bode, Berlin, DE; Sugar Hill Children’s Museum of Art & Storytelling, New York, NY, US; MASSIMODECARLO, Milan, IT; African American Museum of Dallas, Dallas, TX, US; CFHILL Art Space, Stockholm, SE; California African American Museum (CAAM), Los Angeles, CA, US; Anacostia Community Museum, Washington, D.C., US, among others. Shiferaw has been invited to take part at art residencies as Athens Residency Fellow, Athens, GR; at Silver Art Residency, World Trade Center, New York, NY, US; and at Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY, US. His works are part of the public collection of High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA, US. Tariku Shiferaw lives and works in New York, NY, US.