

## Ficre Ghebreyesus

### *Map / Quilt*

September 8<sup>th</sup> - October 22<sup>nd</sup> 2022

Opening Thursday, September 8<sup>th</sup> from 6pm

38 avenue Matignon, 75008 Paris



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

Ficre Ghebreyesus' works are nourished by his rich experience as a citizen of the world. Born in Eastern Africa, in Eritrea, at the beginning of the Independence War (1961-1991), his mother urged him to flee as a teenager and he became a refugee in several different successive countries: Sudan, Italy, Germany. He ultimately settled in the U.S. where he received a degree from the Yale School of Art (and, upon graduation, the Carol Schlossberg prize for Excellence in Painting).

Ficre 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 popular restaurant he co-founded and co-owned: *Caffé Adulis*, in New Haven, Connecticut. While living there, he married and had two sons.

Operating between figuration and abstraction, fluidly passing from the one to the other, Ghebreyesus' oil or acrylic paintings evoke the fluid and serpentine forms of dreams, memories, 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. His refusal of borders and of divisions seems to stem from an identity and a home that were continually evolving.

The gallery is pleased to be exhibiting Ghebreyesus's work in France for the first time. The Paris exhibition is dominated by two large abstract, vividly colored *Map Quilt* paintings from 1999, and as their titles suggest their imagery simultaneously evokes an abstracted geography or landscape and the patterns and colors of Eritrean textiles. Also included are pastels from the 1990s, as well as a series of small delicate canvases in which landscapes merging into abstraction alternate with scenes peopled with human silhouettes, animals or flowers.

Although Ghebreyesus rarely exhibited his work in his lifetime, institutional exhibitions began in 2018 at the Museum of the African Diaspora in San Francisco. His work is now included in several prominent museum collections including the Baltimore Museum of Art, Glenstone Museum, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Studio Museum in Harlem, Rollins Museum of Art and Yale University Art Gallery. Galerie Lelong & Co. has represented his work since 2019 and organised his first New York solo exhibition in 2020. The 2022 Venice Biennale exhibition *The Milk of Dreams* curated by Cecilia Alemani offers Ghebreyesus's work an international resonance.

Ficre Ghebreyesus was born in Asmara, Eritrea, in 1962; he passed away in New Haven, Connecticut (USA), in 2012. Writer and poet Elizabeth 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.

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