

Sullivan Goss

AN AMERICAN GALLERY

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WOSENE WORKE KOSROF

FOR LOVE OF WORDS

JULY 31 - SEPTEMBER 21, 2020

SANTA BARBARA, CA - Sullivan Goss is excited to announce the gallery's **first solo exhibition for contemporary artist WOSENE WORKE KOSROF**. Born in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Wosene was a rising star in his home country before emigrating to the United States to attend Howard University, where he received his MFA in 1980. Now based in Berkeley, CA Wosene's work has achieved international acclaim and is recognized worldwide for its use of Ethiopia's Amharic script as a central formal element in his abstract compositions.

This recognizable signature emerges from the way he elongates, distorts, dissects and reassembles Amharic calligraphy – not as literal words – but as images that speak for themselves in a visual language

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accessible to international audiences. This visual motif serves as a suggestion of meaning, but like the forms themselves the meaning is abstracted, planting the seed of our initial experience of the work, but actively refusing to provide simplistic interpretation. The repetition of these formal elements within individual pieces and across the artist's body of work creates a visual rhythm that Wosene disrupts towards his unique creative purpose. There is beauty in this subversion, as there is in the syncopation of his beloved jazz music. Wosene's creative warping of the Amharic script removes any requirement of understanding its original meaning, and instead, like music, aims to evoke a more universal experience.



Since first debuting Wosene's work at Sullivan Goss in October of 2019, the gallery has quickly sold every single painting that the artist has given us. Given this enthusiastic response, the Gallery is incredibly excited to introduce the artist's work to more of our community through this large, focused exhibition. The show will feature 14 works completed over the past 12 years, ranging in size from the monumental to the intimate.

Born in 1950 in the Arat Kilo district of Addis Ababa, Wosene formally trained at the Addis Ababa School of Fine Arts, and completed a BFA with distinction in 1972. In the aftermath of a 1974 military coup, Wosene was compelled to leave Ethiopia, eventually enrolling as a Ford Foundation Talent Scholar at Howard University for graduate work in studio painting in 1978. In 1991, he moved from the east coast to California and has been based in Berkeley for many years. Wosene's work has been exhibited internationally at institutions including the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art, Washington DC; the National Museum of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa; the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia; the Crocker Museum, Sacramento; and the Fowler Museum at UCLA, Los Angeles.