

"LIFE VS TIME"
WITH

EPHREM SOLOMON

and

FLORINE DEMOSTHENE in Project Space

PRIVATE VIEW 23rd of March 2016
6:30 - 9:00PM

24th of March - 30th of April 2016

Faces peer out at you, some gazing directly, making eye contact, others coyly looking away. There are doleful faces, expressive faces, cheeky, slightly bemused faces – stark lines outlining even starker under-eye bags, laugh lines around mouths, worried furrows on foreheads. Dimples, wrinkles, they're all there in the indelible lines of woodcuts – expressions very literally graven into faces. These figures – who are they? They could be you, they could be me, they could be the lady waiting for the bus down the street or the boy sitting at the desk opposite you – all that is sure is that they are surrounded by swirls of infinitesimal text, blocks of colour in bright primary hues, teeny tiny floating chairs and geometric explosions of pure shape and form. Kristin Hjellegjerde is pleased to announce *LIFE VS TIME* (24th of March - 30th of April 2016), a solo exhibition of new works by Ethiopian artist Ephrem Solomon, who observes and presents socio-political investigations through woodcut and mixed media.

Solomon's painstakingly created works present a view of the urban environment, and, within that realm, of the people that inhabit the spaces around him. These people and places come together to create a fictional world that exists beyond the present; it is a reality that is free from the limitations of anecdotal recordings of experience. Using predominantly black and white to symbolise this juncture in reality, Solomon employs the motif of the chair repeatedly, representing past, present and future authority. Indeed, in much of his work, he presents his observations through symbolism and use of archival material, providing personal and political narratives beyond his locale. However, in spite of such seemingly direct references, many of the artist's works remain untitled. "I choose to keep my works untitled to enable viewers to read their own meaning," he explains, "to recognise parts of themselves and others among the figures."

In *LIFE VS TIME*, Solomon explores how we occupy the space around us. From birth, the artist believes, we enter a world that is partially pre-determined according to various factors such as class, ethnicity, culture and religion. These factors are dynamic and alter over time and space. They are given shape in the various forms that

are suspended in the works, representing our thoughts and the ways in which they may be shaped by our environment, circumstances and the people around us. These newer works also bear the marks of vivid blocks of colour, a departure from the more monochrome palette of previous work. "In my earlier works, I used black and white to explore the real and the imagined," Solomon explains. "I was more focused on shape and texture. In this new series, I began with using primary colours and moved onto secondary colours to explore different perspectives of forms in time and space." The medium itself – woodcut – also provides the artist with a tangibly tactile and, as he refers to it, "time-consuming medium" through which to explore ideas that are philosophical and ethereal.

Solomon's figures carry the burdens and uncertainties of modern life. Yet within these uncertainties, truth remains perfect and resolute: one must follow one's own path and not be tempted to follow one that is paved by someone else. It is when we are living in our own truth, the artist believes, that joy may be found in grief, light in darkness and victory borne of failure. We cannot change time; however, by altering systems that govern, changes may follow.

Taking place simultaneously, Kristin Hjellegjerde's Project Space will host works by Haitian-American artist Florine Demosthene. Interested in the black female body in contemporary visual culture, she is "piqued by how her physical size is supposed to dictate a certain set of ideals and behavior." Drawing on references such as Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, Demosthene's mixed media pieces present these women as if they – and the viewer themselves – were floating in space. Using unconventional viewing angles, she creates "voluptuous female figures amid a strange world of decay and destruction... a non-typical black female heroine persona," as she explains. "By delving into the subconscious mind of a fictitious black heroine and the ephemeral quality of her thoughts and experiences, these are an attempt to structure a new mythology that explores black female sexuality and sensuality."

***LIFE VS TIME* runs from 24th of March – 30th of April 2016
at Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery, London**

Information for journalists:

Ephrem Solomon

Born in 1983 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Ephrem Solomon observes his environment and presents socio-political works using woodcut and mixed media. Informing his work are views of the city and the people that inhabit the spaces around him, as does a fictional world that exists beyond the present – a reality that is free from the limitations of anecdotal recordings of experience. Using black and white to symbolize this juncture in reality, Solomon presents his observations through symbolism and use of archival material, which provide personal and political narratives beyond his locale. Solomon has exhibited internationally, including shows in Ethiopia, Kenya, Dubai and Croatia. His works are held in private collections in Dubai, South Africa, Kenya, Tanzania and the UK, including the Saatchi Collection.

Florine Demosthene

Florine Demosthene is an educator, designer, artist and global citizen. Demosthene was born in United States and raised between Port-au-Prince, Haiti and New York, earning her BFA from Parsons the New School for Design in New York and her MFA from Hunter College, City University of New York. She has exhibited extensively in group and solo exhibitions throughout the USA, Caribbean, UK, Europe and West Africa, with recent solo shows including *The Burst*, Nafasi Art Space Gallery, Dar es Salaam (2016), *The Capture*, Gallery MOMO, Johannesburg (2015) and *GET AZZMATIZED!*, Case à Léo, Fondation Clément, Martinique. Demosthene is a recipient of the Arts Moves Africa Mobility Grant (2015) and of a Joan Mitchell Foundation Grant (2011). Her work was featured in the premiere issue of *Arc*, a magazine dedicated to highlighting emerging and established Caribbean artists. She is also a 2012 Keyholder resident at the Lower East Side Printshop in New York City and was a Guest Artist for the 2014 Dakar Biennale.

Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery

Kristin Hjellegjerde opened her gallery in south west London in June 2012 following her move from New York. Named one of Blouin's 500 Best Galleries Worldwide in 2015 and The Londonist's Independent Gallery of the Year in 2014, Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery showcases cutting-edge contemporary art from emerging and established international artists with the central concern being the creation of a focused, intimate space in which artists can present a coherent body of work. Drawing on her own international background, Kristin Hjellegjerde seeks to discover and develop new talents by creating a platform through which they can be introduced to local and international audiences and by allowing for artistic exchange. Kristin Hjellegjerde also acts as an art advisor for both emerging private and corporate collectors. For more information, visit www.kristinhjellegjerde.com.

For further information and high-resolution images, please contact Kristin Hjellegjerde on khjellegjerde@mac.com