

# The Enigma Of The Gaze – Tewodros Hagos

★ 04/04/2024

[#avantgarde](#), [#exhibit](#)



Reading Time:

3 minutes

The **Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery**, Berlin is delighted to present **The Enigma of the Gaze**, a solo exhibition of all new paintings by the Ethiopian artist **Tewodros Hagos**. Hagos has long been fascinated by how portraiture can simultaneously convey complex emotional states and confront the viewer. In this latest series, he focuses specifically on the gaze as a powerful form of non-verbal communication, a window into the soul. Filling the gallery with a crowd of larger-than-life faces, he invites us into a space that is both intimate and challenging.



Left: *Enigma of the Gaze 8*, 2024 | oil on canvas | 140 x 120 cm, 55 1/8 x 47 1/4 in.  
Right: *Enigma of the Gaze 2*, 2024 | oil on canvas | 120 x 100 cm, 47 1/4 x 39 3/8 in.

‘The reciprocal nature of vision is more fundamental than that of spoken dialogue,’ suggested John Berger in *Ways of Seeing*. In other words, in order to understand the world and to feel true empathy we must attempt to also see how the other sees. For Hagos, whose work often depicts marginalised or overlooked individuals, this is one of the central aims of his portraiture: to appeal to our shared sense of humanity by highlighting the complex interiority of his subjects.

## Reflect On The Judgments We Make

In this latest series, quick, spontaneous brushstrokes create a subtle impression of movement as if not just one, but many emotions were moving across his subjects’ face while their outturned gazes appear to at the same time ‘see’ us, to follow us around the room and bore into our backs. The effect is unsettling: we feel watched and are, in turn, forced to turn our own gaze inwards, to see ourselves within the space and to reflect on the judgments we make.



*Enigma of the Gaze 9*, 2024 | oil on canvas | 140 x 120 cm, 55 1/8 x 47 1/4 in

*Enigma of the Gaze 4* is the only work in the series in which the subject does not meet the viewer – or the artist’s – gaze. The painting depicts a beautiful young woman seemingly lost in thought or memory, her eyes fixed beyond the confines of the canvas. As in all of the paintings, the contextual background detail has been stripped away so as to focus our attention on the individual, her expression and clothing the only clues into her life story.

## We All Deserve To Be Treated With Sensitivity And Respect

‘I want to create points of connection and commonality, so that people can see themselves in the other.’

Tewodros Hagos.

While many of the portraits project a sense of vulnerability or even sadness, Hagos’ intention is not to expose his subjects but to elevate them. They are not, as was traditionally the case with the subjects of portraiture, patrons or nobles; they are ordinary people who are just as complex and deserving of our attention. All of the figures, especially the women, appear powerful, radiant and mysterious, their features accentuated by areas of luminosity almost as if they were standing in a spotlight. We may never be able to know another person fully, the artist seems to suggest, but we all deserve to be treated with sensitivity and respect.



## The Enigma Of The Gaze

**Tewodros Hagos**

**27 April – 1 June**

**Berlin Gallery Weekend:**

**Private View on Friday the 26th of April  
6 – 9 pm**

**Special Opening Hours  
Saturday 27th & Sunday 28th: 11 – 6 pm**

Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery  
Linienstr. 130  
10115 Berlin, Germany

**[Get in Touch About the Exhibition](#)**

Header Image: *Enigma of the Gaze 3*, 2024 | oil on canvas | 120 x 100 cm, 47 1/4 x 39 3/8 in

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**#Writtenby**

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