

MEDIA RELEASE

13/5/08

The Journey: From Ethiopia to Melbourne

An exhibition by Ethiopian Australian Befekir Kebede, Sutueal Bekele & Tamirat Gebremariam.

**June 10th – June 21st Open hours: Tues – Fri 11am – 5pm & Sat 12pm - 4pm
@ 45 Downstairs, 45 Flinders Lane, Melbourne**

In the past 20 years some 20 000 Ethiopians have fled their troubled homeland to settle in Australia. Their journeys have been difficult, at times audacious, yet exciting and worthwhile. For the first time three of these journeyers, visual artists Befekir Kebede, Sutueal Bekele and Tamirat Gebremariam, have come together to share their stories and experiences of migration and settlement with the wider Melbourne community.

The Journey will be an exciting and innovative visual arts exhibition that challenges popular perceptions of African art as being 'tribal'. Depicting the journey of Ethiopians from their native Ethiopia to Australia, and specifically to Melbourne, a city they now call home, the exhibition will feature sophisticated African artworks including contemporary painting, photography and multi media installation, combined with imagery derived from a traditional Ethiopian heritage.

The exhibition is taking place as part of Multicultural Arts Victoria's Emerge Festival – a dynamic annual arts festival that celebrates Victoria's many diverse refugee and emerging cultures in a series of exciting events around Melbourne from June 10th to July 20th. Emerge Festival commemorates the United Nations World Refugee Day and Refugee Week in Australia.

The artists:

Befekir Kebede came to Australia in 1997 and has completed a Diploma in Liberal Arts (VU) and a Bachelor of Multimedia (Swinburne Uni). Befekir works as a multimedia artist designing websites, creating documentary films and photographic exhibitions. He runs one of the most successful websites on the cultural life of Ethiopia located at <http://www.ethiopianmillennium.com>

Tamirat Gebremariam arrived in Australia in 2000. On graduating from Addis Ababa University in 1993 with a Fine Arts Degree Tamirat worked as an artist exhibiting in Ethiopia, Egypt and Australia, as well as an art educator, curator and studio/gallery director. Tamirat's work has grown out of a strong training in traditional classical painting, being an accomplished portrait painter he is now exploring the emotional potential of abstraction to reflect his personal experiences.

Sutueal Bekele is an accomplished artist who studied art at Addis Ababa Fine Arts College (Ethiopia) and Kenyatta University (Kenya) and exhibited for six years as a solo refugee artist throughout Africa. Sutueal arrived in Australia in 1999 where he has widely exhibited his vividly coloured and detailed paintings of daily Ethiopian life.

The project has been generously supported by the City of Melbourne and the Victorian Multicultural Commission.

Media inquiries:

Befekir Kebede – 0431 661 277 or email befekirau@yahoo.com.au

Anita Larkin – 9417 6777 or email projects@multiculturalarts.com.au