

## ***Depart Africa* Explores Artists' Hybrid Cultural Identities**

*Multidisciplinary exhibit opens at Baltimore School for the Arts on November 2.*



Baltimore, MD (October 14, 2017) — *Depart Africa*, a multidisciplinary exhibition investigating hybrid cultural identity, opens at Baltimore School for the Arts on November 2. Presented by Maryland Institute College of Art's MFA in Curatorial Practice program, the exhibition explores the effects of immersing oneself in a new culture and environment and encourages visitors to interact with participating artists. An opening reception will be held from 4:30pm – 7:00pm on November 2, and the show remains open until November 22.

The works on view explore the architecture of assimilations that contemporary African artists build as they establish a new discourse upon moving to the U.S. It investigates the hybrid cultural identities of two artists: Amare S. Worku, a lecturer at MICA and Montgomery College, and Gabriel C. Amadi-Emina, a Photographic & Electronic Media MFA candidate at MICA. Both artists work within a white majority society and use cultural assimilation as a point of departure in their work.

*Depart Africa* will utilize painting, installation, video, and photography to articulate the experience of assimilation and the creation of hybrid identities as mechanisms of adaption. Examples include Amare's *I Belong Here* (2015) painting, that investigates how relocation can affect artistic practice in the formation of a new cultural identity that leads to the creation of a new self, and Gabriel's *Us too go Chop!* (2016) photographic sequence, which touches on various interactions and encounters experienced by the artist, with both his new landscape and its citizens.

Additionally, the exhibition includes a free public seminar and an artist-led workshop with both artists on November 28 from 2:00pm — 5:00pm

### **About the Artists**

**Amare S. Worku** (b.1979) is a Maryland-based multimedia artist and art educator. Soon after graduation in 2004 from Addis Ababa University School of Fine Arts and Design/ SFAD (Ethiopia) with the highest honor, he began teaching painting and drawing and become full faculty at SFAD. Amare is one of the most influential of a new generation of artists in contemporary

Ethiopian art. In 2010, Amare was appointed Head of the Painting Department and Curator of SFAD's Gallery. Amare is also co-founder of Point Fine Arts and Design Studio P.L.C. During this time, as general manager, he oversaw and worked on several high-profile designs and public art projects, including a large-scale mosaic on the main entrance of the National Museum of Ethiopia. In March 2012, he moved to Maryland to pursue his MFA in Studio Art from MICA and graduated in August 2015. His work has been exhibited in Ethiopia and around the world.

**Gabriel C. Amadi-Emina** is a Nigerian-born artist who migrated to the United States in August 2009. Since his transcontinental move, Gabriel has encountered, tackled, and navigated a variety of cultural related happenings which have influenced his personal and theoretical perspective on blackness and black identity. Both during and after receiving his Bachelors of Fine Arts with a focus on Traditional 35mm Photography and Graphic art in Armstrong State University, he has continued to develop a unique visual language, while pondering core ideas revolving around the main topic of his work, which is black identity. Gabriel has been featured in various publications and has exhibited in various shows. Gabriel currently resides in Baltimore, where he is obtaining an MFA from MICA, through which he aims to delve deeper into how the hybrid experience of being simultaneously African and African American can create new approaches towards the black experience.

#### **About the Curator**

**Fitsum Shebeshe** is a painter and curator from Ethiopia. He is the first recipient of George Cicle Curatorial Scholarship. Prior to MICA, Fitsum worked as an assistant curator at the National Museum of Ethiopia as well as taught undergraduate Drawing and Painting courses at the Fine Art School of Addis Ababa University. As part of a new generation of African curators, he hopes to bring the ambitious art scene of his region to the international stage. In 2012 Fitsum co-founded the *1957Initiative*, a series of annual art events in celebration of the liberation of African countries from colonialism. His recent curatorial experience includes the *1957 Art Show*, which took place at the National Museum of Ethiopia on the occasion of the 50th Golden Jubilee Anniversary of the African Union, and the NIGS painting exhibition by Mezgebu Tessema, one of the most prominent realist painters in Ethiopia. Shebeshe was also part of the curatorial team for the Addis Art fair that was held in 2014 at the Millennium Hall in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. He has participated in several international curatorial intensives and residencies, including the Independent Curators International Curatorial Workshop, the CCA/Lagos Asiko International Art School Curatorial Residency Program in Maputo, Mozambique and 89plus research project.

#### **About Baltimore School for the Arts**

Baltimore School for the Arts seeks to prepare the next generation of the creative workforce by providing inspiring arts and academic training to high school students as well as opportunities in the arts to younger children and the greater community.

### **About MICA's Curatorial Practice program**

The first MFA of its kind in the country, MICA's MFA in Curatorial Practice prepares students to expand the role of curators in connecting art, artists, and communities--engaging audiences more effectively by developing relevant, timely, and accessible exhibitions in both traditional and non-traditional venues.

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**Image:** Gabriel C. Amadi-Emina, 2016, *Us too go Chop!* from the photographic sequence, *Awon itan pupa / Awon okun dudu* (Red Stories | Black Bodies). 60 x 40 inches.