

WHITE CUBE

News Announcement

Thursday 6 August 2026, 1pm BST

TESFAYE URGESSA JOINS WHITE CUBE

White Cube is pleased to announce representation of Tesfaye Urgessa (b. 1983, Ethiopia). Urgessa's painting *Fiber of grace (Schutz) 2* (2025) will go on view at the 2026 edition of Frieze Seoul. His debut exhibition with the gallery opens at White Cube Hong Kong on 9 September 2026, following his first solo museum presentation in Asia at Red Brick Art Museum in Beijing (until 9 August 2026).

Urgessa lives and works between Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and Nürtingen, Germany, and was the first artist to represent Ethiopia in its inaugural national pavilion at La Biennale di Venezia in 2024. Describing himself firstly as a draughtsman, he begins each day with drawing before turning to painting on his studio floor, using a long brush to create densely peopled tableaux. Within his compositions, bodies appear pressed against one another, even enmeshed with their domestic surroundings.

Having grown up watching his father reproduce church murals, Urgessa trained in painting in Addis Ababa before continuing his studies at the Staatliche Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Stuttgart. Whilst in Germany, he encountered works of European art in person for the first time and came into direct contact with forms of racial and social difference that had been unfamiliar to him in Ethiopia.

Resisting any single or coherent narrative, Urgessa attributes his visual vocabulary to a broad range of influences spanning Ethiopian iconographic traditions and German Expressionism, as well as artists he has studied including Francis Bacon and Lucian Freud, among many others. His paintings draw upon shifting registers of human experience, from passing observations and the wider news cycle, to conversations with friends and issues including migration – witnessed first-hand through his wife's work with newly arrived migrants. Above all, Urgessa's paintings embody his belief that 'painting should imitate life itself'.

The exhibition at White Cube Hong Kong includes new paintings and works on paper created over the past year which explore themes of migration, familial relations and community.

Urgessa has exhibited internationally, including the Red Brick Art Museum, Beijing (2026) and Sainsbury Centre, Norwich, UK (2025). His works are held in prestigious collections including the Brooklyn Museum, New York; Castello di Rivoli, Turin, Italy; Uffizi Galleries, Florence, Italy and Cheng-Lan Foundation, Hong Kong and London.

For additional press information, interviews or images please contact:

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Exhibition Information

Tesfaye Urgessa
The Lingering Departure
9 September – 20 October 2026
White Cube Hong Kong

Press Preview

Tuesday 8 September 2026, 4-5pm

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Notes to Editors:

- Tesfaye Urgessa (b. 1983, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia) lives and works between Addis Ababa, and Nürtingen, Germany. He studied at the Alle School of Fine Art and Design, Addis Ababa (2006) and Staatlichen Akademie der Bildende Kunst, Stuttgart, Germany (2009-14). Notable solo exhibitions of his work have been held at the Red Brick Art Museum, Beijing (2026); Sainsbury Centre, Norwich, UK (2025); the 60th International Art Exhibition - La Biennale di Venezia (2024) and Uffizi Galleries, Florence, Italy (2018).

Urgessa's works are held in the permanent collections of Brooklyn Museum, New York; Castello di Rivoli, Turin, Italy; Uffizi Galleries, Florence, Italy; Cheng-Lan Foundation, Hong Kong and London; Kunstmuseum, Stuttgart, Germany; Rubell Museum, Miami, Florida; Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, Germany; and The Museum of African Contemporary Art Al Maaden, Marrakech, Morocco.

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