

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART BLACK DREAMS AT SEA MARCH 23, 2019



Black Dreams at Sea: The Sardine Fisherman's Funeral and An Opera of the World

**Elizabeth Alexander and
Manthia Diawara in person**

March 23, 2019

2:30 pm

**East Building Auditorium
National Gallery of Art**

Two artists—painter Ficare Ghebreyesus (1962–2012) from Asmara in Eritrea and filmmaker Manthia Diawara from Bamako in Mali—meet metaphorically in this program focusing on their work. Political refugees, activists, scholars, artists, and storytellers, both men settled in the United States and found themselves working odd jobs, joining the African American community of poets, and hunkering down within their own artistic practice. Ficare Ghebreyesus's epic painting *The Sardine Fisherman's Funeral* centers on the abebuu adekai, the figurative coffin of the Ga people in Ghana, replete with symbols, historical references, and Eritrean iconography expressing a depth of feeling for the power of the sea. Manthia Diawara's film *An Opera of the World* (2017), based on the African opera *Bintou Were*, mines the Malian filmmaker's own migration experience against the backdrop of recent tragedies on the Mediterranean Sea. Diawara's film features contemporary philosophers and employs footage of refugees in exodus, probing cinema's power to bear witness. Manthia Diawara and Elizabeth Alexander—poet, essayist, playwright, scholar, and president of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation—discuss and contrast both of these works (Ghebreyesus's painting and Diawara's film) following the screening. (Approximately 100 minutes)

Ficare Ghebreyesus, *The Sardine Fisherman's Funeral* (detail), acrylic on canvas. Courtesy of the Ficare Ghebreyesus Estate