

SYNTROPY
HELINA METAFERIA

November 21 to December 20, 2025

Opening Reception: November 21, from 6 to 8 pm



FILM SCREENING AND ARTIST TALK MODERATED BY JASMINE WAHI
November 21, from 5 to 6 pm at Coolidge Corner Theatre

(Brookline, MA – October 21, 2025) As Praise Shadows enters its five-year anniversary in December, the gallery is honored to mark this milestone with Helina Metaferia's exhibition *Syntropy*. This presentation, her second solo at the gallery and the last show in Praise Shadows' original Brookline space, features bold new work by the interdisciplinary and research-based artist. Collage with painted elements, sculpture, textile, and video, will be installed in conversation with recent pieces from a solo exhibition at Project for Empty Space in Newark, NJ.

The opening of *Syntropy* kicks off with an artist talk moderated by curator and arts leader Jasmine Wahi – who has worked with the artist for the last two years via an artist residency, solo exhibition, and public art project at Project for Empty Space. The conversation is accompanied by a preview screening of a short documentary film adaptation of Metaferia's *By Way of Revolution* series. Directed by Alex Bledsoe of Breaktide Productions, the film follows Metaferia over a year of making her work in New York and California, and interviews women of color activists who have appeared in Metaferia's art. This ticketed event takes place on November 21

from 5-6 pm, at the Coolidge Corner Theatre. Tickets are required (\$5 per person, purchase [here](#)). The Public Reception, open to all, immediately follows the talk, from 6 to 8 pm.

Metaferia's work combines everyday objects with regal imagery appropriated from her Ethiopian-American ancestry, a nod to anti-colonial and Pan-African liberation movements. This iconography appears in a performance installation set at the entrance of the gallery, where the artist's self portrait collage is flanked by sculptures of a crown, throne, and staff, made out of brass, wood, and velvet, with activism archives etched into them.

Nearby, assemblages of brass jewelry, cosmetics, cowry shells, and 1960's Boston activism flyers, sourced from Northeastern University and Harvard University libraries, appear in vitrines. Painted and collaged still lifes with Black Panther newspapers incorporated appear throughout the gallery. Silkscreened and hand stitched tapestries that are used in her performance work hang in the space. Black feminist citations are interwoven throughout the gallery as wall text, enacting as scriptures, spells, incantations, and affirmations for times of turbulence and uncertainty.

Over the last several years, Metaferia's work has been devoted to conjuring an "everyday revolution" for BIPOC femmes. This exhibition shifts the focus from activist bodies to the objects they may adorn themselves with. Markers of femininity, from lipstick to jewelry, become war paint and protective armor, subverting objects that have traditionally been used to attract the male gaze and transforming them into a sacred reclamation of personal power and space. Playing between representation and abstraction, the sacred and the secular, the individual and the collective, each of these carefully assembled materials allude to daily preparation, presented as if in a museum's repository.

Each wearable sculpture and collage made of photographic documentation are a part of Metaferia's performances, or are drawn from historic archives of protest as performance spectacle, thus infusing the artwork with a ritual of activation. A bibliography accompanies each artwork, citing protest archives that have been sourced from public libraries internationally.

Just as the gallery served as the Boston chapter of the Wide Awakes in 2020 – an arts driven initiative of collective protest – the November 21 opening is aligned with Fall of Freedom, an artist-led, nationwide wave of creative resistance, "an urgent call to the arts community to unite in defiance of authoritarian forces sweeping the nation."

About the artist

Helina Metaferia is an interdisciplinary artist working across collage, sculpture, video, performance, and social engagement. Her work incorporates archival research, embodied practices, and dialogical studies, supporting overlooked narratives of intersectional identities.

Metaferia's solo exhibitions include Museum of African Diaspora, San Francisco, CA

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(2024-2025); RISD Art Museum, Providence, RI (2022-2023); and Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA (2021-2022). Her work was included in the 2023 Sharjah Biennial, United Arab Emirates. Group exhibitions include Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France (2025); Fondazione Merz, Turin, Italy (2025); Frist Art Museum, Nashville, TN (2023); The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, MD (2023); Museum of Contemporary Art, Detroit, MI (2019); and Modern Art Museum Gebre Kristos Desta Art Center, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (2019). Her work is in institutional collections including Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA; Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo, OH; Birmingham Museum of Art, Birmingham, AL; and Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York, NY.

Metaferia received her MFA from Tufts University's School of the Museum of Fine Arts and attended the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture. She's held residencies at MacDowell, Yaddo, Bemis Center for Contemporary Art, Recess Art, Project for Empty Space, and Silver Art Residency. Her work has been written about in The New York Times, Los Angeles Times, Financial Times, The Washington Post, The Boston Globe, Studio Museum in Harlem Magazine, Artnet, Artforum, ArtNews, The Art Newspaper, and Hyperallergic. Metaferia is an Assistant Professor at Brown University in the Department of Visual Art, and lives and works in New York City.

About Praise Shadows Art Gallery

Praise Shadows Art Gallery is a contemporary art program based in the Boston area with a focus on exceptional artists working in all artistic disciplines. Our worldview is informed by the notion that the artworld's untapped and unrecognized potential is worth cultivating, supporting, and championing. Since our founding in December 2020, the gallery has placed artworks by our artists in esteemed public collections, and our exhibitions have been covered widely in major international media outlets. Our work is grounded by partnering closely with artists to develop opportunities in traditional and emerging models of creativity and entrepreneurship—exhibitions, commissions, brand partnerships, new technologies, and original concepts that no one has ever tried before. www.praiseshadows.com

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