

IRISH MODERNISMS: SEMINAR 5 | GLOBAL CONTEXTS EAST AFRICA ERITREA

SPEAKERS: EDWARD DENISON, DAWIT L. PETROS
DISCUSSION MODERATOR: DR KATHRYN MILLIGAN

WEDNESDAY 1 SEPTEMBER 2021, 1PM



CCA DERRY ~
LONDONDERRY

IRISH MODERNISMS:

SEMINAR 5

12:45pm

Waiting room opens

1pm

Welcome from Irish Modernisms

Co-curators Catherine Hemelryk &

Matt Retallick

1:10pm

Edward Denison:

History is a record of power

1:30pm

Dawit L. Petros:

Spazio Disponibile

1:50pm

Screen break

2pm

Discussion facilitated by

Dr Kathryn Milligan

2:30pm

Close

WELCOME

We have reached the end of our series of seminars exploring Irish Modernisms and their Global Contexts. Thank you to everyone for joining us whether for today's alone or the whole series. You can catch up with any seminars you may have missed or watch again on our archives on CCA's YouTube channel and online at CCADLD.org.

Each lunchtime seminar pairs speakers with a key interest in Modernism to share their research with us and present a slice of the reach Modernism has had across the globe on the occasion. This series is part of our Irish Modernisms exhibition at CCA, featuring five NI artists who are inspired by, respond to and collectively highlight the complex and nuanced influence of Modernism in the north.

Eritrea provides the setting for our final seminar. Similarly to Derry~Londonderry, Eritrea was an outpost for colonial power, in its case, Italian. Asmara the capital underwent large scale programmes of construction and is lauded as an exceptional example of early Modernist urbanism in the African context recognised by UNESCO. Our speakers will explore the relationships between Modernism, Africa, Europe and history.

We hope you will enjoy!

Catherine & Matt
Irish Modernisms Curators

IRISH MODERNISMS | GLOBAL CONTEXTS

EAST AFRICA ERITREA

Edward Denison | History is a record of power

History is a record of power. The twentieth century – modernism’s century – was dominated by ‘the west’, its historiography bearing testimony to the west’s domination of ‘others’. This has had significant consequences for modern heritage and for architectural encounters with modernity outside the west, which are often treated as inauthentic, belated, dilute and remote, geographically, intellectually, and even racially. Nowhere is this systemic inequity more conspicuous than in Africa, where the entire continent of 54 countries boasts fewer cultural UNESCO World Heritage Sites than Italy and Spain combined. Asmara, the former Italian colonial capital of Eritrea (inscribed in 2017), is Africa’s only site inscribed exclusively as modern. This brief presentation will explain Asmara’s nomination and, using examples such as St Mary’s Orthodox Cathedral, describe how this city’s renowned modernist heritage owes a debt not to Europe, but to Africa, and the lessons this can teach architectural history in the Anthropocene.

Dawit L. Petros | Spazio Disponibile

Dawit L. Petros will discuss his current research project entitled *Spazio Disponibile* – Italian for ‘available space’ – an allusion to vacant advertising spaces in *Rivista Coloniale*, a widely circulated early 20th century publication and organ of the Italian Colonial project. The project traces the complex and interconnected material histories of Eritrea, Italy, and Canada while connecting these to contemporary mobility out of Eritrea and the Horn of Africa. Through screenprints, photographs, sculpture, film and sound *Spazio Disponibile* examines how built forms visualized cultural ideologies and shaped social action and subjects whose effects continue to have meaning and impact in the present. The presentation highlights the intimate relationship between modern architecture and photography in the near fifty year period of Italian colonization in East Africa.

ABOUT THE SPEAKERS & FACILITATOR

Edward Denison is Professor of Architecture & Global Modernities at The Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL, where he is Director of the MA Architecture and Historic Urban Environments. His research focuses on decentering the historiography of modern architecture. In 2016 and 2017, he won the RIBA President's Medal for Research for his work on Asmara (Eritrea) and former Manchukuo (China). His 20 publications include: *Architecture and the Landscape of Modernity in China before 1949* (2017); *Ultra-Modernism – Architecture and Modernity in Manchuria* (2017); *Luke Him Sau, Architect: China's Missing Modern* (2014); & *Asmara – Africa's Secret Modernist City* (2003).

Dawit L. Petros is a Visual Artist, Researcher and Educator. Dawit's work is informed by studies of global modernisms, theories of diaspora, and post-colonial studies. Dawit installs photographs, moving images, sculptural objects, and sound work according to performative, painterly,

or site responsive logics. Moving between the works echoes the extensive travel taken to produce them; while recurrent visual or formal devices quietly indicate the complex backdrops against which his projects are set. Dawit L. Petros is a co-founder of the Black Athena Collective with artist Heba Y. Amin (EGY). He is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Photography at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Dawit is represented by Tiwani Contemporary in London, UK and Bradley Ertaskiran in Montreal, Canada.

dawitlpetros.com [@dawitlpetros](https://www.instagram.com/dawitlpetros)

Dr Katy Milligan is an art historian specialising in nineteenth and twentieth century Irish art. Following her PhD studies Katy was the inaugural ESB Fellow at the ESB Centre for the Study of Irish Art at the National Gallery of Ireland, and an Irish Research Council Government of Ireland Postdoctoral Fellow in the School of Art History and Cultural Policy, UCD. Her first monograph, *Painting Dublin, 1886 - 1949: Visualising a changing city*, was published by Manchester University Press in 2020.

katymilligan.com

Catherine Hemelryk FRSA was born in Rugby and has been Director at the CCA Derry~Londonderry since 2018. She has previously been Curator at CAC Vilnius, Artistic Director at NN, Northampton. Catherine studied Fine Art at Newcastle University and MA Curating Contemporary Art at Royal College of Art, London. She is a guest lecturer, commissioner and has been guest curator and in residence across Europe including GeoAIR Tbilisi, Sea Foundation Tillburg and Wysing Arts Centre. She is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts.

Matt Retallick is a curator based in Liverpool. He is an Irish citizen, and runs the Instagram [@modernist.ie](https://www.instagram.com/modernist.ie), an archive of everyday Irish design modernism. He is an honorary lifetime member of The Modernist Society, and is studying for an art history PhD at Manchester School of Art. Matt is Associate Curator of PINK, Manchester. [@matt_retallick](https://www.instagram.com/matt_retallick)

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CCA Derry~Londonderry

10-12 Artillery Street

Derry~Londonderry, BT48 6RG

[@CCADLD](http://CCDLD.org)

info@CCDLD.org

+44(0)2871373538

Cover image: Dawit L. Petros, *Untitled (Epilogue II, Nefasit, Eritrea)*, 2019

Archival colour pigment print, 76.2 x 95.25 cm, 2019



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