



News Release

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Contact: Julie Thomson, Outreach Coordinator
517/353-9834, thomso16@msu.edu

Ethiopian Jewish Embroidery on display at Kresge Art Museum

E. LANSING, MICH. --- *Ethiopian Jewish Embroidery* is an exhibition of eighteen brightly embroidered works, a recent gift to MSU, on view at Kresge Art Museum in the Works on Paper Gallery through May 2, 2004. These works were produced by the Feles Mura community of Ethiopian Jews and illustrate Old Testament as well as contemporary Israeli scenes.

Embroidery in Ethiopia has traditionally been used to decorate formal clothing and furnishings. Here, it is used to embellish seat cushions, challah and matzah covers used in Jewish ceremonies. The vibrant colors, stylized figural representation, use of shallow perspective, and symbolic expression demonstrate their artistic African heritage.

The history of Ethiopian Jews dates back to the 10th century B.C.E. They lived for centuries in relative isolation in the mountainous region of Gandar in Ethiopia. Knowledge of their existence and ongoing persecution has only been known to the wider world since the early 20th century. With the rise of Christianity in the 4th century, the persecution of Ethiopian Jews became normal practice and presently continues.

The Feles Mura is a community of Jews remaining in Addis, Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia, after many fled to Israel in the 1980s. While they wait for permission to join their relatives in Israel, they have developed, with the aid of western organizations, work programs that utilize their traditional Ethiopian skills to help them support their families. The embroideries on view are one example of the use of traditional craft with new subject matter.

Kresge Art Museum is located on the first floor of the Kresge Art Center, on the campus of Michigan State University in East Lansing, Mich. Admission is free. The museum is open Monday through Friday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; Thursday until 8 p.m.; and Saturday and Sunday, noon-5 p.m. For additional information about Kresge Art Museum, exhibitions or events, please call 517-355-7631 or visit www.artmuseum.msu.edu.

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