

Cords & Crossings

Like the birdnests that cover the acacia trees, so do those airy yet carrying structures appear throughout Addis Ababa. Thickets of cords and crossings, the scaffold, a perforated depth.

*Bodies resting on the eucalyptus wood, among the ibis and mountain eagles, up where the action seeks relief
It is an encroachment to behold them in this hiatus, an erecting of the off-stage — witnessing a show
that was not meant to be seen.*

*Gazing at an empty backdrop, projecting a patience, extending a lucid illusion. A mirage for a pilgrim of
permanent passings to uphold, of a kingly shadow cast behind the curtain, and of forty orphans,
suspended, mute gestures on the wall.*

- Daniel Seferian Spies, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 2016

The exhibition Cords & Crossing has its outset in the true story of Ethiopian emperor Haile Selassie's adoption of forty Armenian orphans. Preceding his coronation, Haile Selassie visited several of the nations recognizing his new title of Negusa Nagast, the King of Kings. While in Jerusalem, the emperor witnessed a musical ensemble of Armenian children, whom had fled from the genocide in the Ottoman Empire. Impressed by their musical performance, Haile Selassie adopted all forty children, bringing them home to his palace in Addis Ababa, and made them his Royal Bodyguard Brass Band.

In the making of the exhibition, Seferian made research travels to both Armenia and Ethiopia, tracing the story's origin and aftermath, it's curtained facts and dramatized fates.

Inspired by sociologist Erving Goffman, Cords & Crossings use metaphors of the theater to explore social structures and interaction. The "front stage", "back stage" and "off stage" as allegories of the formation of roles and positioning, and the dramaturgical perspective of human actions. In this structural installation without clearly defined borders, however, the audience are free to do their own discoveries and definitions of transitions between various stages.