

# CIGARETTES, ARCHIVES, AND CONSTITUTIONS: RETHINKING THE LEGACIES OF COLONIZATION



**Mara Plaesu**  
Economics '25

*In what ways has tobacco been transformed by cultural commodification, shifting from a sacred crop to a deadly symbol of capital?*



**Beimnet Zerefa**  
Integrated Design '25

*Why does the MET assign itself the role of re-presenting Ethiopian objects and how does this misdirect the cultural memory they hold?*



**Vanessa Guaraca**  
Philosophy '25

*Drawing on Ecuador as a model, how can a social and political movement challenge anthropocentric conceptions of ethics and rights in order to assume responsibility for the environment and defend indigenous sovereignty?*

# Misdirection of Memory: A Critique of Ethiopian Re-presentation in *Africa & Byzantium* at **The MET**



Beimnet Zerefa



Dr. Andrea Myers Achi, Mary and Michael Jaharis Associate Curator of Byzantine Art for [a virtual tour of Africa & Byzantium](#)



A faded background image of the Metropolitan Museum of Art's neoclassical facade, featuring large columns and arches. Two red vertical banners with the text 'THE MET' are visible on either side of the central entrance.

**“Every object has a history that deserves to be told,  
and The MET is dedicated to finding, sharing, and  
acting on these stories.”**

**THE  
MET**



“The ongoing separation of artifacts from their homes is repeatedly reinforced, just like the perpetual clicking of a camera shutter. They are reiterated with a disconnect that suggests an inherently independent existence of objects from their communities and becoming museum pieces inaccessible to those whose heritage, rights, social support, and emotional experiences they embody.”



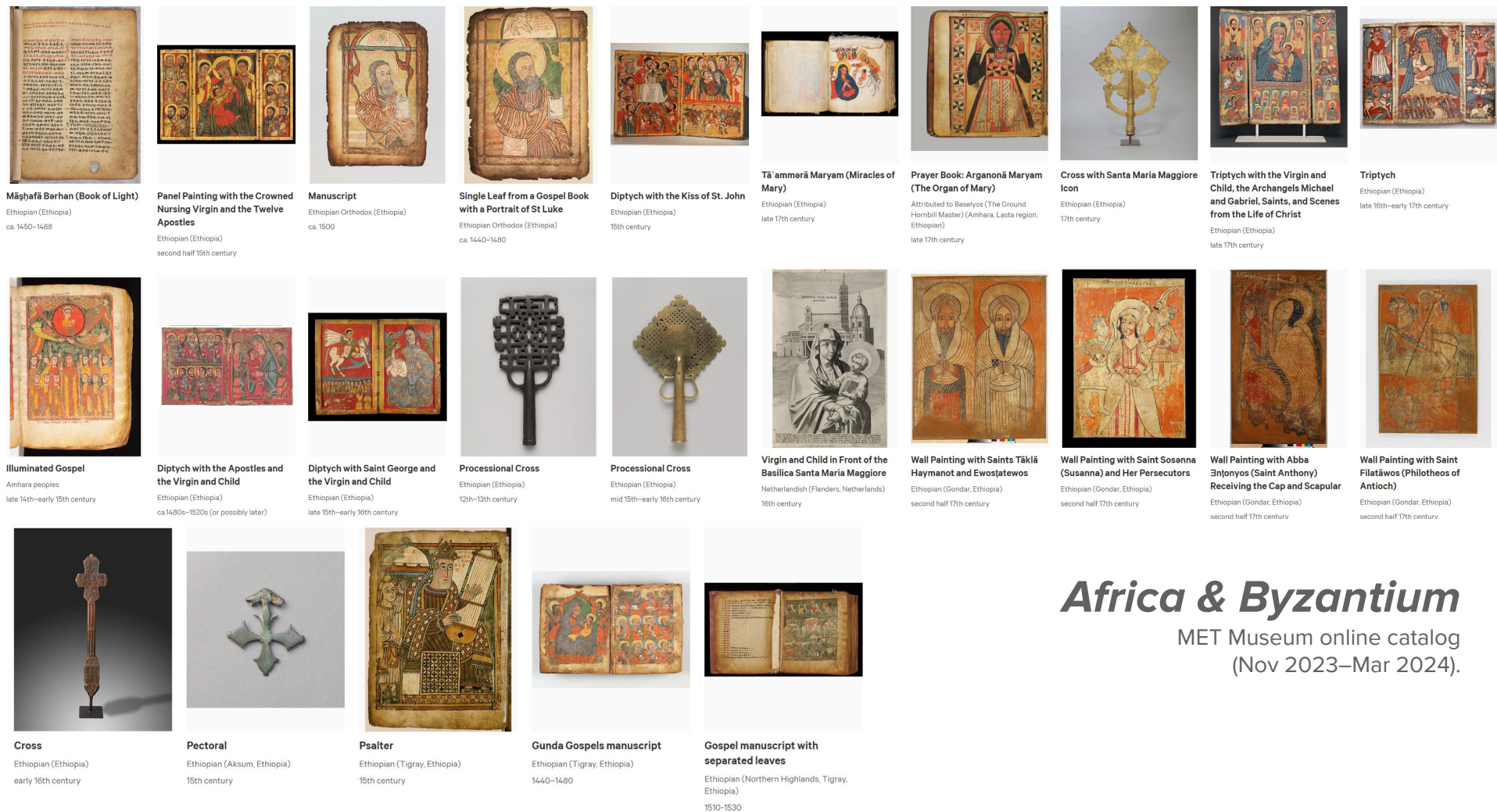
# POTENTIAL HISTORY

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## UNLEARNING IMPERIALISM

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**ARIELLA  
AÏSHA  
AZOULAY**



# Africa & Byzantium

MET Museum online catalog  
(Nov 2023–Mar 2024).



HIDDEN TREASURES

# More than 1000 artifacts in Metropolitan Museum of Art catalog linked to alleged looting and trafficking figures

Reporters pinpointed the pieces, from India to Italy to Egypt, in North America's largest museum. What do the findings mean for the Met's future – and the future of all museums?

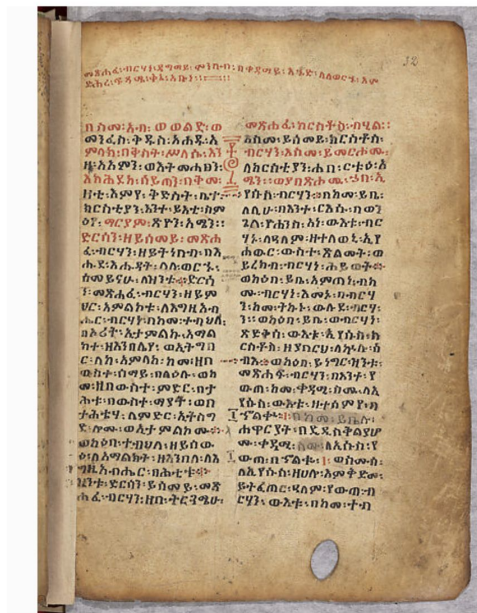


By **Spencer Woodman, Mollia Politzer, Delphine Reuter and Namrata Sharma**

Image: Spencer Platt/Getty Images

March 20, 2023





## Mäṣḥafä Bərhan (Book of Light)

Ethiopian (Ethiopia)

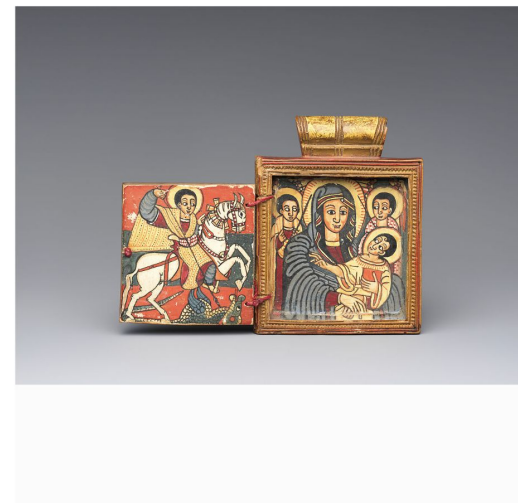
ca. 1450–1468



## Pectoral

Ethiopian (Aksum, Ethiopia)

15th century



## Double Diptych Icon Pendant

Amhara or Tigrinya peoples

early 18th century

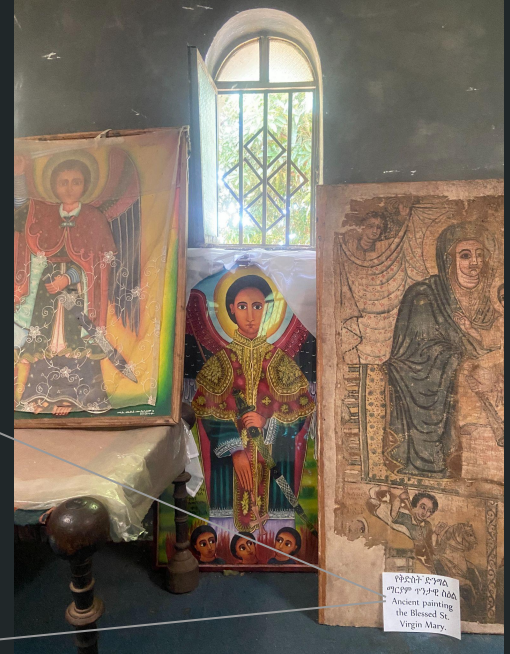
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**Lake Tana Monasteries**  
Bahir Dar, Ethiopia





# Lake Tana Monasteries

Bahir Dar, Ethiopia

# Aberash (አበራሽ) You Give Light II

by Ethiopian American artist  
Tsedaye Makonnen



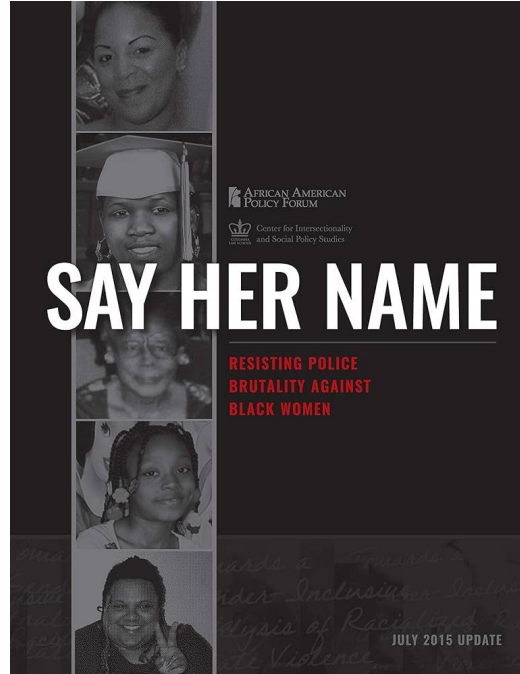
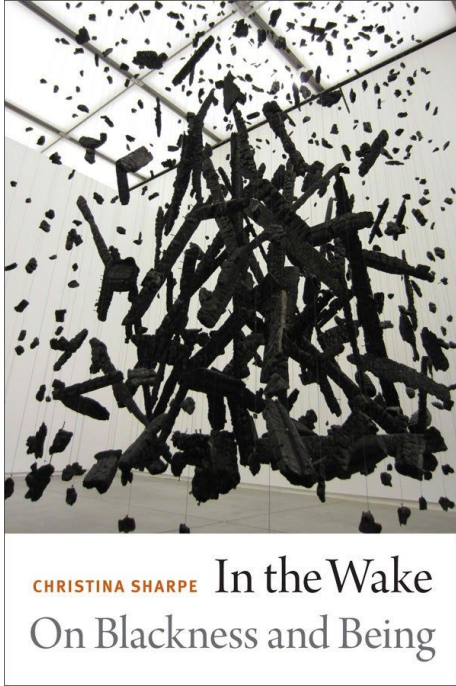


# *Familiar Boundaries, Infinite Possibilities*

August Wilson Center, Pittsburgh (Jan-Mar 2019)









# AddisFiles

*a web archive for  
Ethiopian art*

A digital archive of Ethiopian art and design - **AddisFiles** is a growing resource for Habesha artists, researchers, and enthusiasts to access Ethiopia's various artistic forms to diversify and preserve cultural memory.



**Thank You!**