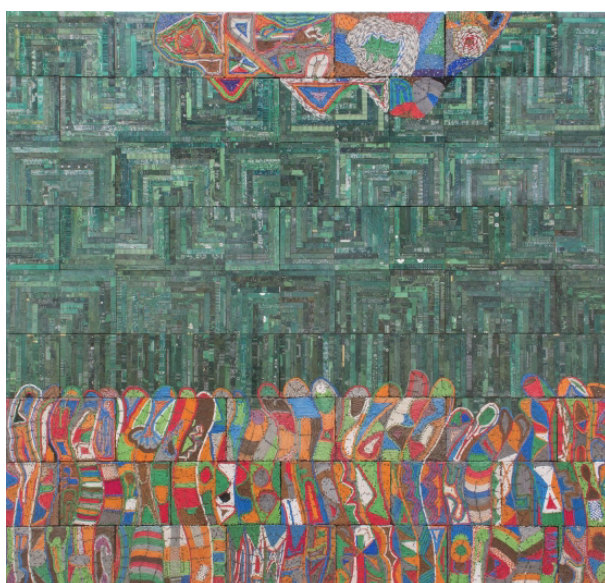


FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 4, 2019

**THE WELLIN MUSEUM OF ART AT HAMILTON COLLEGE WILL PRESENT
ELIAS SIME: TIGHTROPE, THE FIRST MAJOR SURVEY OF THE MID-CAREER ARTIST'S
WORK, ON VIEW FROM SEPTEMBER 7 THROUGH DECEMBER 8, 2019**



Elias Sime, *Tightrope: Familiar Yet Complex 2*, 2016. Reclaimed electronic components and telephone wire, mounted on particleboard, 83 x 87 1/2 in. (210.8 x 222.3 cm). Collection of the Ruth and Elmer Wellin Museum of Art at Hamilton College. Purchase, William G. Roehrick '34 Art Acquisition and Preservation Fund. © Elias Sime

Clinton, NY—The Wellin Museum of Art at Hamilton College will present *Elias Sime: Tightrope* in the fall of 2019, marking the first major traveling museum survey featuring the work of contemporary Ethiopian artist Elias Sime (b. 1968). Curated by Tracy L. Adler, the Wellin Museum's Johnson-Pote Director, the exhibition highlights the artist's work from the last decade, much of which comprises the series entitled "Tightrope," alongside a selection of early works critical to the artist's development.

On view from September 7 through December 8, 2019 at the Wellin Museum of Art, the exhibition will travel to the Akron Art Museum in Akron, Ohio (February – May 2020), the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art in Kansas City, Missouri (June – September 2020), and the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto, Canada (December 2020 – April 2021).

The title "Tightrope" refers to the precarious balance between the progress technology has made possible and its detrimental impact on the environment. Featuring over 25 works of art of varying scales, including new work created by the artist to debut in this exhibition, *Elias Sime: Tightrope* explores the breadth of

Sime's work which focuses on interconnectedness as both literal and conceptual practice. In addition to a large number of works from the "Tightrope" series, the exhibition will include a selection of works from his earlier series "Ants and Ceramicists," which began in 2003, comprising stitched yarn on dyed canvas and often incorporating found objects within the stitching, a commentary on the resiliency and community of both ants and traditional artisans.

Sime's brightly colored tableaux are made from found materials including thread, buttons, bottle caps, electrical wires, and computer detritus. Repurposing salvaged electronic components—such as circuits and keyboards—that the artist often buys at the open-air markets in his hometown Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, where he lives and works, Sime creates his intricately woven compositions. These works highlight the often overlooked or unseen beauty of the humble materials he employs as well as the problems of environmental sustainability they present.

A post-consumerist critique, Sime's work reflects on the repositories of e-waste that are often imported from elsewhere in the world to countries in Africa. The work also incorporates redundant technologies from the former Soviet Union and the West, highlighting Ethiopia's complex political history from communism and dictatorships to a now democratic government. The resulting abstractions reference landscape, topography, and the figure, and at times, employ patterning drawn from traditional Ethiopian textiles.

Explains Adler, "Elias Sime is one of the most significant artists working today. He is both critical and embracing of the world we live in, and brings a truly global sensibility to his work without losing any of its authenticity and authorship. While technology has in many ways changed our lives for the better and facilitated international communication and partnership, it has resulted in detrimental byproducts both materially in terms of its refuse, and socially and culturally, in that we look more to our devices than to each other."

Adds Sime, "My art is a reflection of who I am as human being without borders, labels and imposed identity. There is a sense of unity and cooperation that I reflect through my art. At the root of all of it is love and passion. With this exhibition, including many years of my work, I hope the students and other visitors will share my feelings expressed on the arts."

In addition to his work as an artist, Elias Sime, in partnership with curator and anthropologist Meskerem Assegued, founded and designed the ZOMA Contemporary Art Center in Addis Ababa. ZOMA is an environmentally conscious art institution with a mission to act as a bridge between artists and architects from around the world to create and display cutting-edge ecological art and architecture. ZOMA is built using ancient, yet still existing construction techniques incorporating mud, straw, stone, wood, and cement. ZOMA includes a gallery, a library, a center for children, an edible garden, an elementary school, an art and vernacular school, and other facilities. It is named after Zoma Shiferraw, a young Ethiopian artist who died of cancer in 1979.

This exhibition supports the Wellin's mission as a teaching museum in that the work is so multifaceted that possibilities for discussion and deeper understanding are endless by various disciplines on campus—among them art, anthropology, government, economics, as well as environmental and computer science. In a time in which we are too often distracted by technology as a lens through which to experience the world, Sime deconstructs our assumptions about technology as a space and asks us to recognize its physicality and presence in our lives.

Publication

Elias Sime: Tigh trope will be accompanied by the first monograph focusing on the work of Elias Sime and features contributions by Tracy L. Adler; Meskerem Assegued, anthropologist, curator and co-founder of the ZOMA Contemporary Art Center; Karen Milbourne, Curator of the National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution; and Ugochukwu-Smooth Nzewi, Curator of African Art at the Cleveland Museum of Art. This book will be co-published by the Wellin Museum of Art and Delmonico Books • Prestel.

Exhibition at James Cohan Gallery

There will be a gallery show featuring new work entitled *Elias Sime: Noiseless* on view at James Cohan Gallery (533 West 26th Street, New York, NY) from April 27 – July 1, 2019.

About Elias Sime

Elias Sime (b. 1968 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia) is a multi-disciplinary artist who lives and works in Addis Ababa. He is highly regarded as an artist and as the co-founder of the ZOMA Contemporary Art Center, the only contemporary art museum in Addis Ababa, with curator and anthropologist Meskerem Assegued.

His work has been shown internationally at the Dak'Art Biennale in Dakar, Senegal; the New Crowned Hope Festival in Vienna, Austria; and in the United States at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York; and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago. It was featured in a solo show that traveled from the Santa Monica Museum of Art in California (now ICA LA) to the North Dakota Museum of Art in North Forks, ND. His work is included in the permanent collections of the Carl and Marilyn Thoma Foundation, Chicago, IL; Chrysler Museum of Art, Norfolk, VA; Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit, MI; Harn Museum of Art, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL; Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH; Israel Museum, Jerusalem; Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City, MO; Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY; Newark Museum, NJ; North Dakota Museum of Art, North Forks, ND; Pérez Art Museum Miami, FL; Pizzuti Collection of the Columbus Museum of Art, Columbus, OH; Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Canada; and the Ruth and Elmer Wellin Museum of Art, Hamilton College, Clinton, NY.

About the Ruth and Elmer Wellin Museum of Art

Designed by Machado Silvetti, the Ruth and Elmer Wellin Museum of Art at Hamilton College opened in October 2012. Through its exhibitions, public programs, and educational outreach, the Museum promotes interdisciplinary approaches and the cross-fertilization of concepts and ideas vital to a liberal arts education. The Museum works with emerging and established artists and collaborates with Hamilton students and faculty to develop programming exploring a wide range of disciplines. The Museum features a 27-foot-high visible archive, 6,200-square-feet of exhibition space, and other amenities that foster common exchange and learning. <http://www.hamilton.edu/wellin>

Sponsorship

The Ruth and Elmer Wellin Museum of Art's programs are made possible, in part, with funds from the Daniel W. Dietrich '64 Arts Museum Programming Fund; the Johnson-Pote Museum Director Fund; the John B. Root '44 Exhibition Fund; the Edward W. and Grace C. Root Endowment Fund; the William G. Roehrick '34 Lecture Fund; and private contributions. Additional support for *Elias Sime: Tigh trope* has been provided by the Carl & Marilynn Thoma Art Foundation.

Social Media

Join the conversation on social media by tagging @wellinmuseum and using the hashtag #EliasSime and #Tigh trope when posting.

For media inquiries, please contact:

Yun Lee, ylee@fitzandco.art, 646-589-0920

Meg Huckaby, mhuckaby@fitzandco.art, 646-589-0928