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TIGHTROPE



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Artist: Elias Sime
Curator and Writer: Meskerem Assegued
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Printed by Central Printing Press



Artist: Elias Sime

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2012 North Dakota Museum of Art - (Eye of the Needle, Eye or the Heart)
- 2011 British Council, Goethe Institut, Italian Cultural Institute and Alliance Ethio-*française* - (Ants and Ceramicists)
- 2010 Sydney Opera House, Sydney, Australia - (Oedipus Rex Opera)
- 2009 Waltz Disney concert hall, Los Angeles - (Oedipus-Rex Opera)
- 2009 Santa Monica Museum of Art, California (Eye of the Needle, Eye of the Heart)
- 2008 Alliance Ethio-*française*, Addis Abeba - (What is Love?)
- 2006 European Union and ZCAC – (Metamorphosis) Public Mosaic
- 2006 Alliance Ethio-*française*, Addis Abeba - (GOTA Tarat-Tarat) -
- 2004 Italian Cultural Institute, Addis Abeba - (Min Neber)

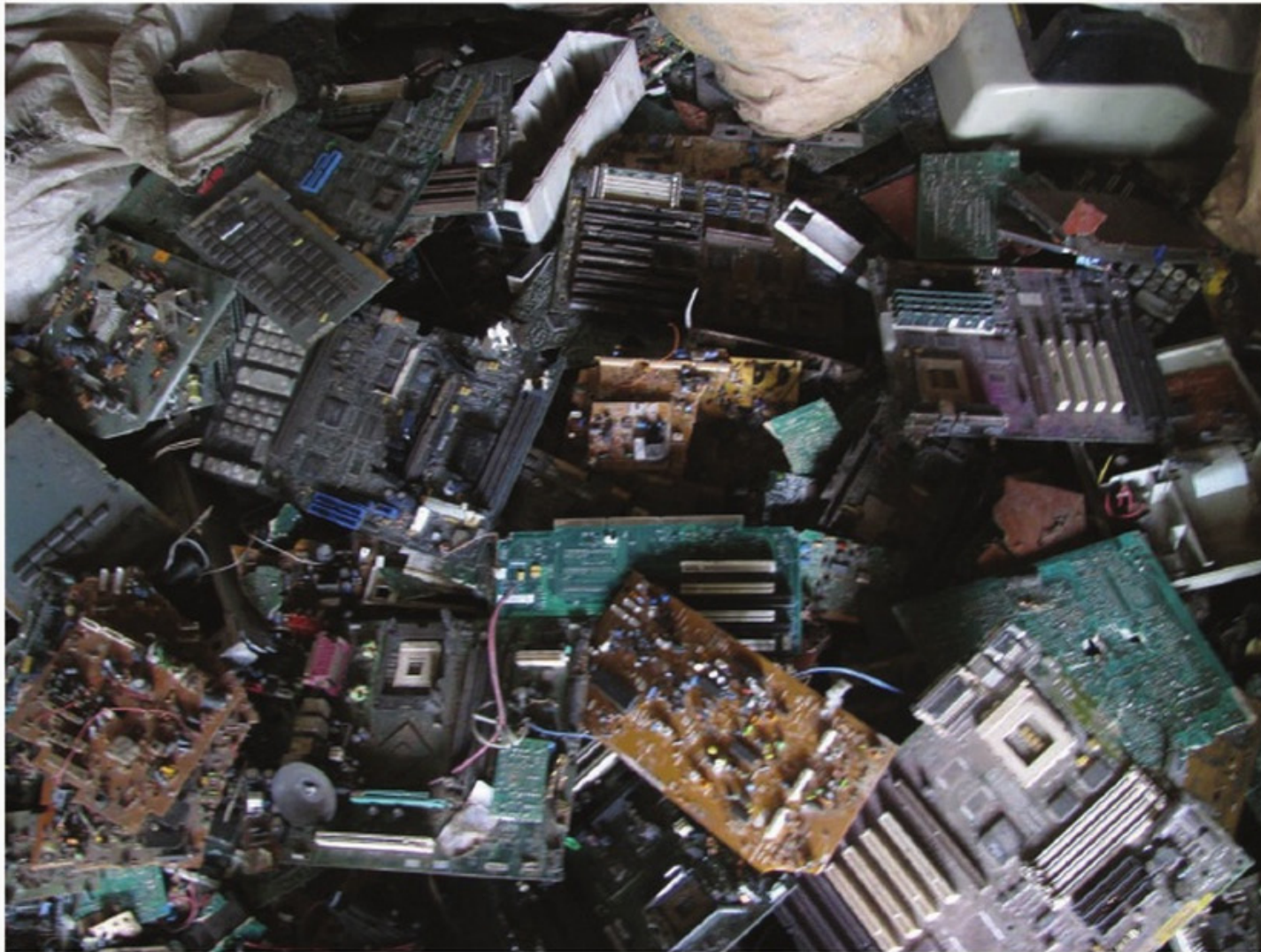
GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2009 Haunch of Venison, London - (Täarät-Täarät)
- 2008 Metropolitan Museum, New York - (The Essential Art of African Textiles: Design Without End)
- 2008 Studio Museum in Harlem, New York - (Flow)
- 2006 New Crowned Hope, Vienna - (Green Flame)
- 2005 Addis Abeba University Fine Art and Design School - (Addis Abeba Zare)
- 2004 Dak'Art Biennale 2004, 6th International Contemporary African

Curator: Meskerem Assegued

Since 1991, Meskerem Assegued, founding director of ZCAC (Zoma Contemporary Art Center) has curated numerous exhibitions and written many art related articles both in Ethiopia and abroad. In 2002, she developed a concept of Contemporary Anthropological Art. Based on this concept, she traveled with artists to different parts of Ethiopia to research, document and produce a collaborative exhibit consisting of the artist's work and her writing. She also included vignettes of her field photographs and video recordings.

Meskerem has collaborated with Elias Sime since 2001. In 2011, she curated **Ants and Ceramicists**, an exhibition of Elias's work that opened in all four European cultural institutes. This unique collaboration was successful for everyone involved including the artist, curator and the cultural institutes. **TIGHTROPE** is a continuation of **Ants and Ceramicists**. The artist's choice of material (motherboards) and the intensity of his collection process needs further research. Therefore, a book written by Meskerem and Bruce Brown is in progress.



When I find new and interesting material that evokes emotion in me, I get very excited. The first thing I do is collect as much of the material as I can. It is not always easy to find. Whenever I see materials, I have to get them in that instant. What is available one day may not be there the next day. Sometimes I have to wait a few years before something appears. Collecting these materials takes a lot of patience. I work with hope, and I find this interesting, satisfying and artistically stimulating. Even when I only find a small amount of a unique material, I hold on to it like a diamond and use it when appropriate. I enjoy looking through my collections because that reveals their character and history.

Because it takes so long to collect this material, I make lots of sketches. I don't start working on the actual composition until I feel I have enough. Once I get started, I don't stop until I am finished.



It took about seven years to collect the materials for Tighrope. I have mountains of it. They are also organized by type and color.

I don't see my artistic materials as trash. I treat them like oil paint, acrylic or clay. I collect them because they relate to the stories I want to tell. I have been collecting interesting material for art since I was a child.

One of the things that touches me about these used materials is the number of people who have touched them. These people include factory workers on the assembly line, merchants, consumers and the people who collect them from the dump.

I have a team of people who have been helping me collect my art material over the years. I would not have been able to make my art without them.



I value sharing my knowledge with my assistants. I want them to understand not only the process but also the idea and the visual concept. I take my time to teach them. They are highly disciplined, goal oriented, respectful and most importantly, eager to learn. The key to our long-standing relationship is the fact that my art changes continuously. They always look forward to the new art and learning new techniques. I am very grateful for my assistants.



Along with the motherboards, I have collected a variety of colorful wires. When I see them in piles, I think about the possibility of great things emerging when different ideas come together. So, I combine different colors and braid them. I actually learned about the different types of braiding from my female assistants. These braids include:

- 2 strings--**Gemed**
- 3 strings-- **Goongoon**
- 4 strings--**Quad**
- Goongoon over Gemed --
Sherib
- 5 or 6 strings---**Gebis**
- Quad, 5 Gebis and 5
Gebis-- **Zenbaba**
- 5 Gebis braided---**Jiraf**
- 8 strings--**Shoor**
- 12 strings---**Zab**
- 24 strings -- **Mechagna**



The size of my art is determined by the idea behind the composition. If the idea overwhelms me, the size of the work keeps growing until I have said enough. When I make art, the constraints of exhibition space are not even a consideration. The idea of the piece takes over. The only time I stop is when I spend all the money I have. I then wait until I earn more and continue. My life is consumed by art, which tends to limit my social life.

When it comes to my art, I am a perfectionist in my own way. I am not concerned about sharp lines because nothing in life is sharp. Regardless, I present my work only when I feel it is completely finished.



There is a saying in Ethiopia: "You can't clap with one hand". TIGHTROPE and everything else I've done would be impossible without the unconditional love and support I have received from family, friends and everyone who have worked with me over many, many years. I would like to name them all, but I'm afraid that I might forget one.

I want to thank the four European cultural institutes and all their employees. Their support for this exhibition and all the previous ones over the many years was unwavering.

I wish there was a word to express my gratitude to ZCAC and everyone involved in it. Since I can't find one, I just want to say thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Elias Sime

Ants & Ceramicists (2011)

An Anthropological Contemporary Art Exhibiton

Artist - Elias Sime

Curator – Meskerem Assegued



British Council, Addis Ababa



Goethe-Institut, Addis Ababa



Italian Cultural Institute, Addis Ababa



Alliance Ethio-Française, Addis Ababa

Ants and Ceramicists was an extraordinary exhibition in its size, range, workmanship and context. Similar to Tightrope, it was supported by UNIC and ZCAC and opened simultaneously at the British Council, Goethe-Institut, Alliance Ethio-Française, and Italian Cultural Institute.

Ants have existed for millions of years and will continue to exist long into the future. Although they are frequently considered a nuisance to human society, their social organization and ability to survive in harsh environments is a testament to the success of their many species. Ethiopian ceramicists are often undervalued in their society and believe to have the "evil eye". They are forced to live in harsh and impoverished conditions yet their sophisticated social structure has allowed them to survive as craftspeople to this day. This exhibition was dedicated to ceramicists and all other skilled craftspeople whom the artist and the curator consider uncelebrated artists.





This Brochure was made possible
with generous support from the
Goethe-Institut, Addis Ababa

The Goethe-Institut Addis Abeba is pleased
to show the work of Elias Sime in
cooperation with EUNIC.

Our main focus in recent years has been
Contemporary Art in Ethiopia. I am sure that
this exhibition will serve as an inspiration for
many young Ethiopian artists and will delight
the general public.

My thanks go to the artist Elias Sime and the
curator Meskerem Assegued

Irmtraut Hubatsch
Director
Goethe-Institut, Addis Ababa



