

North Dakota Museum of Art

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CONTEMPORARY ART FROM ETHIOPIA IS COMING TO THE NORTH DAKOTA MUSEUM OF ART

Ethiopian artist Elias Sime's exhibition "Eye of the Needle, Eye of the Heart" will open at the North Dakota Museum of Art on Tuesday, March 27 from 6 – 8 pm.

The North Dakota Museum of Art is once again going international. Elias Sime will travel from Ethiopia with anthropologist and arts professional Meskerem Assegued to open his solo exhibition at the North Dakota Museum of Art on Tuesday, March 27, from 6 – 8 pm. Sime will speak about his work through a translator.

In the exhibition "Eye of the Needle, Eye of the Heart" Sime addresses the dignity, wisdom, and depth of the ancient indigenous cultures that are rapidly disappearing from Ethiopia. The show continues through May 31, 2012.

This large retrospective survey covers twenty years of one of Ethiopia's most original and prolific artists. Included are over 100 works made from such things as yarn stitches, tattered fabric, buttons, stuffed goat skins, discarded plastic shoes, animal horns, and bottle tops collected from the streets and sprawling markets of Addis Ababa. Sime transforms them into collages and stitched canvases, into floor and wall sculpture, and into installations.

The floor of the galleries will be strewn with small sculptures made of mud and straw called *selachas* (stuffed goatskin), each encased in the full skin of a single goat. The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York has accepted two *selechas* for its permanent collection.

According to Peter Clothier in the *Huffington Post*, "Community is an essential part of his work: family and friends join with him in the creation of his art, and he spreads small wealth and creativity amongst the local children by rewarding them for bringing him the results of their scavenging. He is, in a real and pragmatic sense, a social activist."

Elias Sime: Eye of the Needle, Eye of the Heart was co-curated by Meskerem Assegued and Peter Sellars, the visionary theater, opera, and multidisciplinary arts impresario. Assegued has worked closely with Sime for nearly a decade and many of Sime's works grew out of their collaborative anthropological field research on indigenous pre-Christian rituals in Ethiopia.

The husband and wife team, Jonathan Dayton and Valerie Faris, created an accompanying documentary. They are best known for their directorial debut of the feature film, *Little Miss Sunshine*. They have also received international fame for their music videos for bands such as Oasis, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Beastie Boys, and R.E.M. Originally, the filmmakers were won over by Sellars's exuberant descriptions and photos of Sime's work. Subsequently, they traveled to Ethiopia to meet the artist and create a visual journal of their four days with him in his studio and on the streets of Addis Ababa where Sime lives.

In 2006, Elias constructed *gotas* (traditional mud and straw silos from Ethiopia) in front of a live audience in his exhibition "Green Flame." The show was curated by Assegued for Sellars's New Crowned Hope Festival, a celebration of Mozart's 250th anniversary in Vienna, Austria. In 2009 and 2010, Elias's thrones and masks was used by Sellars as stage set for Stravinsky's *Oedipus Rex* Opera at the Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles and the Sydney Opera House in Australia.

The exhibition in North Dakota is supported in part by a grant from the North Dakota Council on the Arts, which receives funding from the state legislature and the National Endowment for the Arts; by a grant provided by the Minnesota State Arts Board through an appropriation Minnesota State Legislature; and by a grant from the City of Grand Forks through the North Valley Arts Council.

The North Dakota Museum of Art is located on Centennial Drive in Grand Forks. The Museum hours are weekdays from 9 am – 5 pm and weekends from 1 pm – 5 pm. The Museum Shop is open during these hours. There is no general admission; however, there is a suggested donation of \$5 from adults and change from children. In addition, the Museum Café is open for lunch, weekdays from 11 am – 3 pm. Parking is available in front of the Museum in the metered parking lot or a block east of the Museum on Centennial Drive in the Visitors Parking. For more information, please call 701-777-4195 or visit www.ndmoa.com.