

For immediate release

Ephraim Asili's 'Jazz Salt' celebrates music and poetry of the African American experience in 'Elevator Music 35'

SARATOGA SPRINGS, NY (January 12, 2018) — The artist Ephraim Asili will debut a new work commissioned by the Tang Museum that celebrates 20th-century black music and poetry while provoking visitors to engage with the difficult realities of racism, war, and the fight for civil rights. By extracting, combining, and layering music, spoken word, animal sounds, and film, Asili further invites visitors to consider sampling—a fundamental style in the history of African American music—as an art form unto itself.



Collage work by Ephraim Asili, 2017, courtesy the artist.

On view from January 13 through May 20, 2018 at the Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum, *Elevator Music 35: Ephraim Asili — Jazz Salt* is the 35th version of the Museum's Elevator Music series, which activates the Museum's elevator and engages artists across the visual and performing arts to create immersive, sound-based installations. The ongoing series began in 2004 and continues with two or three new installations each year. Previous artists have included Maryanne Amacher, Lucky Dragons, Sharon Hayes, and Pamela Z.

Asili's *Jazz Salt* installation is created for the Tang Museum and is site-specific to its visitor elevator. It includes audio from a thirty-minute cassette using a four-track cassette recorder, and incorporates a rich variety of samples taken from numerous sources, including the documentary film *Mingus: Charlie Mingus 1968*; an interview with Sun Ra; spoken word recordings of poets such as Sonia Sanchez and Maya Angelou; recordings of black U.S. soldiers interviewed live in Vietnam; animal sounds; and music by jazz saxophonist Hamiet Bluiett, the Milford Graves Percussion Ensemble with Sunny Morgan, and Bismillah Khan, who popularized the shehnai, an Indian wind instrument.

In addition to the new recording, the *Jazz Salt* installation includes found objects such as milk crates repurposed as furniture and a book, *Look Hard*, with reproductions of Asili's own drawings and collages as well as liner notes that contextualize many of the sampled sounds. The book offers a textual, visual, and physical gateway to the sound, and the sound an aural gateway to the book, creating a multimedia, multisensory experience. Limited-edition books

and cassettes with the elevator's track will be available to visitors. A coffee tin will be in the elevator to accept donations to the Tang in exchange for the cassettes and books.

Admission to the Tang Teaching Museum is free, with a small donation suggested. The Museum is open Tuesday through Sunday from Noon to 5 pm, with extended hours until 9 pm on Thursdays, and is closed on Mondays and holidays. More information at 518-580-8080 or <http://tang.skidmore.edu>.

Elevator Music 35 is organized by Mellon Collections Curator Rebecca McNamara in collaboration with the artist and is supported by the Friends of the Tang.

About Ephraim Asili

Asili is a filmmaker, multimedia artist, DJ, radio host, and educator. His films, which focus on his travels throughout the African diaspora, have been shown at festivals worldwide, including the New York Film Festival, Toronto Film Festival, Ann Arbor Film Festival (where he received the Most Promising Filmmaker Prize), Milano Film Festival, Trinidad and Tobago International Film Festival, Boston Museum of Fine Art, and elsewhere. Assistant Professor of Film and Electronic Arts at Bard College, Asili DJs on WGCX FM and at the semi-regular dance party Botanica.

About the Tang Teaching Museum

The Tang Teaching Museum at Skidmore College is a pioneer of interdisciplinary exploration and learning. A cultural anchor of New York's Capital Region, the institution's approach has become a model for university art museums across the country—with exhibition programs and series that bring together the visual and performing arts with fields of study as disparate as history, astronomy, and physics. The Tang has one of the most rigorous faculty-engagement initiatives in the nation, the Mellon Seminar, and robust publication and touring exhibition initiatives that extend the institution's reach far beyond its walls. The Tang Teaching Museum's building, designed by architect Antoine Predock, serves as a visual metaphor for the convergence of ideas and exchange the institution catalyzes. More information at <http://tang.skidmore.edu>.

Media contact

Michael Janairo
Assistant Director for Engagement
Tang Teaching Museum at Skidmore College
mjanairo@skidmore.edu
518-580-5542