

# WELLIN

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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**THE WELLIN MUSEUM OF ART AT HAMILTON COLLEGE PRESENTS  
THE EXHIBITION *SARAH OPPENHEIMER: SENSITIVE MACHINE*  
ON VIEW FROM SEPTEMBER 4 THROUGH DECEMBER 2, 2021**



*Sarah Oppenheimer: Sensitive Machine* at the Wellin Museum of Art at Hamilton College, on view September 4 - December 2, 2021. Photo by John Bentham.

**Clinton, NY**—The Wellin Museum of Art at Hamilton College presents the exhibition *Sarah Oppenheimer: Sensitive Machine* from September 4 through December 2, 2021, featuring new work that invites visitors to collaboratively re-align and re-configure the Museum’s Dietrich Exhibition Gallery. Visitors touch and turn four hollow beams, setting in motion a relay of spatial cause and effect. Columns split and slide, creating new sightlines, while light fixtures rise and fall, shifting the radiance of the gallery.

Conceptually, the work explores how our actions—both individually and communally—shape the spaces we inhabit, and how those spaces embody a constant state of flux. The work mobilizes group dynamics and engages the joy of improvised learning, bringing awareness to the collaborative experience of inhabited architecture.

The exhibition is curated by Tracy L. Adler, the Johnson-Pote Director of the Wellin Museum of Art, and comprises four newly designed “instruments” that build on Oppenheimer’s recent exhibitions at Kunstmuseum Thun, Switzerland; and Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh.

Created specifically for the Wellin Museum’s open-plan exhibition space, each of the four instruments is linked to existing lighting tracks and subdividing walls. As visitors manually activate these instruments, a choreography of spatial change is set in motion. Lighting tracks slip between the vertical surfaces of sliding walls; luminosity levels fluctuate while sightlines are interrupted and revealed. The instruments are often interconnected: turning the input of one alters the configuration of another. The resulting spatial overlap blurs the boundaries between instruments such that they are no longer discrete. Gradually, visitors become aware of the dynamic changes enacted and learn their component rhythms. *Sensitive Machine* forms a complex spatial network activated by the collaborative gestures of engaged viewers.

Adler explains, “This exhibition is nine years in the making. I have been speaking to Sarah since the Wellin first opened in 2012 about working with us to develop an exhibition. The type of experience Sarah’s work evinces is so important at this time in particular. Right now, when we cannot be in close proximity to people and places due to COVID, the show will allow for the kind of interaction we have long craved. We can ensure that visitors interact with the installation safely and still have a tactile experience. The audience is actively involved in the installation coming to life. This allows for an experience of physically reconnecting, both with objects and with each other.”

Oppenheimer states, “*Sensitive Machine* conceives of the instrument as a mechanism whose technical dimensions are profoundly social. Museum visitors will become aware of one another’s presence, their bodily engagement, and the extent of their own reach. The residue of touch lingers and communicates; we sense others shaping the space we inhabit. Now more than ever, we must consider how spatial proximity and spatial agency are defined.”

### **Publication**

The exhibition will be accompanied by a fully illustrated publication, including essays by the artist Sarah Oppenheimer, and Wellin Museum of Art director and curator of the exhibition Tracy Adler.

### **Sponsorship**

The new work in the exhibition was commissioned by the Ruth and Elmer Wellin Museum of Art at Hamilton College. The Ruth and Elmer Wellin Museum of Art’s programs are made possible, in part, by 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; and the William G. Roehrick ’34 Lecture Fund.

### **About Sarah Oppenheimer**

Sarah Oppenheimer (b. 1972, Austin, Texas; lives and works in New York City) received a BA from Brown University in 1995 and an MFA from Yale University in 1999. Her work has been featured in solo exhibitions at Kunstmuseum Thun, Switzerland (2020); MASS MoCA, North Adams, Massachusetts (2019); the Wexner Center for the Arts, Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio (2017); the Pérez Art Museum Miami, Florida (2016); MUDAM: Musée d’Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean, Luxembourg (2016); and Kunsthaus Baselland, Muttenz, Switzerland (2014). She is a recipient of the Rome Prize Fellowship (2011–12), Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Fellowship (2009), and Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship (2007). Oppenheimer is currently a senior critic at the Yale University School of Art. She is represented by Annely Juda Fine Art in the UK and von Bartha in Switzerland.

### **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. [www.hamilton.edu/wellin](http://www.hamilton.edu/wellin)

### **Related Projects**

Landmarks, the public art program of The University of Texas at Austin has commissioned a major new work by Sarah Oppenheimer, which will be installed on the university's campus.

There will be a solo exhibition of work by Sarah Oppenheimer at von Bartha in Basel, Switzerland in June 2022, during Art Basel.

### **Social Media**

Join the conversation on social media by tagging @wellinmuseum and using the hashtags #WellinMuseum and #OppenheimerWellin when posting.

### **Full Image Caption:**

*Sarah Oppenheimer: Sensitive Machine* at the Wellin Museum of Art at Hamilton College, on view September 4 - December 2, 2021. Photo by John Bentham.

Pictured: *I-142-03-70* (2021), *I-142-03-70* (2021), *I-132-03-50* (2021), *I-142-03-70* (2021). All works: aluminum, steel, timing belts, and existing architecture. Dimensions and duration variable.

### **Media Contact**

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