



48 WALKER ST | APR 1 – MAY 10, 2023

*Tightrope: It is Green 4*, 2023, Reclaimed electrical wires on components, 82 x 79 x 3 in. (208.3 x 200.7 x 7.6 cm)

# Elias Sime

## TIGHTROPE: ኦረንጌድ ነው (IT IS GREEN)

James Cohan is pleased to present *TIGHTROPE: ኦረንጌድ ነው (IT IS GREEN)*, an exhibition of new work by Elias Sime, on view at the gallery's 48 Walker Street location from April 1 - May 10, 2023. This is the artist's fifth solo exhibition at James Cohan.

Elias Sime deftly weaves, layers, and assembles technological components into abstract compositions, often on a monumental scale. Sime moves fluidly between suggestions of topography, figuration, and sublime color fields. His works serve as records of the global exchange of commodities, and express the tenuousness of our interconnected world, alluding to the frictions between tradition and progress, human contact and social networks, nature and the man-made, and physical presence and the virtual.

The works in this exhibition represent a new chapter within Sime's ongoing *Tightrope* series, whose title reflects the precarious balance between the advancement technology has made possible and its detrimental impact on the environment. All the works in *TIGHTROPE: ኦረንጌድ ነው (IT IS GREEN)* are, in fact, red. This dissonance reflects Sime's desire to push against didactic or prescriptive descriptions of his work. As he notes: "I make my art with freedom, and I want viewers to freely interpret them from their own points of view."

Working within a restricted palette allows the artist to explore subtle, undulating shifts in tonality across the braided wire panels of each composition. Hand-carved sculptural elements—shaped like leaves, flower petals, and branches—are also tightly encased within the same braided and coiled wire. This fluency between two and three dimensions is a hallmark of Sime’s multi-faceted practice, informed by his ambitious civic architectural work in his home city of Addis Ababa.

*“ኢረገገጅ ነው (IT IS GREEN) is a paradox. It is an inquiry into the degree to which reality is shaped by the conditioning of the mind that perceives it. The grass may appear red, but it is grass, and grass is green. So what color is the grass? How far can words be separated from their understood meaning and still hold some kind of value in the minds of their users? Does the nature of that value change? Will language ever be truly powerful enough to fully reflect the internal experience of discovery? IT IS GREEN hopes to remind us of our immense power to dream and discover far outside the bounds of what we have been told. I say it is green. What do you see?”*

- Meskerem Assegued, Curator and co-founder of Zoma Museum

Working with his longtime collaborator, Meskerem Assegued, Sime co-founded, designed, and built the award-winning Zoma Museum in Addis Ababa, an environmentally conscious international art center described by The New York Times in 2009 as “*a voluptuous dream, a swirl of ancient technique and ecstatic imagination.*” Zoma Museum celebrated its grand opening in its new location in March 2019, with expanded facilities that include a gallery space, library, children’s center, edible garden, elementary school, art and vernacular school, amphitheater, cafe, and museum shop.

Sime has exhibited extensively around the world. His work has been shown internationally at the 59th Venice Biennale; Dak’Art Biennale of Contemporary African Art 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; and a survey exhibition that traveled from the Santa Monica Museum of Art, California, to the North Dakota Museum of Art. The Wellin Museum of Art at Hamilton College presented *Elias Sime: Tightrope* in the fall of 2019, marking the artist’s first major museum survey. Curated by Tracy L. Adler, the Wellin Museum’s Johnson-Pote Director, the exhibition highlights Sime’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. The exhibition traveled to the Akron Art Museum in Akron, Ohio, the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art in Kansas City, Missouri, and the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto, Canada in Spring 2021. *Elias Sime: Tightrope* was accompanied by the first monograph focusing on the work of Elias Sime, co-published by the Wellin Museum of Art and DelMonico Books • Prestel. Sime was also the subject of a solo exhibition entitled *Currents 118: Elias Sime*, on view at the Saint Louis Art Museum from July 2020 to January 2021.

In 2019, Sime received an African Art Award from the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art and was shortlisted for the Hugo Boss Prize 2020.

Elias Sime’s work is included in the permanent collections of the Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts, Little Rock, AR; Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY; Alford Collection of Contemporary Art, Cornell Fine Arts Museum, Rollins College, Orlando, FL; Chrysler Museum of Art, Norfolk, VA; Detroit Institute of Arts, MI; Des Moines Art Center, Des Moines, IA; Samuel P. Harn Museum of Art, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL; Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH; Israel Museum, Jerusalem, Israel; Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City, MO; Newark Museum, Newark, NJ; North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh, NC; North Dakota Museum of Art, Grand Forks, ND; Norval Foundation, Cape Town, South Africa; Pérez Art Museum Miami, Miami, FL; Pizzuti Collection at the Columbus Museum of Art, Columbus, OH; Ruth and Elmer Wellin Museum of Art, Hamilton College, Clinton, NY; Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Canada; Saint Louis Art Museum, St. Louis, MO; Carl & Marilyn Thoma Art Foundation, Santa Fe, NM; Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo, OH; Utah Museum of Fine Arts, Salt Lake City, UT; Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, VA; 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, Japan.

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