



***Elias Sime: Dichotomy ፊት እና ጀርባ* to Debut in Venice as Collateral Event of the 60th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia**

Exhibition features seven new works composed of repurposed technological materials in an exploration of the modern human condition

Venice, IT (March 28, 2024) — Addressing the impact of globalization and technology on the human psyche and the global environment at large, *Elias Sime: Dichotomy ፊት እና ጀርባ* debuts this April with seven new artworks by the Addis Ababa-based artist, including six new wall works and a large-scale braided wire sculpture. On view April 20–November 24, 2024, at Tanarte, Castello, the exhibition is an official Collateral Event of the 60th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia. Using materials that form the backbone of all digital communication, Sime crafts dimensional meditations that encourage sustained contemplation. Co-curated by the artist’s longtime collaborator Meskerem Assegued and Felicity Korn, curator at the Kunstpalast Düsseldorf, *Dichotomy ፊት እና ጀርባ* illuminates the relationship between humans, technology, and the natural world. Selected works will later be included in a comprehensive retrospective of Elias Sime at the Kunstpalast Düsseldorf, the exhibition’s organizing institution, from March to June 2025.

In his material-driven and multidisciplinary practice, Sime weaves, layers, and braids repurposed technological equipment into lyrical and intricate sculptural assemblages. Sime’s use of color, pattern, and grids often reference natural landscapes, evoking both the environment and humankind’s imprint on the earth. Sime’s process begins with ideation and sketches, which he then translates into the visual patterns that make up his abstractions. For this new body of work, the artist referenced sketches inspired by past trips to Venice, creating synergy with the city in which they will be experienced for the first time.

See below for more information on featured works in *Elias Sime: Dichotomy ፊት እና ጀርባ*.

- The exhibition will debut large-scale wall works composed primarily of deconstructed computer motherboards assembled into grids. Sime renders these landscapes of hardware in both organic and manicured forms—evoking both the environment and humankind’s imprint on the earth.
- The presentation will also feature wall-hung, dimensional assemblages that expand upon the artist’s *Tightrope* series, which Sime began developing in 2009. In particular, the new *Tightrope* works meditate on the extraction of minerals used in the technology that powers humanity. Featuring raised, crystalline forms representing these natural resources, the works foreground precious minerals that are mined under punishing conditions, raising ethical and ecological concerns due to their geological scarcity and associated geopolitics.
- A standing sculpture comprising stacked geometric shapes made of woven electrical wire—which echo shapes within the *Tightrope* works—creates a visual and spatial dialogue with the wall-mounted works.

Working with Assegued, Sime co-founded, designed, and built the award-winning Zoma Museum in Addis Ababa, an environmentally conscious international art center. Zoma Museum includes a gallery space, library, children’s center, edible garden, elementary school, art and vernacular school, amphitheater, cafe, and museum shop. Visual motifs from Zoma Museum are prevalent throughout the artist’s sculpture, creating a throughline between his architectural practice in Addis Ababa and this exhibition in Venice.

Elias Sime says:

“My chosen materials, and the way I use them in my practice, speak to our modern condition. Technology is omnipresent, but I do not seek to make a statement about technology itself and humanity’s relationship with it. Rather, I want to depict the world around us—including the dynamism of nature, the prevalence of technology in nearly every corner of the world, and both the harmony and disharmony these forces reach in our lived experiences.”

Meskerem Assegued, co-curator of *Dichotomy ፊት እና ጀርባ* and co-founder of Zoma Museum, says: “This new body of work by Elias Sime tells an intricate and complex visual narrative about humans’ relationship with themselves, with the world, and with the technological forces that shape our everyday. In this way, the exhibition is universally resonant, and the public can find their own stories within the bright colors and sculptural forms of these works. Just as many of the pieces in *Dichotomy ፊት እና ጀርባ* are woven together from thousands of wires, chips, and hardware, the exhibition weaves together Elias Sime’s decades-long observations and analyses of his surroundings, but also offers a mirror to viewers, asking them to reflect on their own place in a world that is more interconnected and technology-engaged than ever before.”

Felicity Korn, co-curator of *Dichotomy ፊት እና ጀርባ* and curator at the Kunstpalast Düsseldorf, says: “Just like the materials they are made of, Elias Sime’s works tell stories—stories of their journey around the world and of all the people that have touched them, worked with them. By processing them, he explicitly juxtaposes the global with the local and draws attention to the influence of technology on our society, its mass consumption, and the complex circulation of materials and items. We are very excited that in Spring 2025 the Kunstpalast in Düsseldorf will host a comprehensive retrospective on Elias Sime and that in Venice we can already draw attention to this major artist by presenting a careful selection of his most current works.”

The exhibition is located at Tanarte, Castello, 30 meters from the entrance of the Arsenale, one of the main venues of the 60th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia. More information is available at www.simevenice.org. *Elias Sime: Dichotomy ፊት እና ጀርባ* has been organized by the Kunstpalast Düsseldorf with the support of James Cohan Gallery, New York. Additional support is provided by GRIMM Amsterdam | London | New York, with coordination by Southern & Partners.

About Elias Sime

Born and raised in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Elias Sime has exhibited extensively around the world. His work has been shown internationally at the 59th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia which took place from April 23 to November 27, 2022; the Dak’Art Biennale of Contemporary African Art in Dakar, Senegal; and in the United States at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York and the Studio Museum in Harlem.

Sime is currently the subject of a solo exhibition at Arnolfini in Bristol, United Kingdom, which will travel first to Hastings Contemporary, UK, and will conclude at the Kunstpalast Düsseldorf in Spring 2025. In the United States, The Wellin Museum of Art at Hamilton College presented his first survey exhibition in

2019, which 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. Sime was also a subject of a solo exhibition at the Saint Louis Art Museum in 2020.

Sime's work is included in the permanent collections of over 40 institutions, including Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY; Detroit Institute of Arts, MI; Israel Museum, Jerusalem, Israel; Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City, MO; de Young Museum, San Francisco, CA; Newark Museum, Newark, NJ; North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh, NC; Norval Foundation, Cape Town, South Africa; Pérez Art Museum Miami, Miami, FL; Pizzuti Collection of 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; Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo, OH; Utah Museum of Fine Arts, Salt Lake City, UT; Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, VA; and 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, Japan.

About the Curators

Meskerem Assegued

Meskerem Assegued is an independent curator, anthropologist, writer, and co-founder of Zoma Museum with Elias Sime. She conceived and curated *Giziawi #1*, an art happening in Addis Ababa. She then curated *Divine Light* by David Hammons and *Green Flame*, the visual art exhibition of the New Crowned Hope Festival by Peter Sellars in Vienna. She co-curated *Eye of the Needle, Eye of the Heart* at Santa Monica Museum of Art with Sellars; *Curvature of Events* at the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden; *Johannes Haile: With Different Eyes* at Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen, Germany; and *Vital Signs* at Katzen Art Center, Washington, D.C. She recently co-designed and constructed the landscape and buildings at the Menelik Grand Palace and is currently constructing Zoma Village Entoto with Sime in Addis Ababa.

She has participated in various workshops and symposia, including those organized at MoMA and Tate Modern. She was awarded France's Chevalier dans l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres and has been a member of the selection committees for Dak'Art and the African Pavilion for the 52nd International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia in 2007. Her publications include *Diving For Honey; Introducing Mulatu Astatke: The Making of Ethio-Jazz*; and *Zerihun Yetmgeta, The Magical Universe of Art*.

Felicity Korn

Felicity Korn is a curator and Head of the Collection of 20th and 21st Century Art at the Kunstpalast, the municipal art museum of Düsseldorf, Germany. She holds an MA in Art Research and Media Philosophy, Exhibition Design and Curatorial Studies from the Karlsruhe University of Arts and Design. Between 2012 and 2017 she worked in different curatorial positions in the Department of Modern Art at the Städel Museum in Frankfurt am Main and was responsible for several exhibitions, including *Emil Nolde. Retrospective* (2014) and *Battle of the Sexes. Franz von Stuck to Frida Kahlo* (2016). Since 2017 she has been working at the Kunstpalast in Düsseldorf, where she was Head of Development before taking over her current position in 2023. She curated the exhibitions *Women War Photographers: From Lee Miller to Anja Niedringhaus* (2019) and *Untold Stories: Peter Lindbergh* (2020) and was the conceptual project leader for the renovation and new presentation of the collection wing that opened in November 2023.

About the Kunstpalast Düsseldorf

The Kunstpalast is situated to the north of Düsseldorf's historic city center between the Rhine and the Hofgarten. A major asset of the museum's huge collection is its wide diversity which offers much scope for research, presentations, and educational work. Paralleled by few other museums, the Kunstpalast unites virtually all artistic genres and a variety of eras under one roof: paintings, prints and drawings, sculptures and decorative arts, a glass collection as well as a collection of modern art, photography, and time-based media. The museum's varied program constantly sets new impulses, picks up on contemporary topics and enables new perspectives. In addition, a broad concept of art allows surprising changes of perspective.

Media Contacts

Resnicow and Associates

Francesca Kielb / Claire Hurley / Caroline Farrell

fkielb@resnicow.com / churley@resnicow.com / cfarrell@resnicow.com

+1 212 671 5152 / +1 212 671 5159 / +1 212 671 5157