



48 WALKER ST | MAR 19 - APR 24, 2021

Elias Sime

TIGHTROPE: ECHO!?

TIGHTROPE: ECHO!?, 2021
Reclaimed electrical wires and
components on panel with two
megaphones
45 1/4 x 47 1/4 x 6 in
114.9 x 120 x 15.2 cm

James Cohan is pleased to present *TIGHTROPE: ECHO!?*, an exhibition of new work by Elias Sime, on view at 48 Walker Street from March 19 through April 24. This is Sime's fourth solo exhibition at James Cohan. *TIGHTROPE: ECHO!?* is accompanied by an essay written by curator and anthropologist Meskerem Asseged, with whom Sime co-founded the Zoma Museum.

Elias Sime deftly weaves, layers and assembles materials into abstract compositions that suggest topography, figuration, and sublime color fields. The history of his materials hold meaning, as they are the backbone of all communication systems, whether they be telephone or computer. They suggest 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.

In this new chapter in the *Tightrope* series, the artist presents wall-based works that feature megaphones that have been embellished and affixed to the surface of the picture. The inclusion of this new element points to the artist's interest in the way information can be successfully or unsuccessfully transmitted. Megaphones are used in large communal gatherings—both by activists demanding their rights and by law enforcement controlling the crowds—to project a message. Yet the series title, *ECHO!?* questions which voices are amplified. Sime explains, "As technology connects people virtually and physically from one end of the world to the other, unfiltered and sensational speeches are spread creating confusion and doubting the truth. Each one of the *Tightrope: ECHO!?* is about what I am witnessing now. I leave the interpretation of the pieces to the viewers. The basic idea is how humans are easily manipulated by individuals and rush for conclusions that they often regret when the truth begins to surface."

TIGHTROPE: ECHO!? features a new sculpture inspired by the artist's recent visit to the Cahokia Mounds of the ancient Mississippian city near modern-day St. Louis. For his exhibition *Currents 118* at the Saint Louis Museum of Art, Sime created *Tightrope: Eyes and Ears of a Bat (I)*, 2020, a large, bowl-shaped form covered in dense patterns made from braided, colored wires. The artist found a connection between the Cahokia Mounds, which were hand built from compressed clay, and his own architectural work at the Zoma Museum, which he built and co-founded with Meskerem Assegued in Addis Ababa.

While Sime taps into the rich veins of history and tradition in his work, his longtime collaborator, curator and anthropologist, Meskerem Assegued notes, "Elias' art has always been about the moment." His work is a poetic contemplation on being fully present in a rapidly evolving world. The transformation of his materials beckons us to put down our screens and embrace the potential of human connection.

The gallery will host a virtual conversation on the subject of Sime's work with Lawrence Weschler and Maaza Mengiste, the Booker prize nominee for her recent publication *The Shadow King*, on Friday, March 26 at 1 PM EST as part of James Cohan's ongoing Art for Lunch series.

Elias Sime has exhibited extensively around the world. In 2019, the Wellin Museum of Art at Hamilton College presented *Elias Sime: Tightrope*, marking the artist's first international, touring museum survey curated by Tracy L. Adler, the Wellin Museum's Johnson-Pote Director. The exhibition travelled to the Akron Art Museum in Akron, OH, and the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art in Kansas City, MO, and is on view at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto, CA from April 3 through July 4, 2021. The artist's first monograph *Elias Sime: Tightrope* was co-published by the Wellin Museum and DelMonico Books • Prestel. The solo exhibition *Currents 118: Elias Sime* was on view at the Saint Louis Art Museum through January 2021. His work has been shown at the 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, NY; 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.

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 collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY; Newark Museum, NJ; Ruth and Elmer Wellin Museum of Art, Hamilton College, Clinton, NY; Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City, MO; Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto; Israel Museum, Jerusalem; North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh; Norval Foundation, Cape Town, South Africa; Toledo Museum of Art, OH; Pérez Art Museum Miami, FL; Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond; Detroit Institute of Arts, MI; Chrysler Museum of Art, Norfolk, VA; North Dakota Museum of Art; Saint Louis Art Museum, Missouri; Pizzuti Collection at the Columbus Museum of Art, Columbus, OH; Harn Museum of Art, University of Florida, Gainesville; Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, NH; the Carl and Marilyn Thoma Foundation, Chicago, IL; Utah Museum of Fine Arts; and 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa.

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