



52 WALKER ST, VIEWING ROOM | OCT 25 – NOV 23, 2024

Elias Sime, *Enat, Teret-Teret*, 2004,
stitched yarn and buttons on canvas,
33 x 27 3/8 in. (83.8 x 69.5 cm).

Elias Sime

James Cohan is pleased to present a special exhibition of early work by Elias Sime, on view at the gallery's 52 Walker Street viewing room from October 25 through November 23, 2024.

Elias Sime creates densely layered assemblages of everyday materials, transforming them into lyrical meditations on the world around him. Predating Sime's well-known *Tightrope* series, these canvases, made in the early 2000s, represent the stylistic and conceptual foundations of the artist's later, monumental tableaus composed of braided wire and mosaic-like arrangements of electrical components.

In this early body of work, Sime stitches thread, yarn, buttons, bottle caps and other found objects onto canvas, creating highly textured surfaces and vivid color fields. These works, ranging from figuration to abstraction, highlight Sime's handling of material with the fluency and formal instincts that lie at the heart of his practice.

These distinctive works are inspired by traditional Ethiopian practices of weaving and embroidery. Having grown up amidst this tradition, Sime found the use of the stitched yarn and textile as natural avenues to express himself. By incorporating buttons, bottle caps, toy arms, and clothing, Sime gives a second life to these objects. In the artist's own words, *"Each material I collect has its own story, and has been touched by many hands. It has its own language. All the different stories related to the material move me, and I transform these intuitive reactions into my compositions."* His materially-responsive process gives voice to both these stories and the surrounding landscape.

Sime encourages viewers to look slowly and closely, tracing each fiber stitched onto the canvas. By engaging with the work in this way, we echo the artist's own process. Tracy L. Adler, Director of the Ruth and Elmer Wellin Museum of Art at Hamilton College notes,

"This notion of slow looking is integral to Sime's approach. In our fast-paced world, he reminds us that we must take the time to observe closely, to follow each thread. Once we allow ourselves to do so, we can get lost in the details of Sime's surfaces. His work initiates a meditative process that encourages engaged study and reflection. As we investigate and interrogate the work, we also learn about our own process of viewing it."

Elias Sime (b.1968 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia) has been the subject of major solo exhibitions, most recently *Eregata ከርጋታ* at Arnolfini in Bristol, United Kingdom (2023), which was accompanied by a catalog and traveled to Hastings Contemporary in Hastings, United Kingdom (2024). Other solo exhibitions include *Currents 118: Elias Sime* at the Saint Louis Art Museum, MO (2020), *Elias Sime: Tightrope*, The Wellin Museum of Art at Hamilton College, NY (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. His installation, *Roots*, is on permanent view at the John Hopkins University, Washington D.C.

The solo exhibition *Elias Sime: Dichotomy ልት ከና ጁርባ*, an official Collateral Event of the 60th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia, is currently on view at Spazio Tana, Castello in Venice, organized by Kunstpalast Düsseldorf. The exhibition runs through November 24, 2024. Selected works from this presentation will be featured in a forthcoming exhibition at the Kunstpalast Düsseldorf in Germany, scheduled to open in February 2025.

Sime has been featured in numerous group exhibitions and biennales, including Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts, Little Rock, AR (2023); Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Fort Worth, TX (2023); the 59th Venice Biennale, Italy (2022); Royal Academy of Arts, London, United Kingdom (2021); NEON, Athens, Greece (2021); Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Chicago, IL (2018). 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 in the permanent collections of the Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts, Little Rock, AR; Carl & Marilyn Thoma Art Foundation, Santa Fe, NM; Chrysler Museum of Art, Norfolk, VA; Detroit Institute of Arts, MI; Des Moines Art Center, Des Moines, IA; de Young Museum, San Francisco, CA; Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH; Israel Museum, Jerusalem, Israel; Johns Hopkins University Campus Collection, Baltimore, MD; Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City, MO; Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY; 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; Rollins Museum of Art, Rollins College, Orlando, FL; Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Canada; Ruth and Elmer Wellin Museum of Art, Hamilton College, Clinton, NY; Saint Louis Art Museum, St. Louis, MO; Samuel P. Harn Museum of Art, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL; Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo, OH; Utah Museum of Fine Arts, Salt Lake City, UT; Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, VA; and the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, Japan.

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.

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