



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

**Exhibition features 11 monumental new works composed of repurposed technological materials in an exploration of the modern human condition**

**Venice, IT (January 31, 2024)** — Addressing the impact of globalization and technology on the human psyche, *Elias Sime: Dichotomy ፊት እና ጀርባ jerba* debuts this April with 11 new artworks by the Addis Ababa-based artist, including nine new wall works, a stone sculpture, and a site-specific installation. 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 jerba* illuminates the tenuousness in humanity's private and public dualities. Selected works will later be included in a comprehensive retrospective of Elias Sime's 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. This presentation elaborates on Sime's *Tightrope* series, which the artist first began developing in 2009. In particular, the new *Tightrope* works meditate on the centrality of the smartphone in everyday life. Sime looks at this device as a status symbol, as well as a metaphor for the fraught systems powering global communication today; the ubiquitous devices are powered by precious metals which are mined under punishing conditions, raising serious ethical and ecological concerns due to their geological scarcity and associated geopolitics. In the entryway from the canal to the interior exhibition space in Venice, a site-specific installation will place panels of electronic components and electrical wires in direct dialogue with the ancient infrastructure of the city.

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. As an extension of this architectural practice, Sime has recently begun to develop a series of freestanding carved stone sculptures whose sinuous forms echo the vernacular architecture of the museum. *Dichotomy ፊት እና ጀርባ jerba* will feature the latest work from this ongoing series.



Elias Sime says:

“I believe I was born an artist, but I practice to be perfect. I love sharing my observations, fascinations, and fears using specific materials I collect. Like oil paint, acrylic, or watercolor, my chosen materials speak to our modern condition.”

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’ double personas that switch between private and public. Elias Sime is a visual storyteller, whose art is infused with his observations of his surroundings or his fascinations about new concepts. He is a careful listener and enjoys asking questions, especially when it challenges his beliefs. He is often quiet in the middle of a loud crowd, analyzing and sketching his observations. Twenty-three years have gone by since we met. This long and adventurous relationship has contributed to the trust and more importantly to the productive collaborations developed in the absence of competition. As I curate *Dichotomy ፊት እና ጀርባ*, I think about how I can best enable the public to find their stories within the work. Art that speaks the unspoken and exposes the hidden can be eternal where time and space blur.”

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 [simevenice.org](http://simevenice.org). *Elias Sime: Dichotomy ፊት እና ጀርባ* is presented with support from James Cohan Gallery.

### 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 59<sup>th</sup> 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 Academy of Arts and Design in Karlsruhe. 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.

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