



Tightrope: Familiar Yet Complex 2

Date

2016

Primary Maker

Elias Sime

Medium

Reclaimed electronic components and insulated wire on panel

Description

While rooted in both the figurative and the abstract modes of modern Ethiopian art, from Soviet influenced Socialist Realism to midcentury avant-garde movements imported from the West in the 1950s and 1960s, Elias Sime's work is also in dialogue with global contemporary art. After graduating in 1990 from the Ale School of Fine Arts and Design at Addis Ababa University, Sime has become well known in East Africa not only as an artist but also as

the founder and designer of the Zoma Contemporary Art Center in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia's capital. Situated somewhere between sculpture and painting, Sime's collages and sculptural assemblages contain primarily found objects, both man-made and natural, including thread, buttons, bottle caps, wires, scrap metal, animal skins, mud, and straw. His source for the materials is often the Menalesh Tera (literally, "what do you have?") section of Addis Ababa's sprawling open-air market. In this work, part of a series called "Tightrope," salvaged electronic components, motherboards, and electrical wires—the cast-off innards of computers, cell phones, and other machines—form a bright patchwork of colorful, organic forms against a varying green geometric background. The resulting semi-abstract landscape is a postconsumerist critique combined with patterning that references Ethiopia's cultural heritage. The title of the series refers to the precarious balance between the cultural progress technology has allowed and its detrimental effects on the environment. Tightrope, Familiar Yet Complex 2 and the other works in the series make visible the cost of progress; while citizens of "developed" nations consume and swiftly dispose of the newest models of cell phones, laptops, and video game consoles in a race for social relevance, people in countries such as Ethiopia suffer from the toxic effects of the refuse those consumers leave behind, which is often shipped illegally to Africa and other less privileged locations worldwide. (SOURCE: Alcauskas, INNOVATIVE APPROACHES, HONORED TRADITIONS, 2017)

Dimensions

Overall: 83 × 87 1/2 in. (210.8 × 222.3 cm)