

HIGH LINE



Photo by Timothy Schenck

COMMISSIONS

Arthur Simms

A Totem for the High Line.

August 2024 – August 2025

LOCATION

Northern Spur Preserve, on the High Line at 16th Street

Arthur Simms creates elaborate assemblages of seemingly disparate found and personal objects that coalesce into intimate reflections on his lived experience, familial history, and spiritual reverence. Autobiographical in nature, his work incorporates trinkets, materials more likely found in a hardware store than an art supply shop, and objects gifted by friends and loved ones looking to clean house and discard what they view as “junk.” Simms pairs these elements with deeply personal belongings such as tufts of his and his wife’s hair, keys, identification cards, and letters from his late mother. He then binds these discordant pieces together by meticulously wrapping them with twine, wire, or hemp rope—the latter, a symbolic reference to his Jamaican roots—to the point of near non-recognition. Simms’ practice is grounded in his cultural heritage and dual identity as both Jamaican and American; he uses his sculpture to narrate stories of personal identity, family, spiritual and physical journeys, emotional tensions, and nostalgia for home.

For the High Line, Simms creates a new site-specific sculpture, *A Totem for the High Line*. In addition to materials that have become core to his body of work—wood, rope, and personal objects—*A Totem for the High Line* also speaks directly to its site, both on the High Line and in New York City. The work incorporates a decommissioned utility pole found on Randall's Island, assorted cables, and discarded license plates from various states—perhaps a reference to the many visitors that flock to New York and the High Line. By integrating these elements, Simms continues his practice of entangling and reusing objects to emphasize the various histories and meanings they carry. The work stands as an homage to transformation and the perpetual unfolding of our past, present, and future.

Artist bio

Arthur Simms (b. 1961, Saint Andrew, Jamaica) lives and works in Staten Island, New York. He has held recent solo exhibitions at international institutions, including Kunstmuseum St. Gallen, St. Gallen, Switzerland (2024); Amelie A. Wallace Gallery at SUNY College, Old Westbury, New York (2011); and the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin, Ireland (2008). Notable group exhibitions include *Nature Doesn't Know About Us*, Sculpture Milwaukee, Milwaukee, Wisconsin (2023); *Caribbean Transitions*, American University, Katzen Arts Center, Washington DC (2022); *Infinite Island: Contemporary Caribbean Art*, The Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, New York (2007); and *Site/Insight: An Assemblage of Artists*, MoMA PS1, New York (2003). He has participated in international art exhibitions, including the Kingston Biennial 2022, Kingston, Jamaica (2022); the 58th Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy (2019); Queens International 2002, Queens Museum of Art, Queens, New York (2002); and the International 94, Socrates Sculpture Park in Queens, New York (1994). In 2001, he represented the inaugural Jamaica Pavilion at the 49th Venice Biennale in Venice, Italy.