



WEAVES

In my student days, I recall being dissatisfied with the traditional format of painting and shredding canvas into strips to create woven panels, thus transforming a 2-D surface into a 3-D object. Although these formal investigations did not sustain my interest, I did return to this process some years later when artist Sam Ntshangase was invited by Andries Botha to teach, unofficially, in the Sculpture Department at Technikon Natal in Durban. Like Botha, Ntshangase not only used natural materials, but also appropriated “industrial waste” for reuse in his work. His influence rekindled my earlier interest in a craft common to the KwaZulu Natal region—utilitarian objects made out of scavenged telephone wire. What intrigued me conceptually about this particular process was how a castoff material from the communications industry could be transformed into raw material in a manner that contradicted its original function.

In 1990, I produced a number of woven works using videotape. The videotape had been used and therefore encoded, but what was actually recorded on the tape I never revealed.

I expanded the format of the weaves to explore spatial possibilities, and this led to a number of works where the woven panels behaved as walls. For the 2nd Johannesburg Biennale in the main space of the South African National Gallery, I configured 40 panels in such a way as to create a room within the larger room of the main first-floor gallery. The woven screens, or *La Jetée* as the piece was titled, interfered with and reflected works from the permanent collection. In another architectural woven work, *Screen*, I constructed an impenetrable black box with an inaccessible interior space much like the weave work made for the Anderson Gallery exhibition.

The timing of the exhibition of *La Jetée* led to speculation that the used videotape might contain footage from the Truth and Reconciliation Committee Hearings which

were being conducted in South Africa live on television during this period. Other viewers assumed that it somehow contained all the coverage of Princess Diana’s funeral, which just took place prior to the opening.

I was interested not only in the contradiction between the material and its application in a new context, but also in the fact that the videotape was rendered mute. That this “illicit” information remained present but unreadable evoked for me notions of mistrust and frustrated desire. Disguising the work as a formal, minimalist object also added to its covert function. The whole process spoke of misused technology and the dark opaqueness of the piece also gave it a funerary quality.

The videotape weaves, like my other collection works, are made with a process of gathering and configuring, and are built through accumulated small gestures to create a grid-like pattern. The videotape works are silent and in the context of this exhibition, become perhaps an archive of the unseen or the unknown.

EXHIBITION HISTORY

1993 | **Untitled**
Institute of Contemporary Art, Johannesburg, SA

1994 | **Vita '93**
Johannesburg Art Gallery, Johannesburg, SA

1997 | **2nd Johannesburg Biennale / Graft, La Jetée**, curated by Colin Richards / Okwui Enwezor
South African National Gallery, Cape Town, SA

2000 | **Translation/Seduction/Displacement, Screen**, curated by Lauri Firstenberg & John Pepper
White Box, New York, NY

2001 | **After the Diagram, Untitled**
curated by Lauri Firstenberg & Douglas Cooper
White Box, New York, NY

2008 | **Light Show, The Birds**
curated by Henrietta Hamilton, Robert Fraser & Vaughn Sadie, BANK Gallery, Durban, South Africa

2008 | **Monomania, The Birds**
curated by Storm Janse van Rensburg
Goodman Gallery Cape, Cape Town, South Africa

2008 | **Disturbance – Contemporary Art from Scandinavia and South Africa, The Birds**
curated by Maria Fidel Regueros & Clive Kellner
Johannesburg Art Gallery, Johannesburg, SA

• left: **Screen II** in process, 2010.
Anderson Gallery, Richmond, VA.
• right: **Screen II**, 2010.
woven VHS videotape, steel, 7.5' x 12.5' x 14.5'.
Anderson Gallery, Richmond, VA.

