

Siemon Allen: Artist examines media coverage of South Africa

Brian Rood
STAFF REPORTER

When faced with its expansive, illusive presentation, unskilled viewers often struggle with the meaning of conceptual art. However, viewers must realize that there is incessant value to this form of expression, for if used properly, conceptual art illuminates global issues in a personal, way for each viewer.

One such conceptual artist is preparing for the premiere of his latest work in the Anderson Gallery from Jan. 16 through Feb. 22.

Siemon Allen, a South African native, has recently focused on exploring the American media's por-



photo courtesy of the Anderson Gallery

WINDOWS TO THE TRUTH – Siemon Allen's "Newspaper" features 30 feet of The Des Moines Register pages, each featuring South African issues.

trayal of South Africa and South Africans.

The core of his Anderson exhibit, "Newspapers," is a 30-foot-long minimalist work composed of a grid with 150 news stories about South Africa from The Des Moines Register.

"We tend to look at his work from an educational perspective, and Allen's pieces can educate the public about the way the media reflect issues of South Africa," said Cira Pascual Marquina, director of the Anderson Gallery.

Pascual Marquina also said that although the artist lives on the East Coast, he chose the Register as the subject for his piece to give the work a local relevance.

"The work analyzes how American media depict political events around the world," said Pascual Marquina. "It's very important to be aware of how American media deal with international issues."

Allen, along with other emerging artists from South Africa, seems to relate much of his artwork to the findings of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

According to a graduate study of apartheid by Stanford University, the TRC was developed by South Africa's Government of National Unity to help investigate and support individuals who were mistreated between the 1940s and the 1960s in South Africa.

Under apartheid, white citizens used institutional discrimination as a means to stabilize the economic system in South Africa. The discrimination subsequently altered the

nation's social system, causing harm to and conflict among many of its black citizens.

Allen has issued previous artwork depicting the changing social and economical system in his country. His 2001 display "Stamp Collection" showcased 8,000 official government-issued stamps from his home country to highlight the way in which the country examined itself through years of turmoil and rebuilding.

With "Stamp Collection" and "Newspaper," Allen joins the company of other South African artists who have concerned themselves with the documentation of media coverage in the wake of apartheid.

"Many of the modern artists coming out of South Africa are interested in archival work," said Pascual Marquina. "Even though archival work has been a part of South African art long before apartheid, it is increasingly important after those events."

Allen will appear at the Friday opening of his exhibit from 5 to 7 p.m. Admission is free and open to the public.

For further information on the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commissions, visit www.doj.gov.za/trc.

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Drake alumni, students launch online publication

The staff of Lumino Magazine will host its launch party at Java Joe's Coffeehouse, 214 4th St., on Friday from 7 p.m. to 11:30 p.m. The party is a celebration of the magazine's first issue, which will be available today at www.lumino-magazine.com.

Lumino's staff includes eight current Drake students and two Drake alumni with Nick Powills (J'03) as editor in chief and publisher.

Guests will have an opportunity to browse the new Web site while listening to Joan Jett at 8:30 p.m. and The Envy Corps at 9:30 p.m.

An interview with leading Democratic presidential candidate Howard Dean headlines the magazine's debut issue.

To learn more about Lumino Magazine contact Powills at nick.powills@luminomagazine.com.

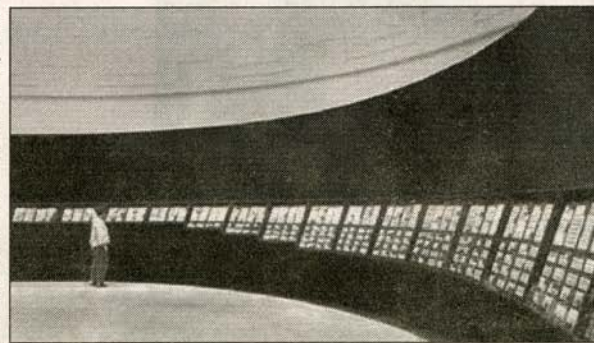


photo courtesy of the Anderson Gallery

THE STAMP OF HISTORY – An earlier archival piece of Allen's, "Stamp Collection," documents 8,000 stamps issued by the South African government before and after apartheid split the nation.