

'My work reflects a number of distinct, but interconnected activities. I collect, organize, and display artifacts. I sample sounds from various media sources and re-configure these to produce audio works, some integrated into sculptural works, and others covertly presented in specific sites. I construct large hand woven panels with cast off movie film or videotape that operate between painting and architectural enclosure. I design and produce limited edition artist's books.

The thread that runs through all of these seemingly varied practices is my need to reconcile my interests in the world of the political with the language of the aesthetic. I try to approach any given project with an attitude of detached research. I want the social critique that inevitably arises out my work to operate subtly and to reflect what I see as the contradictory and complex nature of South African identity. Ironically, most of my work is the result of my being in the United States, where I find myself looking at the image of South Africa as I might reconstruct it. To some extent it speaks to what I feel is a kind of separation from the source, and leads me to consider how much of this work is, at its core, an investigation into notions of branding and identity through displacement.' Courtesy of www.siemonallen.com

Siemon Allen is a South African artist who currently lives and works in the United States. His recent installations or "collection projects" include the display of multiple historical artifacts in which he explores and explodes issues of identity and branding. His current investigations include two epic sound collection projects, one mapping the history of the work of Miriam Makeba, the other a web-based archive of South African audio.

Allen was a founding member of the FLAT gallery, an artist's initiative that operated in Durban from 1993 to 1995. His work was included in the 2nd Johannesburg Biennale as part of the exhibition *Graft* and also in the *Vita 93* and *Vita 98* exhibitions. In 2001, *Stamp Collection*—an ongoing collection of South African stamps and a research project into South African history—was presented at the Renaissance Society in Chicago, Artists Space in New York City and the Corcoran Museum of Art in Washington, DC. His second collection project, *Newspapers*, was included in the exhibition *The American Effect* at the Whitney Museum in New York City, as well as *A Fiction of Authenticity* at the Contemporary Art Museum in St. Louis. Allen's other work employs cut-up collage techniques using comics such as Tintin and has been shown in *Art Positions* at Basel, Miami Beach and at *The Project* in Los Angeles. In 2005 Allen presented his third collection project, *Cards*, in the exhibition *Patriot* at the Contemporary Museum in Baltimore and later in the exhibition *Enemy* at Momenta in Brooklyn, New York.



The Birds (2008)

16mm film, aluminum
4000 x 2200 x 50 mm

The Birds is the most recent in a series of woven works by Siemon Allen. Constructed with recycled strands of 16 mm film from a rare copy of Hitchcock's "The Birds" (1962); Allen has scaled the work in such a way that the weaving contains the entire film. Faded to a reddish hue, the used cut up film stock becomes the raw material for a massive hand-woven panel. Rather than presented in the carefully controlled sequence that produces the illusion of motion, the film stills become frames in a grid construction that converses in the language of painting.

Allen has for some time been interested in appropriating high tech materials such as videotape, audio recording tape, and movie film for use in low-tech processes. In this simple grid weave the vertical axis interferes with the horizontal. A kind of simultaneous perception of the film replaces what was once a sequential reading. Also, with the light of the movie projector's blinding halogen bulb now absent, the original narrative becomes partially concealed.

In the original film Hitchcock's characters struggle against a violence that is disturbingly random and remains ultimately inexplicable. It is a kind of apocalyptic vision with an ending scene of uneasy calm and uncertain future. It is a story about barricades, fear, and unanswered questions.