

Jessica Douglas

Threadbare

Threadbare continues Douglas's exploration of cell theory as a metaphor for human interaction and introduces weaving as a second layer of meaning to her work.

Douglas' use of the technique of weaving brings to her work the associations that this textile has as an essential facet of all major life-cycle ceremonies such as births, weddings and funerals.

Her work refers to all these rites of passage and is a narrative for a relationship where two separate entities negotiate with and rely on each other: "Like cells, each of us is a discrete unit that relies on our interactions with other units for our physical and psychological survival."(Douglas 2005)

This interdependence is employed in the weaving process itself. A woven structure consists of two sets of threads, the warp and the weft, which are interlaced at right angles to each other to form cloth. The warp threads are held parallel to each other and under tension, while the weft is worked under and over them, row by row.

Douglas' work is also layered with references to biology, with the cell as a symbol for the body itself. The plastic golf balls are intended to represent red and white blood cells, as they are hollow enclosed spheres. The yellow balls are infecting organisms or foreign agents. The balls' perforated holes, like a cell's semi-permeable membrane, allude to the possibility of flow between the spheres. The plastic tubing is woven between the balls to form a system or body in which all of the units become interconnected.

The drama that is played out in Douglas' work is the tension of the desire or need to come together and of the inevitable loss and mourning that comes with separation. In 'Cry baby', 'Loveseat' and 'Dreadlock' the woven swatch of plastic tubing becomes the unit or cell. In 'Loveseat' and 'Dreadlock' the two cells are both joined while simultaneously being held apart by intravenous lines, referring to the dichotomy of being connected while still being separate entities. 'Cry baby' differs from the other works in that it deals with the idea that we are ultimately alone.

'Consummate' and 'Bias' make reference to a marriage bed with their size and placement on the floor. Each pattern describes an alternative reading of a relationship. In 'Consummate' both colours are necessary to make up the pattern while performing different but complimentary and interconnected functions. In 'Bias' two separate but identical square grid patterns are placed on top of each other. Which grid is optically laid on top of the other depends on which side or angle you view the work from.

At another level, the pattern in 'Consummate' reinforces the connections between each of the individual balls; the pattern is made up of lines running through and crossing each other, horizontally, vertically and diagonally.

At this level, 'Bias' talks of the utter distinction and separation we have from each other, with each square pattern being isolated from the next.