



**Susan
Hefuna
Cairo
Dreams
2011**

**The Third Line
April 27 2011 –
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Yes, You Don't Know Me

As dreamers we know that the only way of expressing who we are is in disguise. To be dreaming is to be hiding something from ourselves. Dreams tell us that unfiltered self-knowledge may be self-defeating; that to be a person is to protect ourselves; that identity is an elaborate form of defense: a screen, a mask, a cage, a veil.

Susan Hefuna's new sculptures and drawings offer a physical analogue to this mental structure: an experience of the patterns and grids we construct to navigate our inner and outer worlds, of the laces we don to become social and sexual beings capable of facing others. Though abstract and formal, the drawings and sculptures contain the body. They are produced in one spontaneous uninterrupted movement of the hand, transforming this puzzling state of mind we call

dreaming (a state where we are both known and unknown to us) into tangible objects.

Ink and pencil on multiple layers of tracing paper, the drawings present abstract patterns and figurations. They evoke embroidery and tapestry, but also molecular structures, maps, cityscapes, the intricate ornaments of the mashrabiya. The structures we invent to assure ourselves that we have nothing to fear. And fear there is. What could be more prone to destruction than pencil, ink and tracing paper? With each layer covering for the other(s) the drawings are examples of kindred self-defense. No disguise is ever flat, and the drawings are no exception. The superimposed layers of translucent paper create an indefinable space: firm yet shifting, wounded yet protected, strange yet intimate. I know this space. It is my

home, the place where I draw strength from weaving my veils, and speaking from behind a screen—not to withdraw into isolation, not to reject relationships but to face others in spite of my vulnerabilities.

Where the drawings are intimate and introverted the sculptures address the viewer directly. Hefuna carves her sculptures on wax (applied to a solid kernel which is later removed), creating an organic meandering line that 'holds' an empty core. Every sculpture a self-supporting cage whose intricate silvery surfaces act like tiny mirrors. There is no self outside of its cage, no identity without constrictions, no beauty without confinement. The sculptures are pure form: alert, proud, elegant they will never hold water. In their 'empty' embraces I realize that my defenses are enabling fictions. Identity is formed

in the ways we protect it from ourselves and from others.

To the western eye the respect for the art of dissimulation often feels like a provocation. From the other we want transparency, direct, unmediated knowledge, naked truths—unaware that once we crack the mask, and enter the cage there is nothing left to know.

If we cannot know who we are, we can find inspiration and consolation in the disguises we create, for ourselves and for others. Such is the art of Susan Hefuna.

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Structures

Structure I
2011, Aluminium
53 x 36 cm
7

Structure II
2011, Aluminium
46 x 40 cm
8

Structure III
2011, Aluminium
38 x 32 cm
9

Structure IV
2011, Aluminium
29 x 16 cm
10

Structure V
2011, Aluminium
33 x 13 cm
11

7



Drawings

13

Memory III
2011, Ink on tracing paper
122 cm x 323.5 cm
13

Memory II
2011, Ink on tracing paper
122 cm x 403.5 cm
14 - 15



