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Wedding Crash: The fabric of dreams

By Sean O'Toole



Johannesburg artist Frances Goodman is currently presenting her first major solo exhibition in the US.

Titled *Rapaciously Yours* and on view at the Richard Taittinger Gallery in New York, the exhibition comprises nine sculptures and a large sound installation called *The Dream*.

The latter work is composed of 40 wedding dresses sourced from second-hand stores in Johannesburg. Piled in a heap, they form the base to a billowing, tent-like structure installed at the rear of the gallery.

The fabric installation includes recordings of 40 South African women aged between 20 and 60 discussing the social expectation to marry. Goodman recorded the interviews over three months in 2010 at Wits University.

An earlier version of the work was shown at the Goodman Gallery in Johannesburg shortly after the recordings were first made.

I asked the artist what it was like to be an interviewer, rather than the interviewee, while making *The Dream*.

“It is a strange space,” conceded Goodman of the interview process. “It starts mimicking friendship. People start talking to you like a friend. I tried to be pretty upfront with people I interviewed.”

The Dream explores those malleable and sometimes fragile things we call human emotions. Like many of Goodman's sound recordings, it offers a fascinating portrait of the intangible moods and psychological drifts that underpin contemporary society.

Goodman first started making sound recordings while studying at Goldsmiths College in London in the 1990s.

"I was very disillusioned with making things," she told me in 2009. "Out of frustration I started making sound pieces. It took me five years to actually come round to making things again."

Goodman is a skilled maker of objects. She is also an inventive recycler of materials.



Take *Medusa* (2013-14), a wall-mounted sculpture composed of colourful, serpent-like tentacles, and *Lick It* (2016), which resembles a tongue (and featured on singer Miley Cyrus's Instagram feed). Both works are made from shaped foam covered in acrylic nails.

"Making an artwork is like a relationship," said Goodman. "You have an idea that you get hot for. After a honeymoon phase with the idea you begin to make it. The final manifestation in a gallery is almost like a wedding ceremony. The rest is learning to live with it, forever."