

LIZA LOU

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THE WAVES

SALZBURG VILLA KAST

14 May 2016 - 16 Jul 2016

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Opening: Saturday, 14 May 2016, 11 am - 1 pm

„*Umuntu Ubuntu* is a Zulu phrase that means *I am because we are*. I am because we are is important to me as an artist because it is a reminder that there is a wider world beyond my studio.“ Liza Lou

Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac is pleased to announce Liza Lou's fourth solo exhibition which will feature an important in-situ installation titled *The Waves* as well as a group of new paintings.

Over the last twenty years, Liza Lou has developed a body of pioneering work employing the unorthodox art material of glass beads. The exploration of popular culture and social themes which marked her earlier work is now distilled to a singular meditation on process and materiality. The labor intensive process by which her work is created is made possible by her unique studio practice, which she founded as a collective, in 2005, employing Zulu artisans in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

This exhibition will consist, in part, of a new series of *Blue* paintings woven out of glass beads. Their incandescent formal beauty result from a nexus of the slow accrual of repetitive actions by the human hand and the potential of the material, each in just a single shade of blue. Although an attempt at perfection, the beauty of each picture lies in their small errors, flaws, and subtle variations. Like water, their surfaces reflect and shimmer with the radiance and liquescence of the Indian Ocean, near which they were made.

Also included in this exhibition is a site-specific installation, titled *The Waves*, which spans three ground floor rooms of the gallery. Covering all the walls of each room, hang a grid of a thousand white cloths, each scaled to the size of an ordinary dish cloth. Lou's twenty year interest in the issue of labor is not only referenced symbolically in the choice of such a lowly object, but also in its construction, as these cloths will never be used to mop or clean since each one is meticulously made of linen-colored glass beads. Woven from identical materials, to identical sizes, each bears unique marks and blemishes, that like pages in a book, tell the story of their making, unconsciously marked by the sweat and toil of the hands that made them, transforming them into reliquaries of time and human labor. Extending the outreach of her South African studio for one year, Lou employed the help of over one hundred women from the townships of KwaZulu-Natal. *The Waves* transforms the galleries into a memorial to unrecognized and anonymous labor, making the invisible, visible. That so ubiquitous an object carries so much formal beauty, and such sorrowful weight, speaks to the simple power of hand labor past and present, silent witness to the beauty and value of human effort.