

THE STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM

# flow







Black can embody austerity and minimalism, but it gives the artist the freedom to deconstruct and disintegrate the structure of the work. Black gives him the freedom of exuberance.

### *The fabric of the dreams*

From the beginning, textiles have been recurrent elements of Andrianomearisoa's work. As he extracts all their possibilities, he gives the materials a polyphony that becomes language, the language of a material that lets itself be split up, folded, creased or mixed.

The variety and superposition of fabrics in his tapestries give them an architectural density that recalls stone. "I like the flexibility of the fabric, which allows all the combinations through tying, weaving, cutting, matching. It carries a language that can go very far," he says.

The recurrence of fabric may echo the *lamba*, the ubiquitous textile form of Madagascar. It is a garment in daytime and a blanket at night, and also a shroud to wrap the body. The way one wears the wrap, its material and its number of stripes indicate social position, age and origin.

### *La vie dans les plis*<sup>2</sup> (*Life in the folds*)

Andrianomearisoa is always on the edges. He does not approach his work in a direct way, but places it at the edges of the desires of whomever discovers it. His work comes down to a question of posture. He listens to the pulses of life with more generosity than they are given, and finds a way to be present in the world *dans le nu de la vie*, in the nude of life.<sup>3</sup>

Urban space is a primary interest as well. The noises, smells, images, lights and incessant movement that generate city life compose his universe without imprisoning him in a specific geographical space. His images take viewers to places even the artist does not expect to be. "I need to be surprised by images. The situation has to be completely staggered. I do not consider myself as a photographer; I am someone who makes images," he says.

To compose a work, the artist needs a basic frame. Then the experiments begin, the manipulations that outline the project. "The work arises from various manipulations that lead me to the final result. When I set up an installation, I do not imagine its finality. I know the elements that compose it, but in the instant I set them up I discover something else. And that is when the work makes sense," Andrianomearisoa says.

His poetic virtuosity lies in his capacity to seize this moment of signification, when nobody can tell beginning from end.

#### ENDNOTES

- 1 ALL QUOTES COME FROM JOËL ANDRIANOMEARISOA, INTERVIEW WITH THE AUTHOR, NOVEMBER 2007  
2 THIS PHRASE COMES FROM THE TITLE OF THE COLLECTION OF POEMS BY HENRI MICHAUX, *LA VIE DANS LES PLIS*, REV. ED. (1949; REPR., PARIS: GALLIMARD, 1990).  
3 THIS PHRASE COMES FROM THE TITLE OF THE NOVEL BY JEAN HATZFELD, *DANS LE NU DE LA VIE* (PARIS: SEUIL, 2002).



At first glance, seeing is lost, mislaid in the space of the artwork. One does not know how to approach it, an imperceptible field open to fashion, architecture, photography and video. The art of Joël Andrianomearisoa is born from these hybrid exchanges.

In his world, everything becomes material.

In *L'Étrange* (2007), Andrianomearisoa films nature in its slightest shivers. He reveals its strangeness without stating it, and delivers it to the eye like a first dawn. Nature fills the space and captures the emerging body-memory. Intrusively and secretly, he caresses and excavates the depths of the vegetative material. In the darkest hours of the night, his flames outline the present in black.

If it were necessary to find common strands in his work, time and the body would be his poetic vectors. "The only thing that matters to me is to deal with time. And what frightens me most is never to be on time, to be outdated. My way of answering this challenge is to be permanently against the current," he says.<sup>1</sup> Andrianomearisoa's work puzzles because it builds itself, against the flow of time, in movement, a back-and-forth between assertion and negation. To

## ARTIST: JOËL ANDRIANOMEARISOA

WRITER: VIRGINIE ANDRIAMIRADO

build or deconstruct, to dress or undress, to fill or empty, to wrinkle or fold, to light up or turn off—the artist is situated between these opposing forces that, according to him, combine rather than conflict. In these paradoxical connections, the works offer infinite propositions.

### *The colors of black*

Black, as a color, is the cornerstone of his work and is omnipresent in his process.

Far from being monochromatic, Andrianomearisoa's black is one and a thousand colors at the same time. The all-black choice is a permanent challenge that urges the artist to reinterpret and renew the color unceasingly. Depending on the material, composition and lighting angle, his blackness unfolds in endless nuance.

"For me it is a challenge. In every piece, I have to find various colors, different postures of black," says the artist. "It is not only the color, but also an attitude that does not exclude the rest. It aims toward the universal. Black is amazing, disturbing, but it is present and makes sense everywhere."