

New Editions 2016

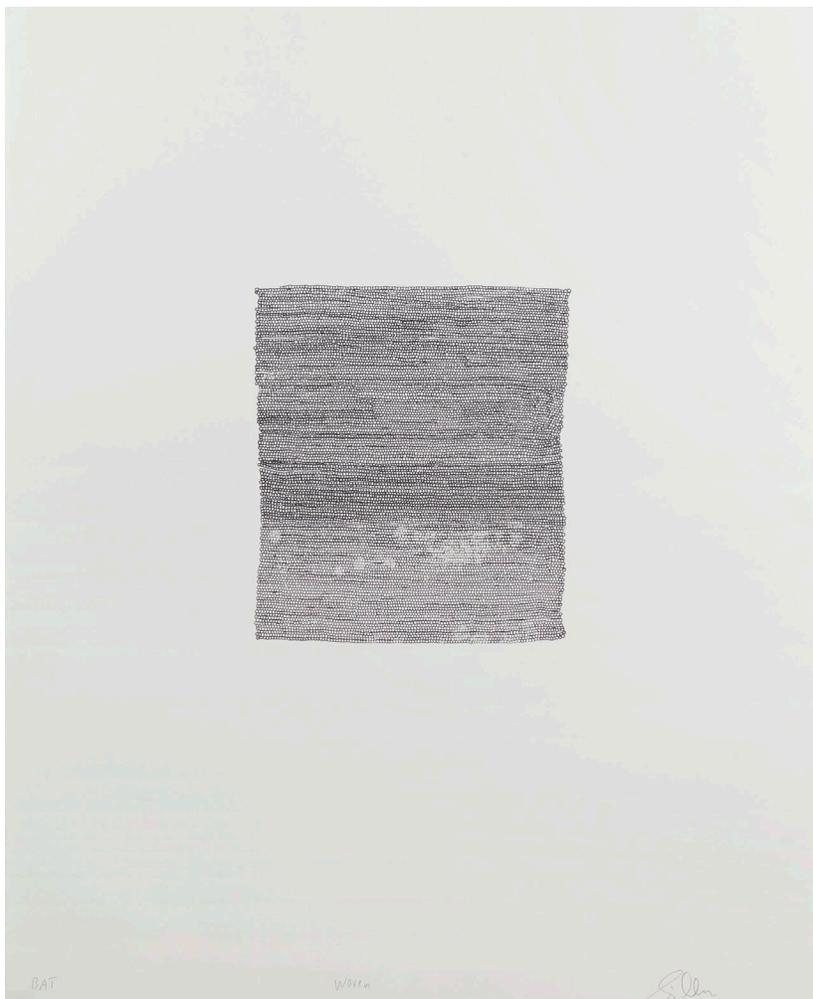
Liza Lou

Woven (2016)

Lithograph in black on Arches watercolor, image 12 x 10 inches, sheet 28 x 22 inches. Edition of 28. Printed by Deb Chaney for the Center for Contemporary Printmaking, Norwalk, CT. Published by World House Editions, Middlebury, CT. \$3,500.

Over the decades, Liza Lou's beaded sculptures and installations have transmogrified from illusionistic be-dazzlement (as in *Kitchen*, 1990–96) to more meditative explorations of the process and social implications of beading. Like many traditionally feminine arts, beadwork is usually anonymous and undervalued; in her recent work Lou has trimmed her once riotous palette back, using monochrome to bring attention to what she calls the “lifblood” of this work: the imperfections that make each piece unique and the extraordinary, overlooked, human effort that goes into each square inch of a beaded surface. In *The Waves*, Lou's installation at Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac in Salzburg last summer, off-white glass beads were used to make 1,000 square sheets, each “scaled to the size of an ordinary dish cloth,” that covered the walls of three rooms of the gallery. The uniform format and material suggested anonymous labor and also invited comparisons between things that are ostensibly the same yet quite different when juxtaposed, highlighting the individuality of each square. As with all the artist's sculptures of the past decade, *The Waves* was created in collaboration with hundreds of Zulu women in South Africa whom she is careful to credit in interviews, naming some individually, and her respect for their contribution is apparent; indeed, it has become the subject of her work.

In *Woven*, Lou emphasizes the unique character of one particular beaded surface by reducing it to line. The subject is a cloth she had commissioned years ago



Liza Lou, *Woven* (2016).

and rediscovered recently: “I thought it would be interesting to try to trace each and every bead as a way of staying connected to something that had been made long ago and may have been forgotten.” Once Lou created the tracing on acetate, master printer Deb Chaney transferred her drawing to a lithographic plate; after trying out various colors and papers, Lou settled on simple black-and-white. Absent the seductively reflective glass surface, the image invites us to consider the peculiarities of each bead and the handwork involved in threading and interweaving them.

Woven is Lou's third printed edition; prior projects were the lithographic diptych *Analogous Mountain State I & II* (2008) done with Hamilton Press in Venice, CA, and a suite of eight etchings, *Untitled* (2013), done with Jacob Samuel in Santa Monica. Both are monochromatic, abstract, pointillist studies that convey her fascination with labor and repetition, but *Woven* is the first to relate directly and recognizably to the actual woven, beaded surfaces that have become her bailiwick. ■

—Sarah Kirk Hanley