

Art in Review

Souleymane Keita

'Ndokalé Gorée/Homage to Gorée'

Skoto

529 West 20th Street, Chelsea
Through June 13

Souleymane Keita's art is a cosmopolitan conversation between islands: Gorée, off the coast of Senegal, and Manhattan. He has lived and worked on both, but his art hasn't been seen in New York since the 1990 show "Contemporary African Artists: Changing Tradition" at the Studio Museum in Harlem. His current show of paintings and painting-sculpture hybrids feels like an overdue visit.

Mr. Keita's stained and embroidered abstract paintings emphasize the common ground — jazz and improvisation — between the New York School and the contemporaneous École de Dakar. One of the best works is "Synthesis V," in which a goblet, tiny asterisks and protoplasmic splotches float in an indigo broth. Also on view are ink drawings that echo some of the paintings' imagery, without the textural richness.

The real standouts are two curtainlike constructions, made of unstretched canvas cut and sewn into rounded forms and suspended from wooden rods. Both are titled "Homage to Al Loving," after the African-American abstract artist who died in 2005. The form of these works nods to Loving's soft sculptures and draped-canvas installations of the 1970s. At the same time the patched, bleach-stained and earth-toned fabrics convey a particularly West African sense of textile as history.

KAREN ROSENBERG