



Extrait du PI-GROUPE

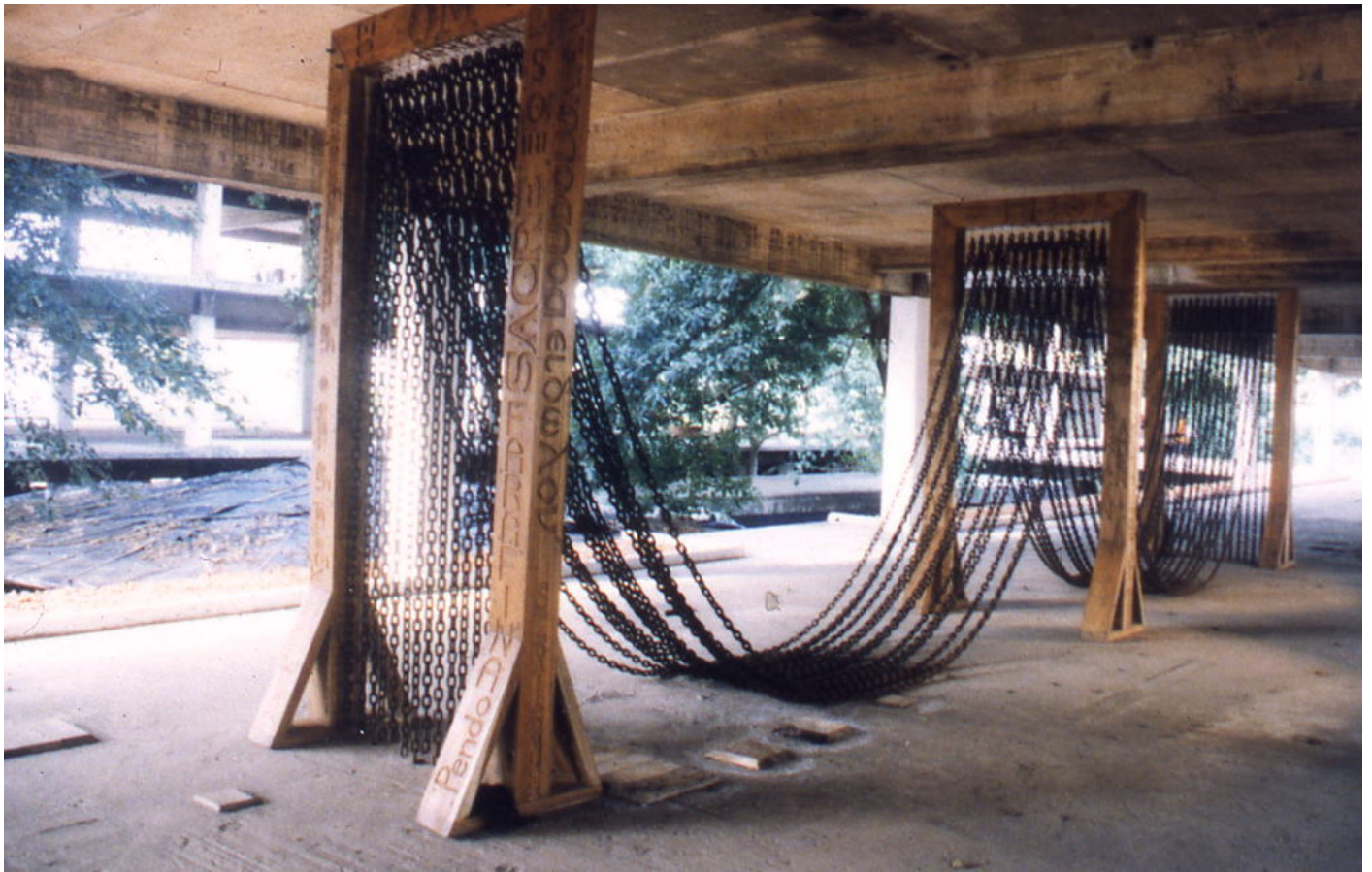
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Doors and Passageways of Return

- FRANCAIS - partenaires - Clients partenaires - Muhsana Ali - articles -

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PI-GROUPE

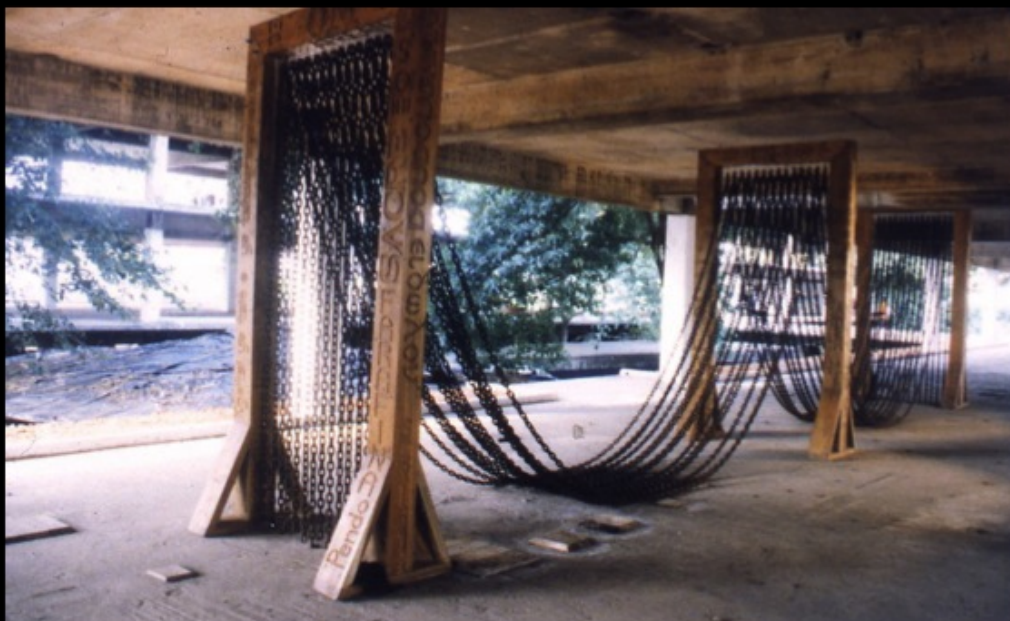


The Chateau was the home of a gang of over 40 African street youth between the ages of 12 and 24 - most drug addicted and violent, constantly in and out of prison - who had taken refuge there as protection from the outside world. The Chateau was a three-story hospital ruin, one city-block long, located in the center of the business district of Abidjan, Capital of Cote d'Ivoire. A two-year Fulbright grant permitted me to travel to Africa to research traditional and contemporary African art in over 7 different countries before settling in Cote d'Ivoire to produce the exhibition based on that research. What became *Portes et Passages du Retour* (Doors and Passageways of Return), was strongly influenced by my experiences in the rural regions of the continent: the Dogon Doors of Mali and finally the infamous Doors of No Return encountered at the slave ports in Senegal and Ghana. The exhibition consisted of 10 monumental sculptures and interactive installations produced over a year and a half - the time I spent working amongst the street youth of The Chateau. During this time, we developed into a family of sorts. I became known to them as Auntie, introducing those interested to artistic expression, reading and writing. To others, I was someone to talk to and seek advice from to have listen to them from time to time or to turn to for injuries or ailments.



When I presented my exhibit in 1999, I also exhibited the work of the youth and involved all of them in the project as security guards, maintenance and tour guides. This exhibition was the turning point in my life when I realized that art could be a tool to transform lives, and not only homes. I dedicated my career from this point on, to using my art to make positive change in society and amongst individuals. It led to the development of the Doors and Passageways of Return foundation, non-profit organization founded in Washington DC, through which I produced a documentary film on my work with the youth and continued to fund their artistic development. It later led to the creation of the Senegal-based association, Portes et Passages du Retour : and the subsequent Center for Art and Holistic Development in rural Senegal.

The Middle Passage



From the Abidjan Expo Portes et Passages du Retour