

ARTTHROB REVIEWS CAPE, Raymond Smith, Philip Barlow and Liza Grobler at the AVA,
Written by Kim Gurney (2005)

Raymond Smith's 'Armchair Traveller' is the first installation to greet viewers in the Long Gallery. Smith takes the *riempie* chair and repeats it several times in sandcast aluminium, the chairs positioned side-by-side in a long row. Each has the *riempies* replaced with a different medium, drum-rope for the chair from Nairobi, brown leather for Harare and black neoprene for Paris. The humble chair has been the subject of much intervention ever since Marcel Duchamp transformed the lot of the everyday object. This installation recalls strongly Joseph Kosuth's *One and Three Chairs*. Kosuth's display of an actual chair, a text definition of a chair and an image of a chair questioned art and representation.

'Armchair Traveller', while visually interesting and clearly skilfully created, stops short of a significant enough intervention. The chairs still allude strongly to their 100-year-old original, which is exhibited as part of the installation, and the alteration to their mere presence seems little more than cosmetic.

The concept is intriguing, however. Smith says the *riempie* chair is to an extent a symbol of his own culture or tribe, 'an object or craft or design which presents an opportunity to deconstruct, reinterpret and reassemble'. He says in this process of unravelling, there is an opportunity to reassess heritage. But the final artwork could perhaps go further in its reconstruction to achieve its own aims.

Space, place, indigenous idioms and context are considered central to Smith's practice as an interior architect and designer, and this exhibition once again displays these familiar concerns.