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Lynn Sures: Weavings in Time

Time itself is a weaving, a binding and flowing together of infinite strands of being and will, so it is especially natural for Washingtonian Lynn Sures to have chosen a weaving of paper fibers as the ground for her recent essays in human prehistory. Her six-panel series **Human Origins** combines anthropologically accurate images of skeletal remains of early hominids with natural forms—from the outlines of continents to the contours of an embryo—that echo both the perpetuity of the processes of life and their breadth in time.

Woven with layers and clumps of colored paper pulp, these works have an immediately three-dimensional quality, as if they have been built up—through time—of successive waves and patterns of transformation. This sense of the accumulated weight of time and history highlights the power of Sures' images, as if they have appeared—as they did to the scientists who discovered them—embedded in the matrix of the earth out of which they evolved.

Each of the panels in **Human Origins** illustrates different human prehistoric species, and each panel carries its own range of feelings, from the bright and humble fragments of an *Australopithecus* named Lucy to the mythic dignity of the La Ferrasse Neanderthal. Bearing the images of *Homo erectus*, the first hominid to be built like our own species, Panel Four is composed of a skull of a Chinese female, a skeleton of a boy from Lake Turkana, in Kenya, and another skull from Indonesia. The images are suspended in a soft but energized field of variant color, as if they were simultaneously imaged in an infinite space, each image isolate but somehow joined in the kinship of shared memory.

In the unwavering gaze of an ancestor literally ten thousand centuries old, we can sense a shocking familiar humanity. The visage of a skull, which is almost always a signifier of the terrors of death, is here unusually without threat, as if what remains to it is its living link to our-

selves. Indeed, Lynn Sures' **Human Origins** series paradoxically deeply resembles no art so closely as the cave paintings executed by the very humans she depicts. In their evocation of mythical space and in the careful observation of their subjects, both Lynn Sures and our very, very great-grandparents have created an

art that commemorates the fragile, incidental beauty of lives lived in the inexorable presence of time.

—J. W. Mahoney

J. W. Mahoney is a Washington, D.C., artist, writer, and independent curator who is currently Washington's corresponding editor for Art in America.



Homo Erectus, panel four from "Human Origins" series; pulp painting; 79 by 43 inches. Photo: Breger & Assoc.