RESISTANCE: REVEALING AND EXPOSING THE CONSTRUCTIONS OF SOCIETAL CONTROL

NISHIL RISHIK VAGHMARIA

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RESISTANCE: VISUALISING AND EXPOSING SOCIETAL

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By

Nishil Rishik Vaghmaria

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Declaration

I, Nishil Rishik Vaghmaria, hereby declare that this dissertation is my own work and that it has not been submitted for assessment of completion of any postgraduate qualification to another university, or for any other qualification.

Nishil Rishik Vaghmaria

Acknowledgements

Abstract

This practice based visual arts investigation was triggered by the researcher's social understandings and personal concern about societal control on the individual, and his resistance to the negative effects of consumerism and capitalism. Through this research project he aims to reveal and expose the workings of those systems of control visually. He pays particular attention to our current global, cultural and socio-political, economic order and the limitations that are imposed on the individual in terms of freedom of choice and expression, and through both the written work and the practical work he aims to influence a revolution of the mind and to encourage critical consciousness and awareness on the part of its audience regarding how individuals are manipulated, distracted and seduced into conformity. As an outcome of his research, and of his intention to act as an agent for socially aware creative practice, he presents a tentative framework for the use of emerging, socially conscious artists and educators. The practical component of this study is focused around the creation and display of graffiti-influenced images in both public and gallery spaces. The researcher makes extensive use of the SI's subversive artistic technique of *Détournement* as he engages with the notion of 'distraction'.

This project, with its dual focus on text and on the creation of artworks in both public and gallery spaces, is intended as a contribution to the search for new critical understandings and diagnostic terminologies around social control.

Keywords: *Détournement*, Distraction, Manipulation, Capitalism, Consumerism, Resistance, Pedagogy, Critical Consciousness.

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Introduction

This practice-based research project is based on my concerns as a socially committed creative practitioner in contemporary society. It focuses on one of the most significant challenges facing society today – namely, the effects of our current global, socio-political-economic order and the ideologies of consumerism on humankind. Conceptually, the study draws heavily on the ideas, theories and art production of the revolutionary avant-garde movement called Situationist International, (hereafter SI), which operated from 1957 to 1972. The SI consisted of contemporary artists and critical thinkers whose work exhibited resistance to economic, cultural and political systems of control. As a practitioner, I intend to follow in their footsteps by raising awareness about social issues and drawing attention to ways in which people are manipulated and coerced into conforming to dominant societal norms.

This study is positioned within a sociocultural theoretical framework which Sarah Scott and Annemarie Palincsar, in their journal article *Sociocultural Theory*, describe as "a means to explain how individual mental functioning is related to cultural, institutional and historical context; the focus of the sociocultural perspective is on the roles that participation in social interactions and culturally organised activities play in influencing psychological development" (Scott & Palincsar, 2013: 1). Read through the lens of the sociocultural, there are various ways in which one can interpret constructions and understandings of social control, whether cultural, political or economic. When visually interpreting these ideas in the study I intend to make use of the subversive SI artistic technique of *Détournement* which involves the appropriation of products and images from popular culture and the popular press. By altering these popular images, through the reworking of existing images, my intention is to subvert the original meaning and reception. This method of art production allows the artist to alter a viewer's perspective and understanding of these images.

The SI expressed concern that the mass consumerist society of their time was being bombarded with images to the extent that imagery was beginning to replace actual,

authentic lived experience. This concern led them to develop theories focused on investigating social control where Debord's book *Society of the Spectacle* (1967) was dedicated to this critique. In Debord's journal the *Theory of Derive* (1958), he argued that the modern capitalist society of his time could be classified as the 'spectacle' and that individuals within the society were simply 'spectators' seduced by the glamorous mediation of their own lives through images. He described these modern individuals as being characterised by personal alienation, a feature which is fundamental to class reproduction and economic expansion which still exists today.

The SI classified themselves, as well as anyone employing their ideas and tactics into their own lives, as 'Situationists'; as people who would set about engaging in the 'construction of situations'. Stephanie Bognar (2012: 50), in her thesis, *Street Art: Perceptual Alteration*, tells us that Debord defined these situations as "a moment of life concretely and deliberately constructed by the collective society of a unitary environment and the free play of events". He defined modern capitalist society as the 'spectacle', describing it as "a system that is a confluence of advanced capitalism, mass media and governments in favour of those phenomena". He suggested that life had become a superficial imitation of itself and that an abundance of images had replaced it. Debord criticised the spectacular society of mass production, mass consumption and mass media as "lacking authenticity and impoverishing the quality of life which leads to a degradation of knowledge and genuine experience, the decline of being into having, and having into merely appearing, all that was once lived has become a mere representation" (Ibid: 50).

Debord criticised the spectacle as a socio-political instrument manifesting in capitalist phenomena such as media, advertising, television, film and celebrity culture used in the aims of distracting and pacifying the masses. The SI were at first primarily concerned with artistic output but soon they developed an overtly political stance. Their initial intentions were to transform society and culture through artistic techniques, and like the Dadaists and Surrealists before them, they wished to abolish the narrow categorisation of art and culture as separate activities and transform them into part of everyday life (Ibid: 51).

This transformation of society was categorised by a movement beginning in the 1990's which dealt with the acts of cultural jamming. This form of cultural resistance was intended at social activism and was what Mark Dery, in the foreword of DeLaure and Fink (2017: 3), describes as "a sub-cultural backlash, given intellectual momentum by critics against a society in which a powerful few spoke and millions listened". Focusing on the struggles and conflicts in contemporary culture, the act of Culture Jamming can directly relate to the strategies of the SI, having both share a common focus of resistance to mass-consumption and corporate power.

Culture Jammers updated the SI tactics of using "spectacular images and language to disrupt the flow of the spectacle" (Ibid: 3). The study is utilizing the approaches and theoretical frameworks of the SI, and drawing from the contemporary subversive global graffiti sub-culture that followed it as well as cultural jamming ideology. As an outcome of the study, the researcher aims to create a hybrid, fine-art/graffiti, and mixed-media body of work, one that is intended as a public intervention and is directed at audiences in both gallery and public settings. The research objectives and creative outputs are a response to his own lived experiences, observations and interpretations of contemporary society and its ills, intending to shed light on society's manipulative effects upon our consciousness.

By painting, installing and projecting artworks in identified public spaces, it is intended that the work will reach a wider audience than the one that frequents art galleries. In a parallel process, the fine art/street art/graffiti, along with photographic and video documentation of the interventions in public spaces, will be displayed in a gallery setting, with the intention of allowing the work to reach an exhibition-viewing audience. In this setting, the aim is to give street art and graffiti more credibility and to, in a sense, 'decriminalise' or 'legitimise' it in the eyes of the art establishment.

Mikel-Bolt Rasmussen & Jakob Jakobsen (2015: 8), editors of the text, *Cosmonauts of the Future: Texts from the SI in Scandinavia and Elsewhere*, suggest that the SI thought of art as "a means to an aesthetic emancipation of capitalist society", thus

relating to the idea that art is a means of ending the packaging of human existence into "compartmentalised sectors where most people work and consume" (Rasmussen & Jakobsen, 2015: 8).

This research project is ultimately intended as a personal, positive contribution towards a change in the nature of society. It aims to create awareness and influence enlightenment of consciousness on the part of the viewer, in the hope that he or she will begin to question the consumption-focused nature of society. It is suggested that in the present day we are still, as Jean Baudrillard, translated by Douglas Kellner (1989: 2), best puts it, "surrounded by the conspicuousness of consumption and affluence. This environment of consumption desire is established by the multiplication of objects, services and material goods which constitutes a fundamental transformation in the ecology of the human being. These affluent individuals are "no longer surrounded by human beings as they were in the past, but by objects" (Ibid: 2). As David Fasenfest (2009: 1) points out, Marx cautions us that, while we make our own futures, we do so under conditions that we have little to no control over. He proposes that, for us, history sets out a repertoire of past efforts which aid the promotion of change as well as serving to identify the transformation of material conditions describing opportunities / possibilities for change.

In seeking to critique the consumer society of the present-day, this study draws on Guy Debord and the SI *Internationale Situationniste* journals, and it takes influence from the writings of Henri Lefebvre on what he calls *The Bureaucratic Society of Controlled Consumption*, and Jean Baudrillard (1989) on the social formation he refers to as the *"Consumer/Technological Society"*. These theorists were prominent and active between the late 1950's and the early 1980's, an extended period of time during which the societies in which they lived experienced various revolts and contestations against the disciplines, methods, theories and discourses of universities and the establishment. This was a time which saw radicals attacking conventional wisdom and seeking out new critical theories and discourses (Kellner, 1989: 2).

According to Kellner, Baudrillard contributed to the SI movement and development of French thought by merging the Marxian critique of capitalism with cultural studies of consumption, fashion, media, sexuality and consumerist tendencies. His writings served as 'an updated version of Marxist theories in the light of new social conditions that were emerging at the time' (Ibid: 2). Baudrillard expresses influences from Lefebvre and the SI as he sets out to reconcile themes of Marxist thought and create social awareness and enlightenment of consciousness in what Lefebvre described as "the critical knowledge of everyday life" (Lefebvre, 1991: 13).

Richard Lane (2005: 67) describes consumer society as being "the vision for a new system of human behaviour concerned with the abundant consumption of objects". What is meant by this is that humans are beginning to be valued for reasons other than their humanity. He suggests that they have adapted their lives "according to a new pattern or rhythm, a new temporality, that of the succession and consumption of objects". He recognises the synergy of thought between Baudrillard and Lefebvre, pointing out the Marxist influences on both of them, also describing a shift from previous societies which were anchored in production, to modern day societies which are primarily concerned with consumption (Ibid: 68).

This research project is intended as an exploration and expression of resistance to capitalism, and as a means of creatively expressing the researcher's concerns about consumerism, and how the latter limits people's options and their abilities to be creative, sentient human beings. Advertising is one of the most influential factors in the manipulation of society's consciousness. The influences of social, cultural and political theorists as well as the work of the SI are employed to shape the objectives of this project.

Objectives

The primary purpose of this study is to convey the researcher's personal and social understandings of societal control in both the theoretical writing and studio practice. The aim to create public awareness of particular systems of social control. Additionally, it is the intention to contribute to the legitimising / decriminalising of graffiti / street art through the strategic planning and placement of content-rich, provocative artworks in both public and gallery settings.

The mixed-media body of work that is the outcome of the research project draws on SI theories and practices for its inspiration. It makes use of the SI's artistic method of *Détournement*, Fine Art, Graffiti / Street Art techniques and conceptual approaches. It is conceptualised as a visual form of resistance to neo-liberal society. The project is intended as an attempt to contribute to a positive change in the nature of society. It is intended as a response to the question: how can graffiti or urban art focused visual imagery, influenced by the work of the SI, anti-conformist artists and more recently cultural jammers, be usefully employed in a series of creative outputs intended as a means of making audiences more aware of the constructions of social control.

Chapter One explores the negative, manipulative effects and consequences that capitalism has on our society. The aim is to enlighten the reader's consciousness and highlight the societal constraints that limit and control freedom of choice and expression. The chapter addresses the media, advertising and marketing strategies that are used as the means to manipulate and seduce consumers. Additionally, there is a focus on shopping, which is seen as a crucial ritual in modern society, and on how individuals shape their identities based on what they consume. The main aim is to make the audience more aware of constructions of societal control and manipulation, and to encourage resistance to established customs and authority. The chapter concludes with a brief exploration of artistic political movements that resist capitalist tendencies, with particular attention being paid to the Situationist International movement and the Culture Jammers.

Chapter Two addresses the use-value of the SI in relation to this particular study. This chapter is concerned with how the researcher, as a contemporary reflective visual arts practitioner, can relevantly draw on the theories and practices of the SI in a body of work expressing their influence. The most significant influence on the practical component of the study is the artistic process of *Détournement*, and this will form the main focus of the chapter, given that the researcher's practical work explores ways in which this technique can be used as a means to express objections and resistance to contemporary neo-liberal society. The goal of this chapter is to present an understanding of the contribution of the SI, so that the lessons learnt from this will enable the researcher to usefully employ and expand SI ideals in ways that are relevant to the present day.

Chapter Three focuses on the Adbusters and the movement of Culture Jamming. It explores ways in which cultural jamming disrupts the flow of what the Situationists called the "spectacular society", and it looks at how this approach can be used as a form of social activism in the present day. In this chapter, the attention of the reader is focused around three major concepts explored by Culture Jammers, namely: Sabotage, Appropriation and Identification, all of which serve as a means of raising social consciousness through art production and all of which are potential ways of challenging and disrupting the status quo. Along with sections of Chapters One and Two, this chapter will be used as the basis for the tentative framework for the socially conscious artist that is presented at the end of Chapter Four.

Chapter Four addresses the research findings. This chapter opens with a broad statement of intent, and thereafter, it provides details of the intentions and outcomes of the studio practice associated with the project. The chapter ends with the presentation of a brief and tentative framework for socially aware creative practice that is distilled from the researcher's findings. This framework, which is inspired by the Adbusters 'Media Empowerment Kit', is intended to be of use to contemporary artists, as they set out to become more socially engaged or aware. It aims to assist in the raising of consciousness and critical thought. The critical consciousness I have gained

through the study of the work of the SI and the Cultural Jammers that followed them has assisted me in the production of the body of practical work that supports and informs the framework.

In Chapter Five the researcher's conclusions are presented. The chapter briefly explains the use-value of chapters One to Four. It focuses attention on the creative outputs that form the underpinning of the project, and on the development of the tentative framework included in chapter Four. It sets out to draw together all the strands of research explored in each chapter, and briefly acknowledges how the researcher has connected the theory and the practice and found ways for theory to inform practice, and, vice versa, for practice to inform theory. It ends with a recognition of the possibility that this research project might encourage socially concerned educators to incorporate critical pedagogical approaches to art making by including street art/graffiti and *Détournement* into the visual arts curriculum.

Chapter 1: The Manipulative Effects of Social Control

This chapter focuses on concerns about the consequences of neo-liberal capitalism, and its manipulative effects on society by limiting the individual's freedom of choice. To support this notion, it refers to specific theorists, artistic movements and artists who responded with resistance to these negative consequences, and who, like the Situationist International and Cultural Jammers, have used interventions as a means to disrupt the status quo.

In doing this, the chapter aims to expose systems of control and to influence an enlightenment of consciousness on the part of the viewer. It sets out to draw the reader's attention to the consumption-focused nature of society before going on to address the ideology of consumerism, highlighting its effects on the lives of modern individuals. The researcher's concerns about the lack of awareness amongst the general public about the impact of consumerism in their lives echo those of the Greentumble editorial team, who, in their article *The Negative Effects of Consumerism*, stating that "the biggest problem is that people don't realise that there is a problem" (Greentumble, 2017).

In *'The Myth of Consumerism'* (2002: 2), Conrad Lodziak describes the increasing commercialisation and commodification of life, with people setting out to purchase goods, services and experiences in order to address their needs and wants. However, consumer-focused society appears unable to distinguish between the two, and the focus is now placed on inauthentic commodities meeting the "false needs" generated by marketing and advertising strategies. A significant problem of the day seems to be the general lack of critical awareness or concern amongst people about having their everyday thoughts and behaviours dictated and controlled by dominant society.

This ideology is deeply rooted in capitalism, and Professor John Corner and Dr Dick Pels (2003: 180) state that "if so many people voluntarily consume and enjoy products

of mass culture then they are dupes who are manipulated and deceived by the cultural opiate they consume". Mackay (1997: 3) in Lodziak (2002: 12) goes one step further by pointing out the risks of ideological control, observing that in this type of environment, consumers are seen as "passive, mindless dupes, rather than active creative beings". The commercial and corporate organisation of media technologies requires mass cultural activity to be commoditised in a controlled media industry maintaining the hegemony of the dominant society.

In the context of this study the researcher understands the contemporary consumer society to represent a significant shift away from previous producer focused societies. As the study focuses on forms of resistance to and enlightenment about the consumer society, it is necessary to interrogate the influences of consumerism on the shaping of identity. Cultural, social and political theorists have developed various arguments expressing their concerns about popular culture and democracy in an age dominated by mass-media technologies, describing the inhospitable cultural context in which democracy operates. The following paragraphs explore the writings of theorists who critique the ways that the mass media industries manipulate the consciousness of consumers.

Mass Media Manipulation

Corner and Pels (2003: 180) problematize popular culture which they say is produced, disseminated and consumed in and through mass media technologies. They reference the Frankfurt School social theorists Horkenheimer and Adorno (1993) who criticised the "inappropriateness" of popular/mass culture in democratic politics, analysing the commodification of culture organised by neo-liberal capitalist industries.

Adorno (1991: 92) suggests that mass culture functions as a means to promote an "ideological deception" where the consumption of culture and entertainment fulfils real human needs and wants. He concluded that "by organising conformism and promoting

substitute gratification, the culture industry impeded the development of autonomous, independent individuals who would be the precondition for a democratic society". Corner and Pels (2003: 180) argue that this view employs a Marxist logic in the sense that "if people were able to make a genuinely enlightened, substantially rational democratic choice, they would not accept capitalist domination". They describe a shift of meaning to the term "public" which changed from a narrower, more elitist sense of an educated bourgeoisie public, to a broader, more populist one which refers to all members of society.

Dahlgren (1991: 16) observes that "the public sphere [is] no longer the privileged terrain for the production, dissemination and appreciation of elite culture, but one constructed by media technologies which generated audiences for entertainment more so than for politics". Popular culture, guided by new media technology such as the camera, radio, video, cinema, television, music and the internet are all synonymous with the growth of media possibly reaching all members of modern society. Regis Debray (1996) is referred to in Corner and Pels (2003: 173) by describing this change in society as a succession from the "graphosphere" where print-based media was dominant, into a "videosphere" where most contemporary mediated popular culture comes in a televised form, appealing to both the aural and visual aesthetic.

The researcher is in opposition to consumer-capitalism and the concerns articulated in this study relate to the negative effects of political, commercial and corporate images on society. It is suggested that mediated images are used as a means to obscure reality, and that individual members of contemporary society construct their identities in response to the range of media images they are exposed to. The construction of this social identity is of relevance as it plays a significant role in reproducing and maintaining capitalist social control.

The Fluidity of Identity Construction in the Present Day

Zygmunt Bauman (2005: 31-32) describes the current consumer society as having undergone a shift in emphasis from a production to a consumerist society. The most decisive change is in the manner in which people are groomed and trained to meet the demands of their social identities, i.e. men and women being integrated into a specific social order and given a place in society. The traditional means of social placement in the pre-modern era were based on the standards attached to the social category into which people were born. The shift in emphasis in the present day indicates that modernity challenged people with the task of self-construction that allows the individual to build and rebuild his or her own identity, in ways that no longer has to abide by the rules of the past.

This form of social definition allowed individuals to create temporary identities allowing for social recognition and approval of social groups in society. There are important differences between this fluidity of identity as it was constituted in the producer / working societies of the past, when social identities were built around their working skills and identity remained constant for life. Bauman suggests that in the present, each current identity is temporary, and it is better to embrace it lightly, and to make sure it will fall away once its newer and untested replacement is discovered as "each successive identity is likely to remain incomplete or conditional" (Bauman, 2005: 33).

Bauman compares and relates aspects of identity construction to consumer goods which are meant to be used up and eventually disappear. Identities, much like consumable objects, are to be possessed and to be open for appropriation. Like the marketing of consumer goods, the construction of an identity should not eliminate the desire for a new, and perhaps improved identity. Bauman adds that the sole purpose of any norm is to "use the human agency of free choice to limit or altogether eliminate freedom of choice except the one promoted by the norm". This meaning that in a society where there is the freedom to choose, members are able to "frame and inscribe

their life aspirations; a frame that defines the directions of efforts towards self-improvement and enclosing an image of a good life" (Ibid: 33).

In their search for identities, consumers are thus victims of seduction by the dominant society, surrounded by an array of 'untested wonders' and promises of sensations which are new to the consumer, overshadowing all previous tested objects and experiences.

Shopping for Identity

Lodziak claims that in contemporary society individuals construct their identities in terms of what they consume, making shopping an important custom for the majority of society. Angie Kordic, in her Widewalls web article, *Consumer Culture Expressed Through 10 Contemporary Art Pieces'* (2015) states that "shopping has become one of the most crucial rituals in the aims of shaping and transforming one's identity" (Kordic, 2015). She is suggesting that the seeds of the present were sown in the past as she observes that the rituals of shopping became crucial in the shaping of identities during the prosperous post-war era which saw the rise of neo-liberal capitalism.

Elena Martinique, editor in the Widewalls web article, *Is Consumerism Depicted in Art a Relevant Critique of Contemporary Society and Culture?* (2016) cautions that whilst consumerism seemingly emphasises individual's freedom of choice, it undermines people's democratic rights and broader powers.

The relationship between consumerism and capitalism and later neo-liberal capitalism can be seen as a move away from satisfying people's basic needs to the construction of those needs and wants. This is done with the overall aim of production, and in support of the constant need for capitalism to reproduce (Martinique, 2016). Martinique is suggesting that the consumption of goods to survive is nothing new, however, she states that what is new is the globalised project for organising an entire society around

the necessity for ever-increasing rates of personal consumption. She adds that the consumer also directs their desire for cultural fulfilment to rewards of buying and owning new commodities, suggesting that the consumption of commodities and the easy pleasures of pop culture is resulting in people being rendered passive, easily content or over complacent (Ibid, 2016).

The replacement of a reading public, that in previous societies critically debated matters of culture, with a mass public of culture consumers, has been accompanied by what Habermas (1989: 168) describes as a "psychological facilitation". This is understood to refer to the "digestion" of culture where the optical and acoustic dilutes or replaces the verbal, and the textual.

Resistance to Social Control

Jason Beedle, in the web article *Artistic Rebellion* (2016), raises his concerns around the consequences of consumerism and societal control. He discusses artists and movements whose work served as resistance to various forms of control (social, political, cultural and economic). He observes that the carnage of World War 1 resulted in a revolution of the art world. Artists and intellectuals, witnessing the war's destruction on the fabric of society, sought to have their work serve as a revolt against established traditions and authority. This period saw the birth of an entirely new form of art, Dada. The artist Jean Hans Arp, who was part of the movement, defined Dada as "destroying the hoaxes of reason to discover an unreasoned order" (MoMA, 2016). Dadaism dealt with rebelling against established values and societal conventions of the society of the time, and challenged the traditions and notions of authority in the art world.

Martinique claims that after Dadaism, which introduced concepts of appropriation and subversion, and the ready-made 'art' object, was incorporated into the world of Fine Art, Pop Art was the next and largest artistic movement dealing with the global issue

of mass consumerism. She describes how Pop artists began to include aspects of mass-consumer culture such as advertisements, comic book imagery, industrial labelling and various other combinations into their work revealing the mundane experiences of everyday life. (Martinique, 2016).

The Situationist International, already mentioned in the Introduction, arose at the same time as Pop Art movement in the late 1950's. Unlike many of the Pop artists, the SI artist-theorists associated with the group intended to contribute to a movement for radical social and economic change. The SI, whose approaches and *modus operandi* will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Two, were seeking to shed light on social issues through rebellion. Their intention was to produce art and theory as a means of emancipating people from consumer-focused societies, and they aimed to make the public aware of the detrimental effects of consumerism and societal control on individual consciousness.

More recently the Culture Jammers have continued to build on these approaches and to respond from a contemporary perspective. Culture jamming plays an important role in shaping culture and critiquing mass-media culture. 'Jammers' do this through disruption, subversion, adjustment and alterations, with the aim of toppling existing power structures. Their output will form the basis of the discussion in Chapter Three of this study.

Chapter 2: The Situationist International and their Revolutionary Attempts

"The Situationist International characterised modern capitalist society as an organisation of spectacles; a frozen moment of history in which it is impossible to experience real life or actively participate in the construction of the real world. They argued that the alienation fundamental to class society and capitalist production has permeated all areas of social life, knowledge and culture, with the consequence that people are removed and alienated not only from the goods they produce and consume, but also from their own experiences, emotions, creativity and desires". (Plant, 1992: 1).

The SI, consisting of mainly artists and intellectuals, formed itself as an agent of revolution aiming to reinforce the ideas put forth by previous avant-garde movements. The group existed and operated from 1957 – 1972 and is famously associated with the May 1968 mass worker/student uprisings in Paris. SI aimed at renewing past, failed revolutionary movements and they referred in their mission statement to the introduction of 'new forms of action within politics and art'. Stracey (2014: 1) suggests that their responses to these specific failures of the past were conditioned by new social and economic formations and the emergent consumer society already alluded to in Chapter One of this study.

In the years immediately after the formal founding of the SI, the First World was immersed in a post-war period which saw new international economic development and a resurgence of Capitalism. The formation of this group came as the result of a search for a new international avant-garde, standing as a united front working against the emerging consumer society and its consequences, which included social banalisation. SI developed a critique of "urbanism" in modern society. Its conceptual roots were formed in the Lettrist International movement (hereafter LI), operating in Paris during the 1940's.[1] Lettrism was a short-lived movement (1948 – 1951)

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[1] The Situationist International emerged as an amalgamation of the Lettrist International, The London Psychogeographical Association, The International Movement for Imaginist Bauhaus and CoBrA which was an artistic vanguard in Paris fusing members from Copenhagen, Brussels and Amsterdam.

consisting of authors, writers, artists and intellectuals. Ashley Rogers, (2006: 5), in her text *The Influence of Guy Debord and the SI on Punk Rock Art*, suggests that the LI were concerned with a kind of "anti-poetry" that included the manipulation of the alphabet and even the creation of new letters. The LI provided the foundation of what would later become key theories of the SI such as; *Détournement*, *Dérive* (Psychogeography), *Unitary Urbanism* and the *Creation of Situations*. The SI developed and further expanded these theories and engaging in these practices as a means of seeking an alternative to the accepted way of life (Ibid: 6).

Richard Gilman-Opalsky (2011: 81) claims that Debord, as leader of the SI, aimed to achieve both major and minor goals through "unexpected rupture" and the creation of situations. The minor or secondary goal was to reach people on an emotional level by creating situations that provoked critical thought and generated raw feelings and emotional responses. The major or primary goal was to create situations that open up space for rigorous criticism and collective action. Alias Recluse (2013) posted a translated article on Libcom.org website; *Notes on the Situationist International: The Art of Historical Intervention* (2012), where the original author, Miguel Amoros claims that "the SI were the most political artistic vanguard and the most artistic political vanguard".

The SI believed that their vanguard action would be the best instrument for interventions in the crises of art and culture, deeming it the most appropriate means of action against social control. SI fought against dominant *bourgeoisie* culture and encouraged artists to make work that is both provocative and political. When Debord used the term "artist" he included authors, musicians, poets, activists and members of the general public who were concerned with the subversion of the ruling culture or dominant society.

All the actions undertaken by the SI were seen as radical public acts of rupture. In the context of this study, the focus is placed on their 'construction of situations' as a form of resistance to control. Amoros (2012) claims that the SI were successful in

counteracting the cultural mainstream through "scandals or situations" that effectively broke the circles of silence in which the dominant social order protected itself, and that this counteracting served to act as a counter-public measure of subversive knowledge. Amy Britton, in her Louder-Than-War web article *Situationism Explained! and its Effect on Punk and Pop Culture* (2012), states that "the world we see is not the real world but the world we are conditioned to see and the SI agenda is to explain how this nightmare works so that everyone can wake up".

The SI committed to a total transformation of life.[2] SI intended to develop a new culture with striking aesthetic and political strategies designed for instigating a revolution against capitalism, which was, they argued, consuming and colonising the whole of life and human experience. The ideas and activities of the SI at the time were successful in executing a resurgent activist culture.

They rejected all artists and art movements that offered new forms of media with no equal commitment to revolutionary politics aimed at overturning capitalism through politics and art. Throughout the SI's existence they continuously emphasised and reinforced their mission statement of "new forms of action in politics and art".

Between 1958 and 1969 they published fifteen editions of their illustrated journal *Internationale Situationniste*. Over the same period, they spread their messages through books, comic strips, paste-up posters, graffiti and street protests. Visual imagery played a vital role in supporting the communication of their intentions and their revolutionary thought.

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[2] SI employed the lessons they had learnt from evaluating the past, failed revolutionary movements such as; Futurism, Dadaism, Surrealism and Lettrism whose aims were to change the world, not just its art.

The Spectacular Society

Debord wrote *The Society of the Spectacle* in 1967. The text served as a reworking of Karl Marx's *'Das Kapital'* in a way which resonated with a new generation of artists and critical thinkers alike. "The whole of life of those societies in which the modern conditions of production prevail, presents itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles, all that was once directly lived has receded into a representation" (Debord, 1967: 7).[3]

In Debord's later text entitles *The Comments on the Society of the Spectacle* (1988: 1) he claims that his work aimed to reveal the essence of the modern day spectacle, which as he explains was "the autocratic reign of the market economy and the totality of new techniques of government accompanying this reign.

He believed that advanced capitalist and technological societies are structurally incompatible with principles of social and economic justice, fairness and vibrant, creative democratic cultures. Gilman-Opalsky (2011: 65) suggests that in any discussion about the relative apathy of public existence and the manipulation of mass consciousness as well as the politicisation of civil society, much can be gained from the work of Debord and his theories of society as a spectacle.

Debord viewed the spectacle as a result of our supposed powerlessness in society in the face of a neo-liberal capitalist driven economy which increases the spectacle's power. Stracey (2014: 5) compares this the idea put forth by Lukacs who sought to generalise Marx's account of commodity fetishism as characteristic of the reification of all social relations under capitalist rule. The SI understood this reification to have taken on an 'image' form in which social relations are reduced to an image, or a representation i.e. a 'spectacle'. Debord was not only concerned about the significance of the spectacle's media instrumentation, which had already attained a highly

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[3] Debord paraphrases Marx as he substitutes the term 'spectacles' for what Marx referred to as 'commodities'.

advanced stage of development, he believed quite simply that spectacular domination had succeeded in raising an entire generation moulded to its laws. His aim was to search for new diagnostic terminologies and critical theories that befitted the SI's historical moment as they challenged the burgeoning post-war climate driven by capitalist production.

The SI argued that the spectacle is nothing but a fake reality which masks the capitalist degradation of human life and existence. They set out to influence individuals to critically analyse their everyday existence and then to follow the pursuit of genuine desires and needs. They believed that as a direct result of capitalism, immense dissatisfaction was bred, and they aimed at the subversion of the manipulative and controlling effects of dominant society through the constructing of situations.

In the SI journals they explored the shift in labour from factories to the newly developing 'tertiary' sectors in the economy. These sectors included what we now call 'leisure and service' industries, which were (and arguably still are) dependant on the use of mass-media communications to assist in selling their accumulation of new products, services and lifestyle and leisure activities. SI observed that the advertising of new was being designed with the aim of meeting the high demands of a completely new generation of consumers immersed in a booming economy. Debord observed that "the issue is no longer one of scarcity, but now of abundance and the working class struggle can now be called a battle for leisure, a fight over the uses and abuses of leisure time as an already dominant feature in capitalist society" (Debord, 1967: 16).[4] He claimed that under modern capitalist rule, the process of spectacular production had transformed in a way which now demanded the use of intermediary "image-objects" such as that of advertising and the packaging of goods promoting its sale.

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[4] The efforts of the Cultural Jammers to 'jam' the dominant media-spectacle through 'subvertisements' (advertisements that had been *détourned* or reworked to alter or subvert the advertisements' original intention, will be discussed in Chapter Three).

This form of communication marketed a fantasy or aspirant lifestyle, created to supply the growing demands and requirements for the consumption of commodities. The SI declared that the image form of the spectacle represents a totality of the social world and that "it is not a collection of images; rather it is a social relationship between people that is mediated by images" (Ibid: 16).

Ken Knabb's article on the Bureau of Public Secrets website, *The Joy of Revolution* (1997) suggests that "spectacular" domination seeks to eradicate all historical knowledge, beginning with virtually all information and rational commentary on the past. The spectacle endeavours to make sure that people are kept unaware of the social issues happening around them. If they are aware of issues regarding social control, the spectacle ensures that they quickly forget whatever these are. The more important information or issues are, he tells us, the more likely it is that these are hidden or concealed.

The SI exploration of the possibilities (and limitations and illusions) of human activity free from social conditioning continued over a period of years. It was the position of SI, that people who continued and advanced the SI's stated intention to ferment a total social revolution in opposition to capitalism, to its division of labour, its alienating, spectacular image-economy and who advocated a sustained class war, were considered as 'situationists'. They accepted that this would result in a state of continued revolutionary change, as people are transformed by or seek to challenge the specific historical conditions that emerge during their time (Stracey, 2014: 122). The SI rejected the art institution with radical enthusiasm, and argued that the work of art viewed in isolation no longer possessed critical potential (Erickson, 1992: 2).

In the context of this study the intention is to respond to notions of social control in the present day, by making use of the Situationist's artistic technique of *Détournement*, with its re-use and subversion of the existing image. This technique was an historically and contextually targeted artistic practice, employed with the intentions of subversion and the provoking of critical thought about spectacular domination.

The SI communicated their ideas through the use of *Détournement* to subvert elements of popular culture (Ibid: 5), and this has caused a ripple effect of subversive and critical thought and creative activity over time.

Détournement for Subversion, Resistance and Social Change

The curator Elizabeth Sussman staged an exhibition of SI work at the Boston Institute of Contemporary Art in 1989. At this time, she explained *Détournement* by referring to its rebellious tendencies. She is referenced when defining *Détournement* in James Trier (ed.) '*Détournement as Pedagogical Praxis*' (2014), stating that it "proposes a violent excision of elements such as literature, painting, architecture, film, urban-sites, sounds, gestures, words and signs from their original contexts". Consequently, this results in what she describes as "destabilization and re-contextualisation" (Sussman, 1989: 8).

Détournement, which literally translates to mean 'diversion'[5], is an artistic practice conceived by the SI, wherein the products of popular culture, which the SI viewed as a commodity, are appropriated, and, through a process of physical intervention, amendment and alteration have their ideological subtext turned back upon itself, "revealing its manipulative effects upon consciousness" (Erickson, 1992: 46).

Fundamental to the laws of *Détournement* is the fact that the importance of the original sense of each artistic element is overturned or destroyed, whilst at the same time, other meaningful artistic elements are re-organised into a new ensemble, which consequently has an alternative effect or intention (Debord, 1958: 67). It is essentially both a devaluation and a subversion through alteration, and in turn, a recreation of a new idea that changes the viewers' understanding or perception of the original.

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[5] Diversion: The act of diverting or turning aside, as from a course or purpose.
https://www.dictionary.com/browse/diversion

The SI keenly observed and theorised the shift to a manufactured, alienated and isolated society. The recognised that due to the technological advances and the exponentially increasing efficiency of production, urban working individuals had begun dedicating their lives to the cycle of production and consumption. Patrick Greaney (2011: 76) in his text, *Détournement as Gendered Repetition*, refers to Debord where he writes "the spectacle, being the reigning social organization of a paralyzed history, of a paralyzed memory, of an abandonment of any history founded in historical time, is a false consciousness of time". He goes on to state that this "false consciousness was a result of a division where there is an alienated experience of time as homogenous, quantifiable 'blocks' that can be sold as labour time or sold as leisure time" (Debord, 1967: 85).

Having addressed the use-value and successes of the SI above, the researcher acknowledges that the revolutionary fervour of the period from the 1950's to the early 1970's has died down, and despite the inroads made by the SI, neo-capitalism and the consumer-focused society has gone from strength to strength which can be seen as a failure to the Situationists.

The SI exercised significant influence on later developments in the fields of revolutionary politics, socially focused urbanism, radical popular culture, and in the field of urban art, as an outcome of their intention to initiate a new cultural revolution through the creation of situations. According to Britton (2012) in her web article, she suggests that the SI had a real impact on popular culture with their notion of "the importance of play" becoming the most important characteristic of the Punk movement that followed in SI's footsteps. Bognar (2012: 50) observes that with the emergence of the graffiti of the Punk and subsequent Hip-Hop movements in the 1970's, intentionally or not, the artists adopted the approaches and ideas put forth by the SI. They were producing art in a public setting, and conveying messages focussing on socially relevant themes. The artistic aesthetic and the messages were merged with the "everyday", challenging the categorisation and segregations of traditional and conformist art.

Popular themes of this type of work include cultural, political and social statements, as well as the use of literary quotations and references drawn from the archive of the fine arts. Banksy, one of the most famous (and infamous) graffiti artists of the 1990's, who remains an active social commentator in the present day, continues to make use of the methods and techniques of the SI, specific *Détournement,* as he aims to provoke critical thought through his art. The researcher draws the reader's attention to Figure 1 of Banksy's *Keep Your Coins I Want Change* stencil, which speaks of the harsh mistreatment of people in society, also which has been *détourned*, in the researcher's own critical way, in the practical component of this study.

Figure 1. Banksy, *Keep Your Coins I Want Change.* (N/D.)

Graffiti can be seen as a creative approach towards inspiring positive change as well as giving an individual artist the freedom to make his or her presence felt and creative voice heard in an isolated, alienated society dominated by the mass accumulation of products for consumption. It can be the voice of the unheard and at the same time it can serve as a powerful social, political and cultural medium, due to its universal reach. Habermas, in Crossley (2003), observes that there are two types of activism, both in which are able to operate through the use of *Détournement*. One is the kind of revolutionary resistance that calls for complete and total social revolution in all aspects of society, culture, politics and the economy. The other, which Habermas seems to

suggest is the more effective type of resistance, is the activism employed by smaller resistance groups that strive for a more realistic and rational reconstruction of everyday life. He adds that the latter groups are more likely to contest social norms, and question traditions, habits and lifestyle choices with the intention of making people stop and think about the negative consequences of societal manipulation and mass-media on their mental environments and their everyday consumption habits (Ibid).

The second approach to societal resistance, mentioned above, has been linked to the type of social activism employed by the Culture Jammers, who, for the past two decades, have played an important role in shaping culture and raising public consciousness of mass-media manipulation through their disruption, subversion, adjustment and alterations, aiming to topple existing power structures, and whose approaches will be discussed in the Chapter Three.

Chapter 3: The use of Culture Jamming to Disrupt Spectacular Society

There are two main themes that Culture Jammers critique and set out to address in their work, namely:

- The ways in which marketing and mass-media tends to colonise public, psychic, social and discursive space.
- Their concern of the ways in which global capitalism and rampant consumerism negatively affect contemporary society and the mental environment of the individual members of society (Rumbo, 2002).

In *Culture Jamming – Activism and the Art of Cultural Resistance*, (2017: 40-41), Marilyn DeLaure and Moritz Fink define "culture jamming", a term that originated in the mid 1990's, as a range of creative acts of popular intervention used by social activists, including artists, to "critique, subvert and otherwise 'jam' the workings of consumer culture". This often involves drawing on the SI tactics of appropriation, reworking and *Détournement*. The same authors go on to suggest that 'Culture Jamming' involves "creative acts of [popular] intervention performed by people seeking change in society by using whatever means and materials at hand" (Ibid: 40-41). Mayo (2005: 54) describes it slightly differently as "a collective mobilisation of social, economic, political or cultural dimensions dealing with issues of identity and specific rights".

In the foreword to DeLaure and Finks book, Mark Dery (2017: 4) reflects positively on the ongoing potential of Cultural Jamming. He writes: "Culture jamming's startling new vision of a better world, where we as citizens actively engaged in civic life and public discourse rather than passive consumers of media myths, is not easily forgotten". Despite his enthusiasm, he does raise certain reservations. He notes, for instance, that we live in a world "where subcultural resistance is almost instantly appropriated by corporate cool hunters" (Ibid: 5) and he asks: "is jamming a quaint anachronism in a networked world?" However, he goes on to acknowledge that the techniques and approaches used by activists have changed and adapted over time: "whereas early jammers used spray paint and photocopiers, today most of them carry digital recording

devices in their pockets… [to assist in] the rapid dissemination of content". According to him, culture jamming is the collective dream of reclaiming our sense of selves as citizens in a culture that insists on reducing us to consumers, or as he puts it; "wallets with mouths, in advertising parlance"

Darts (2004: 319) states that "artistic troubling of our identities, our beliefs, and our actions (and inactions) is often disorienting and almost always discomforting. It frequently trembles the ideological ground on which we are accustomed to standing. From gay activists to Guerrilla Girls, Dadaists to Debord, Conceptualists to Culture Jammers, *socially engaged artists* [6] have repeatedly addressed and redressed issues of socio-political and cultural significance, and in the process, undermined our ability to function within a dysfunctional world".

There is a long list of individual creative artists, artist collectives, and organisations that have engaged in Cultural Jamming, along with authors who have written textual contributions, like Naomi Klein's analytical *No Logo* (1999), and Andrew Boyd's activist manual *Beautiful Trouble: A Toolbox for Revolution* (2012). In Sandlin and Milam (2008: 326-327) it is suggested that various groups such as the Guerrilla Girls, TheYesMen, Adbusters and Reverend Billy's Church of Stop Shopping are all part of a wider social movement focusing on resistance to capitalism and consumerism, fighting against the destructive consequences of globalisation and raising awareness about global socio-political and cultural issues, as well as the ecological destruction that comes with overconsumption. All these resistance groups perform acts of cultural jamming intended at social activism and this was the primary intention for the Adbusters interventions.

The Adbusters Media Foundation is a socio-political creative movement, described on its Canadian based website as "a global network of artists, activists, writers, students, educators and entrepreneurs who are advancing social activism in the information

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[6] Term used to describe all artists choosing to engage with social justice and human rights issues in their work.

age, and implementing radical design and media strategies to shake up complacent consumerist culture" (Adbusters Media Foundation, n.d.) http://www.Adbusters.org

Dery in DeLaure and Fink (2017: 4) says that the movement dreams up "new ways to punch through the seamless surface of the Matrix to expose the emptiness of its promise". Kalle Lasn and Bill Schmall, who initiated the movement, introduced the idea of creating an "uncommercial" or what they called a 'counter-commercial'. This 'counter-action' is essentially a form of *Détournement*. Its intention is to neutralise the original messages of commercials and advertisements through the alteration or subversion of the original message.

Since their formation in 1989, the Adbusters have operated through the publication of magazines and online content, without any funding from advertisers. They published content in the form of artworks, articles and 'subvertisements' (*Détourned* advertisements) generated by themselves, or submitted by their members.

Their intention is to assist in the rewiring of our 'virtual' lives, and to bring us back to reality, to re-focus our attention on things directly experienced and lived. They set out to encourage us to have activist mind-sets, through the circulation of images and information which will influence us into action. This form of activism and socio-cultural engagement can operate successfully within transitional spaces which will be discussed in the following sections.

Culture Jamming as Social Activism in Transitional Spaces

Cultural Jamming allows for the ability to open up transitional spaces through creativity and cultural production as well as creating community by engaging with people from all walks of life. Christine Harold, in her journal article *'Pranking Rhetoric: Culture Jamming as Media Activism'* (2004: 190) defines Culture Jamming as an "insurgent political movement" that works against what Bordwell (2002: 237) critiques as an

advertising-saturated, corporate-ruled consumer culture. Duncombe (2002: 5) explains these transitional spaces as follows; he tells us that these are "spaces of play where culture can be creatively produced. It is about creating a culture rather than absorbing it". In these spaces "artists can now experiment with a new way of seeing and being by developing the tools and resources for resistance" (Ibid:5). The primary goal is to challenge the hold consumerism has over us by reclaiming the intellectual and critical space. The underlying intention of the Cultural Jammers is to cultivate a critical mind-set that diversifies discursive space as a way to reclaim public and mental space. In this regard, the educational power of culture jamming cannot be underestimated.

DeLaure and Fink (2017: 21) refer to Harold, in her book '*Our Space: Resisting the Corporate Control of Culture'* (2007: 58) asserts that Culture Jamming takes on three 'rhetorical postures' – Sabotage, Appropriation and Intensification.

- Sabotage seeks to "block" or "jam" the workings of consumer culture using parody satire and intervention. "Saboteurs" are the critical and analytical nay-sayers who create cynicism and perpetuate the binaries they attack. Sabotage is fundamentally limited as it 'fails to offer a new locus for the desires the market currently seems to satisfy – desires of community, identity and beauty' (Harold, 2007: 58).

- Appropriation, by contrast, is used by pranksters and pirates who aim to "playfully and provocatively fold existing cultural norms on themselves" (Ibid: 74). In essence, it has less negative connotations than Sabotage as it draws more attention to the logic and workings of brands and marketing. Harold (Ibid: 160) adds that 'it still operates via an oppositional stance, a dialectic between the structures of capitalism and the mythical outside.'

- Intensification, as Harold claims, has the greatest promise as it is "an idea which seeks to make intellectual and cultural work freely available for public collaboration… therefore it can offer possibilities for resistance and political action within the logics of post-industrial capitalism" (Ibid: xxvii).

These ideas can be traced back to the 1960's Situationists, whose work was a radical critique of both capitalism and consumerism. During this time, the SI were developing, enhancing and projecting the power of *Détournement* where an image, message or artefact can be lifted out of its original context. Writing in the present day, Ellsworth (2005: 38) suggests that *Détournement* has the potential to operate as a transitional space encouraging play, creativity and cultural production.

Cultural jammers are therefore visual activists who set out to appropriate and recirculate cultural symbols in society in order to alter their meanings. In doing so, they aim to contest meaning through constructing situations / interventions challenging dominant forms of power and control. David Darts, in the journal article *Visual Culture Jam: Art Pedagogy, and Creative Resistance* (2004: 314), he refers to post-modern theorists such as Jameson (1984, 1991) and Kincheloe (1993, 2003a) when pointing out that "the modern era…has witnessed a transformation of the cultural domain into what is now considered to be the most important 'political' arena. Darts further points out that this then has important implications for visual arts educators in particular. Teachers, as darts suggests, should be committed to examining social justice issues and should foster democratic principles in their teaching. They should also be obliged to consider how their pedagogical practices respond to the complex connections between culture and politics. He goes on to state that "visual culture successfully demonstrates that the visual is inextricably linked to ongoing social, political, psychological, and cultural struggles" (Ibid: 315) referring (Duncum, 2001a, 2002; Freedman, 2000, 2003; Tavin, 2000, 2002, 2003).

Visual culture theorist Nicholas Mirzoeff (1999: 7) in Darts (2004: 315) suggests that "the human experience is now more visual and visualised than ever before; it is not just a part of our everyday lives, it is our everyday lives". Darts (Ibid: 315) refers to Duncum (2002: 5-6) by suggesting that he observed the everyday aesthetic experience as an important (but often overlooked) location, "where many of our attitudes, knowledge and beliefs are shaped. It is a site where ideological struggles occur, often without us being conscious, knowing or aware of this. It is this

imperceptibility which makes ideological struggles difficult to resist. This ideology works because it grounds itself in taken-for-granted, common sense assumptions".

Lastly, Darts (2004: 316) suggests that visual culture education must be equally concerned with what Duncum (2001: 31) states as "the teasing out of what lies beneath the imagery, the material conditions of their production, distribution and use and other interests they may serve". Here he also refers to Mirzoeff's (1999) "visual event" as the interaction between the viewer and that which is viewed, and that it is constantly embedded with social, political and economic contexts. Given this, he proposes that visual art educators should begin to enlighten students and alert them to the complex forces behind the imagery and aesthetics of the familiar. He concludes to state that "if art education is to prepare students to responsibly live within the contemporary sociocultural sphere, educators must be willing to help them resist the ideology of the ordinary, question the unperceived and become awakened to the invisibility of the everyday (Darts, 2004: 316).

Détournement: Disruption and Appropriation

Cultural jamming can be described as both a backlash against and a form of resistance to the influence of corporations, mass-media, consumerism and advertising in a capitalist driven society.

Culture Jammers, like the SI before them, focus on the alteration of existing imagery and advertising that has been created in support of mass-consumerism. Unlike the SI, contemporary 'jammers' have adopted a post-industrial position and culture jamming now involves the alteration or *Détournement* of billboards, video ads, digital ads online and physical print advertisements. These social activists borrow liberally from previous avant-garde movements such as Dadaism, in their visual attacks on the art world and its passive spectator culture. Cultural jamming is simultaneously a critical, creative and constructive approach that artfully seeks to invent new visions for the future. Through

their subversion of mass-consumer culture and their critique of advertising, Cultural Jammers have been able to raise public awareness of social, political, economic and environmental impacts of global brands and corporations. Whilst doing so, they have registered their disapproval of capitalist society and offer innovative, alternative, creative ways to express non-violent resistance to the status quo. It is fundamentally a backlash against the influence of corporations, mass-media, consumerism and advertising in a capitalist driven society.

Dery in DeLaure and Fink (2017: 4-5), describes culture jamming as an "elastic category" and situates it on a historical continuum of artistic resistance. He suggests that this continuum includes anti-art movements like Dada and Surrealism, along with Situationism and aspects of Pop Art. He lists an array of sub-cultural practices including the use of socio-political satire, appropriation, cut-up collage *Détournement* alternative media practices, graffiti / street art, and the construction of situations.

The Adbusters, led by their founder, Kalle Lasn, set out to unsettle the status quo. DeLaure and Fink (2017: 9) refer to Lasn's manifesto *Culture Jam: The Uncooling of America* (1999: xi) as providing a "wake-up call seeking to jar readers out of their consumption-induced stupors, a cry for rage against the colonisation of our physical and mental environments by marketing messages. A vehement critique of privately-owned, advertising-driven media and corporate personhood, and a demand for returning democracy to the airwaves". Culture jamming confronts authority with imagination and humour / satire / parody, and as a result, subverts the stereotype of the angry or destructive protestor.

Carducci (2006: 119) acknowledges that the Adbusters have achieved success. He observes that they succeeded in encouraging consumers to examine the motives behind their own desires to consume, and that these same consumers have begun to critique their own "mental environment" (Conca, Princen & Maniates, 2001). Micah White, the Adbusters Senior Editor, has explained the theory underpinning the concept of the "mental environment" as follows: it helps to "draw a connection between the

pollution of our minds by commercial messaging and the social, environmental, financial, and ethical catastrophes that loom before humanity" (White, 2011).

As Lasn (1999: 100) suggests in his book *Culture Jam: How to Reverse America's Suicidal Consumer Binge – and Why We* Must, like other culture jammers, the Adbusters position themselves as SI descendants who are concerned with fighting against the "spectacle of everyday life" which as they see it manifest in modern society's spectacular level of commodity consumption and hype". As they understand it, "the spectacle to stifle spontaneity, free will and active living, replacing these with pre-packaged experiences" (Bordwell, 2002: 100). This aligns with the SI understanding of the spectacular culture as a culture that has reached the point where commodification and desire for the commodity have completely taken over the people who live in it. "Commodification is not only visible, we no longer see anything else, the world we see is the world of the commodity" (Debord, 1967: thesis 42).

Margaret Farrar and Jamie Warner (2008: 277), refer to Bruce Mirrof, suggesting that he builds on this understanding, stating that "the spectacle does not permit the audience to interrupt the action and redirect its meaning. Spectators can be absorbed in the spectacle and find it unconvincing but they cannot become performers. A spectacle is not designed for mass participation as it is not a democratic event" (Mirrof, 2003: 168).

Lasn (1999: xvii, 103) explains that a Culture Jammer's primary goal is to make use of *Détournement* to achieve a turning around – one that is instigated through the rerouting of spectacular images, environments, ambiences and events in order to reverse or subvert their meaning, and thus reclaim them. Farrar and Warner refer Berry, quoted in Cammaerts (2007: 71), declaring that Culture Jammers "create with mirrors; they replicate while simultaneously inverting hegemonic messages, focusing on reclaiming identity in a densely saturated consumer culture".

Dery (2017: 7) presents a more graphic description, writing that Jammers "intrude the intruders, they infest ads, newscasts and other media artefacts with subversive meanings, introducing noise into the signal as it passes from transmitter to receiver, encouraging idiosyncratic, unintended interpretations".

Lasn (1999: xvii) reflects back on the influence of the SI when he observes that, as a Culture Jammer, the important learning moment occurs when members experience *Détournement*. He explains that this moment can provide new ways of looking at the world and provide a "perspective-jarring turnabout in your everyday life" (Ibid: xvii). Lasn continues, observing that "you are, everyone is a creator of situations, a performance artist and the performance is your life lived in your own way" (Ibid: xvii).

McLeod (2011: 3), in DeLaure and Fink (2017: 16) adds that this French term *Détournement* "captures the critical impulse to turn culture back on itself". It prompts a "double-take" on the part of its viewers by creating a kind of "perspective by incongruity". For example, a hijacked billboard not only attacks specific brands and corporations but prompts a critical reflection upon the entire institution of advertising.

It can be argued that *Détournement* thus provides new ideas and choices about how to live and how to be. Understood from this perspective, it works as a transitional space that creates a window of time between an experience and our usual responses to it, one that provides us with the opportunity to come up with alternatives to the accepted way of living and being in relation to that moment.

In closing, Culture jammers participate in the creation of culture, knowledge and politics through the opening up transitional spaces. They are not prepared to be passive recipients of corporate-produced culture and instead, they produce their own. They believe that as adult educators[7], the important learning and education is

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[7] A term Culture Jammers use to describe activist visual communicators, as opposed to traditional teachers / educators.

achieved outside of formal institutions. Dery (2017: 7) defines these social activists as 'Groucho Marxists', "jammers who are ever mindful of the fun to be had in the joyful demolition of oppressive ideology". They see themselves as being in a war with consumer capitalism and its hold over our collective imaginations. Harold (2004: 190) suggests that culture jammers excel at interrupting spectacular culture by turning back against it, one of its most effective tools, the advertisement, a reversal called 'rhetorical sabotage'.

Critical Pedagogy in Educative Spaces

In the preceding sections of this study the reader's attention has been drawn to the approaches adopted by the SI and the Cultural Jammers. In this chapter particular attention has been paid to the activities of the Ad Busters, with their focus on social activism in transitional spaces, and their use of appropriation and *Détournement* as a vehicle for the disruption of the status quo. These radical artists and agitators adopt social, political and cultural issues as their primary focus.

Culture Jammers believe that in a commercially dominated and market driven society in which culture is often defined simply as a set of objects, images and artefacts that are intended to be purchased and amassed, participating in individual and community-based forms of cultural production and resistance is an essential component of responsible democratic engagement with the ideology of the everyday. Their acts of creative resistance are a critical response to what they view as the domination of consumer culture. They attempt to call attention to and transform the ways in which meanings are produced in society.

Cultural Jammers like the Adbusters believe that members of the public (and by deduction this includes school learners and students) are shaped by popular culture and that they have the potential power to reshape and actively recreate culture. The Jammers set out to resist popular culture, and through their work they endeavour to

problematize the social relations and ideologies that are both constructed and reinforced through the distribution and promotion of popular culture commodities and experiences. Klein (2000: 280) explains their type of activism as 'creative cultural intervention' which she describes as "Semiotic Robin Hoodism", as being a direct response to the steady increase in aggressive commercialism, and she suggests this challenging of the meaning of cultural signs is only possible due to, and is a response to the wide availability of newly accessible digital technology that they have available to them.

"Artists always make art by re-configuring our shared cultural languages and references. But as those shared experiences shift from first hand to mediated, a new set of issues emerges that once again raises questions about the out-of-date definitions of freedom of expression in a branded culture"

David Darts (2004: 322).

It is the position of the researcher that socially aware, activist artists have an important educative and consciousness-raising role to play in present day consumer-capitalist society. Through their actions and through the circulation of their artworks they are in a position to make visual commentary on the nature of contemporary society, and in so doing they are able to alert others to their concerns on a range of issues related to the political and economic climate of the time.

In this regard, socially conscious visual art and visual culture educators also have a role to play. The researcher suggests that art educators operating within both the formal and the informal education sectors should be encouraged to introduce the work of socially engaged artists into their classes and forums, as this will serve to open up transitional educative spaces where the layers of sociocultural, political, aesthetic, historical and pedagogic complexities surrounding their work can be examined and explored. In doing so, students and members of the public can begin to challenge disenfranchised conceptions of the social role and political function of art.

Education (both formal and informal) should "include conscious and critical forms of student socio-cultural engagement" (Darts, 2004: 323). Freedman & Schuler (2002: 19) point out that "students are becoming part of consumer culture and constructing their identities with little critical reflection". Studio and classroom-based cultural production thus helps students move away from uncritical modes of viewing, which the SI referred to as "passive spectatorship", towards a more productive form of engagement in society (Ibid: 22).

Critical education should not only critique the consumption of popular culture, it is also about the remaking and appropriating of meanings in that culture, as well as the construction and production of knowledge and information. Freedman (2002: 147) states that "artistic production is a critical path to understanding. It enables students to experience creative and critical connections between form, feeling and knowing. It empowers students through their construction and expression of ideas as well as constructing identities giving insight of artistic motivations, intentions and capabilities of others".

Duncombe (2002: 6) recommends introducing *Détournement* into the art curriculum. This will serve to expose students to counter-cultural modes of artistic production which are based on artistic activism, conceptual, performance and 'Guerrilla' art. He observes that these modes can offer multiple opportunities for meaningful forms of student cultural participation.

Ellsworth (2005: 38) describes this use of *Détournement* to open transitional and educative spaces as a "pedagogical hinge" that can serve to influence students to move beyond passive spectatorship and towards more generative/thoughtful forms of cultural production and resistance. Used in this sense, the term hinge refers to specific aspects of spaces which make them pedagogically powerful. She adds that this hinge creates possibilities for all aspects of the spaces to be disrupted and reconfigured. By helping students to uncover the ideological struggles embedded within the visual,

visual culture educators can empower them with the ability to respond to the increasingly complex environment of the everyday. Darts (2004: 325) states that "as an outcome of this pedagogical approach, students will learn to deconstruct and critique the powerful strategies and aesthetic tactics commonly employed by artists, designers and other producers of visual texts". In this way educators will provide their students with the required intellectual and creative tools to examine, challenge and transform themselves, their communities and the world in which they live.

Lasn refers to this as helping students break out of what he refers to as a "media-consumer trance", and enabling them to think critically about the world. He describes this technique of education as one that has the power to help prepare the next generation of consumers by empowering them to create their own meanings of the world, think for themselves and consider an alternative future.

Culture can be, and is, used as a means of social control. Yet, culture has the potential to be used as a powerful means of resistance (Duncombe, 2002: 35). There should be space created wherein people are encouraged to formulate alternative solutions to the issues that beset society, in order to strive for positive social change. Storey (2006: 171) in Sandlin (2007: 74) states that "we need to see ourselves, all people, not just vanguard intellectuals, [but also] as active participants in culture; resisting, selecting, rejecting, making meaning, attributing value, and yes, being duped and manipulated".

In the context of this study, the researcher aims to communicate the above-mentioned message both textually and visually. The studio work explores and addresses issues of identity and of self-construction through consumption, and both the practical and the theoretical components set out to encourage critical consciousness regarding the negative effects of capitalism, consumerism and its globalisation.

The chapter that follows addresses the research findings to date, and it should be seen as an attempt to draw together the strands of theory and art production as the

basis for the development of a tentative framework for socially aware creative practice. The chapter will explore ways in which visual art educators, including the researcher, who styles himself as a socially engaged artist, can contribute to the reshaping of culture. It is envisaged that such a framework has the potential to act as a guide/toolbox, or what Lasn called a 'media empowerment kit'. This framework should not be viewed as a prescribed formulaic set of rules for people to follow, but should rather be seen as a scaffolding that can be assembled in different ways and used in the construction of situations and 'teachable' moments.

Chapter 4: Research Findings and a Tentative Framework for Socially Aware Creative Practice

This chapter addresses the research findings. As much of the content is based on the researcher's reflections on the outputs of what is essentially a subjective creative investigation, much of the chapter is presented as a first-person narrative.

The chapter opens with a broad statement of intent, in which the researcher set out to explain his intentions and to reiterate some of the conceptual influences he draws from the artistic resistance movements of the 20th century. Thereafter, the researcher provides details of the intentions and outcomes of the studio practice associated with the research project. This section includes a chronology of thematically linked artworks, along with critical observations that have emerged as an outcome of the investigative process, based on the research trajectory, the reading of theory, and the experience of creating socially conscious creative outputs. The chapter ends with the presentation of a brief and tentative framework for socially aware creative practice that is distilled from the researcher's findings.

A Statement of the Researcher's Intent in the Practical Component

As mentioned in the introduction to the document, the primary goal of the research project has been to convey, through the written word and through studio practice, a set of my personal and social convictions and concerns regarding the experience of societal, cultural and economic control. Both the practice and the text have emerged as a response to the research questions posed at the start of the project's trajectory. The final outcome represents a synthesis of my experiences, observations, scholarly engagement and creative production.

I was drawn to this area of creative exploration as a result of particular sets of social circumstances that I have experienced in my life, that had influenced my worldview.

As an outcome of restrictive schooling environments I experienced a sense of alienation in a society that I now understand as controlling, conformist and self-censoring. This life experience led to ongoing and continued research into resistance focused sub-cultures.

In this study the subversive anti-capitalist theories of critical thinkers such as Lefebvre and Baudrillard have been explored, as have the ideas and creative production of counter-culture creative and political movements, ranging from the SI to more recent Culture Jamming movements. Visually and theoretically, all of the above has made me conscious of the desire to create awareness and shed light on the problematic issues and struggles contemporary societies face daily. All of the studio work employs the SI artistic technique of *Détournement*, and all of the work in some way expresses a resistance to capitalism, consumerism, social media and mass-media advertising.

As the project is practice-based [8], I suggest that the artworks should be viewed, firstly, as an autonomous and stand-alone body of image-based research outputs intended to provoke a thoughtful response from its audience, and secondly, as a response to the theoretical investigation that has also informed the written component of the research. As part of the iterative process that informs Practice-Based Visual Arts research the studio practice has been informed by theory, and in turn, the written component needs to be read and considered in relation to the creative outputs.

The artistic approach to this study relies significantly on the use of *Détournement* as a means through which to contest and challenge the ideologies of our current neo-liberal capitalist society. The artwork is intended as a subversion, and as a means to influence public perception about important socio-political issues in the society of our time, where commodities are in abundance.

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[8] Linda Candy (2006: 1) suggests two types of practice related research; practice-based – where creative artefact is basis of the contribution of knowledge and practice-led where the research primarily leads to new understandings about practice.

From the outset of the project my intention was to draw on the powerful ideas and techniques of the SI and the Cultural Jammers, and to present these in a way that is relevant to the present day, and to my own social context. Like the Cultural Jammers I set out to use *Détournement as* a means of opening up transitional or discursive spaces that allow viewers to engage in critical thought about their lives. Much like the practices of the SI, my work involves the use of experimental artistic techniques in my practice, combined with staged interventions, combined with theoretical investigation that informs my practice. My work is intended to challenge the general public's perception of society, and to encourage the viewer to engage in critical thought and to begin to question the *status quo*.

The SI sought to revolutionise the art world through the alteration and appropriation of aspects and elements of popular culture. My work seeks to do the same by employing the principles learnt from the investigation of these past, revolution seeking artistic and social movements. I set out to use my practical work as a medium through which to explore the SI notion that play and experimentation through art and theory can serve to facilitate positive social change, awareness and consciousness.

I see Culture Jamming as a valuable means through which to educate the public about societal issues that are under-attended to in the popular press, and are not given sufficient attention to in societal politics in general. I set out to achieve an artistic style that is a marriage of aspects and elements drawn from Graffiti (which I understand to be considered as 'low art') and Fine Art (which has traditionally been considered as 'high art' directed at a cultural elite).

Graffiti, which is also commonly referred to as 'public', 'urban' or 'street' art, is a major focal point of this study. Because it is presented in public spaces, it has the potential to reach a large and more egalitarian audience, with a consequential potential to affect change and influence critical thought quite widely. Graffiti works in public spaces are in a perpetual state of transformation, in response to the social issues of the time, and these works can be read as a direct reflection of the way the world is interpreted by

the masses and by the general public. It is my opinion that graffiti, when used as a visual or artistic outlet, frees practitioners from the restraints of society, allowing them to express their thoughts and convictions through what is essentially both a visual and a textual medium.

A cultural revolution can, and will only be achieved if the general public (the proletariat in Marx's terms), operating as a collective, wants a change in society. Graffiti as an art form has the potential to assist in this process as it expresses ideas, it shares and disperses knowledge and provides a site for voicing distrust about and resistance to the dominant consumer-society and its controlling effects.

A chronology of artworks

The initial triggers for this research project can be traced back to my interest in using art-making as a means of expressing resistance to any form of control, and to my interest in the exploration of artworks that represent a merger between fine art and graffiti.

In a body of early work, which was a trigger for and which informed the thinking that underpins this research project, I set out to develop 'fine art' works that could be develop into stencils, and these images were reproduced on various surfaces and objects, such as skateboards, hand-made canvases, corridor walls and locker doors. This work is introduced briefly below.

The Freethinkers Club (2013)

In these works, I expressed my resistance to the idea of being trapped in the social constraints of modern society. I drew on the SI technique of *Détournement* and I represented popular 'iconic' figures who have expressed particular pedagogical ideologies.

Figure 2. The Freethinkers Club spray-painted stencil on locker doors, 2013.

Figure 3. Nishil Vaghmaria applying stencils to locker doors, 2013.

Figure 4. Nishil Vaghmaria, screengrab of Instagram profile (@nishilrishikart), 2017.

The Power of Knowledge (2014)

Subsequently I was commissioned by the Mandela Bay Development Agency to complete an urban art intervention as part of an inner city regeneration project. The work was to be semi-permanently installed into the vacant windows of the fire damaged Holy Rosary Convent building in Bird Street, Central, Port Elizabeth. This project was conceptualized around a *Détourned* elaboration of the 2013 *Freethinkers* work. Here I had the opportunity to produce twelve large-scale portraits of iconic figures, and to include quotes from them that refer to the transformative power of education.

Figure 5. Burnt out and abandoned shell of Holy Rosary Convent, Bird Street, Central, Port Elizabeth, 2014.

Figure 6. Work in progress photos of painting portraits in studio, 2015.

Figure 7. Panoramic photo of completed portraits in studio before installation, 2015.

Figure 8. Completed project after installation at Holy Rosary Convent, 2015.

Both of these public interventions were triggers for this research project, and both helped me to define the problem statement and the research questions which essentially revolve around the question of how the urban art / graffiti can change people's mind-sets.

Détourning myself: The practical work for this research project

The problem statement which this study revolves around how specific forms of visual art can be used to raise the awareness of the mass of individuals within society to the ways in which they are being controlled and conditioned to conform to the expectations of mainstream society. The creative project sets out to promote awareness of the manipulative aspects of mass-media, advertising, social media and fashion, all which operate in service of capitalism and in the interests of a neo-liberal economy. The main research question that emerged from the reading of theory is phrased as follows: How can Graffiti or Urban art focused visual imagery, influenced by the critical theories discussed in this document, be usefully employed by visual art practitioners of the present, as a means of making audiences more aware of the constructions and constraints of societal control?

Subsequently, the research process, in both its theoretical and practical forms, has revolved around the investigation of those questions.

In the studio work I have set out to express the use-value of the SI by posing the question of whether I, as a socially concerned reflective arts practitioner of today, can relevantly draw on the theories and practices of the SI, and on those of the anti-conformist street artists who followed in their footsteps. In the works featured on the following pages I have usefully employed the SI artistic technique of *Détournement*. Like the SI, I hope, through these works, to disrupt the spectacular status quo.

My reading for this project has provided me with a conceptual underpinning drawn from critical theorists such as Henri Lefebvre, Jean Baudrillard, and Guy Debord from the SI whose aim was to merge a Marxian critique of capitalism with cultural studies focused on consumption, media, identity, advertising, fashion and sexuality. These theorists aimed at a reconciliation of Marxist thought with an awareness of contemporary socio-political-economic conditions, in order to create awareness and

influence critical consciousness on the part of viewers. As a means of visually responding to this theoretical input I have focused on the creation of artworks which speak to the above-mentioned theoretical perspective and which make use of the SI's subversive artistic method of *Détournement*.

Each artwork has been conceptualised and made following a fairly set process, with an initial sketch in a journal leading to the production of a larger and more refined 'fine-art' piece, which, in turn, has been scanned in high resolution, digitally edited, and reconstituted into a stencilled image comprising of either one, two or three layers. Finally, the work has been transferred onto a wall or building, either through a crafted spray-painting process, or as a projection.

After critical reflection on the studio work as it has evolved during the project, the outputs have been categorised and ordered under three main thematic headings, all related to the term 'distraction', namely:

- The Distracted
- Weapons of Mass Distraction
- The Master Manipulators and the Distractors

The Distracted

This series of works expresses resistance to consumerism and aims to reveal how we are lured into becoming passive and unthinking consumers in society. The artworks discussed in this section are *YOLO – You Only Live Online* (2017 - 2018), *Resist, Rebel, Reclaim* (2015 – 2016), *Liberty torch* (2017), *Social Entrapment* (2016) and *Keep Your Change – I Want Revolution* (2017 - 2018).

In the previous chapters much attention has been paid to the fact that contemporary society has moved from a previously productive one to, more recently, one centred around consumerism in a capitalist economy. Commercial and corporate interests are served when cultural activity is commoditised and controlled as a means of maintaining the hegemony of the dominant society. These works aim to raise

awareness of how members of society are conditioned to meet the demands of their social identities through consumable goods which result in pacification, distraction, alienation and entrapment, all of which are fundamental to class reproduction and segregation.

It was mentioned earlier in the document that a shift in the way identities are constructed occurred during modernity. In the pre-modern period people constructed their own identities for social recognition and approval. In modernity and in post-modernity individual identities, like consumable goods, are to be purchased, possessed, appropriated and then used up and replaced, to an extent where individual identities might eventually disappear.

Capitalism feeds the desire for socially acceptable identity, presenting a constant array of new and improved goods, services, and in this case, purchasable identities. The mass media and advertising are used to seduce people into consuming. The artworks created under this theme express the researcher's understanding of the relationships between capitalism, consumerism and the neo-liberal economy.

YOLO – You Only Live Online **(2017 – 2018)**
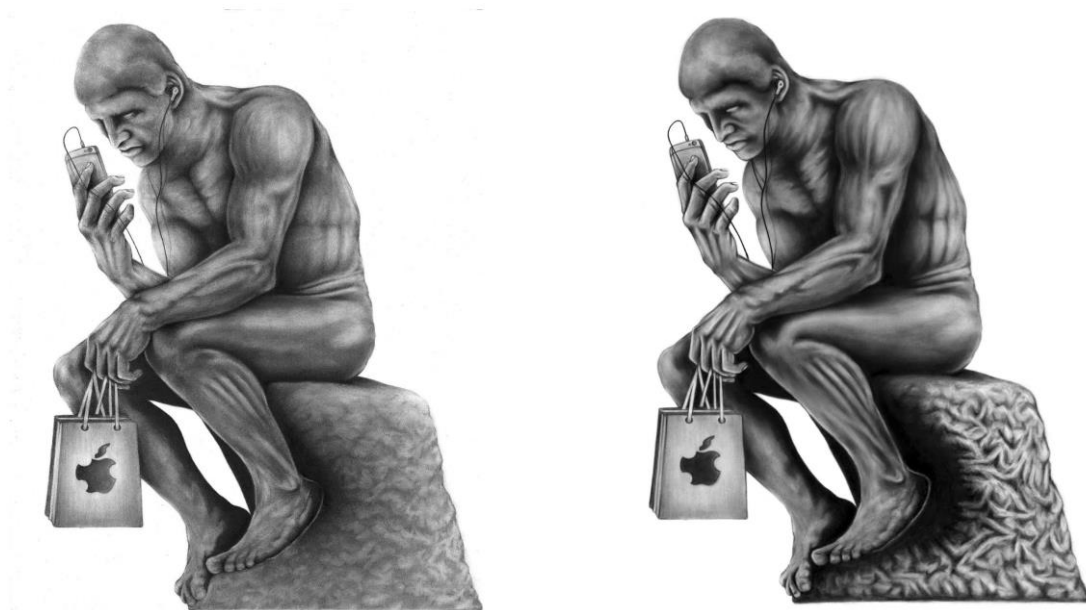
Figure 9. You Only Live Online graphite (left) and digital drawing (right), 2016 - 2017.

Figure 10. YOLO digital three-layer stencil and line drawing for silkscreen print for
Alter-Native Space Exhibition, 2018.

Figure 11. You Only Live Online paste-up on wall of local convenience store, Athol
Fugard Terrace, Port Elizabeth, 2019.

Background:

The *YOLO* project title is an acronym for *You Only Live Online*. The works are based on a *Détourned* interpretation of Auguste Rodin's sculpture entitled *The Thinker*. The current project artworks are themselves a *Détournement* of an earlier stencilled work entitled *I Think, therefore I Tweet*, which focused on *The Thinker* checking his phone for messages. In the *re-détourned* and further evolved artworks he wears headphones and he holds an iPhone in one hand. He clutches a branded Apple shopping bag in the other hand. The works set out to present a visual commentary about how we are distracted by our desires for trending/up-to-date technology. With his headphones plugged in and his eyes deeply focused on the phone screen, the figure is represented as being cut off from the rest of the world around him.

Production:

The work was created as a large (700mm x 820mm), detailed graphite and pencil 'fine art' drawing which has subsequently been framed and which is intended for gallery exhibition (Figure 9). As an outcome of a digital production process a three-layer stencil was produced. Subsequently the image has been exhibited on various surfaces in public spaces. The artwork was *détourned* once more by simplifying it for the Alter-Native Space silk-screen exhibition. Figure 11 depicts the three-layer stencil pasted onto a wall of a local convenience store.

***Resist, Rebel, Reclaim* (2014 – 2017)**

Figure 12. Reference photos taken for Resist, Rebel, Reclaim sketch, 2014.

Figure 13. Initial sketches for Resist, Rebel, Reclaim, 2014.
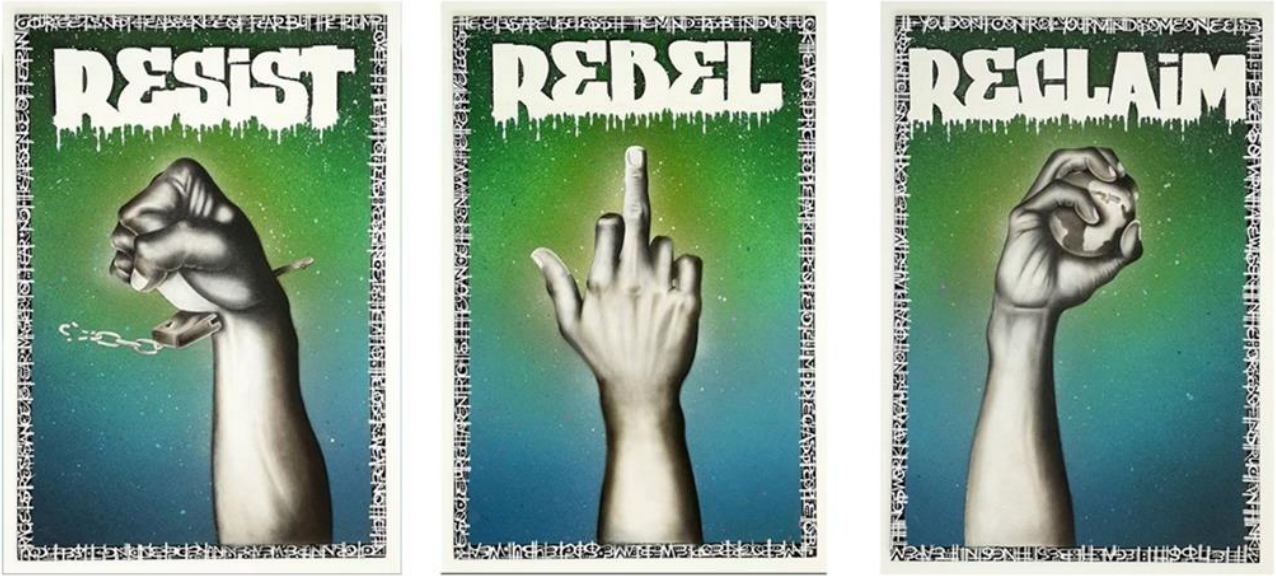
Figure 14. Larger painting versions (600mm x 400mm) of Resist, Rebel, Reclaim, 2015.
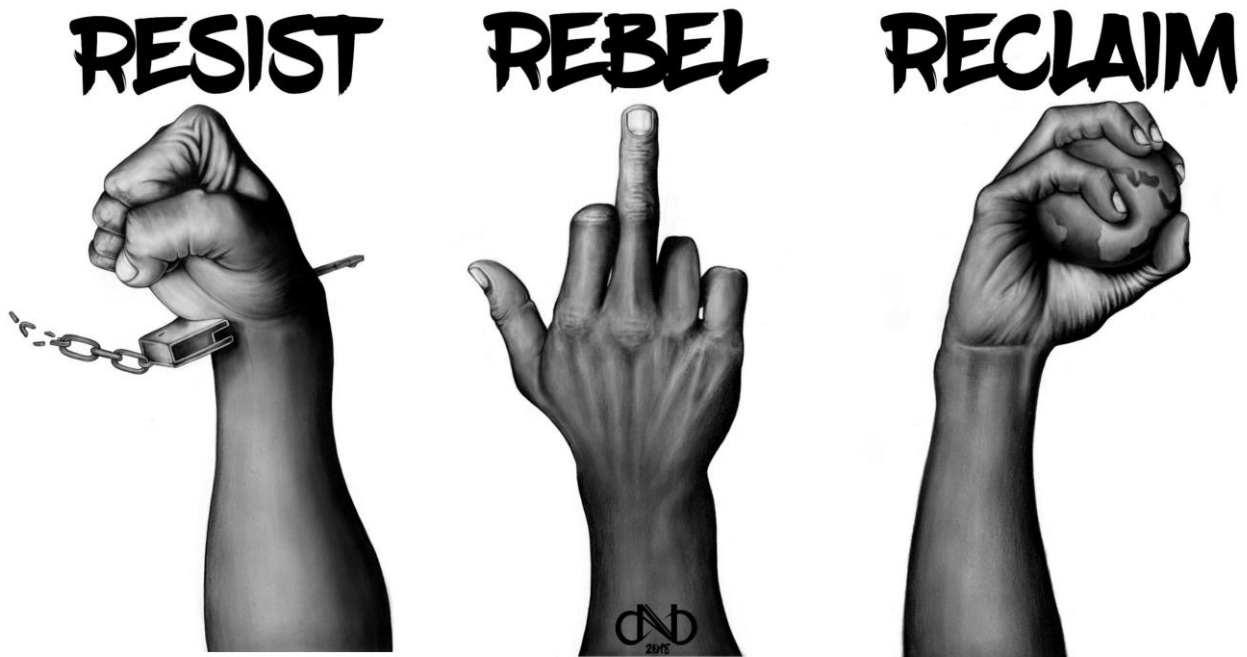
Figure 15. Resist, Rebel, Reclaim digital reproduction, 2018.

Background:

The artwork *Resist, Rebel, Reclaim* makes use of images of 'iconic' hand gestures, ones that are often seen by 'polite' society as being controversial or socially unacceptable. The images are accompanied by text and the work is intended to illustrate the researcher's resistance to social control.

The raised clenched fist in the *Resist* image on the left is commonly associated with resistance, and with activism with social protest movements (Black Power / Black Consciousness Movement being an example). The broken handcuff lock with its trailing chain can be read as a symbol of unshackling, and of emancipation from the chains of bondage and enslavement. The central image calls on the viewer to *Rebel*, through its depiction of the resistant and strident middle-finger gesture. The *Reclaim* image on the right features a hand holding the earth in a firm grip, symbolising what we should hope to achieve by having a mind-set that we, as ordinary people, should reclaim our sense of agency.

Production:

A set of reference photographs taken by the researcher himself formed the basis for a series of A4 (297mm x 210mm) sketches on brown cardboard. These images were used as the basis of three larger paintings on Masonite boards (600mm x 400mm), made with oil and acrylic paints, spray-paint and paint-markers. The border of each individual painting incorporate iconic quotes from the themes *Resist*, *Rebel* and *Reclaim*, in a graffiti styled text. These drawings and paintings were in turn converted into digital formats and edited and used to create three-layer stencils. Subsequently the image has been exhibited on various surfaces in public spaces.

***Liberty Leading the Powerful* (2018)**

Figure 16. Liberty Leading the Powerful black and white design, 2017.

Figure 17. Liberty Leading the Powerful poster (left) and silkscreen print on t-shirt (right), 2017.

Figure 18. Painting Liberty Leading the Powerful for South African Youth Day, 2018.

Figure 19. Liberty Leading the Powerful paste-up in Military Road, Port Elizabeth, 2019.

Background:

The black and white image in Figure 16 was conceptualised as a combination of two appropriated and *Détourned* images, one depicting a variation of the fist of power, and one featuring the iconic torch borne aloft by the American Statue of Liberty. The artwork was used as a poster design promoting a silkscreen exhibition in which the researcher, along with emerging artists in Nelson Mandela Bay, co-hosted in an inner city space. The exhibition was titled *Alter-Native Space, Activism as a Weapon*. It was intended as a forum for artists, including the researcher to exhibit work that focuses on the use of social activism as a disruptive and creative 'weapon'.

Production:

The initial black and white design (297mm x 210mm) was created digitally and then refined with black fine liner and white paint-marker. The design, which was made with the intention of silk-screen printing, then provided the basis for the poster and painting that were subsequently produced. Figure 16 depicts the *Liberty Leading the Powerful* poster design (297mm x 210) with text digitally incorporated. This poster was my contribution to the promotion of the Alter-Native Space exhibition. The same image was silk-screen printed onto a t-shirt. On 16th June 2018, a public holiday which marks South Africa's *Youth Day,* the researcher had an opportunity to perform a live painting (Figure 18) of *Liberty Leading the Powerful* (920mm x 700mm). This rendition was *Détourned* in response to the significance of the day, which commemorates the loss of the lives of youthful protestors in the 1984 Soweto Youth Uprising. The South African national flag is incorporated, painted onto the fist of power. Figure 19 depicts the public intervention of pasting a printed version onto a wall in Military Road, Port Elizabeth.

***Social Entrapment* (2016)**

Figure 20. Social Entrapment one-layer stencil (left) and silkscreen print on t-shirt (right) for Alter-Native Space, 2016.

Figure 21. Social Entrapment paste-up in Strand Street, Port Elizabeth, 2019.

Background:

This project was inspired by the work of street artists, Banksy being an example, who are concerned with using stencilled images in order to convey messages of social consciousness. The artwork depicts a young boy watering a small tree. One end of a rope is tied to the tree; the other end is tied around the boy's neck. This image is intended to be symbolic of how society is contributes to a range of types of social control. It is the researcher's position that young children are the victims of society, as they are trained to confirm from an early age.

Production:

The image was created digitally from a combination of found images, including one of a boy watering a plant, an image of a rope, and one showing a small tree. The resultant work was then converted into a stencil which was used to create a single artwork in the corridor of Nelson Mandela University's North Campus K-Block Visual Arts Building (Figure 3). The stencil broke so no further works were made using it. The digital version of the image was used in 2017 for the Alter-Native Space exhibition and was printed on a t-shirt (297mm x 210mm). Using a photograph of the spray-painted stencil, it was then digitally edited allowing for further reproduction. The artwork was later used as a contribution to the Alter-Native Space Exhibition where it was silkscreen-printed onto a t-shirt as depicted in Figure 20. The artwork was then printed and pasted onto a wall in Strand Street, Port Elizabeth (Figure 21).

Keep Your Change – I Want Revolution **(2017)**

Figure 22. Keep Your Change – I Want Revolution journal sketch, 2017.

Figure 23. Screengrab of Keep Your Change – I Want Revolution, 2017.

Figure 24. Framed graphite drawing of Keep Your Change I Want Revolution, 2019.

Figure 25. One and two-layer digital stencil reproductions, 2018.

Figure 26. Live spray-painting performance for students at Varsity College, 2018.

Figure 27. Keep Your Change, I Want Revolution paste-up in John Kani Road, Port Elizabeth, 2019.

Background:

The *Keep Your Change – I Want Revolution* series draws direct influence from the street artist Banksy's stencilled artwork, entitled *Keep Your Coins – I Want Change* (Figure 1).

Production:

In my visual journal I set about making a *Détournement* response to the Banksy work. The initial small (297mm x 420mm) sketch (Figure 22) depicts a more realistic representation of a seated figure, now represented as a boy child, holding a signboard on which the words *Keep your Change, I want Revolution,* are written. In the background is a depiction of ruined buildings, drawn from a found image showing of the ruins of war-torn Syria. In a further *Détournement* (Figure 24) the visual journal sketch was reworked on a larger scale, and in this 750mm x 400mm drawing, intended for gallery exhibition, the boy child was replaced by a girl and wearing a traditional Islamic scarf. Finally, the drawing was digitally edited; the background was removed and the image of the figure was simplified, and one and three-layer stencils were produced (Figure 25). Subsequently, I have used the one-layer stencil to create a work as part of a performance presented to students at Varsity College (Figure 26), at which event I had the opportunity to explain the aims of this socially focused research project. The three-layer version was pasted in public on John Kani Road, Port Elizabeth (Figure 27).

Weapons of Mass Distraction

The second theme addressed in the studio practice aspect of this study focuses on visual expressions of concern about the issue of social media distraction. Taking its influence from the Cultural Jammers tactic of employing 'Sabotage', I set out to make images aimed at disrupting the workings of consumer culture and social media,

intended to provoke a critical and analytical cynicism on the part of viewers. The artworks discussed in this section are *Weapons of Mass Procrastination* (2014), *Weapons of Mass Distraction* (2017 – 2018) and *Social Notworking* (2017).

Drawing on the writings of the SI, I have produced a series of artworks that intentionally make use of spectacular imagery as a means of disrupting and commenting on the spectacular flow of information on the internet, and on social media platforms in particular. The aim is to make use of *Détournement*, as a means through which to challenge conventional understandings of and acceptance of the power of social media.

These works are an expression of my resistance to the controlling and manipulative effects of the internet and the social media which I view as being dominant controlling forces in contemporary global society. They display the influence of the Culture Jammers and the Adbusters. I deliberately employ the cultural jamming tactics of 'Sabotage,' 'Appropriation' and 'Intensification' as I set out to take an oppositional stance aimed at disrupting existing capitalist controlling structures by turning dominant cultural norms back on themselves. The titles are intended to be provocative, playful and satirical and the works themselves are intended to spark public engagement when projected digitally onto surfaces in public space.

***Weapons of Mass Distraction* (2014 - 2018)**

Figure 28. Weapons of Mass Procrastination painted on skateboard, 2014.

Figure 29. Weapons of Mass Distraction digital reproduction, 2018.

Figure 30. Weapons of Mass Distraction oil and acrylic painting, 2019.

Background:

The initial concept was derived from an earlier work *Weapons of Mass Procrastination* (Figure 28). This work, which was painted onto a skateboard, which was intended as an expression of resistance to the negative consequences of social media, one of which is the temptation to procrastinate. The work featured painted bombs with social

media icons on them. The intention was to draw a comparison between social media and destructive nuclear missiles. The 'social media' bombs are shown being showered over a cityscape which incorporates a range of iconic global landmarks. The concept evolved, and the initial *Weapons of Mass Procrastination* work was revisited, *détourned* and retitled as *Weapons of Mass Distraction* (Figure 29-30). This 2018 digital version included intricate detail taken from reference images depicting actual nuclear missiles used in the past. The cityscape was changed from a silhouette to a more realistic depiction. The digital version was subsequently transferred onto a canvas for gallery exhibition.

Production:

The initial skateboard painting was created using a stencil technique to create the cityscape silhouette. The bombs were painted using acrylic paints. This artwork formed the basis for the digital version (scaled to fit the size: 297mm x 420mm) which is in effect a *Détournement* of my own work.

***Social Notworking* (2017)**
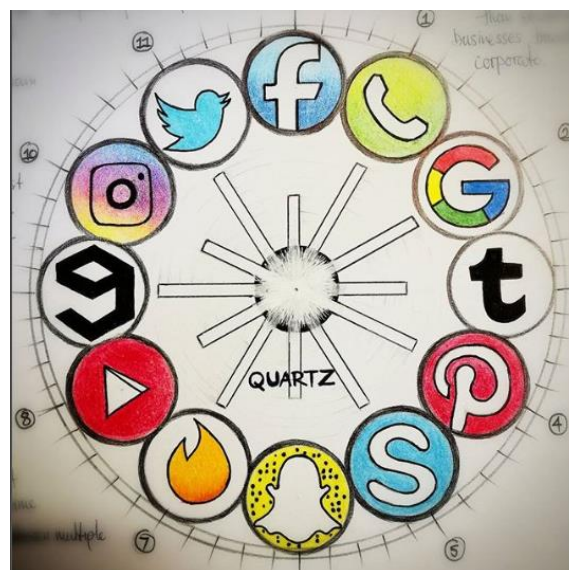
Figure 31. Social Notworking clock planning sketch, 2017.

Figure 32. Social Notworking clock digital plan (left) and test painting on clock face (right), 2017.

Figure 33. Social Notworking final piece, vinyl sticker on functional clock, 2019.

Background:

The *Social Notworking* project has as its basis the idea of a clock face where all the numerals have been replaced by the icons of popular social media platforms. This work expresses my concern about how extended periods of social media usage can cause a person to become unaware of the passage of time moving on. I suggest that social media are misused in order to distract and pacify their mass audiences of consumers, and I suggest that the social media companies are complicit in this. By making use of *Détourned* symbols of popular culture, and by distributing these images on social media platforms dedicated solely to the circulation of my art, I intend to reach wider audiences and to use social media against itself. In this I draw on Kalle Lasn's idea, referenced in Klein (2009: 281), of mass-media and political "jujitsu"[9] – he sets out to use social media to disrupt and resist.

Production:

The *Social Notworking* project originated in a 297mm x 210mm visual journal drawing (Figure 31). I then converted an actual clock, removing the numerals and the face of the clock, and replacing it with my own painted version. The initial plan was to insert a motor and a switch which would allow the clock arms to spin at speed, in order to illustrate how fast time passes when the user is focused on social media. The plan evolved into using a functional clock and replacing the numbers with vinyl stickers. This work, which is also intended for projection onto a building façade, speaks to the waste of the time that people devote to social media.

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[9] Naomi Klein refers to the metaphor, culture jamming as jujitsu, meaning that jammers can utilise the power of one part of the power structure against another part. Using the power structures against itself (Klein, 2009: 281).

The Master Manipulators and the Distractors

In this section of the studio work, I have set out to respond to the question: who are the masters at manipulating the public, and what methods do they use to distract their audiences? The theme takes its inspiration from a series of artworks which I began as early as 2014, featuring the then President of South Africa, the Honourable Jacob Zuma. In an ongoing series I depict him as the villain Joker[10] from DC Comic's *Batman* series. In doing so I have re-presented the former president as being money-hungry and borderline psychopathic.

In my original satirical interpretation, the president was depicted with a grimly smiling face. The corners of his lips were cut all the way to his ears. I made use of *Détournement* in order to merge the image of the president, notorious in some circles and admired in others, and the image of the Joker, the destructive antithesis of Batman, who is considered to be one of the most recognisable villains in pop culture history. I also included a textual alteration in the image - the Joker's '*hahaha'* was redrafted as a '*hehehe'* laugh that sounds more like the one Jacob Zuma has uttered in public on many occasions.

In this series I am influenced by the thinking and the writings of Guy Debord and the SI. My major/primary goal is, like the SI, to be able to open up spaces for education and to encourage collective resistance to outside control over our mental environments. My minor/secondary goal is to communicate with audiences on an emotional, cultural and social level, through the artworks I create, and through the

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[10] Batman (also known as the Dark Knight), is the hero. The DC Comics.com website tells is that "The Joker stands unquestionably as the most recognizable and popular comic book villain in pop culture history. Unpredictable, violent and incredibly dangerous, he is chaos personified". He is regarded as "the polar opposite of the Dark Knight. Both were created by a great tragedy, but Batman has since vowed to do whatever it takes to prevent similar incidents, the Joker revels in creating chaos and destroying lives, believing that life's a big joke and psychotically demonstrating that in a moment, it can all change". His unpredictability in the present is recognised, whilst "Not much is known about his past, but his acts during the present are what define the Joker as one of the greatest threats to our heroes and the people they've sworn to protect". https://www.dccomics.com/characters/joker

situations or interventions I construct, with the intention of provoking critical thought and evoking raw feeling and emotion on the part of the viewers. In the works, I aim to achieve these goals by incorporating the use of *Détournement* and graffiti as both social mediums and tools, in order to apply the SI ideas of play and experimentation in public spaces as a means of affecting positive social change, awareness and consciousness. Here I draw on Richard Cary (1998: 14) who states that gaining emancipatory knowledge involves the tasks of identifying hidden sources of oppression in everyday life and the distortions of social relations among people all in the aims of creating awareness and initiating resistance.

The images of former President Zuma were the catalyst for the series of representations of world leaders that form part of this, the third and final theme of my exhibition. I present them as the masters of manipulation and distraction.

Joker Zuma – Why So Seriaas? (2014 – 2018)
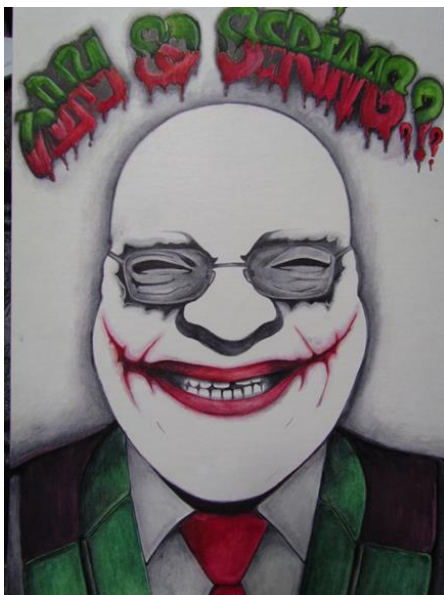
Figure 34. Joker Zuma idea sketch painting in visual journal (left) and vinyl print design on t-shirt (right), 2014.

Figure 35. Joker Zuma two-layer spray painted stencil (left) and mixed-media stencil and acrylic painting (right), 2014.

Background:

As previously stated, the series takes its inspiration from an earlier artwork featuring the then President of South Africa, the Honourable Jacob Zuma, depicted as the villain Joker from the popular superhero comic DC's *Batman*.

Production:

Figures 34 and 35 depict the initial small (297mm x 210mm) visual journal sketch, in acrylic paint, including the text "*Why So Seriaas?",* was intended as a *Détournement* of the *Joker* figure. I used the colours associated with the DC Joker figure, on the face and the blazer of the President, as well as in the dripping text. I simplified the image into a two-layer stencil and sprayed it on canvas. The same image with altered text was used for vinyl printing on a t-shirt. The artwork was updated and *Détourned* into

a more structured three-layer stencil, and I incorporating elements of graffiti into a 'fine art' version, using spray-paint, oil and acrylic paints along with text on Masonite board (600mm x 400mm).

***Joker Presidential Series / Heads of Fate* (2017-2018)**

Figure 36. Joker Presidents A4 visual journal sketches, 2017.
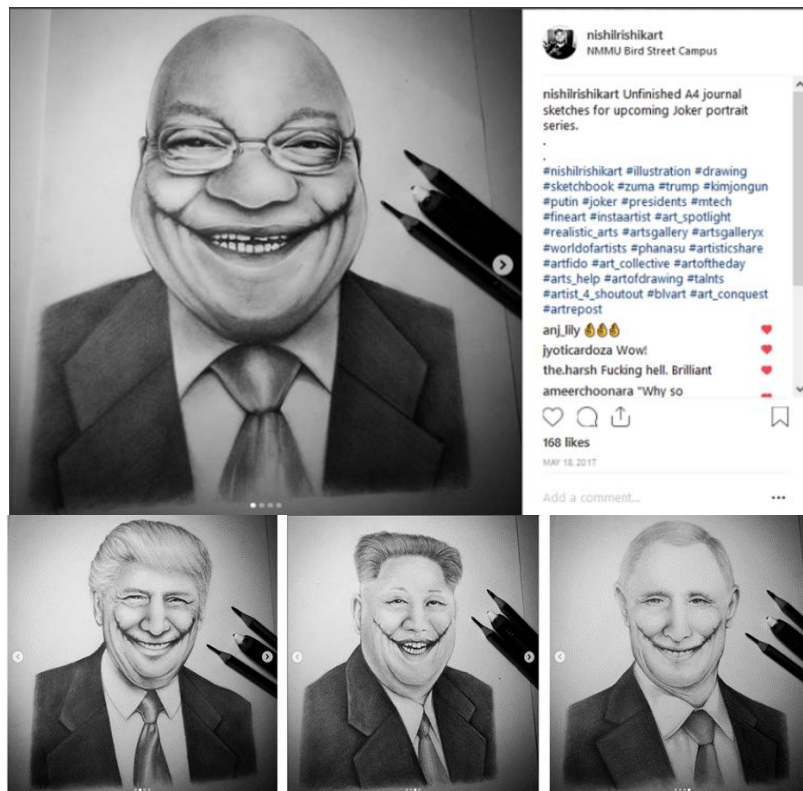
Figure 37. Screengrab from Instagram - *Heads of Fate* presidential series, 2017.

Figure 38. Screengrab from Instagram of Joker Presidents larger detailed drawings, 2018.

Figure 39. Framed Joker Presidents / Heads of Fate, 2019.

Figure 40. Screengrab of Joker Presidents three-layer stencils, 2018.

Figure 41. Applying Joker president's paste-ups in Strand Street, Port Elizabeth, 2019

Figure 42. Joker Zuma paste-up on the freeway, M4 freeway, Port Elizabeth, 2019.

Figure 43. Joker Zuma stencil in Strand Street, Port Elizabeth, 2019.

Figure 44. Joker Zuma three-layer stencil process (top), and action/process shot of spraying stencil on La Boca restaurant in Clyde Street, Central, Port Elizabeth, 2018.

Zuma inspires NMU student

● Former president and other leaders become villainous 'Joker' in work for master's degree

Siyabonga Sesant
sesants@tisoblackstar.co.za

He has been the butt of many a joke and the subject of countless Zapiro "shower head" cartoons – but now former president Jacob Zuma is the inspiration behind the body of work of a Nelson Mandela University master's student.

In his eye-catching illustrations, fine art master's student Nishil Vaghmaria, 27, of Malabar, compares Zuma to The Joker from both the *Batman* and *Suicide Squad* movies.

The Joker is portrayed as a villain in both films.

"Like Zuma, at least in my satirical view, The Joker is money-hungry, he's unpredictable and causes chaos," Vaghmaria said of his work, which will be on display at the NMU Bird Street campus gallery until February 21.

Vaghmaria and two fellow master's students presented their respective bodies of work for examination on Wednesday evening.

Of his work, he said: "It was triggered by my social and personal understanding of social controls and my work kind of tends to express resistance to capitalism and consumerism, so that's what got me into it.

"When I came up with [the] Zuma piece he was still president, so it was still fresh at the time. That was in 2014.

"In 2017 when I was doing my master's I went in a little deeper and I did a realistic drawing of him and I thought, why not touch on the other presidents as well, to keep it as global as possible," he said.

"It's my satirical interpreta-

tion, but when we focus on Zuma. I compare him to The Joker, who is seen as borderline psychopathic and unpredictable at times.

"So it was just inspired by my satirical interpretation of him," Vaghmaria said.

Also on display were "joker" versions of other world-famous leaders.

"I did a realistic drawing of Jacob Zuma when I started my master's and from there I thought to do another three presidents, which are [US president] Donald Trump, [North Korean leader] Kim Jong-un and [Russian president Vladimir] Putin."

Visual arts professor Mary Duker, who was Vaghmaria's

supervisor, said: "If one looks at what Nishil has there, there are different strains in that work – one of which is the preoccupation that everyone has with social media.

"So a lot of that is around social media and it's manipulative aspect.

"Then the other is around leaders . . . the ones he's chosen

in the end are politically attuned with the times, so Trump and Kim Jong-un and Putin and Zuma, all of them are a body of people who wield huge power.

"It's around this global phenomenon of people being influenced."

Duker said each student had a different supervisor.

Fellow master's students Robyn Munnick and Nicole Jordan also had their work on display.

"They [the students] will have come with an idea, a passion, or something that moves them," Duker said.

"I can only speak for Nishil's because I was his supervisor.

"Nishil had a particular interest in the business of people being manipulated by media or by aspects of society which limit individual freedom.

"And so from the time he did his honours he's worked towards this desire to make people conscious of the effects that society has on them.

"He's done a lot of theoretical reading [and] writing and then through that, his body of work was generated.

"The other two students, from what I understand, each deal with something that is personal, that is around their own identity – one in terms of a young Afrikaans female and where she fits in the world and the other one around the business of personal loss, which is quite abstract."

NMU visual arts head of department Professor Vulindlela Nyoni said he was proud of the students' work.

"What we're trying to do with our master's and postgrad students is to strive for excellence – and what is on show proves they have worked hard.

"They have come through a great deal of process and thinking and academic rigour to arrive at an exhibition that really encapsulates everything they've been working on for the last 18 months to two years," he said.

REFLECTING LIFE: Nishil Vaghmaria with his Joker Zuma illustration at an exhibition highlighting the creativity of Nelson Mandela University's visual arts master's students Photograph: WERNER HILLS

Figure 45. Feature in The Herald local newspaper, 2019.

Background:

In 2017 I returned to the manipulator theme. I further *détourned* the Zuma stencil and produced a realistic journal sketch of the then President. I followed this with similar sketches of three other presidents, namely Donald Trump, Kim Jong-Un and Vladimir Putin, all of them notorious in various ways. All three of them are depicted in the same manner and style as I portrayed the Jacob Zuma figure. Drawing on the reference from the *Joker* from *Batman* they are all shown with the big smiles and cut lips.

Having gauged the positive responses to these images on my social media platforms, which are dedicated to the promotion of my art and to undermining the power of social media through the use of social media, I moved on to produce larger (594mm x 420mm), highly detailed drawings of the Joker presidents. These drawings were scanned and digitally manipulated and three-layer stencils were made from them. The Zuma image was then *détourned* further, and he appeared as an alternative version of the Joker as he was portrayed in DC's *Suicide Squad* (2016) movie[11]. This particular *Joker* had face tattoos hence the 'J' tattooed below the President's eye and the inclusion of the word 'Damaged' inscribed on his forehead. Each *détourned* version of the Zuma artworks is befitting to the historical moment of its creation.

Production:

Figure 37 features the four (297mm x 210mm) drawings from my visual journal as well as screengrabs of them that I posted on Instagram. These idea-sketches formed the basis for four larger (594mm x 420mm), more detailed, framed versions shown in Figure 39. These drawings were intended as a *Détournement* of the technique of *Détournement* in order to achieve a more 'Fine Art' effect focused on very realistic detailing. All four of the revised drawings were digitalised and converted into three-layer stencils (620mm x 450mm), and subsequently they have been sprayed onto various wall surfaces. The Jacob Zuma image (Figure 44) which was created at a slightly larger scale, has been made into an 841mm x 594mm three-layer stencil. Figure 41 - 45 shows the artist's intervention in public space in the inner city of Port Elizabeth as well as featuring in the local Herald newspaper after the exhibition.

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[11] DC's *Suicide Squad* (2016) A secret government agency recruits some of the most dangerous incarcerated super-villains to form a defensive task force. Their first mission: save the world from the apocalypse. The twisted Joker playing the lover of one of the villains in the task force: Harley Quinn.
https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1386697/

A Tentative Framework for Socially Aware Creative Practice

Scott & Palincsar (2013: 1), already mentioned in the introduction to the study, state that "the focus of the sociocultural perspective is on the roles that participation in social interactions and culturally organised activities play in influencing psychological development" In both the practical and the theoretical components of this study the researcher has sets out to express his social awareness and to explore, express and explain how individual mental functioning relates to social, political cultural, institutional and historical contexts.

Like the SI, the researcher sets out to influence people to think critically about the socio-political and cultural issues of their current historical moment. The tentative framework which concludes this chapter has been written with the intention of challenging viewers to analyse and critique their daily conceptions of the world, and to remind them of the social role and political functions of art. The findings that have emerged out of the researcher's critical reading and the visual explorations have been funnelled into this framework, which is intended as a 'take-away' for the reader/viewer to make use of and draw from. The artist, who sees himself as an emerging visual arts educator, aims to raise consciousness in a way that encourages people to learn to think for themselves, and in turn, share their theoretical perspectives and visual techniques in order to teach others. It is the researcher's belief along with other cultural activists, socio-politically concerned artists and visual arts educators play an important educative role in raising the consciousness of contemporary society.

In the following paragraphs, knowledge gained through both the theoretical and the practical research components of this study is shared. The researcher will set out to present this section as a 'toolbox' of theoretical triggers and practical ideas. The discussion will be framed around a series of critical questions, and the researcher will present possible ways that reader/viewers, concerned educators and artists can set out to become active participants in influencing social change.

How do readers/viewers, concerned educators and artists equip themselves with knowledge about and awareness of the constraints society places on them?

Détournement can be used as a vital tool to critique, visually interpret ideas, and construct understandings of social control. The appropriation of images from popular culture allows for the subversion of popular or traditional perceptions as well as equipping the artist with an ability to alter viewer's perspectives and understandings of the images which are being *Détourned.* In following in the footsteps of the SI which people should set out to consider, critique and address two main issues, firstly, the powerful and negative effects of the mass media and the resultant colonisation of public, psychic, social and discursive spaces, and secondly, the question of how the effects of rampant consumerism, reinforced by global capitalism, negatively affect those spaces.

Artists should use these techniques to criticise the spectacle; capitalist phenomena that occur in a society such as media, advertising, television, fashion and celebrity culture. Debord suggested that life had become a superficial imitation of itself and that an abundance of images had replaced it. Criticism of the spectacular society of mass production, mass consumption and mass media is highly encouraged. If this society is lacking authenticity and impoverishing the quality of life which leads to a degradation of knowledge and genuine experience, people should be warned about these phenomena which distract and pacify the masses through activism.

One can view this as a form of visual and social activism which is aimed at a transformation in society. These transformations occur through cultural resistance and subversion, both employed by the Situationists and the Culture Jammers. It should be intended at an update of their tactics by using spectacular images and language to disrupt the flow of the spectacle. Like Rasmussen and Jakobsen (2015: 8) suggest, this method of artistic production should be seen as an aesthetic emancipation to spectacular society.

The researcher maintains that people should set out to vehemently 'resist' dominant forms of social, political and cultural control. In order to do this, they will need to attain emancipatory knowledge.

What approaches to resisting societal control and drawing attention to its negative effects can newly 'conscientized' people adopt?

They should seek to alert others to their concerns and they should consider engaging in activities which 'rebel' against the status quo. Here he recommends creating artworks as a means of resisting and rebelling. If people engage with the theory and explore resistance through the sharing of their understanding and through the creation and distribution of visual images they can 'reclaim' their sense of agency. Here the researcher draws attention to the call he makes in the artwork *Resist, Rebel, Reclaim* (Figure 15).

Positioning resistance theory within the realm of education about daily visual experiences, students can thus be able to meaningfully assess, interpret and attend to social, political, and cultural struggles that occur every day and affect people's mental environments. Resistant artists should also use their work to contest the status quo which will inspire, offend or enrage the audience in the aims of awakening society's consciousness.

What techniques can artists employ?

The researcher encourages artists to adopts the approaches used by the *Culture Jammers*, and follow a three-step system in which they explore the mental and physical consumer culture environment, as consider ways in which readers/viewers can be assisted to develop new understandings and to find and express their concerns

in forms of visual and social activism. As was stated in previous chapters this activism has the power to act as a 'pedagogical hinge' (Ellsworth, 2005: 5).

The researcher proposes that artists use *Détournement* in order to create 'teachable moments'[12] which can serve to contribute to a positive change in the nature of society. These moments, he suggests, can lead audiences out of passive spectatorship through generating informative and thought-provoking forms of cultural production. He promotes the experimental use of *Détournement*, and suggests that this approach can serve as a counter-cultural mode of production. Here the researcher directs reader/viewers to consider his work *YOLO* featured in Figure 9.

What techniques and approaches can newly socially conscious educators employ?

The researcher suggests that critically conscious educators can open up transitional educative spaces by introducing the work of socially, politically and culturally concerned creative practitioners. Here students and adult learners can explore the layers of sociocultural, political, aesthetic and historical complexity that were considered and discussed in Chapters One, Two and Three of this study.

Here educators might introduce and promote the Culture Jammers tactics and strategies of disruption, and their employment of 'Sabotage, Appropriation and Intensification' (Harold, 2007: 58) These approaches informed the researcher's own approach to conceptualising his own works, as discussed in Chapter Four.

The researcher maintains that when employing these techniques of production, genuine pedagogical value is created. He proposes that educational institutions be re-envisaged as generative sites of consciousness-raising, sites where both students and

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[12] Reference to the Adbusters Media Foundation's *Media Empowerment Kit* (2005: 1).

teachers are able to critically reflect upon and effectively challenge the repressive practices and the dominant power structures that reinforce the inequities of the status quo. This kind of educational environment can serve as a site for thoughtful opposition and reflective inquiry which influences meaningful engagement in society.

Positioning resistance theory within educational content that focuses on daily visual experiences will allow students the opportunity to meaningfully assess, interpret and attend to the social, political, and cultural struggles that occur every day, and which affect people's mental environments.

Drawing from Freedman and Schuler (2002: 23), people should be aware that the activity of creating artworks have long been valued as a physical manifestation of an artist's social, cultural, and individual identity as it "reflects, critiques, and supports the exploration of what it means to be human for viewers".

By drawing attention to the way social relations and ideologies are constructed and reinforced through popular culture commodities and experiences, resistant artists are able to construct new meanings of the world around them. Knowledge can thus be expressed through appropriation, and this critiquing contemporary society's ills have the power to alter or affect the mental environments of others. This relates to Tavin (2003: 198) where he suggests education that approaches everyday experiences that are related to popular are seen as sites for ideological struggle and resistance. He adds that these struggles and conflicts are primarily rooted in a democratic spirit that attends to the practices of teaching and learning, focusing on lived experiences with intentions of disruption, contestation and transformation of oppressive systems of control.

Artists should follow Freedman (2003: 147) when he explains why student art-making plays an important role in the learning and teaching of visual culture. He states that "Artistic production is a critical path to understanding, partly because the process and

the product of art-making enables students to experience creative and critical connections between form, feeling and knowing. It empowers students through their expression of ideas and construction of identities as it gives insight into the artistic motivations, intentions, and capabilities of others".

Kincheloe (1991) adds that critical art educators should be committed to the democratisation of society through art education and seek to generate emancipatory goals through creating awareness of, revealing and resisting hidden forms of power. The pedagogical approach in educating others should follow in Darts (2004), where he asserts that people can arm themselves with the required intellectual and creative tools which examine and critique the world around them and in doing so, transform their own mind-sets as well as that of their specific communities. This is done in the aims of preparing the next inevitable generation of consumers to be critically conscious of these issues.

Artists should use their acts of creative resistance as critical responses to what the Culture Jammers believed as the insanity of controlled contemporary consumer-culture. This is to be able to live a life with the birth-right of being able to resist, select, reject, create, rebel, contribute, educate and reclaim their sense of selves. Like Yorkley (1999: 24), the researcher is suggesting that contemporary educators should combine the power of artistic means with political action that questions powerful ideological formations. Hence is the reason that critical art education can be seen as a tool for exposing and addressing oppression which in turn encourages social transformation.

All of the above can be related back to Debord's major and minor goals intended to be achieved by the Situationist International through creating situations and ideas which are free from social control, consciously causing unexpected rupture and disruption of the status quo. Artist's primary goal should be to create these situations allowing them to open up transitional educative spaces for criticism and collective action. Secondly artists should aim to reach their audience on an emotional level by creating situations

that provoke critical thought, raw feelings and honest emotions. Also like the SI, the researcher believes that these forms of vanguard action may possibly be the best instrument of intervention in the crises of contemporary society. It is the most appropriate means of action against any form of control.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

At the outset of this study, the researcher set out to convey his concerns about the workings of our current global, cultural, socio-political and economic order. In the text he has examined the mechanisms that are used to achieve societal control, and presented information about socially and politically focused art movements that have sought to resist capitalism and consumerism. In the studio work he has explored ways to express his own position, and set out to communicate visually with a range of audiences, using different modes and mediums, with a particular focus being placed on the use of the SI technique of *Détournement*. As the project as a whole is intended as a way of alerting audiences to the systems that limit their individual freedom of choice, expression and creativity, the research trajectory culminates in the presentation of a tentative framework intended for use as a catalyst by artists' intent on developing and expressing their social consciousness'.

The creative outputs generated in the study have been presented in galleries, as well as in online and public spaces. The *Détourned*, graffiti styled works have reached, and been responded to by a wide range of audiences. In this the researcher has achieved one of the primary research goals. The exhibition work, drawing as it does on street-art techniques and approaches, is intended to contribute to the legitimisation and decriminalisation of graffiti as an art form in the arts institution.

In Chapter One, the negative consequences and manipulative effects of capitalism were examined. The social constraints that restrict modern society were highlighted, and the chapter drew attention to media, advertising and marketing strategies that are used as the means of manipulating and seducing the global society of consumers. The chapter also focused on shopping as an essential ritual in contemporary society, and reflected on how people shape and transform their identities based on what they consume. Its main intention was to make readers more aware of these capitalist systems that govern and control our mental and physical environments. The chapter

then concluded with a brief exploration of recent artistic and political movements that have set out to resist these systems and constraints.

Chapter Two addressed the use-value of the Situationist International in relation to the conceptual understandings generated in Chapter One. It focused on the use of the aesthetic technique of *Détournement* and on the SI theories of the *Spectacle*. The chapter explored how the researcher draws from the SI ideologies in his artworks, which are an expression of his resistance to, and, objection to, aspects of neo-liberal society.

Chapter Three focused on the work of Culture Jammers and the Adbusters, exploring how these groups use art as a form of visual activism intended to disrupt the flow of the spectacle. The researcher drew attention to three of the main concepts employed by the Culture Jammers, namely Sabotage, Appropriation and Intensification. He recommended using these as a means of consciousness raising through art production, and highlighted them as potential ways of challenging and disrupting the spectacular status quo.

Chapter Four addressed the researcher's findings thus far. It opened with a broad statement of the intent for the project as a whole. Thereafter it set out the main intentions and outcomes of the studio / practical component, along with an analysis and thick description of each of the artworks that informed and formed part of the project. This chapter draws together the strands of the researcher's research objectives. It provides a critical reflection on both the theoretical and creative aspects of the research, and it encourages critical consciousness' on the part of the viewers / readers. The chapter ends with a brief framework for socially aware creative practice which was distilled from the research and findings. This framework, inspired by the Adbusters *Media Empowerment Kit* (2005), is intended to serve as an inspiration to contemporary artists who want to think more critically about their surroundings and be more aware of the social, political and cultural issues facing society.

Resistance to spectacular domination is the driving force behind this research project. The findings of the study, both textual and visual, are intended to serve both as a contributing agent and as a means of overcoming the spectacle. Given that societies around the world are in a state of change, the researcher is now aware that emerging artists are constantly being transformed by the changing historical moments occurring of their time. In response to this, the researcher sees the research presented in this study as an emancipatory contribution to social change, with knowledge derived from the exploration and expansion of the ideas and thinking of revolutionary movements, both past and present.

This study, and the tentative framework presented in it, may serve as a guide or toolbox for individual artists who seek to respond to socio-political and cultural issues, and resist the controlling factors of neo-liberal society. This study may serve to inspire educators to introduce these visual forms of activism and resistance into their curriculums, in order to encourage further explorations into this area of research. In the search for critical theories, means, ways and recommendations for activism against any form of control, projects like this one can be used to open the eyes of artists, educators and activists, with the aim of raising social awareness through the creation of situations and the construction of transitional spaces that lead to teachable moments in art and theory.

Figure 46. Installation set-up in the Nelson Mandela Bird Street Gallery for exhibition, 2019.

Figure 47. Installation set-up in the Nelson Mandela Bird Street Gallery for exhibition, 2019.

Figure 48. Installation of process room at NMU Bird Street Gallery for exhibition, 2019.

Figure 49. Set-up of projection room presenting slideshow at NMU Bird Street Gallery, 2019.

Figure 50. Projection of slideshow onto façade of NMU Bird Street Gallery on exhibition opening night, 2019.


Figure 51. Projection of slideshow onto façade of NMU Bird Street Gallery on exhibition opening night, 2019.

Addendum

The Examination Exhibition

The research project culminated in a multi-modal examination exhibition entitled *'Visual Resistance through Détournement'*, which took the following forms:

A gallery exhibition

An outdoor projection

An installation of artworks in identified public spaces

Gallery exhibition

The work was displayed in three adjacent rooms: In the main room was a formal display of framed fine art drawings, paintings and installations, that included works which produced using stencilling techniques. In the second room viewers were introduced to the art-making processes I use in the production of street art, stencilling, vinyl sticker and wheat-pasting. In the third room I projected a compilation of still image and video footage of the processes leading up to the final product of each artwork, and of my interventions in public spaces.

Outdoor projection

On the opening night of the examination exhibition there was stills and video footage were projected onto the façade of the university's Bird Street Gallery building.

Artworks in identified public spaces

Détourned street art works, in the forms of stencils, vinyls and wheat-pastes were installed in identified public spaces in the period prior to the examination exhibition. The examination panel was provided with an annotated map of the city centre, along with route-finder directions, and they viewed the works in situ.

Note:

Because the work installed in public spaces formed part of an academic research project, permission was acquired permission from building owners / occupants. All the artworks installed were easily removable from any surface should the owners wish to remove them at a later stage.

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