

*Visualising Chinese Presence:
An Analysis of The Contemporary Arts of Zambia and
Zimbabwe*

By

Lifang Zhang

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for

Master of Arts at Rhodes University

November 2019

Supervisor: Professor Ruth Simbao

Abstract

With the revival and rapid growth of relations between China and African countries in the present century, the “China–Africa relationship” has become a topic of close attention globally and the media and politicians have been dominating the mainstream discourses with dichotomised narratives. China–Africa engagement has also spurred academic research, most of which is oriented toward large-scale economic, political, and strategic concerns. In this context, it is significant to conduct in-depth research exploring specific engagement between Chinese and African people on the ground.

Contemporary artists based in Africa have started to represent, through artworks and performances, their experiences and expressions of relations between China and various African countries. However, an examination of twenty-first century connections between Africa and China in relation to the contemporary visual arts is a new area of study and only a limited number of scholarly works exist. To contribute to the research in this area, this thesis explores the ways in which artists engage with specific realities and lived-experiences of Chinese presence through their artistic practices, with a focus on a selection of artists from Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Through visual analysis, interviews and field work, this thesis provides a systematic investigation of contemporary arts of Zambia and Zimbabwe in relation to Africa– China encounters, engaging with four aspects: the discursive field, the material presence, individual experiences of encounters, and the broader relational connections within the arts. This thesis argues that, motivated by the histories and realities of African societies, artists from Zambia and Zimbabwe, through their artistic practices, form part of the Africa-China engagement and insert their

agencies in the south-south relations between Africans and Chinese. Therefore, this thesis demonstrates the value in approaching the broader discussion on Africa–China engagements from the perspective of contemporary art, arguing that, with the social concerns of the artists and the expressive capacity of creative forms, visual arts are able to embrace diversity, dynamics, complexities and contradictions, and, therefore, can develop the topic beyond the stereotypical narratives about Africa-China relations to a more nuanced understanding of African-Chinese encounters in specific contexts.

Declaration of Originality

I declare that this thesis is my own work and that all the sources I have used have been acknowledged by complete bibliographic references. This thesis is being submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for Master of Arts at Rhodes University. I declare that it has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at another university.



Lifang Zhang

2019.11.29
Date

Table of Contents

Preface	i
Acknowledgement	iii
List of Illustrations	v
Introduction	1
CHAPTER ONE: Representing “China–Africa”: A Discursive Field of Social-Politics and Cultural Practices	14
1.1 A brief history of Zimbabwe–China relations	14
1.2 The Look East Policy as a patriotic narrative.....	19
1.3 The new Colossus: a counter-narrative	24
1.4 <i>Zimdesia</i> : another counter-narrative	34
CHAPTER TWO: Materialising Chinese Presence in Zimbabwe with Consumer Wastes of Made-in-China Products	39
2.1 Representations of zhing-zhong.....	39
2.2 A metaphorical smellscape of urban Harare suffused with foreign objects.....	44
2.3 Towards a social-cultural life of the object	50
2.4 Materialising the lived-experiences with the consumer waste of Chinese products	53
CHAPTER THREE: Inserting Little Narratives of Zambian–Chinese	59
Encounters through Research-based Art Practice	59

3.1 Zambia–China: relations, facts and discourses.....	59
3.2 Towards a process of unlearning and relearning: questions, researches and family stories.....	65
3.3 Little narratives as concern and method.....	72
3.4 The past, present and future in <i>Black Mountain</i>	79
CHAPTER FOUR: Texturing the South: Possibility of Comparative.....	89
Perspective and Hidden Artistic Network.....	89
4.1 Disaggregating the global south.....	89
4.2 The possibility of a comparative approach: the China bag as <i>lingua franca</i> of migration in the south	93
4.3 The hidden network within the south: Marin Phiri’s artistic experience between Zambia and China	106
Conclusion	122
Bibliography.....	126

Preface

As my entry point to the contemporary arts of Africa, my research on representations of China in Africa is associated with the process of situating myself in the space where I conduct my study. Here, the word “situating” refers to what Simbao (2017c:1) refers to as “a positioning that is physical and metaphorical, and draws from lived experiences guided by specific situations”.

In my case, it first means my physical shift from China to South Africa in 2018. As a MA student, I joined the *Arts of Africa and Global South's* Research Programme at Rhodes University, which is run by my Supervisor, Professor Simbao. This research platform includes postgraduate training and an artists' and writers' residency programme, and provided me with the opportunity to communicate with the artists and visit their studios. My MA studies overlapped with the MFA studies of fellow student Stary Mwaba, who was also conducting research on China's presence in Africa, and the artist's residency of Moffat Takadiwa. Through informal conversations with Mwaba and Takadiwa and close observation of their work in their studios, I had the chance to understand their creative processes and to learn more about their lived experiences that are so critical to their artworks. Furthermore, I was selected to participate in the Theory from Africa Workshop at Witwatersrand University, as well as the Southern Epistemologies series seminars at Rhodes University. My experience of living in South Africa and engaging with various artists and researchers in the research programme and at these two workshops brought home to me the idea that there is often a “disjuncture between theoretical approaches and lived experiences” (Simbao 2017c: 6), particularly when Africa is being written about from beyond the continent.

Through my experiences of living in South Africa, learning how to understand what is happening on the ground, and drawing closer to the perspectives of the artists' creative processes, I began to feel more meaningfully situated in relation to my own research. Sary Mwaba's use of little narratives and my observation of the way in which he embodies them in his practice, assisted me to turn my attention to ordinary people's narratives in relation to Africa-China. Moffat Takadiwa's personal reading and usage of everyday objects in his work influenced my understanding of objects, including art objects in a social-relational context. These are a few of many things in the space I have been working in that impacted and shifted my perception of the topic of Africa-China in relation to artists' practices.

The process of situating myself, therefore, has shaped my concern with and my approach to the study. Empirically grounded research does not provide easy answers to questions I initially raised in my research proposal such as "How do African artists imagine China?" or "Do they view/represent China's presence as positive/negative?". Gradually I shifted my question to "How do the artists engage with Chinese presence, motivated by their specific context and lived-experiences?" and started to implicitly ask what artists were actually talking about when they made work about China. As such, contextualising the artists' work became a substantial process in my study and a bottom-up approach is adopted in my research in order to understand the broad social-political context through the lens of art.

Meanwhile, my own experience as a Chinese person in Africa, encountering complicated emotions and tensions in many cases, became an important part of my own process as a MA candidate. During my two years of study, I have, on numerous occasions, been led to question my own positionality as a Chinese researcher, and to seek ways to exert my own agency and position in my study of the arts of Africa.

Acknowledgement

This research was made possible through the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Masters bursary (2018-2019) and the support of the *Arts of Africa and the Global Souths* Research Programme run by Prof Ruth Simbao.

First of all, I would like to thank my dear supervisor Prof Simbao. Thank you for having me here for the past two years, with all your encouragement, support and your trust in me. Your wisdom and your open mind have made me believe that academic study can also be interesting and creative. Thank you for all the opportunities you provided for me. Thank you for being such a generous person and a very understanding supervisor. I believe I will have another three beautiful years with your guidance as I embark on PhD studies.

Thank you to all the artists who have shared their stories with me. Thank you for your support of my study and for bringing me new ways to look at the world and life. Thank you for engaging with me and inspiring me.

Thanks to the great *Arts of Africa and Global Souths* research team. Thank you all for being so kind to me and making me feel I have a home here. Thanks to Charmaine Mostert and Shirley Kabwato for all your administrative support.

I would also like to thank Prof Cheng Ying and Jiang Hui. Without your encouragement and guidance, I would not have made my way here. Thanks to Mr Zhao Ke for your generous help with my field trip in Harare. Thanks to all my friends who are so far but so close.

Thanks to art. Thanks to the beautiful seasons.

My sincere thanks again to those who I have or have not named here. I wish the stars shine on your way forward.

List of Illustrations

Fig.1.1 Kudzanai Chiurai, *Revelations II* (2011), Pigment inks on premium satin photo paper. Source: <http://www.goodman-gallery.com/exhibitions/234>

Fig.1.2 Wallen Maondera, *Pagoridhe revanhu manje?*, Oil Oncanvas, 165*180cm. Source: photo courtesy of Tyburn Gallery

Fig.1.3 Richard Mudariki, *Chinese Tailor* (2013), Acrylic on canvas; 100*100 cm. Source: <http://www.johansborman.co.za/contemporary-artists/mudariki-richard/40richard-mudariki---chinese-tailor-2013-100-x-100-cm.jpg/>

Fig.1.4 Edward Linley Sambourne, *The Rhodes Colossus*, 1892. Source: *Punch, or the London Charivari*, 10 December, 1892

Fig.1.5 Zapiro, *The Rhodes Colossus - 118 years later*(2009). Source: <https://www.zapiro.com/090405st>

Fig.1.6 Richard Mudariki, *From Cape to Cairo* (2013), Charcoal and pastel on paper, 71*50 cm. Source: <http://www.johansborman.co.za/exhibition-work/black-white-2014/from-cape-to-cairo-2013-71-x-50-cm.jpg/>

Fig.1.7 Ronald Muchatuta *Made in China* (2016), Oil & Charcoal on canvas, 139.5*100 cm. Source: <https://eclecticaprintartgallery.co.za/Artists/ronald-muchatuta/>

Fig.1.8 Yue Minjun, *Untitled* (2005), Oil on canvas, 220*200cm
Source:https://www.saatchigallery.com/artists/artpages/yue_minjun_untitled.htm

Fig.1.9 Wallen Mapondera, *Zimdesia* (2018), post on Facebook page.

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/Zimdesia-Democratic-Party-1990690747610800/>

Fig.1.10 Wallen Mapondera, *Zimdesia* (2018), post on Facebook Page of

Zimdesia. Source: <https://www.facebook.com/Zimdesia-Democratic-Party-1990690747610800/>

Fig.2.1 Dan Halter, *Zhing-Zhong Mother and Child*(2006), Plastic,

33*18*10 cm each, image by Mario Todeschini. Source:

<http://danhalter.com/category/work/takeme-to-your-leader/>

Fig.2.2 Vulindlela Nyoni, *Murambatsvina vii* (2012), screenprint, etching

and chincollé. Source: published in Simbao (2012) *Making Way:*

Contemporary Art from South Africa & China exhibition Catalogue

Fig.2.3 Gerald Machona, *From China with love* (2012), performance ,

photo by Mark Wilby. Source:

<https://www.ru.ac.za/ruthsimbao/exhibitionsperformances/fromchinawithlove/>

Fig.2.4 Moffat Takadiwa,, *smell of Harare A* (2015), found spray tops,

approx. diameter 70 cm. Source: photo courtesy of Tyburn Gallery

Fig.2.5 Moffat Takadiwa,, *smell of Harare B*, 2015,Found spray-can

debris, 95*95*25 cm. Source: photo courtesy of Tyburn Gallery

Fig.2.6 Moffat Takadiwa, *Zimbabwean bird smell like plastic dragon*

(2015), spray tops and cut beverage flasks, 241*99*21 cm. Source: photo courtesy of Tyburn Gallery

Fig.2.7 Moffat Takadiwa collects materials from the dumpsite in

Chitungwiza town. Source: photo by Lifang Zhang, Harare, 2018

Fig.2.8 Shared Studio at Mbare. Source: photo by Lifang Zhang, Harare, 2018

Fig.3.1 Sary Mwaba, *The Copper, Cobalt, Manganese Chinese Cabbage* (2015), installation of chinakohl, food colour. Source: photo courtesy of Sary Mwaba.

Fig.3.2 TAZARA passengers, Bana Mukupa and grandson, Chambeshi, Zambia (2017). Source: photo courtesy of Sary Mwaba

Fig.3.3 A mining slag or waste dump, Wusakile, Kitwe, Zambia (2017). Source: photo courtesy of Sary Mwaba

Fig.3.4 Sary Mwaba, *The WITCH* (2014), acrylic on wire mesh, 200*195cm. Source: photo courtesy of Sary Mwaba

Fig.3.5 Sary Mwaba, Detail of *Creating a Nation out of Newsprint, Chambia the New Colony* (2018), newsprint on tarpaulin, variable dimension. Source: photo courtesy of Sary Mwaba

Fig.3.6 Sary Mwaba, *Creating a Nation out of Newsprint* (2018), newsprint on tarpaulin, various dimension. Source: photo courtesy of Sary Mwaba

Fig.3.7 Sary Mwaba, *Black Bodies* (2018), enamel on board, 40*60cm. Source: photo courtesy of Sary Mwaba.

Fig.3.8 Sary Mwaba, Details of *Black Mountain* (2019), Sary Mwaba, *The Black Mountain* (2019), mushrooms, soil and plastic bags, various dimension. Source: photo courtesy of Sary Mwaba.

Fig.3.9 Sary Mwaba, *Mapping Black Mountain Land* (2018), Mixed media on tent, 200*280 cm. Source: photo courtesy of Sary Mwaba

Fig.3.10 Stary Mwaba, *Tracing, Marking the Spots: Buried Alive* (2018), mixed media on tarpaulin, various sizes. Source: photo courtesy of Stary Mwaba

Fig.3.11 Stary Mwaba, *Scorched Land I* (2018), mixed media on shade cloth, 292*286 cm. Source: photo courtesy of Stary Mwaba

Fig.3.12 Stary Mwaba, *Black Bodies* (2018), enamel on canvas, 150*180 cm. Source: photo courtesy of Stary Mwaba.

Fig.4.1 China bag with red-blue-white pattern. Source: <https://www.zkhiphani.co.za/tribetuesday-see-chuenes-creative-vernac-bags/chinabag/>

Fig.4.2 Dan Halter, *Space Invader* (Customs House, Cape town, 2008), photographic Lambda print mounted on aluminium, 255*375 mm, photo by Matthew Partridge. Source: <http://danhalter.com/space-invader-bags/>

Fig.4.3 Dan Halter, *Rifugiato Mappa del Mondo 4* (2012), new and found plasticweave bags, 183*380cm. Source: <http://danhalter.com/rifugiato-mappa-del-mondo-42012/>

Fig.4.4 Dan Halter, *Kuzvuvu Dumbu* (2019), Found plastic-weave bags and wire frame, 230*100*38 cm, Source: <http://danhalter.com/kuzvuvu-dumbu-2019/>

Fig.4.5 Dan Halter, *Mai Mabag* (Back),(2019), used plastic weave bags and wire frames, Black Serpentine, 110*122*240 cm, Edition of 5 + 1 AP. Source: <http://danhalter.com/mai-mabag-2019/>

Fig.4.6 Dan Halter, *The ears of the hippo* (2013), black spring stone, found plasticweave bag, life-size. Source: <http://danhalter.com/the-ears-of-the-hippo-2013/>

Fig.4.7 Ronald Muchatuta, *Children of the necklace VI* (2015), oil on board, 27*27cm. Source: <http://afripopmag.com/2015/12/16/ronald-muchatutas-africanimmigration-series-highlights-xenophobia/>

Fig.4.8 Ronald Muchatuta, *Zulu Tribal Affair* (2016), Oil on Board. Source: <http://sacreativenetwork.co.za/2015/12/ronald-muchatuta-strives-for-national-unitythrough-the-african-immigration-series/>

Fig.4.9 Shen Hua, *Fenyan Portrait* (2012), oil on woven bag, 50*60 cm. Source: <http://show.artintern.net/index/image/html.php?id=14618&page=44>

Fig.4.10 Chen Qiulin, *Xinsheng zhen* (2006), installation view. Source: <http://longmarchspace.com/zh/chen-qiulin-migration/>

Fig.4.11 Dan Halter, *Go Out/Go Global* (2016), Hand-woven archival inkjet prints 64 x 90 cm. Source: <http://danhalter.com/go-out-go-global-blue-2016/>

Fig.4.12 Martin Phiri at studio in China, photo of Martin Phiri. Source: photo reproduced by Lifang Zhang, Lusaka, 2018

Fig.4.13 Martin Phiri's graduation certificate of Central Academy of Fine Arts. Source: photo by Lifang Zhang, Lusaka, 2018

Fig.4.14 Martin Phiri, *Casket II* (1995-1996), fluorescent light tube cover, plaster. Source: photo by Lifang Zhang, Lusaka, 2018

Fig.4.15 Martin Phiri, *Ngoni Warrior* (1988), bronze sculpture, life-size. Source: photo by Lifang Zhang, Henry Tayali Art Gallery, Lusaka, 2018

Fig.4.16 A page of Martin Phiri's sketch books. Source: photo by Lifang Zhang, Lusaka, 2018

Fig.4.17 Page 35 of Martin Phiri's hand-drawn textbook. Source: photo by Lifang Zhang, Lusaka, 2018

Fig.4.18 Page 50 of Martin Phiri's hand-drawn textbook. Source: photo by Lifang Zhang, Lusaka, 2018

Fig.4.19 Emmanuel Muntanga, *Harry Mwaanga Nkumbula* (2013), bronze sculpture, height of 320cm. Source: photo courtesy of Emmanuel Muntanga

Fig.4.20 Martin Phiri, *The Holy Family* (1994-1995), wood, around 120*100cm. Source: photo by Lifang Zhang, Matero Boys' Secondary School, Lusaka, 2018

Fig.4.21 Zhan Wang, *Artificial Rock #10* (2001), stainless steel, wood stand, 75*45*19 cm. Source: <https://www.artsy.net/artwork/zhan-wang-zhan-wang-artificialrock-number-10-jia-shan-shi>

Fig.4.22 Zhan Wang, *Shell of Mao Suit* (1993-1994), bronze, life-size. Source: <http://www.zhanwangart.com/works/22>

Introduction

For most African people today, China is not the far-off and abstract East, but constitutes a visible reality in their everyday lived-experiences. Many of those who once imagined China through kung fu movies now encounter Chinese in daily living spaces, the streets, restaurants and offices. Others observe China when they pass by Chinese construction spots in the urban space, purchase Chinese products in local markets or confront the headlines in the media. These direct and indirect encounters are shaping the current relations between Africa and China, Africans and Chinese. What are the artists' experiences and expressions of these relations? How do they engage with the realities and discourses about Chinese presences? To explore these questions, this thesis provides an in-depth analysis of the representations of Chinese presence with a focus on a selection of artists from Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The China–Africa relationship in public discussions

With the revival and rapid growth of relations between China and African countries in the present century, the “China–Africa relationship” has become a topic of considerable attention. In the Art Basel Hong Kong 2019 show, an Artworld Talk panel *Comparative Futurisms: Afro-Asian Perspectives* put together artists from China, Egypt, India and Kenya for a conversation on how ideas of the future are developing in artistic practice. It is interesting that the conversation shifted to the China–Africa engagement, after Beijing-based curator Yang Beichen introduced an art project by Chinese artists on China's foreign aid in the 1960s and related it to the current video blog (vlog) made by some Chinese based in Africa. These vlogs, which filmed the local community's life with a specific focus catering to the stereotypes of Africa as a primitive and miserable continent,

aroused a lot of controversy in China and were banned ultimately. Yang Beichen's observation on the contradictions and shifts in Chinese imagination about Africans from the 1960s to the present, unsurprisingly, was followed by the question, "is China colonizing the world starting with Africa"¹ from one of the audience members.

"Is China colonising Africa?" is one of the most frequently asked questions in the public discussions about China–Africa relationship. This neo-colonialism narrative can be summarised by three propositions: scrambling for resources, cheap goods for market dominance and disregarding of human rights (Li 2017:26). According to Sautman and Yan (2017:6), since 2006 when the leaders of China and African countries met at the Forum on China–Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), the mainstream Western media have remarkably increased reports and discussions on China's presence in Africa. In the discourse around "China–Africa" constructed by the Western media, the Chinese government, individual investors, workers and small business enterprises are usually aggregated and referred to as "China Inc." and China is labelled or implied as a "neocoloniser" (Sautman and Yan 2008: 5; 2017: 6). Besides the problematic simplification to isolate China's economic activities in Africa and discuss it in the framework of colonialism, the West-driven discourse of "neocoloniser" also implies the absence of African agency in China–Africa engagements as well as in the narratives of the relationship. Through his critical textual analysis of the UK newspapers, Mawdsley (2008:517) suggests that the media systematically constructs the images of Chinese ruthlessness, Western trusteeship and African weakness. However, focusing on China-Africa engagements through the lens of South African media, scholar Herman Wasserman (2012, 2015) points out that

¹ Video recording of the talk:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V2GY1SH70z0&feature=youtu.be>

China's relationship with South Africa has dominated the coverage of BRICS partners since South Africa joined BRICS in 2010 and that China is not represented in either a starkly positive or negative light but rather with a cautiously optimistic attitude, which suggests the complex role of China in Africa.

With the increasing engagement between African countries and China, the China– Africa relationship has also spurred academic research. While Giles Mohan and Ben Lampert (2013: 109) argue that “Africa cannot be seen as simply a passive space increasingly subject to intervention by China”, some scholars observe that the increasing academic studies on China–Africa relations are “broadly based on the main trends in China’s domestic politics as the determinative influence in Africa relations” (Alden and Large 2019:9). In this regard, it is important to recognise and insert African agency in the narratives about China’s presence in Africa, which are motivated by the history and the reality of African societies. Meanwhile, most of the research is dominated by a discourse that is oriented toward large-scale economic, political, and strategic concerns (Monson and Rupp 2013:24). Therefore, it is necessary to advocate a close-up and dynamic look at the various forces that constitute interrelations between the Chinese and African people on the ground (Monson and Rupp 2013:22), proceeding beyond a grand discourse to a more nuanced level in specific contexts. In their special issue of the *African Studies Review*, Monson and Rupp (2013) analyse the state of this research area. They call for an in-depth study of specific communities, social networks, languages, and racial identities, and they also point to scholarly work in the visual arts (Simbao 2012a).

Literature Review: writing Africa–China² in relation to visual arts

Contemporary artists based in Africa have started to represent, through artworks and performances, their experiences and expressions of relations between China and various African countries. Many artists create visual commentary on the broader Africa–China relationship, such as Michael Soi from Kenya with his ongoing series *China Loves Africa*, which depicts Africans as sex workers pleasuring Chinese people. Some artists document a Chinese presence in specific contexts such as the empty site of Chinese-owned mining companies in the Democratic Republic of Congo explored by Sammy Baloji. While artists such as Moffat Takadiwa from Zimbabwe (discussed in chapter 2) adopts made-in-China objects as materials in his work, Rui Sergio Afonso from Angola and Feliz Mula from Mozambique place more emphasis on individual encounters in their work. Some other artists engage with visual elements from communist China: photographer Samuel Fosso from the Central African Republic dressed as Mao Zedong to create a series of self-portraits in relation to his youthful memories from the 1970s; while South African artist William Kentridge’s work provides an intertext with the Model Opera which was a typical art form during the period of the Chinese Cultural Revolution³, while Kendel Geers, Brett Murray and Kudzanai Chiurai create works based, inter alia, on Chinese propaganda posters and artefacts . These are among many other works in the form of painting, installation, photograph and videos that address China.

² The re-ordering of “China” and “Africa” from “China–Africa” to “Africa–China” signifies the emphasis on the agency of and perspective from Africa (or specifically Zimbabwe and Zambia in this thesis).

³ The Cultural Revolution was a socio-political movement in China from 1966–1976 which led to a decade’s chaos in the society with mass casualties.

A handful of exhibitions have engaged with the topic. The *Making Way* exhibition (2012 and 2013) in Makhanda⁴ and Johannesburg curated by Ruth Simbao explored issues of place and movement in the works of 18 artists based in China and South Africa. Artist Kristin Hua Yang also curated a group show *Consider China* at Art Space Durban in 2013, addressing different issues of Africa's relationship with China. A broader approach to China–Africa was explored in the *ChinAfrika* exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art Leipzig (2017). The exhibition *chin(A)frica: an interface* (2017) in New York, featured works by four artists, Hu Xiangqian, He Xiangyu, Samuel Fosso, and Edson Chagas, who have reflected on cross-continental relations and immigration between China and African countries over the past decades. A recent exhibition opened in September 2019 gathering several artists from China and South Africa, *Material Thinking: Conversations Between China and South Africa* (2019), took place at the Durban Gallery in South Africa.

Studies on the Africa–China engagement in the visual arts, however, are still relatively scarce. An examination of twenty-first century connections between Africa and China in relation to the contemporary visual arts is a new area of study and only a limited number of scholarly works exist. Simbao (2012a) is the foremost scholar and practitioner to propose a new approach to African–Chinese engagements through visual arts, which adds a new perspective and advocates an approach that digs deeper and challenges the stereotypes in the dominant Northern-driven discourse of China–Africa relationship. This enables more nuanced conversations that move beyond the dichotomised discourse of China either being a “curse” or “cure” (la Pere cited in Simbao 2012a:1). Besides her curatorial projects,

⁴ Makhanda, formerly called Grahamstown, is a town in the Eastern Cape Province in South Africa. Its name was officially changed to Makhanda in 2018.

Simbao (2011, 2012a, 2012b, 2012c, 2012d, 2014, 2016, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c, 2019a, 2019b) has published many scholarly works on both theoretical probes and specific artworks on the topic. The current work in process by Ruth Simbao, Juliette Leeb-du Toit, and Ross Anthony (forthcoming) analyses artistic representations of China's presence in Southern Africa, linking contemporary analysis of this region to historical engagement. Meanwhile, Simbao is processing her monograph to provide an in-depth and comprehensive discussion in this new area of study. There is value in engaging with the broader Africa - China relations through an analysis of the visual arts as:

The arts provide a channel for people to begin to “talk back” to the popular press, to political commentaries, and against stereotypes, expressing their individual experiences with China–Africa, full of contradictions and complications (Simbao 2012c:7).

Some other scholars have also started exploring art works engaging with Africa-China relations in their studies. Corrigall (2015, 2016, 2018) has been writing on the Chinese Camera Club of South Africa, which was a group of Chinese South African photographers who were very active during the 1950s and 1960s. Leeb-du Toit (2017a) has explored China's impact on the design history of South Africa, specifically the blueprint, in her book *Isishweshwe: A History of the Indigenisation of Blueprint in South Africa*. She has also published essays (Leeb-du Toit 2017b, 2019) to examine the referencing of China in contemporary South African Art. Hendriks and Malaquais (2016) provide an in-depth discussion on Sammy Baloji's photographic series of the empty sites of Chinese mining companies in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Cheng (2018) theorises the mobility in Africa and pays special attention to how artists dwell on the growing

presence of China in African countries through analysing the visual element of the “China bag” (further discussed in chapter 4) in recent artistic practices in Africa. Huang (2019) also explores the China bag as a global commodity, material object, and art object within the specific context of racialised xenophobia in South Africa. Van Burden (2018) explores artistic engagement as cultural diplomacy between the Zairean avant-garde group and the Chinese during the 1970s to make visible previous connections in the global south. The artistic research project *Chinafrika .under construction*⁵ aims to trace the cultural relationships between China and Africa and the project includes working groups based on China and three African countries (South Africa, Nigeria and DR Congo). The project held a conference at Goethe Institut in Johannesburg in 2017 and featured the launch of publications⁶ produced by writers and artists from Southern Africa, such as Ruth Simbao, Juliette Leeb-du Toit and Dan Halter whose works have been mentioned above.

Simbao’s pioneering work, as well as the research of above-mentioned scholars, have laid the foundation for more in-depth study of the artistic engagements in relation to specific contexts, which are still under-researched. Therefore, this thesis follows the trajectory with a systematic investigation of relevant artworks from Zambia and Zimbabwe, in order to provide insight into the ways in which artists engages with specific realities and lived-experiences of Chinese presence through their works.

Scope, Method and Procedure

This thesis focuses on contemporary art from Zambia and Zimbabwe as its scope, mainly because, with their political solidarity with China in 1960s to

⁵ For more information about the project and access to the materials, see the website: <https://www.chinafrika.org>.

⁶ The publication is available at: <https://www.chinafrika.org/material/working-group/942-2/>.

1970s and the current close economic engagements, these two countries are typical cases of Africa–China relationships in the international debates. It is intriguing that Zimbabwean artist Kudzanai Chiurai’s photographic series *Revelations* (2011) (further discussed in chapter one) mirrors these main concerns and narratives in the relations between Zambia, Zimbabwe and China. The series presents eleven photographic scenes with some characters posing on constructed stages to tell the story of a fictional state, starting from revolution to its end in chaos and dictatorship. In my conversation with Chiurai on the outdoor balcony of a small bar in Harare, the artist told me that the composition of the figures in the photograph is based on the propaganda posters of the Chinese Communist Party from the time of the Cultural Revolution, and that the background stages are installed with made-in-China items found in dumpsites and shops (Chiurai 2018b). In spite of its story, these two Chinese elements juxtaposed in this photographic series somehow mirror the predicament of narrating the Africa–China relationship with historical (non)continuity, as they echo the mainstream narratives in the public discourses about the relations—the political solidarity dating back to the 1960s and the Chinese economic involvement in Africa currently.

Historically, the People’s Republic of China’s association with Zambia stretches back to support for the national liberation struggle during the Northern Rhodesian era (Zambia’s former designation) when it was closely connected to Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). Construction of the TAZARA railway (discussed further in chapter three) enabled Zambia to break away economically from the white-dominated regime in Southern Rhodesia and South Africa (Taylor 2007; Monson 2009) and the cost of this project, as one of the most significant in China’s engagements with Africa, totalled more than all of China’s aid to Africa put together since 1960

(Taylor 2007:38). With China's military and strategic assistance, the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) in then Southern Rhodesia, led by Robert Mugabe developed into a powerful liberation movement in the 1960s (Zhang 2014:6). The historical interaction and its influence, laid the foundations for their current relationships. Due to Zambia being one of earliest African countries that China invested in and considering the current issues around their mining and farming engagement (Sautman and Yan 2009, 2013, 2017; Mwanawina 2008; Brooks 2010; Chatelard 2011), Zambia has become the typical case of "China-in-Africa" discourse in the dominant Western media (Sautman and Yan 2017:6). With Zimbabwe's Look East Policy, the economic and political relations between Zimbabwe and China have become a worldwide topic of close attention (Ojakorotu and Kamidza 2018; Zhang 2014).

In this context, China's presence is a visible reality in daily life to artists from Zambia and Zimbabwe and, meanwhile, the artists are also exposed to the narratives about Zimbabwe–China/Zambia–China links in the public sphere. Many artists have started to address the current Chinese presence in Zambia and Zimbabwe through their works. It is important to explore how these artists react to, engage with and intervene in the realities and discourses on China's presence, as well as how the international relationships inspire, inform and influence their works. Therefore, this thesis focuses on a selection of artists, including Dan Halter, Kudzanai Chiurai, Martin Phiri, Moffat Takadiwa, Richard Mudariki, Ronald Muchatuta, Stary Mwaba and Wallen Mapondera, in order to provide a systematic survey of the representations of Chinese presence in contemporary arts from Zambia and Zimbabwe engaging with different dimensions (discussed in the following part of chapter structure).

This thesis adopts visual analysis as the core method to unpack the visual elements in the relevant work by the artists mentioned above and establish the meaning of the art object as a whole, engaging with a broader socio-historical context. Interviews are considered in this research as “productive research instruments and constitutive elements in knowledge production” (Grabski and Magee 2013) to contextualise the artists’ practice and highlight their voices. The interviews with the artists range from semi-structured ones to open discussion, with questions on specific artworks, their artistic experiences, to broader social-political issues about and beyond Chinese presence. I conducted my field research in Harare and Lusaka in November, 2018. In Harare, I interviewed Kudzanai Chiurai, Moffat Takadiwa as well as some other artists and gallerists to understand the art scene in Zimbabwe in which these Zimbabwean artists’ work should be situated. I also visited relevant art spaces in relation to Moffat Takadiwa’s artistic experiences and learnt about his process of collecting materials and creating work through a trip with Takadiwa to the dumpsites and several visits to his studios in Harare. During my trip in Lusaka, I interviewed the late Zambian artist Martin Phiri’s former students who were lectured by him at Evelyn Hone College and who founded the Visual Arts Council together with him. Phiri’s older brother Missile Phiri and his son Tom Phiri provided me with materials about Phiri’s early life and also his personal archive of his study experiences in China. I also visited several art collections that hold Phiri’s artworks and Evelyn Hone College where he was working as a lecturer after he came back from China. In 2019, I conducted my electronic interviews with Dan Halter, Ronald Muchatuta and Martin Phiri’s former classmate Kumoyo Simutanyi. I also had informal conversations with Sary Mwaba, Wallen Mapondera and Moffat Takadiwa and observed their

process of making art by multiple visits to their studios at Rhodes University⁷.

Chapter Structure

Chapter one focuses on artists who engage with the typical “China–Africa” discourses, such as the neo-colonialism paradigm, with a selection of works by artists from Zimbabwe that provide general comments on China’s presence and points to the active role of art in this discursive field where discourses by politicians, media as well as cultural actors meet, dialogue and contest with each other. This chapter starts with a brief introduction of Zimbabwe–China relations and the state-driven narrative of the Look East Policy. Engaging with the social-political background, this chapter analyses works by Richard Mudariki, Ronald Muchatuta, Kudzanai Chiurai and Wallen Mapondera which provide counter-narratives to different political discourses in relation to Chinese presence in the specific context of Zambia.

Chapter two focuses on artistic practices which engage with the materiality of Chinese presence. This chapter starts with the representations of “zhing-zhong”, which refers to the influx of made-in-China products in African countries. Central to this chapter is Moffat Takadiwa’s work, which is often made from consumer waste, including the waste of made-in-China products. This chapter unpacks his “Smell” series of works which create a metaphorical “smellscape” of Harare that is filled with foreign objects such as Chinese commodities, addressing the urban transition and consumer

⁷ Stary Mwaba was doing his MFA programme at Rhodes University from 2017 to 2018 with his project on Chinese presence in Zambia. The way Stary Mwaba, our supervisor Prof Ruth Simbao and me work with each other in our research group contributes significantly to my study as we are all researching the same topic on China–Africa relationships through visual arts. Wallen Mapondera is doing his MFA at Rhodes University from 2018 to 2019. Moffat Takadiwa was artist in residency at RAW Spot Gallery of *Arts of Africa and Global Souths* programme. The academic home of *Arts of Africa and Global Souths* is the Fine Art Department at Rhodes University and the programme comprises postgraduate degrees, publishing workshops, residencies for artists and writers, talk series, and so on. For more information, see <https://www.ru.ac.za/artsof africa/>.

culture in the social and economic crisis. Furthermore, this thesis unfolds the materialisation process of the works by tracing the social-cultural life of these objects through different social spaces, from commodity to consumer waste, to art materials and the art objects, all of which attach meaning to the work.

Chapter three focuses on work which engages with the individual stories of encountering Chinese from the perspectives of ordinary Zambian people. This chapter starts with a brief history of Zambia–China relationships, and emphasises the TAZARA railway and Chinese involvement in Zambia’s mining sector, which are the main focuses of Zambian artist Sary Mwaba’s work. This chapter highlights the research process that shapes his representation of Zambian–Chinese stories in his works, including the field trip by TAZARA in the Northern province and his research around “black mountain”, which is the dump site for mining slag in the Copperbelt region. This chapter unpacks the way in which Mwaba foregrounds the lived-experience of ordinary people through his artistic practice.

Chapter four focuses on works which embody the artistic connections and contacts of the global south⁸ with a focus on art from Zambia, Zimbabwe and China. This chapter starts with a brief introduction to notions of a global south especially in relation to contemporary art and Africa–China engagements. This chapter unpacks the way in which the China bag pattern has been adopted as a symbol of migration by artists from both Zimbabwe and China, in order to explore the possibility of a comparative approach to contemporary art of and across the global south. Furthermore, this chapter provides insight into Zambian artist Martin Phiri’s artistic experience

⁸ In this thesis, global south is not referred to as a fixed geographical location. The global south is further discussed in chapter 4.

between Zambia and China to foreground the hidden network within the global south.

With a systematic survey of the representations of Chinese presence in contemporary arts from Zambia and Zimbabwe, this thesis provides a nuanced analysis of Africa–China relations, proceeding beyond the north-driven discourses and the grand narratives that focus on economic and political links. By doing so, this thesis highlights the value of approaching African–Chinese engagements through visual art which embraces diversities, dynamics and complexities. Meanwhile, this thesis explores the ways in which artists, through their practice, engage with the lived-experiences of Chinese presence in specific contexts of Zambia and Zimbabwe, in order to foreground the artists’ voices and re-insert their agencies in discussions about Africa–China relations. Furthermore, situating the artistic engagements in the context of global south, this thesis pertinently engages with the focus of the *Arts of Africa and Global Souths* Research Programme, “initiating, formulating and driving knowledge from the African continent and the global south”, to “situate the south at the forefront of contemporary scholarship and shift the centre of gravity of the global academy” (Rhodes University 2019).

CHAPTER ONE: Representing “China–Africa”: A Discursive Field of Social-Politics and Cultural Practices

This chapter focuses on artists who engage with the typical “China–Africa” discourses, such as the neo-colonialism paradigm, in the specific context of Zimbabwe, with a selection of works which provide general comments on China’s presence. This chapter unpacks these works in the discursive field of a China–Africa relationship, where discourses by politicians, the media as well as cultural actors meet, dialogue and challenge each other. The idea of a discursive field is used to “conceptualize an aspect of the context in which discourse and meaning-making processes, such as framing and narration, are generally embedded” (Snow 2013:1). This chapter does not aim to judge any of the narratives, but rather, by unfolding the details of the art work, this chapter attempts to foreground and contextualise the artists’ narratives and point to the active role of art in the discursive field. It is crucial to briefly outline the relationship between Zimbabwe and China before the discussion.

1.1 A brief history of Zimbabwe–China relations

In the past two decades, the links between Zimbabwe and China have been increasingly visible and these spur debates with contradictory narratives. Zimbabwe is often viewed as “China’s African ally” (Eisenman 2005). While some scholars point to the uniqueness of the relationship that has momentum from both directions (Zhang 2014), others argue that China’s economic engagement and resource-seeking activities in Zimbabwe are portrayed as “a microcosm of China–Africa relations” (Chipaike R & L Mhandara 2013:155),.

Zimbabwe–China engagements stretch back centuries to “the Ming and Qing dynasty when the Chinese established relations with Munhumutapa Empire ⁹ (AD 1430–1760) based on trade and cultural exchange” (Manyeruke and Mhandara, cited in Zhang 2014:4). Chinese coins and porcelain fragments from the Sung dynasty (AD 960–1279) found at archaeological sites in Great Zimbabwe also indicates that the indirect contact has existed for a considerable period (Taylor 2007:16).

The contemporary interactions between Zimbabwe and the People’s Republic of China date back to the era when China provided support for the liberation movements against colonialism and racial oppression in Southern Rhodesia¹⁰ (Taylor 2007: 106). During the liberation period, China helped the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) led by Robert Mugabe, in order to compete for influence with the Soviet Union, which supported the Zimbabwe African People’s Union (ZAPU) founded by Joshua Nkomo (Zhang 2014:5; Taylor 2007:107; Alao 2014: 5; Fay 2015:75). According to Alao (2014:6), China’s support for ZANU basically came in four different forms; the provision of arms supplies, military training for guerrillas, financial assistance and ideological solidarity. The adoption of Maoist military tactics of mass mobilisation of the population gave ZANU “a far firmer base in the Rhodesian countryside and a stronger support than their political rivals ZAPU” (Taylor 2007:109). China’s assistance played a significant role in Zimbabwe’s independence and ZANU’s victory in the 1980 election (Alao 2014:6). Unsurprisingly, Robert Mugabe’s government established diplomatic relations with China immediately after Zimbabwean independence.

⁹ Munhumutapa Empire, often referred to as Kingdom of Mutapa, was a Kingdom centred in the Zambezi valley from 1430 to 1760.

¹⁰ Southern Rhodesia is the name of the colony which was the predecessor of Zimbabwe.

China's support in the Zimbabwean liberation war laid the foundation for their relationship after independence. Meanwhile, it should be noted that the coalition of mutual interests has had a more significant effect (Alao 2014:6; Taylor 2007:115). According to Taylor (2007:115), Zimbabwe's government consciously integrated itself into the global capitalist system and this is important as it coincides with the policy interests of the Beijing leadership during that time, which was also committed to the development of capitalism and modernisation.

Relations between Zimbabwe and China since independence in 1980 have been mainly economic (Taylor 207:123). Between 1980 and 2000, China–Zimbabwe relations grew through economic engagements, which are exemplified by the construction of Zimbabwe's National Sports Stadium by Chinese, as well as the interest-free loans from China after Mugabe's visit to Beijing in 1985 (Zhang 2014:7; Taylor 2007:119). Mugabe's defence of the Chinese government after the 1989 Tiananmen Square crisis¹¹ in Beijing, which damaged China's international image, reinforced China's relations with Zimbabwe (Taylor 2007:122; Zhang 2014:7). It is crucial to be aware that Zimbabwe engaged more with the West¹² than China during this period, as Mugabe received substantial aid from Western partners, such as the EU and the USA and Zimbabwe's foreign investments before the early 2000s mainly came from neighbouring countries and the West (Zhang 2014:7; Chipaike 2013: 147). However, the economic crisis under the “Fast-track Land Reform”¹³ at the beginning of this century and the sanctions applied by the West were the turning point in Zimbabwe–China economic

¹¹ The Tiananmen Square protests, also known as “89 Democracy Movements” and “June Fourth Incident”, were student-led demonstrations in Tiananmen Square in 1989 which were suppressed on 4th June by the military sent by government.

¹² In this thesis, the “West” refers to most European countries and the United State of America. However, it should also be noted that the West is a complicated term and there are diversities among the West in the relations with African countries.

¹³ This refers to the march and later violent invasion on white-owned farmlands by the Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association at the beginning of this century.

involvement, which has made headlines since then (Taylor 2007: 123; Chipaike 2013:147; Zhang 2014:8).

In 2000, China established the Forum on China–Africa Co-operation (FOCAC) to strengthen its relationship with African countries and, according to Zhang (2014:8), Zimbabwe–China relations have been further consolidated through China’s credit facilities and loans to the Zimbabwean government. Meanwhile, the Zimbabwean government’s relationships with the international community came to a deadlock with sanctions imposed by the US and European countries and its adoption of land reform policy as well as the corruption of the ZUNU PF government further collapsed its economy. Confronted with challenges from social-economic crises and the withdrawal of investment and aid by the West, the Zimbabwean government announced the “Look East Policy” (this will be discussed more in the following section) in 2003. “As Zimbabwe’s crisis has deepened, China has opportunistically entered the fray and solidified previously existing relationships based on history into something far more substantial” (Taylor 2007:123). Since then, China has steadily become the largest foreign investor in Zimbabwe, becoming one of the largest trading partners of Harare (Taylor 2007:124–126). Bilateral trade between the two countries increased from \$52.2 million in 1996 to \$275.25 million in 2006, growing further to \$1.1 billion in 2013 (Zhang 2014:16). In contrast, Zimbabwean exports to the EU fell from \$1 billion in 1997 to \$476 million in 2008 (Alao 2014:9). China’s economic and commercial links with Zimbabwe have involved multiple sectors, ranging from mining, retail, agriculture to telecommunications, medical, transportation and power generation (Alao 2014). With Zimbabwe joining China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)¹⁴,

¹⁴ The global development strategy advocated by Chinese government. It was originally known as the One Belt One Road (OBOR), the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road, and the Belt and Road Initiative since 2016.

more projects have been launched to enhance the relations, such as the construction of Zimbabwe's new parliament building (Zhang 2018).

Chinese migration to Zimbabwe has experienced a similar evolution. According to Liu Haifang (2018:74), Chinese had begun migrating to Zimbabwe since the late nineteenth century. Around 1700 to 2000 Chinese residents lived in Zimbabwe at the beginning of the 1970s and more than half of the Chinese population left Zimbabwe after its independence although most of them returned years later (Liu 2018:72). They formed part of the old generation migrants in Zimbabwe. Among the Chinese descendants of 19th and early 20th century immigrants who came as labourers during British colonial rule, Fay Chung¹⁵ is one of those who are widely known and have made a great contribution to the development of Zimbabwe. The “new migrants” who moved to Zimbabwe after the 1980s constitute the majority of the Chinese in Zimbabwe today. According to Shen (2015:132), the new Chinese immigration to Zimbabwe after the establishment of diplomatic relations started from the mid-1980s. After working for a Chinese aid project in Zimbabwe, some of the translators and technicians settled down as so-called new Chinese immigrants in Zimbabwe, which developed slowly into a group of around 500 people in 2000 (Shen 2015:132). Since 2000, the number rapidly increased to around 10,000 (Liu 2018:74). 2003 is a year that witnessed a significant growth of Chinese migrants into Zimbabwe, as well as tourist arrivals from China which increased by 245% over the previous year (Alao 2014:4). Shen Xiaolei's (2014:133) research finds that Chinese migrants and their economic activities in Zimbabwe mainly include three types: 1) entrepreneurs who invest in medium and small companies and factories for clothing,

¹⁵ Fay Chung is a Zimbabwean of Chinese descent and was former Head of Educational Planning in Zimbabwe.

construction materials, food processing and ore smelting – the number of factories is around 100; 2) self-employed individuals in the catering, tourism, entertainment and retail business – there are around 1000 wholesale and retail stores; 3) employees in private-run enterprises and individual businesses, as well as staff in China’s state-owned enterprises (mining, tobacco, telecommunications and construction, etc.), with the former ones more likely to settle in Zimbabwe while most of the last type would go back to China after the contract period.

1.2 The Look East Policy as a patriotic narrative

As can be seen from the brief history outlined above, although China and the Zimbabwean government under the leadership of ZANU PF¹⁶ had close links during the liberation struggle against the colonial state, their economic engagements were strongly intensified until the beginning of this century. The representations of Chinese presence in Zimbabwean visual arts also focus more on the predominantly economic relations in this period, especially after the declaration of Look East Policy, which is a milestone of Zimbabwe–China links. In the following section, I contextualise the narratives about this policy in relation to the Zimbabwean state’s self-narration (Ranger 2004; Youde 2007; Chingono 2010b) and analyse a selection of works that engage with the discourses of “China in Africa/Zimbabwe”, in order to unpack this discursive space of political discourse and cultural practice.

The Look East Policy is defined as a “strategy adopted by the Zimbabwean government towards East-Asian countries, in particular China, to ensure enhanced and heightened bilateral cooperation between the two governments and in all economic sectors” (Chingono 2010a:5). According

¹⁶ Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) was founded in 1963 and combined with Zimbabwe African People’s Union (ZAPU) ZANU in 1987 as ZANU PF. The minor political party Zimbabwe African National Union – Ndonga (ZANU Ndonga) was founded in 1975.

to the policy briefing paper by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) (2004:2), the Look East Policy was officially declared in 2003. After documenting the developments in economic relations, such as in trade, tourism, mining, clothing and construction sectors, the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (2004:12) pointed out the optimistic expectations of Zimbabwean government towards its relations with China. However, many scholars have expressed sceptical views towards this “optimism” through the analysis of economic practices in the engagements between Zimbabwe and China (Ojajorotu & Kamidza 2018).

Among the motives for the Zimbabwean government’s Look East Policy, which focuses on relations with China, two aspects to the state’s narratives should be noted: the reorientation of Zimbabwe’s external alignment and the domestic narratives against the Western imperialist strategies and neo-colonial intentions (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung 2004:10). Youde (2007) also points out the Zimbabwean government’s attempt to redirect the public imagination at the domestic and international level, which is suggested in Robert Mugabe’s statements about the policy. On the 25th anniversary of independence, Mugabe presented to the audience that “We have turned east, where the sun rises, and given our back to the west, where the sun sets” (Meldrum, 2005). Mugabe also claimed that “It [the Look East Policy] is a policy rooted in our struggle” and declared that:

It is very important for us in Zimbabwe to develop the Look East Policy because that is where people who think like us are, same history of colonialism as ourselves, people who have started developing their economies, are more advanced than Africa, and relations with them will be reciprocal and rewarding. (Mugabe cited in Youde 2007:13)

Youde (2007:14) posits that in these statements Mugabe draws on his image as a freedom fighter and presents himself as the one leader who challenges the West through the Look East Policy, which is declared to follow the same lines as the struggle against the Smith regime. Therefore, Mugabe is reasserting the government as a player on the international scene, emphasising self-reliance and independence in world affairs, and is trying to bolster his domestic legitimacy and discount the opposition parties supported by the Western states (ibid.). Youde highlights the measure of agency of the Zimbabwean state in its relationship with China by pointing out the government's attempt to reconstruct its identity and image.

What should also be noted is that Mugabe's inserting of the Zimbabwean state's agency, through his narrative about "turning" to China, is associated with ZANU PF's self-narration with the propagated "patriotic history", which is intended to proclaim the Zimbabwean revolutionary tradition (Ranger 2004). Ranger (2004:218) asserts that history is at the centre of politics in Zimbabwe and the "patriotic history", which regards "as irrelevant any history that is not political", is "different from and narrower than the old nationalist historiography, which celebrated aspiration and modernisation as well as resistance". He observed that, during the 2002 election:

[C]entral to ZANU PF's campaign was a particular version of history. I spent four days watching Zimbabwe television which presented nothing but one 'historical' programme after another; the government press – the *Herald* and the *Chronicle* – ran innumerable historical articles ... Television and newspapers insisted on an increasingly simple and monolithic history ... Television constantly repeated documentaries about the guerrilla war and about colonial brutalities ... The *Herald* and the *Sunday Mail* regularly carried articles on slavery, the partition, colonial exploitation and the liberation struggle. I recognised the

outlines of many of my own books but boiled down in the service of ZANU PF (Ranger 2004: 218).

Dividing up the nation into revolutionaries and sell-outs through the narrowed “patriotic history”, Mugabe and ZANU PF claimed to be custodians of history and continuing the revolutionary tradition, while the opposition parties came to represent a neo-liberal “end of history” (Ranger 2004). Election propaganda is not the only example of the patriotic narratives of ZANU PF. Chingono (2010b) analyses how the values premised in Zimbabwe’s colonial history and liberation struggle, ideological differences and partocracy, have influenced the perspectives of the Zimbabwe and the Western governments respectively in understanding the causes that led to the imposition of sanctions on Zimbabwe. In spite of the nature and the factual impact of the sanctions, it is important to note Chingono’s (2010b:67) observation of how the targeted individuals declare allegiance to the country’s history of colonialism and the liberation struggle. Mugabe and ZANU PF’s narratives on the Look East Policy follow a similar trajectory, shaped by the state’s self-narration of its continuance of the revolutionary tradition.

In this sense, Zimbabwean artist Kudzanai Chiurai’s photographic series *Revelation*, mentioned in the thesis introduction, provides a distinct representation of China in relation to a problematic state in postcolonial Africa and thus disrupts ZANU PF’s narrative on the Look East Policy which legitimates itself as continuing liberation struggle. The series tells the story of a constructed state beginning from revolution and ending up with chaos and dictatorship. According to the artist, *Revelation* is:

[A] photographic series which explored the relationship between the nation and the state, how it fosters nationhood and identity, and how the nation state is the outcome of conflict resolution. *Revelation* took as its

starting point the political revolutions which led to social evolution, in turn shaping the post-colony and revealing the new African state. The nation state is viewed as a neo-colonial instrument. True independence and self-reliance were not achieved, and today the same tactics of colonial violence continue to be employed by the African nation state. (Chiurai 2018a: 11)



Fig.1.1 Kudzanai Chiurai, *Revelations II* (2011), Pigment inks on premium satin photo paper

Source: <http://www.goodman-gallery.com/exhibitions/234>

As can be seen in *Revelation II* [Fig.1.1], the composition of the characters typically imitate the pose and position of figures in Chinese propaganda posters during the period of the Cultural Revolution (Chiurai 2018b). While the ZANU PF traced the Look East Policy back to the liberation struggle to narrate their current links in a revolutionary tradition, the artist uses the Chinese Communist Party's propaganda posters from the same era of the 1970s which represents the grandness of the state, to indicate his perception of the relation between state and nation, and more poignantly, to his criticism of the African state in a postcolonial period, or in what the artist refers to as "colonial future" (Chiurai 2018b). The made-in-China objects in the background reference the influx of Chinese commodity products in current engagements between African countries and China, and also illustrate the chaotic and degenerate nature of the fictional state in the

photographic work. It is not necessary to read this work as a judgement of the Zimbabwe–China relationship. But the way in which Chiurai uses the Chinese elements in the photographic series brings tension to the discursive field of “China–Africa” in the specific context of Zimbabwe.

What should also be noted is that the grand narratives on China’s involvements by the Zimbabwean politicians from a state’s lever, as well as individual narratives from the ordinary people, are multivariate, complex and contradictory. ZANU PF’s “turning to the east” is not a single story and other political parties have also provided rhetorical narratives on “Zimbabwe–China” links for their purposes, which will be discussed later in relation to the analysis of Wallen Mapondera’s work. The intention here is to point out that, besides the pragmatic elements, the ZANU PF’s discourse on the Zimbabwe–China relationship is logically associated with its narratives for self-legitimation and political propaganda. Therefore, in the specific context of Zimbabwe, “China–Africa” has become a discursive field involving the politicians’ discourses, the discussions from media and the visual narratives by artists which, as a form of cultural practice, entering the field, provide counter-narratives from individuals’ perspectives, that conflict with the grand narratives of politicians and bring more tension into the public sphere.

1.3 The new Colossus: a counter-narrative

In research investigating China’s image in Zimbabwe’s most circulated newspapers during the intensive election campaign period of 2013, the author Vava (2017) finds that the image of China was projected in a more positive light in the state-driven media *The Herald* when compared to the depictions in the privately owned newspaper *News Day*. In the sample with search word “China” on the website, “*The Herald* has an overwhelming percentage and a high number of positive stories, 88, which constitute 68.4 %

of the stories”, and the author argues that the positive image of China “is not more objective but rather based on the political economy of the state media in Zimbabwe” (Vava 2017:34).

However, Musanga (2017:83) points out that ordinary Zimbabwean’s perceptions contest official narratives of Zimbabwe–China relations in a cynical and sceptical manner. He highlights Zimbabwe’s urban grooves music and literature as examples. By providing a textual analysis of Winky D’s song *Made in China* (2012) and NoViolet Bulawayo’s novel *We Need New Names* (2013), Musanga (2017) argues that these texts express their scepticism and cynicism about the relationship, which constitutes a “parallel counter discourse” to the state-driven narrative. Some other scholars also take a similar path to foreground the voices of Zimbabwean writers who grappled with the Look East Policy as one side-effect of the Zimbabwean crisis, and indicated a critical view towards Chinese presence (Moyo, Mdlongwa & Hlongwana, 2014). Investigating the Zimbabwean experiences in fictional works by NoViolet Bulawayo, Petina Gappah and John Eppel, the article argues that “friendship with China is a form of latter-day colonialism and was motivated less by national interests than by the fact that Zimbabwe found herself in a *cul de sac*” (Moyo, Mdlongwa & Hlongwana, 2014:5).

In contemporary visual arts, some artists also provide counter-narratives through their works contesting official discourse driven by ZANU PF. While the government propagates its current “turning” to China as a continuing friendship in the revolutionary tradition, some artists have questioned current Chinese activities in Zimbabwe and expressed a negative view towards the impact on local people. Wallen Mapondera’s oil painting *Pagoridhe revanhu manje?*¹⁷ (2018) [Fig.1.2] depicts a meeting venue full

¹⁷ The title in Shona means “On People’s Gold now?”.

of various-sized chairs and a huge Chinese national flag hanging on the wall behind. Two thirds of the painting are occupied by the gold under the ground, where we can see the shape of the Zimbabwe Bird¹⁸. The gold has expanded outside the earth, blurring the boundary of the surface of the ground. Ironically, in this painting, people are absent on people's gold, while the chairs symbolising power are taking over the ownership, with the highest being the closest to the gold. This painting points to one of the main propositions in the “neo-colonialism narrative paradigm” (Li 2017:26) of China–Africa relationships mentioned in the Introduction, that is the scrambling for resources, and is not articulated in ZANU PF's narratives. Richard Mudariki's painting *Chinese Tailor* (2013) [Fig.1.3], which depicts a Chinese tailor stitching with a sewing machine on an African person's bending back, references the other proposition of the exploitation of labour practice and poses the question “Is China transforming Africa positively or negatively, or is its involvement in Africa a form of neo-colonialism?” (Mudariki, 2019)



Fig.1.2 Wallen Mapondera, *Pagoridhe revanhu manje?*, Oil Oncanvas, 165*180cm

Source: photo courtesy of Tyburn Gallery

¹⁸ The sculpture of Zimbabwe Bird was discovered at the archaeological site of Great Zimbabwe and the iconic Zimbabwe Bird forms parts of the national flag of Zimbabwe. More discussion about Zimbabwe Bird see 2.2.



Fig.1.3 Richard Mudariki, *Chinese Tailor* (2013), Acrylic on canvas;
100*100 cm

Source: <http://www.johansborman.co.za/contemporary-artists/mudariki-richard/40richard-mudariki---chinese-tailor-2013-100-x-100-cm.jpg/>



Fig.1.4 Edward Linley Sambourne, *The Rhodes Colossus*, 1892
Source: *Punch, or the London Charivari*, 10 December, 1892

The sceptical view and “neo-colonialism” narrative on China’s engagement is expressed more forthrightly in Richard Mudariki’s *From Cape to Cairo* (2013) and Ronald Muchatuta’s *Made in China* (2016), both of which

parody the famous cartoon *The Rhodes Colossus* [Fig.1.4] by Edward Linley Sambourne. The cartoon, depicting Cecil Rhodes (1853–1902) towering over the African continent, was first published in *Punch, or the London Charivari*, on 10 December, 1892, after Rhodes announced the plan for a telegraph line from Cape Town to Cairo. In the image, Rhodes is dressed in khakis, holding his helmet and dangling a gun over Lake Victoria. The line stringing in his widely opened hands, which links the Cape Town and Cairo, is a symbol of the telegraphic plan that metaphorically referenced economic expansion as well. The satiric poem complementing the cartoon delivered an ambiguous message that poked fun at Rhodes’s ambitions in apparently friendly fashion (Scully 2012:130). This image has been reproduced in innumerable textbooks, atlases, encyclopaedias and history texts.

It is interesting that the cartoonist was recycling a well-known visual pun at that time. The original Colossus is an ancient Greek statue with wide-set legs across Rhodes harbour in the city with the same name. Even before Sambourne’s image, an American cartoonist, Joseph Keppler, published his cartoon “The Modern Colossus of (Rail) Roads” in the magazine *Puck* in 1879. The idea to link Rhodes to the Colossus concept, according to Scully (2012: 126), may have originated unsurprisingly in South Africa in Cape Town’s comic weekly *The Lantern* (May 31, 1884:3; Jan. 28, 1888:7; March 17, 1888:7). Sambourne’s version, however, had a great impact that did not fade with time. It was imitated by numerous cartoonists, such as Art Young, who was best known for his cartoons in the political magazine *The Masses* (November, 1914).

Today, the image of Rhodes as a typical illustration that alludes to the Scramble for Africa and of colonialism as a whole seems to grow in popularity (Scully 2012). With regards to the issue and discourse around the China–Africa relationship or China’s presence in Africa, artists Richard

Mudariki, Ronald Muchatuta, and even the South African cartoonist Zapiro before them, have drawn on Sambourne for inspiration, expecting their audiences' familiarity with the original one by modelling in the same pose and accessories.

In 2009, India-based Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama was denied a visa to attend an international peace conference ahead of the 2010 World Cup. While different stories were told¹⁹, the media focused more on the possible pressure exerted by the Chinese government. Drawing on the issue, the famous South African cartoonist Zapiro (Jonathan Shapiro) satirised China–Africa relations – China– South Africa relations in particular – parodying Sambourne's *The Rhodes Colossus* [Fig.1.5]. He replaced Rhodes with the Chinese premier holding Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma like a marionette over South Africa, while on the continent of Asia stands the Dalai Lama with a surprised and dissatisfied look. On Zapiro's website, there is a short statement next to the image:

Cartoon is based on the classic cartoon by Edmund Linley Sambourne's "The Rhodes Colossus" originally published in 1892 in PUNCH magazine. Comparison is made between the old colonial times of Cecil John Rhodes and Chinese neocolonialism of today. China pulling the puppet strings of South African Foreign Policy with respect to the Dalai Lama visa withdrawal (Zapiro, 2009).

The cartoon, titled *The Rhodes Colossus – 118 years later*, is a contemporary version perpetuating the myth of the Colossus within the context of the intensified Chinese involvement in African countries, which is also depicted by Mudariki and Muchatuta in a sceptical manner.

¹⁹ More details see the media coverages on: <https://mg.co.za/article/2009-03-23-tibetans-blamechina-for-dalai-lama-visa-denial>; <http://edition.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/africa/03/23/south.africa.dalai.lama.visa/>; etc.



Fig.1.5 Zapiro, *The Rhodes Colossus - 118 years later*(2009)
 Source: <https://www.zapiro.com/090405st>

Mudariki’s *From Cape to Cairo* (2013) [Fig.1.6] depicts a man dressed in a formal shirt and swallowtail-like robe with the same pose as Rhodes and with string in his hands. Africa under his feet, however, is painted as China’s national flag in the continent’s shape. The colour of the painting is predominantly red with a line of text over the man’s head saying “MADE IN CHINA”. Mudariki’s works constantly engage with the social, economic and political environment to bring out his “artistic reality” as “one can be providing a visual form of questioning, somewhat giving an independent, alternative, creative way of looking at contemporary society” (Mudariki cited in Barnard 2018). In this work, the artist rings the alarm that “China has a strategy for Africa; it is subtly taking over the continent – ‘painting Africa red’” (Mudariki n.d.). In Muchatuta’s *Made in China* (2016) [Fig.1.7], the figure with three faces steps exaggeratedly astride with two strings in its hands to control the continent, questioning China’s role in Africa as “likely a neocolonialist entity and is slowly taking over Africa” (Muchatuta 2019).



Fig.1.6 Richard Mudariki, *From Cape to Cairo* (2013), Charcoal and pastel on paper, 71*50 cm Source: <http://www.johansborman.co.za/exhibition-work/black-white-2014/from-cape-to-cairo2013-71-x-50-cm.jpg/>

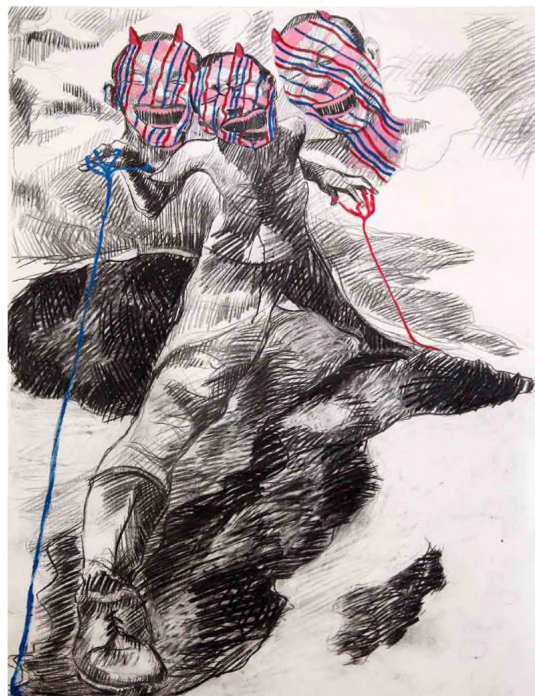


Fig.1.7 Ronald Muchatuta *Made in China* (2016), Oil & Charcoal on canvas, 139.5*100 cm Source: <https://eclecticaprintartgallery.co.za/Artists/ronald-muchatuta/>

It is also interesting to note Muchatuta's engagement with the Chinese artist Yue Minjun, who is known for his stylised figures frozen in laughter [Fig.1.8]. The artist replaces Rhodes's face with the stylised laughing faces in Yue's work, in order to break away from the typical Cecil Rhodes illustration and add more dynamics. According to the artist:

I chose him because I found the face very satirical ... I was playing with humour in that piece. And I felt why not use an Asian looking character and also refer to contemporary art and the artist's role within contemporary art and link it to using it in a way as reference to a penetration by the Asian group. So I wanted to create a piece where it bridges the gap between China and Africa within our contemporary context of art ... I wanted to expand more from his work and expand my work but also bring a contextualised aspect to what the works means (Muchatuta, 2019).



Fig.1.8 Yue Minjun, *Untitled* (2005), Oil on canvas, 220*200cm
Source:https://www.saatchigallery.com/artists/artpages/yue_minjun_untitled.htm

The illustration of Rhodes, being reproduced in manifold texts including magazines, atlases and online media, has often become an integral element disseminated in the public sphere and discourse about “colonialism”.

Adopting the image, both Muchatuta and Mudariki's work enters the controversial "China–Africa relationship" as a field of social-politics and cultural practice and provides a counter-narrative to the state-driven perspective of the Look East Policy, contextualised specifically in the case of Zimbabwe. Approaching from the dimension of language, "look East" here indicates the subjective initiative of Zimbabwe, as Robert Mugabe puts it "We have turned east where the sun rises, and given our backs on the west where the sun sets" (Meldrum 2005) as mentioned above, while in the art representations the African continent is lying prostrate under the Colossus figure and being controlled by the "red expansion" of China. Furthermore, as mentioned above, the government's narrative on current engagement with China attempts to redirect the public imagination by associating with the nation's liberation history as a current strategy against Western dominance and interference (Youde 2007). However, in the two artworks, China's role is depicted with the image of a former Western coloniser, which contests, interrogates and subverts the state's narrative. Therefore, the visual representations can proceed beyond the field of art and enter the public sphere to "talk back" (Simbao 2012c:7) to grand narratives, politics and power. In this regard, Wallen Mapondera's online performance piece *Zimdesia* (2018) provides another counter-narrative which will be discussed in the following section.

On the other hand, the claim of Chinese colonialism has unfolded through Western politicians and media representations of China practising colonialism in Africa since 2005 (Sautman and Yan 2006:4). These visual reflections from the artists' perspectives, while reacting to the narrative of China as a neo-colonialist, also exposed the narrative's simplification of the issue which is analysed by Sautman Barry and Yan Hairong (2006, 2007, 2008, 2017). Muchatuta and Mudariki's imitations of the cartoon that replace Rhodes with figure(s) symbolising China, is not so much a

juxtaposition of history and present in a colonial lineage, as simplified presenting with the presence of former colonist Rhodes and (current) China, while the (current) West is absent. Sautman and Yan argue that:

The discourse should not be inverted by arguing that China's presence in Africa is positive and the West's negative or that problematic Chinese activities in Africa are justified because abuses are shared with the West. The analysis of China–Africa should invoke neither a “win-win” nor dystopic representation; rather, the trees of China's behaviour should be seen as part of a world system forest and the discourse examined using comparative analysis. Our arguments are threefold: 1) given the world system, it is difficult to assess the pluses and minuses of China-in-Africa as a single phenomenon; 2) as a player in the world system, China in Africa has more in common with the West than is usually acknowledged; 3) there are nevertheless notable differences between Western and Chinese presences in Africa, many of which derive from China's experience as a semi-colony, its socialist legacy, and its developing country status, features which together make PRC policies presumptively less injurious to African sensibilities about rights than those of Western states. (2008: 10)

In this sense, these two pieces of a new Colossus exemplify that visual language as a medium can embrace the contradiction and complexity by reacting to this specific discourse in an affirmative manner and simultaneously visualise its fallacy. Therein lies the value in engaging with the broader “China–Africa” discourse through an analysis of the visual arts.

1.4 *Zimdesia*: another counter-narrative

In June 2018, a time of intensive campaigns for the first presidential election after the abrupt downfall of Robert Mugabe, who had been in office for 37 years since the independence of Zimbabwe, artist Wallen Mapondera (2018)

created his own “political party”, the Zimdesia Democratic Party. Presented as a website page on Facebook, Zimdesia was claimed to be the 113th party competing in the election, as there were already 112 parties registered with the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC). In the form of an online performance, the artist was enabled to interact, more directly, timely and pertinently, with a wider audience who were concerned about the election. With the increasing reactions from website visitors, Mapondera posted his manifesto for the Zimdesia Democratic Party [Fig.1.9] which mocked the similar declarations from different campaigners in competition:

Why Vote for Me:

I promise the truth and not to give people false hope. What I say, I deliver, I have people at heart.

What I will Do if I Become President:

Listening to your voices and do nothing about it

Increase the rate of corruption

Support Violence

Poverty

More cash crisis

...

Lack of medical facilities in hospitals, hence more strikes from all within the sector More potholes²⁰

²⁰ For more details see the Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/1990690747610800/photos/rpp.1990690747610800/2021084141238127/?type=3&theater>

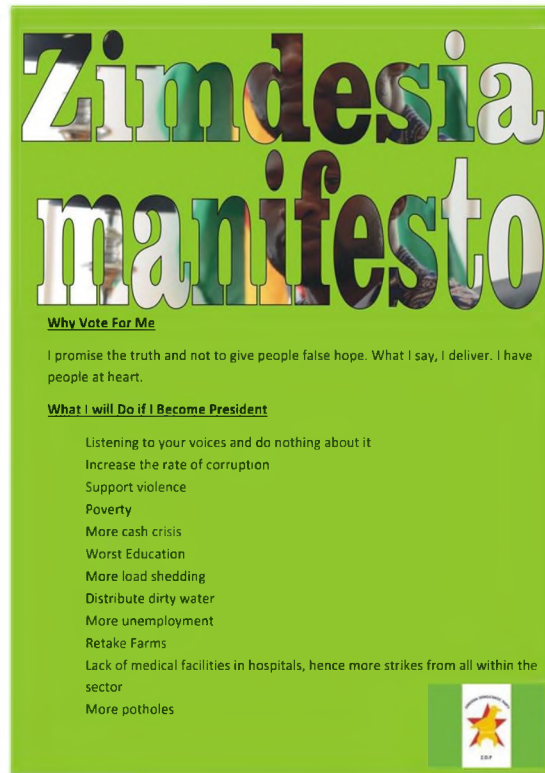


Fig.1.9 Wallen Mapondera, *Zimdesia* (2018), post on Facebook page
Source: <https://www.facebook.com/Zimdesia-Democratic-Party-1990690747610800/>

It is interesting that in relation to the topic of this thesis, one of the most competitive presidential candidates, Nelson Chamisa, from the opposition party the Movement for Democratic Change Alliance (MDC Alliance), vowed to kick out Chinese investors as part of his election rhetoric should he come to power, as “we want genuine deals that benefit the people. These deals are not country, but individual deals and the new dispensation is busy exporting lies that they are a new dispensation” (“Chamisa: I will kick out Chinese investors” 2018). This anti-Chinese rhetoric had been employed successfully by Michael Sata, the former president of Zambia, and apparently the promise was forgotten after Sata got in office in 2011. After a chat with Zambian artist Stary Mwaba about the two politicians who cooperated with the stereotypical “China in Africa” narratives that are popular in the media for their temporary political purpose, Mapondera added a section in his online performance. He decorated a space in an office

at Rhodes University and invited me, a Chinese student at Rhodes University, to perform a scene for a photograph. As seen in the images [Fig.1.10], the artist is seemingly discussing something important with a Chinese woman and they appear to come to an agreement by shaking their hands. Attached to the photographs as a document of the Zimbabwe–China deal is a statement by the artist:

FACT: Africa cannot be liberated from China.

If we cannot beat them, join them. Mapping a way forward for our beloved nation with Honourable Zhang. As much as they will say we want to boot out Chinese investors, we just cannot. Instead we can do better agreements which benefits the country at large. (Mapondera 2018)



Fig.1.10 Wallen Mapondera, *Zimdesia* (2018), post on Facebook Page of Zimdesia

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/Zimdesia-Democratic-Party-1990690747610800/>

Playing with the dialectic between actuality and fiction, the artist satirises the politician's intention to manipulate the stereotypical narrative about China's presence for his personal political purpose. It is humorous and meanwhile political, engaging with the present reality and the social media as a salient site where ordinary people can "talk back" (Simbao 2012c) to the grand narrative. It is interesting to compare this work with the two paintings by Muchatuta and Mudariki, as both the typically positive and negative discourses by politicians on China's presence are challenged in visual arts. Furthermore, Mapondera's online performance is not so much an expression of a consistent attitude toward "China–Africa", bearing in mind his painting *Pagoridhe revanhu manje? (On People's Gold now?)* [Fig.1.2] mentioned above. It demonstrates that visual art can bring more dynamics to the topic and can take an active role in the discursive field of social issues.

"China in Africa" has become a space where politicians (government and its opposition), media (local and global) as well as cultural actors (literature, music and visual art) bargain for the discursive tug-of-war. This part provides a visual analysis of a selection of works to spotlight Zimbabwean artists' role in participating and intervening in the field and, meanwhile, to highlight the significance of approaching the topic through this specific medium. However, it is also significant that a Chinese presence is not just visible in arts as thematic representations in discourse, but also has impact on the materiality of artworks, which is discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER TWO: Materialising Chinese Presence in Zimbabwe with Consumer Wastes of Made-in-China Products

Following discussion on artists who engage with the typical China–Africa discourses, this chapter shifts the focus to artworks dealing with the materiality of Chinese presence. In a conversation with two new friends from Zimbabwe, I mentioned that there is a big Chinese community in Harare. I intended to ask if they had any engagement with the Chinese community. One of the friends responded before I posed my question, “Those guys. They sell things”. “Things”—the imported Chinese products selling in the local markets—have played a significant role in the increasing engagements between Zimbabweans and Chinese and have also been explored by many artists from Zimbabwe. In this section, I analyse artworks by Zimbabwean artists who grapple with the material aspect of Chinese presence by representing or re-presenting the “things” in their works.

2.1 Representations of zhing-zhong

The influx of Chinese commodity products into African countries has been a topic of close attention internationally. While China is accused of flooding the African market with cheap, low-quality goods and overwhelming the already fragile local industries (Li 2017:28), more and more Africans are involved in their importation (Park 2013). In the specific context of Zimbabwe, the year of 2004 witnessed a great increase of a wide range of Chinese products entering Zimbabwe (Manyeruke 2006, Taylor 2007, Alao 2014). It is significant to note that the effect is not merely diplomatic and economic but has an impact on ordinary people in their everyday lives. In the research about the impact of Chinese products on Zimbabwean women, Manyeruke (2006: 90) observes that, though there are concerns of the low quality and a desire for better quality goods, poverty and lack of alternatives

makes the majority of Zimbabwean women go for Chinese products, which are comparatively affordable. Chinese products such as clothing, footwear and utensils, bring new fashion to Zimbabwean women and meanwhile, create more informal employment for them in the marketplace (Manyeruke 2006).

There are also increasing representations of China-made commodities in Zimbabwean pop culture and literature as well as visual art. The popular slang expression “zhing zhong” emerged initially in Zimbabwe to refer to a Chinese-looking person and Chinese language that locals found incomprehensible, and is widely used as a derogatory term disparaging cheap Chinese goods as well as a metaphor for products or anything that is perceived as cheap and of inferior quality (Mbiba 2017:379). In the song *Made in China*, Zimbabwean pop singer Winky D mocked the Zimbabwe–China link in relation to the cheap Chinese products as “Your friendship is fake like something made in China which does not last for long. If I do not tell them they will never be able to say that to each other. No, it does not last it does not last”²¹ (Musanga 2017:86).

Some artists from Zimbabwe also grapple with this dimension through their practice. In 2006, Dan Halter created a series of small sculptures titled *Zhing-Zhong Mother and Child* [Fig.2.1]. Halter is playing with zhing-zhong as a metaphor for low-quality products or fake copies and also refers to the influx Chinese commodities in Zimbabwe, as stated by the artist,

The “mother and child” is one of the archetypical forms of Shona sculpture. It is copied widely and as result it is a common Zimbabwean

²¹ The song is translated from Shona “*Ihwo hushamwari hwenyu uhwuhwu hunenge made in China haugare ndikasavaLiner havaudzane*”. See Musanga (2017).

curio. My version is massproduced out of plastic with a black mother and a white child. (Halter, 2017)



Fig.2.1 Dan Halter, *Zhing-Zhong Mother and Child*(2006), Plastic, 33*18*10 cm each, image by Mario Todeschini
Source: <http://danhalter.com/category/work/take-me-to-your-leader/>

While in Vulindlela Nyoni’s print *Murambatsvina* [Fig.2.2], the Chinese tote bag can be interpreted as alluding to the increase of Chinese products in Zimbabwe (Simbao 2012b:28)²², Gerald Machona “plays with the influx of ‘zhing zhong’ (cheap or low quality goods often associated with Chinese imports) to Zimbabwe and other parts of Africa” (Simbao 2016b:26) in his performance *From China, with Love* [Fig.2.3] in the *Making Way* (2012)

²² According to Simbao, “the sweeping action represented in the print depicts the 2005 Zimbabwean government crackdown Operation Murambatsvina—translated from Shona as “to get rid of filth.” The government eradicated ‘slums’ in the name of urban renewal and sanitation, creating havoc in the lives of millions. Due to the fact that the livelihoods of informal Zimbabwean traders, including vegetable-sellers, flower-sellers and curio hawkers (Martin 2007: 235) were crippled when their wares were confiscated and buildings were razed to the ground, some speculate the clean-up was aimed to diminish local Zimbabwean competition for newly arrived entrepreneurs from China who were welcomed by Mugabe’s *Look East* policy.” For more information, see Simbao(2012b).

exhibition. The artist “alludes to current global socio-economic shifts, which have resulted not only in Chinese objects pouring into Africa and elsewhere, but also in many Africans seeking opportunities for informal trade in places such as Guangzhou.” (Simbao 2012b:26).



Fig.2.2 Vulindlela Nyoni, *Murambatsvina vii* (2012), screenprint, etching and chin-collé Source: published in Simbao (2012) *Making Way* exhibition Catalogue



Fig.2.3 Gerald Machona, *From China with love* (2012), performance , photo by Mark Wilby
Source:<https://www.ru.ac.za/ruthsimbao/exhibitionsperformances/fromchinawithlove/>

As documented by Simbao (2012d), Machona:

[C]arefully stitched together three-dimensional objects, such as a wallet, a watch, a pair of sunglasses and a bag out of decommissioned Zimbabwean dollars and stitched a label on them that read ‘Made in China’. He then bartered with the audience in a playful process of exchange, expecting them to, for example, sing a national anthem in order to obtain one his beautifully made objects.

Machona collaborated with Chinyanta Mwenya, a Zambian student who learnt how to speak Mandarin in China. He “begins the performance by wheeling Machona, (who is hidden inside a ‘Ghana-must-go’ bag) into the gallery” and “casually spoke with the audience in fluent Mandarin, as if expecting them to understand what he was saying” (ibid). As Simbao (2012d) points out, the collaboration reveals “the complex relationships between Chinese and African people that move beyond surface-level quips about zhing-zhong or fong-kong²³”. The metaphorical wall, which is constructed by the language that is incomprehensible to some, points to the reality of the lack of mutual understanding and trust within the cross-continental immigration and relationships between Chinese and African people. Meanwhile, there are layers in the phenomenon of the influx of Chinese cheap goods in Africa as Cheng (2018:29) writes:

Scholars (Huynh 2012; Zi 2015, 2017) have pointed out that the prevalence of fong kong products on the continent is a more complicated phenomenon than “Chinese merchants dumping China-made counterfeits.” Despite the negative image attributed to fong kong products as well as the social criticism and the governmental restrictions

²³ “Fong kong” is another word similar to zhing-zhong which refers to low-quality goods from southern Africa, especially South Africa.

applied to them, these products are still prevalent in local markets, and “have contributed to clothing the needy, initiated creativity and brought convenience to members of local society” (Zi 2015:7).

To proceed beyond visual commentaries on the phenomenon of flooding Chinese goods into Africa in general, the following sections approach the issue from a different angle with a focus on Moffat Takadiwa’s work, which is not so much representing the phenomenal influx of made-in-China commodities as re-presenting the materiality of Chinese presence. I highlight the artist’s process of creating the work in order to unfold the way in which he engages with the made-in-China commodities based on his lived experience in the vicissitudes of urban space in Harare.

2.2 A metaphorical smellscape of urban Harare suffused with foreign objects

Based in Harare since the early years of this century, Moffat Takadiwa has experienced, observed and, through his work, materialised the transition of Harare, in Mbiba’s words, from a “European settler-colonial ‘sunshine city’ to a ‘zhing-zhong’ African city” (Mbiba 2017), which is featured with the increasing visibility of a Chinese presence. To illustrate the transformation of Harare from a systemic spatio-temporal and historical point of view, Mbiba (2017) adopts the Shona word *jambanja*²⁴ to refer to the post 1990s foundational restructuring of the economy beyond the narrow ‘time bound’ land reform, and the slang word *zhing-zhong* to describe the physical manifestations of urban processes in Harare. According to Mbiba (2017), *jambanja* has spread to all avenues of society and, as an outcome, the current

²⁴ The word *Jambanja* is from the song *Jambanji Pafotela* (2001) by Zimbabwean singer Marko Sibanda, which literally means violence or angry arguments. In Mbiba’s article, “*Jambanja* means ‘impunity’, *handikendenge* (I don’t care) or *ugondinini?* (So what? You won’t do anything to me), *madiro* (I will do as I please). It means turning the tables upside down, rejection of existing order, revolt” (Mbiba 2017:377).

conditions of Harare City are captured by ordinary people's metaphor "zhing-zhong" in terms of the deterioration of infrastructure, the collapse of industry, the informality of economy, the irregular development on wetlands and use of land, the collapse of health services, the improper disposal of waste, and so on.

As mentioned above, with the rapid intensification of links between Zimbabwe and China in this century, the Chinese presence, in specific the made-in-China product, not only influences the economic activities on a grand scale, but also impacts the daily life of the ordinary people. Due to the *Jambanja* effects from 2000, the economy shifted from job-creating production and manufacturing to the importing and selling of consumer products, which has made Zimbabwe an economy of traders ever since, and the mass produced goods sold in both formal and informal spaces of Harare are of Chinese origin (Mbiba 2017). "The city transformed from a manufacturing city to a 'city of traders' in imported consumer goods" (Mbiba 2017:394). In this sense, Zimbabwe is reduced to a consumer society with little industrialisation (Manyeruke 2006:90).

"The other face" (Chagonda 2016) of Zimbabwe in the increasing import, trade and consumption of foreign commodities, is the "crisis" and "a decade of suffering" (Coltart 2008). People's livelihoods, which are important to their material wellbeing and societal identities, are threatened in periods of crisis (Chiumbu and Musemwa 2012:xvi). For ordinary Zimbabweans, "the situation is unbearable" (Ntali 2018). The informal economy became the mainstay for the majority of the urban citizens due to between 80 and 85 percent of the adult population being unemployed (Chiumbu and Musemwa 2012: xvii). In my personal conversations with several Zimbabwean artists, the common refrain in their memories of the life in Harare around 2007 is that people were even struggling to buy food and to find transportation.

Takadiwa also refers to the year 2007 as a time of economic collapse and things falling apart with urban transition and its impact on citizens' everyday life becoming more and more visible. He has witnessed the shutting down of shops, the paralysing of public transportation, the increasing number of vendors selling goods on the street, as well as the increase of litter without proper waste management, which turned Harare city into a chaotic, noisy and dirty space. As a student at Harare Polytechnic College in Harare, Takadiwa was unable to acquire sufficient traditional art materials, such as canvas, paint and clay, at a time when the country was short of necessities. Therefore, he turned to found materials as the main medium for his work, initially encouraged by his mentor Chikozenro Chazunguza²⁵. Since then, he has been working with found materials for more than a decade now. Takadiwa (2018) considers himself as a “spiritual garbage man” who does “archaeological work” as he observes, collects, meditates on and records people's lives through the discarded objects. The boundless dumps in the suburbs around Harare and the trash-occupied chaotic streets in town, which are digestive sites of the excretion of urban life, become sites where Takadiwa collects his materials and the pheromones of the society.

Sitting with a basket full of trash and questions, both of which would be transformed into his work, Takadiwa started paying close attention to the consumer culture in Harare city, which is contradictorily intertwined with the deficiency of necessities. In several of his exhibitions he has grouped together “wall-hung sculptures that bear witness to the cultural dominance exercised by the consumption of foreign products in Zimbabwe and across Africa” (Tyburn Gallery, 2016), such as *Africa Not Reachable* (2012) in the First Floor Gallery in Harare, *Local Foreign Products* (2015) at

²⁵ Zimbabwean artist who was also a lecturer at Harare Polytechnic College in Harare.

WHATIFTHEWORLD Gallery in Cape Town and *Foreign Objects* (2015) at the Tyburn Gallery in London²⁶. A great measure among the works in these exhibitions were titled with smell-relevant phrases: *Smell of Harare* (A, B, C, D) [Fig.2.4; Fig.2.5], *Foreign Smell*, *Smell of Foreign Policy*, *The Perfumigation*, *Head Spin* (series), ‘*Zimbabwean Bird*’ *smell like plastic* ‘*Dragon*’, and so on. These form part of his “smell” category as an approach to grasp the complexity in the phenomenon of foreign commodities dominating Zimbabwean urban spaces.

Paying close attention, one would notice that the works are mainly made from found consumer waste, specifically, perfume lids and spray tops. The artist considers this found debris as “uncanny materials”, seeing them almost in every dustbin in a time when people were struggling with necessities such as food. He collected them and, through his work, materialised their presence as well as his questions, assumptions and imagination about the objects. According to the artist:

Sometimes my works are based on the seeming paradox of the Zimbabwean policies and excrements of the very people and societies. However, I was also perplexed with satiric paradox of the growing garbage in Harare. I was playing with the sarcasm idea of a smelly community with busting sewerage pipes, uncontrolled waste and stinking poverty which imported so many millions of perfumes, fragrances and deodorant beauty products filling the dumps and refuse of Harare (Takadiwa 2017).

²⁶ Takadiwa was working with the London-based Tyburn Gallery since 2015. The gallery was closed in June, 2019.



Fig.2.4 Moffat Takadiwa,, smell of Harare A (2015), found spray tops,
approx. diameter 70 cm
Source: photo courtesy of Tyburn Galler



Fig.2.5 Moffat Takadiwa,, smell of Harare B, 2015,Found spray can
debris, 95*95*25 cm
Source: photo courtesy of Tyburn Gallery

In this sense, the artist created a metaphorical smellscape as his key tenet which illuminates the lived and sensually embodied dimension of urban transition. The works coagulating olfactory experiences, which are created

by the scented products and their waste littering the urban space, symbolise the increasing informal economy and the dominance of foreign products within the collapsing function of the metropolitan city of Harare. In this smell category focusing on the issue of the consumption of foreign objects in a broader context, the artist highlights Chinese presence in the urban space of Harare. This is embedded in his work from two dimensions: the artist's intention through his work to reflect on the phenomenon of increasing Chinese commodities in Harare city, and the materials he used which are the consumer wastes of made-in-China products.

'Zimbabwe Bird' smell like plastic 'dragon' (2015) [Fig.2.6] is an eye-catching sculpture affixed to the wall due to its large-scale abstraction with a height of almost 2.5 meters and, more crucially, the sparkling colours: golden, silvery tones and emerald-green. Takadiwa blends into the title his sensual experiences in the urban space of Harare as well as his investigation of the experiences. As indicated in its title, the golden outline sketches the shape of Zimbabwean bird which is the national emblem of Zimbabwe and forms part of the national flag with the colour of gold. The sculpture of the Zimbabwe Bird is assumed to have been created during the heyday of Great Zimbabwe, roughly between 1300 to 1450 (Hubbard 2009). The bird is viewed by many Zimbabweans "as an able protector, a guiding spirit, or a divine messenger whose absence from Zimbabwe thwarts positive sociopolitical change" (Simbao 2017:2). In Takadiwa's work, the bird is a dispirited one with the body and the golden wings hanging down on each side. More importantly, this shining goldenness is merely a contemporary parody of gloriousness as it is made from discarded spray tops of made-in-China cheap perfume and the body is made from cut-up pieces of green beverage flasks. As a legendary creature in Chinese mythology, the dragon is a typical symbol of greatness in Chinese culture. Takadiwa has seen many

plastic dragon toys sold in small shops in Harare. The “smell” of these plastic dragons has left a heavy odour in his metaphorical smellscape of Harare. Therefore, Takadiwa addresses his enquiry into the urban culture of Harare city that is characterised by the influx and consumption of foreign commodities especially the Chinese goods, which degrades the Zimbabwe Bird to a level of being plastic and zhing-zhong.



Fig.2.6 Moffat Takadiwa, *Zimbabwean bird smell like plastic dragon* (2015), spray tops and cut beverage flasks, 241*99*21 cm

Source: photo courtesy of Tyburn Gallery

2.3 Towards a social-cultural life of the object

As suggested above, the materials of Takadiwa’s work play a crucial role in the meaning production of his work. First of all, the metaphorical smellscape is directly connected to the use of perfume debris. Moreover, his

investigation into consumerism is effective and powerful, with the centralisation in his work of the residue of consumer society. Therefore, the use of consumer waste of Chinese products is crucial in Takadiwa's artistic engagement with the social issue in relation to the increasing Chinese presence in Harare. To unpack the material aspect of Takadiwa's work, this part shifts focus from visual symbolism to the materiality of his work, which literally means the quality of being composed of matter, and the materialisation process by which such quality is achieved.

Art historian Michael Yonan (2011:238) noted that, within an art-historical disciplinary framework, materiality has rarely been formulated as an essential component of interpretation due to that the visual aspects of art having been privileged over the material. However, Yonan (2011:239) argues that "visuality and materiality tend to operate in tandem" and the object status of arts insistently inflects and determines a work of art's potential meanings. He further suggests that the physical dimension of art as an indissoluble component of art's capacity always surpasses or exceeds our ability to describe it. Therefore, drawing from the broader project of material culture and in order to close some of the gaps that currently exist between art history and material culture, Yonan (2011) suggests that the materiality of objects should be viewed as the rightful focus of art-historical study. This section traces Yonan's insight to focus on the materiality of Takadiwa's work and locates the art objects in a social-relational context (Gell 1986:7), in order to unpack the way in which meaning is accumulated in the creation process and manifests itself in its materiality of Takadiwa's work. In other words, this part aims to explore the materiality of his work as well as the materialisation process, which is a process unfolding in social space and time that leads to the object status of the artwork, drawing from the recent scholarship on the agency and socialcultural biography of objects

in relation to the field of consumption and art (Appadurai 1986; Gell 1998; Gosde and Marshall 1999; Brown 2001; Miller 2005; Hoskins 2006, 2013; Yonan 2011; Roberts 2017).

It is intriguing to note that some scholars have already drawn our attention to the significance of material in meaning production in contemporary arts of Africa. In regard to Ghanaian artist EL Anastui's cloth pieces, Binder (2008) argues that the historical connection to a specific cloth type is secondary to the transformation of material and interprets the significance of this change in relation to local and global political and societal conditions. Kearney (2016) explores the significance of the use of found objects in contemporary South African arts. She proposes the approach with a shift in focus, "from the idea of the found objects as anti-art, to an exploration of the changing ontological status of the found object as it moves through different social fields" (Kearney 2016:ii). Adopting a social-anthropological understanding of materiality, she explores the manner in which the materiality of found objects contributes to the meaning of the artworks, as "part of the significance of objects lies in their materiality, and the meanings that the objects accrue as they move through social practices, which are subsumed into the materiality of the artworks" (Kearney 2016:155). Tracing the circulation of paper beads in space and time in the specific context of Uganda, Kasozi (2019) analyses the artistic practice of Ugandan artist Sanaa Gateja, who references paper beads as prime materials. She points out the variations that stretch the meaning of Gateja's materials and that his art expands the margins of beads and art. The variations, according to Kasozi (2019:48), are introduced by the artist's exploration of "the tactility and mobility of the materials and their register in daily life" or, in other words, "paper bead(ing) on the move" in socio-spatial processes. From a similar point of view, pertinent discussion around the circulation of

Chinese products in the contemporary arts of Africa, regardless of their different forms, is exemplified by the two articles by Cheng (2018) and Huang (2019), both of whom focus on the symbolic object of the China bag. As suggested in their research, these scholars analyse the materials within the social contexts in which the objects circulate and transform into artwork.

Following their insight in the significance of materials and considering the art object as part of its social-cultural life transforming in different contexts, the following section aims to foreground Takadiwa's creative process, as:

Tracing the social life or the biography of objects, including how the objects are transformed into artistic works, provides a unique way to understand the shifting spatial structures and complicated power relations of the specific context in which the objects circulate (Cheng 2018:20).

2.4 Materialising the lived-experiences with the consumer waste of Chinese products

To unfold further discussion of Takadiwa's work, it is crucial to give more background information on his artistic practice. Takadiwa was majoring in ceramics at Harare Polytechnic College and, as mentioned above, he turned to found materials around 2007 mainly due to the lack of "traditional"²⁷ art materials, which were unaffordable to him and which the school also failed to supply in a situation of when students and others were even struggling to source food. During the early years when first working with found consumer waste, Takadiwa went to the streets and dumpsites to look for materials daily and spared no effort in experimenting with a wide range of materials, such as worn shoes, ARV tablet packaging, discarded bulbs, beverage

²⁷ The "traditional" art materials here refer to paint, canvas, materials for ceramics, and so on, which are often regarded as the common materials in the framework of high arts.

bottles, cosmetics debris, and so on. Gradually, he trained himself to be a sharp observer and collector of trash to the extent that he could identify the difference at a site from the previous day through a mere glimpse (Takadiwa 2018). Besides, he started building relationships with the many “peers” at the garbage dumps in Harare. With the situation improving in terms of his practice, Takadiwa established a stable way of working with a team to look for and deal with found materials. The team members include the jobless youth in his neighbourhood and the people who depend on the dump sites for their living.

In this context, the social life of perfume spray tops, which actualise the materiality of Takadiwa’s work, shall be remapped in the specific social spaces, including marketplaces, living spaces of the consumers, dump sites, as well as Takadiwa’s studio space. Thus, the lived experiences of people in these different social contexts have been attached to and inscribed in the objects through their trajectories, as “not only do objects change through their existence, but they often have the capability of accumulating histories, so that the present significance of an object derives from the persons and events to which it is connected” (Gosden & Marshall 1999:170). Simply speaking, things tell the story of people’s lives (Hoskins 1998).

Therefore, it is crucial to briefly contextualise the stories and provide a biography of the object within its socio-cultural life as commodity, waste and art material to art object. Situated in the broader background of the international relationship between Zimbabwe and China, the formal and informal marketplaces of made-in-China goods are connected to the transnational experiences of the Chinese traders and local vendors. While more discussion that is outside the scope of this thesis can be explored on social psychology in the desire for these types of “uncanny” (Takadiwa 2018) products despite economic hardship, such as cheap perfume and

fashion clothing, the mass consumption of them is in the first place a recent reality involving Chinese engagement (Manyeruke 2006:90).

The object's socio-cultural life as art material should be located in Takadiwa's studio space and the particular dump site of Harare where it overlaps with its life as consumer waste. I visited Takadiwa's studio space and the dump site where he collects materials during my field trip in Harare when the jacaranda season was barely over in November 2018. These visits embodied my imagination of what Takadiwa (2018) referred to as "work with the local community as a team" and, more crucially, enabled me to understand the meaning attached to his work by this form of creative process. At the Chitungwiza dump site, about a forty-minute drive from Harare, a group of people are always expecting Takadiwa. Among them are the aged with white hair, teenagers, as well as toddlers on their mothers' back. Takadiwa has been working with these people from the local community for many years. They search for different materials among the boundless dump according to Takadiwa's needs.



Fig.2.7 Moffat Takadiwa collects materials from the dumpsite in
Chitungwiza town

Source: photo by Lifang Zhang, Harare, 2018

During my visit together with Takadiwa, his gallerist from Tyburn Gallery and his friend who is a social worker in Harare, the team was already waiting at a small disposal centre in the middle of the dump site with a collection of discarded toothbrushes [Fig.2.7]. As they told me, the one who is the most efficient can find eight toothbrushes in one hour. Being in an extreme situation of cash crisis, they were delighted to receive the cash from Takadiwa and also to see from the gallerist's mobile phone what the artist has made from the waste they collected. From trash to art materials, the objects in effect also reference the transition of this Harare suburb to a current "garbage town" (Kawadza 2017) and the everyday experiences of these people whose lives depend on the dump site. While in his studio, which is located in the community public space of Mbare ²⁸, the transformation of these materials into art objects tells the story of local youths [Fig.2.8]. Many young artists share the studio space with Takadiwa; the adjoining room accommodates a project of sewing skill training courses for local jobless women. Takadiwa has two studio assistants from Harare who help him to organise, clean and drill the materials. They are among the urban youth who form part of the large number of unemployed in Zimbabwe.

A social process has unfolded in the trajectory of the found objects. Through this transformation process of consumer waste to art material, Takadiwa has created opportunities to economically empower these people from the local community, including his team from Chitungwiza and the assistants in his studio. In this sense, Takadiwa's practice not only remains in close contact with people's realities but also intervenes in the realities and becomes part of the social process. Therefore, the meaning of these works is never context free and should be approached as a part of a broader

²⁸ Mbare is a high-density, southern suburb of Harare, Zimbabwe. It was the first high-density suburb, being established in 1907. At that time, it was located near the city cemetery, sewage works, and abattoir. It was originally called Harare Township, a name later on used for the capital city itself.

social and political process, within which Takadiwa materialises people’s lived experiences in different spaces in relation to the increasing Chinese presence in Zimbabwe’s current economic crisis. With what Gosden and Marshall (1999) called the “capability of accumulating histories”, meanings associated with these lived experiences have been attached to the objects in the transformation process. In other words, through the “things” it is created from, the art object “matters in its own materiality” (Du Preez 2008:30).



Fig.2.8 Shared Studio at Mbare

Source: photo by Lifang Zhang, Harare, 2018

At this point, the meaning of Takadiwa’s work engaging with Chinese presence has been analysed through its visual symbolism and its materialisation process in relation to different social spaces and contexts. Again, it demonstrates the value in approaching the broader discussion on the engagements between Africans and Chinese from the perspective of contemporary art, which embraces contradictions and complexities. In a way, it also implies the value of approaching art from such types of social relationships. Initially motivated by the concern about African–Chinese

engagements, this approach forces a specific social-political context to the discussion of artworks and thus inherently suggests an inter-disciplinary perspective to unearth new possibilities, thematically and methodologically, in the field of art.

CHAPTER THREE: Inserting Little Narratives of Zambia–Chinese

Encounters through Research-based Art Practice

Following the discussion on work that re-presents the materiality of Chinese presence, this chapter focuses on the work by Zambian artist Stary Mwaba, who engages with individual stories of encountering Chinese from the perspectives of ordinary Zambian people. In his installation works on Zambia–China encounters, *Chinese Cabbage* (2014) and *Black Mountain* (2019) (discussed further in the following sections), Mwaba provides two laboratory scenes based on primary school experiments that examine how plants absorb water and minerals in the soil and how mushrooms grow from coffee grounds. The laboratory scene as a site of “construction of scientific facts” (Latour and Woolgar 1986), is a metaphor for Mwaba’s practice, which is a process of unlearning and relearning knowledge, as well as deconstructing and reconstructing narratives through the lens of personal stories. This chapter analyses how Mwaba, through his research-based art, challenges the myth and rhetoric among the popular “facts” on Chinese presence in Zambia, in order to re-writes his own stories about Zambians– Chinese engagements.

3.1 Zambia–China: relations, facts and discourses

The bilateral relations between Zambia and the People’s Republic of China (PRC) is a typical case in the global discussions around the China–Africa relationship (Taylor 2006; Negi 2008; Kopińsk & Polus 2011; Sautman & Yan 2017). Right after Zambia’s independence in 1964, Zambia established formal diplomatic relations with China on 29 October, 1964 and a Chinese embassy was opened in Lusaka in November in the same year (Taylor 2006).

Since then, the Chinese presence has been increasingly visible in different sectors in Zambia, especially in this century.

The first president of Zambia, Kenneth Kaunda (1924–), played a significant role in Zambia’s early ties with China. According to Taylor (2006:180), under Kaunda Zambia maintained perhaps one of the warmest relations with China in Africa. Sun (2014) also pointed out the personalised feature of the Zambia–China relationship, with a focus on national leaders and their ruling parties from the very beginning. China announced its support for the national liberation movements in Africa after the Bandung Conference²⁹ in 1955 and had briefly engaged with Kaunda “through its observer status at the All African Peoples’ Conference in Accra (1958)” (Sun 2014:26). Prior to Zambia’s formal independence, the Chinese government telegraphed Kaunda “informing the President elect of China’s decision to recognise Zambia” (Taylor 2006:164). During the Chinese Cultural Revolution³⁰ (1966–1976) when other African countries’ relations with China were drastically affected, Kaunda still paid a state visit to Beijing in June 1967 at the height of the disturbances (Taylor 2006:166). Following that was a holiday visit to Beijing by Kaunda’s special assistant, the Vice-President’s visit to China in 1972 and Kaunda’s state visit to Beijing again in 1974 (*ibid.*). During this period, besides political support, China provided dozens of different aid projects to Zambia, and the economic relations between Zambia and China were the largest in Southern Africa, though at a low level (Taylor 2006). Kaunda visited China later after Mao’s death in 1980 and 1988. Under Kaunda, Zambia–China relations were often referred to as “an all-weather friendship” (Taylor 2006:166; Kopiński & Polus 2011:184). Kaunda’s close engagement with China laid

²⁹ The Bandung Conference took place on 18–24 April 1955 in Bandung, Indonesia. It was the first large-scale meeting of Asian and African states, most of which were newly independent. For further reading in relation to the Bandung Conference and China–Africa in visual arts, see Simbao (2019b).

³⁰ For more details about the Cultural Revolution in relation to China’s engagements with African countries, see Taylor (2006).

the foundation for China to continue its relations with Zambia in the post-Kaunda period after 1991³¹ and is still a symbol of the old friendship today, informed by Kaunda's attendance and speech in events such as the Ground Breaking Ceremony of the TAZARA Memorial Park Project in May 2019³².

During the 1970s, the most significant project and visible symbol of the Zambia–China link, or of broader Africa–China relations, was the construction of the Tanzania – Zambia Railway (TAZARA) linking Dar es Salaam in Tanzania with the town of Kapiri Mposhi in Zambia. It is also called the Uhuru Railway³³ (Freedom Railway) which illustrates its ideological substance besides the function of transportation services for passengers and the exports of landlocked goods. Breaking free from its dependency on Rhodesian, Angolan and South African ports and linking the Zambian Copperbelt with the port city of Dar es Salaam, TAZARA was also “an anti-apartheid railway, a symbol of revolutionary solidarity and resistance to the forces of colonialism, neo-colonialism, and imperialism” (Monson 2009:2). When the newly independent Tanzania and Zambia stated their intention to build a joint railway, they first appealed for financial support to the World Bank, the United States, the Soviet Union and some other countries. After requests from Tanzania and Zambia were rejected by these countries, China, then a poor country in an early development phase and at a time of turmoil during the Cultural Revolution, immediately agreed to offer the financial aid when Julius Nyerere, the president of Tanzania, visited China. The construction was completed between 1970 and 1975.

³¹ Kaunda was the president of Zambia from Zambia's independence in 1964 until he was defeated in the general election in 1991. It was the first multi-party election since the first post-independence general election in 1968.

³² For more information about the ceremony, see the CGTN Africa report “Zambia launches construction of memorial park to remember Chinese heroes”, 14 May, 2019. Available at: <https://africa.cgtn.com/2019/05/14/zambia-launches-construction-of-memorial-park-to-rememberchinese-heroes/>.

³³ Uhuru is a Kiswahili word that means “freedom”.

Jamie Monson (2009:3), a scholar who specialises in the history of the TAZARA Railway, points out:

The railway was part of China's effort to combat what it termed the hegemonism and neo-imperialism of the two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union. At the same time, however, China's investment in African development assistance was part of a drive to be acknowledged as a world power. Meanwhile, in defining a legitimizing foundation for Afro-Asian solidarity, China claimed a shared history of imperial conquest and colonization with its "brothers" in the third world. The relationship between China and Tanzania at this historical moment was defined as one of "the poor helping the poor," as one underdeveloped country reaching out to another. China thus claimed to be part of a common "third world struggle" against the forces of imperialism and neo-colonialism, while at the same time proposing to construct TAZARA as the third-largest development infrastructure project in Africa. In this way, through African development assistance China sought to retain two seemingly contradictory identities—that of a formerly colonized subject as well as that of a Cold War player.

Since the 1980s, China has shifted its main task towards economic development and modernisation, which was also emphasised in its foreign policies. After the political transformation taking place in early 1990s in South Africa, the "Cold War rhetoric of anti-apartheid and anti-imperialism was no longer relevant as a basis for co-operation" (Kopińsk & Polus 2011:184) and thus led to the increasing visibility of a Chinese economic presence in African countries. In the case of Zambia, Chinese investment and migration grew rapidly from the end of 1990s and the beginning of this century. However, while the narrative of "all-weather friendship" was still adopted by the leaders of Zambia and China, the year of 2006 marked a "clear point of departure and introduced a new element to the picture:

political and popular opposition to China” (Negi 2008:48). Coincidentally, it was also after the 2006 Forum on China–Africa

Cooperation (FOCAC), when leaders of 48 African countries gathered in Beijing, that China developed into one of the most significant economic partners with African countries, and a “China–Africa relationship” became a topic of close attention in the popular press especially the mainstream Western media (Sautman & Yan 2017).

In the centre of these narratives is Chinese involvement in the Zambian mining sector, which should be located and understood in the mining history of Zambia. According to Fraser (2010:5), the Copperbelt as a mining region emerged in the 1890s when copper deposits were “discovered” in 1895. In Northern Rhodesia, which was formed in 1911, Cecil John Rhodes’s British South Africa Company (BSAC) controlled mineral rights in the country. Being recruited as labour, black mine workers suffered badly in the process. Meanwhile, they became central to the nationalist movements of Zambia, experiencing political influence and profound changes in their social lives and structure. At its independence, “largely on the basis of its copper industry, Zambia was seen as a model for a continent seeking to move from political self-rule towards economic independence and to end poverty” (Fraser 2010:6). In the late 1960s, Kaunda announced the nationalisation of mine companies into Zambia Consolidated Copper Mines (ZCCM).

However, the industry and the fortunes of Zambia were closely connected to global mineral markets and corporations (Larmer 2010:32). Kaunda attempted but failed to make changes to the economic model inherited from the colonial era in which the sale of all minerals was through the London Metal Exchange (Fraser 2010:7). Right after the completion of nationalisation process in mid-1970s, the world price of copper experienced a dramatic decrease that lasted over 25 years. This led to the economic crisis

that changed Zambia: it became one of the poorest countries in the early 1990s, having been a country which had had a higher GDP than South Korea, Brazil and most other African countries (Ferguson 1999:6). Though there were debates over the World Bank's request for ZCCM to be sold, Zambia was forced to start a privatisation process in the 1990s as a result of the crisis in the mining sector and its massive debts (Fraser 2010:12). Between 1997 and 2002 under president Frederick Chiluba, ZCCM was "unbundled" into seven different units and sold off to investors from countries such as South Africa, Canada, Britain, Australia and Switzerland, as well as India and China (Lee 2010:130). However, the world copper price experienced a sharp increase immediately after the privatisation process.

Of the seven "packages", only one small mine – Chambishi Mine – was originally bought by a Chinese state-owned enterprise, NFCA, in 1998. However, it was only the Chinese investor who attracted the most attention locally and internationally (Fraser 2010:17). In line with the industry-wide trend of casualisation driven by capitalist logic, as one of the most salient results of privatisation on the Copperbelt, NFCA adopted a similar flexibility strategy in managing its workforce (Lee 2010:130). But the highest proportion of casual and contract workers and the lower wages among major mining companies made the Chinese company highly unpopular in its first ten years in Zambia (Fraser 2010:21; Lee 2010:131). In 2006, Michael Sata, the candidate president of the Patriotic Front (PF), adopted an anti-China rhetoric during his presidential campaign with the slogan "Zambia for Zambians". He promised to expel Chinese "infestors" (instead of investors) living in Zambia (Kopińsk & Polus 2011:188). Negi (2008:54) suggests that "the negative perception of the Chinese has overdetermined the equation and China has become "the' foreign exploiter in Zambia" and this is because:

First, China has invested heavily in copper mining, which is central to Zambian economy and identity; second, particularly terrible accidents and publicized instances of worker unrest discussed below have taken place in Chinese-owned mines; third, the ruling MMD government is considered extremely close to China; and finally, the PF has repeatedly singled out China as enemy number one.

Fraser (2010:22) pointed out that Sata's expression of anti-Chinese sentiment resonated with Western analysts concerned about China's role in a new "scramble for Africa". Lee (2017) argues that Chinese state capital, because of its more ambitious agenda beyond a singular profit-maximisation imperative, has been more open to negotiation and concession with the Zambian state and society than global private capital. However, as Sautman and Yan (2013:132) pointed out, "although thereafter the PF government made a 'u-turn' on relations with China and Chinese firms in Zambia, the consequences of its anti-Chinese incitement remain very much present", which is discussed further in the following sections combining with an analysis of Sary Mwaba's art works.

3.2 Towards a process of unlearning and relearning: questions, researches and family stories

Mwaba's topic-driven and research-based project on Zambia–China relations started with questions. Growing up in the Copperbelt region and now living in Lusaka, Sary Mwaba has been aware of the narratives mentioned above and decided to start a project exploring the Chinese presence in Zambia, inspired by the interest in his work *Chinese Cabbage* [Fig.3.1], which was exhibited at Künstlerhaus Bethanien in Berlin in 2014. The installation shows how cabbage leaves turn yellow, blue and red after absorbing dyed liquid in the beakers in which they are placed. The colours

Mwaba used for dyeing the cabbage symbolise the significant minerals, copper, cobalt and magnesium that are mined in Zambia.



Fig.3.1 Stary Mwaba, *The Copper, Cobalt, Manganese Chinese Cabbage* (2015), installation of chinakohl, food colour
Source: photo courtesy of Stary Mwaba.

While Mwaba (2018:1) supposes that “the *Chinese Cabbage* piece that I had exhibited in Germany attracted a lot of attention simply because many people assumed the work was addressing Chinese economic colonisation”, he emphasises the layers in this piece. Firstly, it is based on a primary school experiment he did with his daughter who attended the Chinese International School in Lusaka. This for him is important, as it inserts into the work the experiences of his daughter, even her generation, who grows up in the increasingly visible Chinese presence and impact. Secondly, Chinese cabbage being chosen by him as material for the experiment, which when converted into an artwork, was not merely coincidence as it evidences the change in vegetable landscape with Chinese influence³⁴. Thirdly, using food

³⁴ Mwaba states that, “the Chinese cabbage is the best metaphor and representation of how the presence of the Chinese has influenced and brought change to Zambian communities. The vegetable is a source of nutrition, can be cultivated throughout the year, unlike Zambian traditional vegetables which are grown seasonally, adding another valuable aspect to the development of the society in terms of nutrition. Due to its foreignness, the vegetable has also brought with it the environment challenges, as foreign plants do. Interestingly, other foodstuffs that are now considered to be ‘traditional’ Zambian food, were originally foreign and were imported from South America.” (Mwaba 2019:19).

colours, the edibility of the leaves creates a sense of ambiguity about the issue this work seemingly alludes to, which is “the Chinese appetite for natural resources and her aspirations to economically colonize Zambia” (Mwaba 2019:19).

Rejecting the single story, Mwaba was questioning the predominant narrative of a “new coloniser” through *Chinese Cabbage*. This was followed by more questions in his art project concerning the Chinese presence in Zambia, which was processed during his MFA programme at Rhodes University in Makhanda, South Africa. The focus of this project is the mining sector in Zambia and it also touches on the history and events of the TAZARA Railway. Besides the significance as Zambia–China engagements in different historical periods, as highlighted above, the other reason for Mwaba to pay close attention to these issues is their interweaving with stories of Mwaba’s family members. The experiences of Mwaba’s family form part of the history in relation to these issues and also Zambia–China engagements, which, in turn, can be traced in their lives and memories.

Mwaba’s grandparents on his mother’s side were settled in Chambeshi town in the Northern Province, downstream of the Chambeshi river where it is bridged by the TAZARA Railway. As Mwaba (2019:29) narrates it:

Chambeshi holds fond memories for the family, particularly the stories about the bridge from the time of its construction, which was told by my grandmother when I was a child, including stories about Chinese people eating snakes, growing vegetables and walking with the “Little Red Book”.

On the evening of 11 October 1979, Evelyn Mwansa, who is considered to be the first female Zambian locomotive driver, drove the south-bound TAZARA 12-coach passenger train over the Chambeshi Bridge, which

was bombed minutes afterwards. Driving the train on this fateful day is a story that has been told over and over by my grandparents who were in town at that particular time. ... Through Chambeshi I engage not only with my own personal story but also with the stories of my family's first encounters with the Chinese.

Mwaba himself also spent four years between 1994 and 1998 in Kasama town in the Northern Province, a TAZARA station and a place in which the population grew considerably in the 1980s³⁵ after the construction of TAZARA, as in many other places in the railway corridor (Monson 2009:136). He used to travel back and forth to Chambeshi by train to visit his grandmother during that time. However, except being referred to in propaganda as a symbol of Africa–China friendship, the stories of people whose lives have been directly affected by TAZARA railway are seldom mentioned in current mainstream narratives about a Chinese presence in Zambia.



Fig.3.2 TAZARA passengers, Bana Mukupa and grandson, Chambeshi, Zambia (2017)

Source: photo courtesy of Stary Mwaba

³⁵ The data is available at <http://zambia.opendataforafrica.org/ZMPAD21016/population-anddemography-of-zambia?region=1000520-kasama>.

Bearing in mind the question concerning the local ordinary people's stories in relation to TAZARA railway, Mwaba travelled from Lusaka to the Northern Province to conduct field research for his art project [Fig.3.2]. He first took a train trip riding from Kasama to Kapiri. On the train and at the stops, Mwaba interviewed passengers who visit friends by train or who conduct small business along the railway. He also went back to Chambeshi town to interview some of his relatives about the stories and their lives in relation to the TAZARA Railway. Meanwhile, Mwaba also drew from scholarly literature, archives and non-fiction books about TAZARA. He was inspired by the work of Jamie Monson, *Africa's Freedom Railway: how a Chinese development project changed lives and livelihoods in Tanzania*, and a memoir about the construction of the railway by some workers, *A monument to China–Africa friendship: first-hand account of the building of the TAZARA*, from which he developed the concept and work “Black Body”.

Living in the Copperbelt region, many family members from Mwaba's father's side have worked in the mining sector and experienced the vicissitudes of society connected to the dramatic fluctuation of the copper price. Mwaba's grandfather was a miner in Chingola in the first decade of the newly independent Zambia when a process of nationalisation of mining companies was conducted. His father, together with many of his uncles, was working in the mining companies under ZCCM from the mid-1970s until he passed away in 1994. He was moved around according to the needs of the company in the province, including to Kitwe, Kabwe and Mufulira, and experienced the decline of the mining economy from its extremely promising time to its decline. Mwaba's younger peers have contributed new stories of a Chinese presence in the Zambian mining sector. His cousin is among the small-scale miners, who are currently excavating the mountain-sized mining slag heaps or mountains and trading with Chinese companies

or individuals who have recently come to Zambia. Mwaba himself also spent his childhood and teenage life in the mining region of the Copperbelt, basically Kitwe, Kabwe, Mufulira and Chingola. His life was surrounded by mining, but it was not until Chinese involvement overwhelmed the media that mining became a subject in his art, with the narratives of “China is taking over Zambia”, as well as political discourses such as Sata’s presidential campaign (Mwaba 2018).

For this core issue addressed in his ongoing project, Mwaba went back to the

Copperbelt for his research in 2017. In the company of his cousin he travelled to Chingola and Kitwe to visit mining sites, polluted river spots as well as the urban living spaces around them. Besides his cousins and their peers, he also interviewed other people from these places, among whom was a primary school teacher living around a polluted river, who made him realise how much he was misinformed by media (Mwaba 2018). Mwaba learned from online news that the water source had been polluted by a Chinese mining company and was ready to seek more negative evidence, only to find out that the mining company that was responsible for the pollution of the river was not even owned by Chinese (Mwaba 2018:1). After a visit to the black mountain (the mountain-sized dumps of former mining process, discussed in 3.4) where his cousin mines [Fig.3.3], Mwaba was confused and decided to investigate the mining history of Zambia and identify where Chinese engagement had been located. He started with a question of “What are these mountains?” rather than the simplistic statement of blame that “The Chinese are buying a mountain and taking over Zambia” (Mwaba 2018), driven by the headlines in the media. Besides the interviews with ordinary people whose lives are closely connected with mining, he also researched scholarly literature from different disciplines about mining, urban life and history in the Copperbelt. In 2018, he went back to Kitwe again for more visual and oral material.



Fig.3.3 A mining slag or waste dump, Wusakile, Kitwe, Zambia (2017)
Source: photo courtesy of Stary Mwaba

To analyse Mwaba's work, it is important to foreground and shed more light on his research into the topic. First of all, the act of research itself attaches meaning to his works. Aiming to acquire knowledge and fact beyond the mainstream media, Mwaba's research activities challenge the dominance of media in the discourses about Chinese presence and the stereotypical narratives produced. As his research must be understood as part of his creative process, as the stories he heard, photos he took, together with the scholarly and archival materials he read, shape the final representations in his works. Moreover, by adopting topics and methods from academic research, Mwaba's artistic practice intervenes and contributes to the knowledge creation on this topic about the Zambia–China relationship with his specific approach of individual stories and the medium of art. Therefore, the following sections aim to unpack the way how Mwaba “translated” his research into art-making with his profound insight based on individual stories.

3.3 Little narratives as concern and method

Mwaba approaches the broad issue of the Zambia–China relationship from a personal perspective, drawing from the experiences of his family members. In fact, individual stories have been a consistent concern in Mwaba’s artistic practice. As one of Zambia’s foremost painters of his generation, Mwaba is known for his portraits, many of which are “driven by notions of youthful anxiety” and “his aesthetic is recognised as featuring a combination of representational and abstract images” (Mulenga 2016:114). Besides the portraits of many ordinary people he encounters in his life, Mwaba also pays close attention to some significant figures in Zambia’s history, which are also approached from a personal point of view.



Fig.3.4 Stary Mwaba, *The WITCH* (2014), acrylic on wire mesh, 200*195cm

Source: photo courtesy of Stary Mwaba

One example is his 2014 work, *The WITCH* [Fig.3.4], a painting of the eponymous band of the musical genre Zamrock. Combining traditional African music with guitar driven rock and funk music, Zamrock emerged in the 1970s and “embodied the important social changes and later the

economic recession that characterised the lives of those who came of age in the early independence period” (Guene 2018). Its story started from the different musical styles brought by the mass migration into the rich mining region of the Copperbelt, partly resulting from Kenneth Kaunda’s policy to create a uniquely Zambian musical presence in the nationalisation process after independence, and ended with the fall in the copper price in the late-1970s (Sandberg 2013). As the representative Zamrock band, The WITCH experienced the same fate. It was formed and became the most popular band in the 1970s, which toured all over southern and eastern Africa, playing to thousands at stadium shows (ibid.). However, with the end of Zambia’s golden years, The WITCH and many other Zamrockers were reduced to playing “tea-time” shows and finally faded away (Smith 2014). Born after the peak of Zamrock in 1976, Mwaba only learnt about the musical genre through his mother, whose favourite band was The WITCH. His engagement with The WITCH through his work is not so much an elegiac recall of a psychedelic period of national history, as his mother’s personal memory of Zambia’s golden days and the following straight downhill fall. In his project on Makuka Nkoloso, who founded Zambia’s National Academy of Science, Space Research and Philosophy and claimed to compete with the West with an ambition for Zambians to be the first Africans to land on the moon or fly to Mars, Mwaba also paid close attention to the only female member in Nkoloso’s team and obtained information from Nkoloso’s son.

A personal approach with more depth is adopted by Mwaba in his recent works about Zambian–Chinese encounters. He uses Francois Lyotard’s term “Petits récits” (little narratives) as the fundamental concept of his project. This term is from Lyotard’s principal contribution to the debate on postmodernism, *The Postmodern Condition* (1984). In the book, Lyotard (1984) does not provide a precise definition of “little narratives” or

articulate what little narratives he refers to, which remain “the quintessential form of imaginative invention” and replace “the principle of a universal metalanguage”. With his particular focus on scientific discourse and knowledge in Western societies, Lyotard defined postmodernism as an “incredulity towards metanarratives” and what he calls “the obsolescence of the metanarrative apparatus of legitimation (Lyotard 1984:xxiv). As Storey (2018:208) puts it:

According to Lyotard, metanarratives operate through inclusion and exclusion, as homogenizing forces, marshalling heterogeneity into ordered realms, silencing and excluding other discourses, other voices in the name of universal principles and general goals. Postmodernism is said to signal the collapse of all metanarratives with their privileged truth to tell, and to witness instead the increasing sound of a plurality of voices from the margins, with their insistence on difference, on cultural diversity, and the claims of heterogeneity over homogeneity.

In Mwaba’s project about the case of China’s presence in Zambia, he refers to “the dichotomized narratives in media as metanarratives which pay little attention to the people on the ground and [I] propose the approach of ‘little narratives’ to foreground the lived-experiences of Zambians who have individual encounters with Chinese in various social spaces” (Mwaba 2019:8). One of the prevailing narratives in media, locally and internationally, which Mwaba engages with through his work, often depicts China as a (neo) coloniser of Zambia, including headlines such as “China buys its first African colony”, “Africans fear Zambia has become a Chinese colony” or “China is taking over Zambia”³⁶. In 2018, a contentious word,

³⁶ Narratives in the news media: <https://capx.co/china-buys-its-first-african-colony-for-a-meagre40million/>; <https://www.kaieteurnewsonline.com/2018/09/23/africans-fear-zambia-has-become-achinese-colony/>; <https://www.africanliberty.org/2018/09/10/china-is-taking-over-zambia-nationalassets-but-the-nightmare-is-just-starting-for-africa/>; [https://face2faceafrica.com/article/threeevents-that-prove-zambia-or-chambia-is-chinas-first-african-colony](https://face2faceafrica.com/article/threeevents-that-prove-zambia-or-chambia-is-chinas-first-african-colony;); etc..

or “nation”, “Chambia” (a combination of China and Zambia) was created and made a great clamour in news media, as well as social media with the emblematic Facebook page “Republic of Chambia” which is still active today with irregular posts about China–Zambia links³⁷. Mwaba’s works “talk back” (Simbao 2012c) to the “distortion of information and misinformation in the media which has led to an imaginary colony” (Mwaba 2019:33). This is fully illustrated in his ongoing series *Creating a Nation out of Newsprint, Chambia The New Colony* (2018), which can also be read as a meta-representation of his other work in this project about Zambia–China engagements.

The essential foundation of all the works in this series of *Creating a Nation out of Newsprint, Chambia The New Colony* [Fig.3.5] is burnt-perforated newsprint. Using a soldering gun, Mwaba removes some words in the newspaper, selectively or randomly, and then joins several cuttings together. Then the scorched-out newspaper print is stuck onto tarpaulin material, which is primarily used in Zambia to cover copper when it is being transported. The used tarpaulin colour and texture is visible through the holes created by the soldering gun. Mwaba (2019:34) explains that “the idea is to create a different narrative or story from the existing text”, and that “I use newspaper print as a representation of the media narrative for both the current and historical. I reconstruct and rearrange stories, insert and force small narratives into the spaces and gaps that are created by burning parts of the newsprint; essentially, I remove some of the words that form the vocabulary of meta-narrations”.

Another work [Fig.3.6] from this series is an installation in which still images and videos from Mwaba’s research are projected onto the hanging perforated newsprint sheet. Resulting from the projector bulb and the holes

³⁷ The Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/Newchambia/>.

in the newsprint, the images are visually illuminated with its original colour on the mainly black and white newspaper sheet, through which indistinct and flowing images can be seen on the wall in the direction of the projection. This work, therefore, foregrounds Mwaba’s concept and intention to “retell the stories and emphasize the importance of our little narratives” (Mwaba 2019:35).



Fig.3.5 Stary Mwaba, Detail of *Creating a Nation out of Newsprint, Chambia the New Colony* (2018), newsprint on tarpaulin, variable dimension
Source: photo courtesy of Stary Mwaba

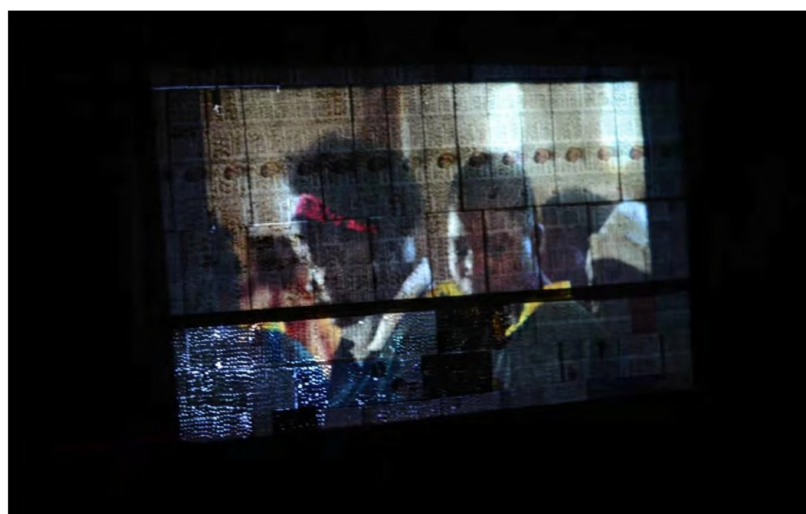


Fig.3.6 Stary Mwaba, *Creating a Nation out of Newsprint* (2018), newsprint on tarpaulin, various dimension
Source: photo courtesy of Stary Mwaba

Unpacking Mwaba's *Creating a Nation out of Newsprint*, a few notes should be underlined here to clarify his use of Lyotard's term "little narratives". The first point is the suspension of its context of "postmodern condition" in a social-cultural genealogy of Western societies and the re-contextualisation into a specific discussion around Zambia–China relations. Thus, on one hand, his art is by no means a footnote to Lyotard's theoretical work. On the other hand, however, it does not indicate that Mwaba's adoption of the term is entirely out of context, as what inspired him is the fundamental framework of Lyotard's theory—the link between narratives and legitimation of knowledge and the tension between metanarratives and little narratives. Although Mwaba (2019:8) defines the metanarrative he critiques as the "dichotomized narratives in media", his work is not limited to that. What Mwaba questions and challenges are those narratives that ignore the lived experiences and spaces of ordinary people and the plurality and complexity of these experiences; among them are the neo-colonialism narrative that isolated China from other international capital, the grand narrative of state propaganda, and the narratives that put all agendas from China and Zambia into one box. Therefore, he implements "little narratives", which Lyotard has not defined precisely, into individual stories and from a Zambian's perspective specifically, starting from his grandmother and cousin. That is to say, the experiences of them and those people connected to them is the concern in Mwaba's work and also his method to approach the widely debated issues in relation to a Chinese presence. It coincides with the current directions in China–Africa studies to proceed more in-depth and empirical research beyond the grand narratives, called for by many scholars from academic institutions (Large 2008; Park 2010; Simbao 2012a; Monson & Rupp 2013; etc.) And, as mentioned above, combining with academic research methods, Mwaba's artistic practice intervenes in knowledge creation about Zambia (Africa)–China relations through creative means and makes a special contribution through the medium of art.

Little narratives, specifically individual stories, as a concern and method to conduct his research and to “translate” knowledge into visual art, are also embodied in his work *Black Bodies* (2018) [Fig.3.7]. “Black Bodies” is a concept, as well as the title of a painting series which Mwaba developed from his research about the TAZARA Railway. He was impressed by a historical scene reading the memoir of some construction workers, as narrated by one of the engineers among them:

When we hang a single white coloured plumb line, we could barely see it from afar, as local people were dark skinned, they were so kind to put the white coloured plumb line in front of their chest so that we were able to identify quickly the line through the theodolite because of the colour contrast. (Feng cited in Mwaba 2018)



Fig.3.7 Stary Mwaba, *Black Bodies* (2018), enamel on board, 40*60cm Source: photo courtesy of Stary Mwaba.

Black Bodies is a series of 50 portraits using black enamel paint on white wood board, each 60x 80cm. Displaying the work, Mwaba linked them with fishing line and displayed them in a square, hung them on a wall and used a laser projecting on them to symbolise the plumb line. In this way, Mwaba

visualises the historical moment of interaction between Zambian and Chinese workers. What should be noticed here is that the figures in the painting are based on the photos he took of the passengers and his interviewees during his field trip by train. They are among those who travel and trade through and along the TAZARA railway. In this sense, *Black Bodies* embodies the continuing impact of the historical engagement between Zambians and Chinese during the railway construction, among which is the important role of TAZARA in the independent small-scale trade and entrepreneurial activity after the mid-1980s (Monson 2009:3). Moreover, this work also foregrounds the agency of the locals as participants in the active space of TAZARA. Therefore, Mwaba's work is not a visual accessory of the archive but connects the history to the present. Drawing from his family memories and his research, he foregrounds the lived-experience of these individuals in relation to the railway, which is often neglected in the mainstream discourses about the China-Zambia relationship. The idea of "Black Bodies" as a metaphor of legitimating the individual stories of Zambians is not limited to the issue about TAZARA but is continued in his other works, such as the 150x180cm painting from this series, which is unpacked in the following part of the discussion around his work on black mountain.

3.4 The past, present and future in *Black Mountain*

The first part of this chapter has briefly contextualised Chinese investment in copper mining in Zambia, which has become one of the most discussed issues in mainstream analysis of China-in-Africa after the year of 2006 (Sautman & Yan 2013). Besides debates around working conditions in Chinese state-owned companies, narratives such as "the beginning of an empire" and the anti-China sentiment derived from politicians' discourse, are perpetuated through the media. Mwaba approaches the issue around Chinese presence in Zambia's mining sector through the little narratives of

his cousin, who is an artisanal miner in black mountain in Chingola and has been trading with individual Chinese businessmen. Therefore, black mountain is the main subject of

Mwaba's works in relation to the discussion on a Chinese presence in copper mining in Zambia. This section considers how Mwaba, through his work, creates knowledge beyond the grand narratives to foreground the lived experiences of his cousin and other youths whose lives are closely connected to the historical site, black mountain.

In recent years, Chinese involvement in mining black mountain has become a topic of close attention, of which the controversies are mainly around issues of ownership (Mwaba 2018). Black mountain, the most visible feature in the landscape of the Copperbelt region, refers to the mountain-sized dumps of copper slag left behind by historic mining operations. Located in several sites, black mountains' existence dates back to colonial times and the ZCCM period as the by-product of mining processes dumped around the local towns. During the long period of low copper prices that lasted until 2004, these slag heaps had no apparent value (Mususa 2010:189) and no investor was interested in these in the process of privatisation in the 1990s (Kabamba 2018). After privatisation, increasing (illegal) mining activities were conducted in black mountain sites by local youths, women and children for their livelihood (Mususa 2010). Since 2004, "the mine dump site has been informally run by 'illegal' miners who came from as far away as Lusaka to exploit the opportunity of selling flux stone and copper ore on the thriving local and international markets" (Mususa 2010:199) and many of the smallscale miners are trading with Chinese businessmen (Mwaba 2018). It was not until 2005 with the boom in the copper price that these dump sites came to be regarded as more valuable assets (Mususa 2010:185) and interest in the sites grew after this advancement, with

Chambeshi Metals being the first investor acquiring the black mountain in Wusakile Township in Kitwe. However, China was again at the cutting edge of controversies around the ownership of black mountains after Chambishi Metals sold one black mountain to a Chinese company Nkana Alloys. Around 2013 and 2015, small-scale miners (illegal at that time and referred to locally as *jerabos*) took the matter to court, claiming ownership of the black mountain (Kabamba 2018) and later it became part of an election promise that this black mountain would be handed over to empower the youth. More local youth are involved in re-mining these sites with the debates around their ownership ongoing.

Mwaba is aware of controversies around black mountain ownership, among many other discussions about China's presence in Zambia. Based on his research, which informs him of the nature of black mountains and the experiences of his cousin and other youth, Mwaba creates a series of works about these sites. These works complement and dialogue with each other, addressing different aspects of the black mountain issues. They were first shown in his 2018 MFA exhibition, titled *Black Mountain*, at the Gallery in the Round in the 1820 Settlers Monument at Makhanda, South Africa.

The work titled *Black Mountain* (2018) [Fig.3.8] is a wall-hanging installation with mushrooms growing from coffee grounds in planter bags which are tied with copper wire. It is significant to spotlight this work as its core task is to address the nature of the black mountain phenomena and thus to contextualise the current activities and Chinese involvement in their ownership and exploitation. Mwaba uses coffee residue as a symbol of the discarded waste which were disposed of by mining activities starting from the period of colonial rule, in order to address the nature of black mountains as historical sites of slag dumping, a legacy of copper exploitation from colonial times and the nation's ZCCM period. This work points to the existence of black mountains on the landscape of the Copperbelt as sites

accommodating the materiality of the past. The growing of mushrooms, on the other hand, symbolise value remaining in these mountain-sized dumps and the current activities of re-mining by Chinese companies and the local youths. By doing so, this installation visualises the fact that black mountain is also an active site beyond “present past” (Jewsiewicki 2016), with the current process of re-mining and dumping. In this sense, Mwaba contextualises and considers Chinese presence in the mining history of Zambia and a broader context of a globalised system, instead of singling out China and judging its role in Zambia as neo-coloniser or not.



Fig.3.8 Stary Mwaba, Detail of *Black Mountain* (2019), Stary Mwaba, *The Black Mountain* (2019), mushrooms, soil and plastic bags, various dimension Source: photo courtesy of Stary Mwaba.

Therefore, Mwaba’s work shows the tension around the West-driven narrative about China’s involvement in the Zambian mining sector as “the beginning of a world empire”, as, ironically, “it was Western-imposed liberalization that created the space into which investment by Chinese state-owned companies flowed” and thus Chinese companies “fitted around the edges” of Western capital investors (Fraser 2010:22). As embodied in *Black*

Mountain, as well as in *Black Bodies* mentioned above, history is a significant parameter in Mwaba's research and art making process in relation to the Chinese presence in Zambia. On the one hand, it is important to revisit the past that is relevant to the topic. On the other hand, as emphasised in Mwaba's work, it is crucial to bring the history and its continuing impact to the present, in order to understand the current experiences, which are overwhelmed by political discourse and new myths. Meanwhile, the "little narrative" is Mwaba's consistent concern and methodology to approach the realities, which is again demonstrated in his works in this exhibition.



Fig.3.9 Stary Mwaba, *Mapping Black Mountain Land* (2018), Mixed media on tent, 200*280 cm

Source: photo courtesy of Stary Mwaba

The other works in this exhibition, such as *Mapping Black Mountain Land* (2018), *Tracing, Marking the spots: Buried Alive* (2018) and *Scorched Land* (2018), should be read along with each other to understand the lived

experiences of the young miners inside and outside of these spaces of black mountain. In *Mapping Black Mountain Land* [Fig.3.9], Mwaba engages with the geographers' notion of mapping to create a passage between past and present, shifting the view of these spaces from the epistemology of the colonials to that of contemporary local ordinary people based on their daily experiences. *Mapping Black Mountain Land* is a 292x268cm work with mixed media on tarpaulin, on which map elements such as contour lines are visible. According to Mwaba (2019:50), he first re-drew the archival material of colonial mineral exploration maps of the Copperbelt on paper and stuck it onto tarpaulin. Then he drew new contour lines on the colonial map.

These highlighted contour lines are based on the narration of his cousin to locate the sites he has been mining with his friends. Thus, the routes of Mwaba's cousin are superimposed on the historical map of colonial mining activities. *Tracing, Marking the Spots: Buried Alive* [Fig.3.10] also engages with the mapping process and the same material of tarpaulin that is often used for covering the copper. Due to the components of black mountain being copper slag, these sites are not stable and the artisanal miners often take risks with their lives digging these dumps. Hearing about their stories, Mwaba used cartographic lines and numbers to symbolically mark the sites of black mountain in Kitwe and Chingola where some youth mined and lost their lives and, as informed in the title, to "locate the young people's unmarked burial sites" (Mwaba 2019:51).

Scorched Land (2018) is a series of works to address the polluted living space of these young people outside and around the black mountain. During his research at many black mountain sites, Mwaba saw the "blue water" and damaged vegetation which is caused by the chemical reaction of black mountain when it rains and flows into the nearby river.



Fig.3.10 Stary Mwaba, *Tracing, Marking the Spots: Buried Alive* (2018), mixed media on tarpaulin, various sizes
Source: photo courtesy of Stary Mwaba



Fig.3.11 Stary Mwaba, *Scorched Land I* (2018), mixed media on shade cloth, 292*286 cm
Source: photo courtesy of Stary Mwaba

Scorched Land I (2018) [Fig.3.11] in the series is inspired by Mwaba's experience of interrogating news of environmental pollution in Chingola, which misinformed him that a Chinese company was the cause of water pollution in a specific spot. He met a primary school teacher who lives near the spot and talked with him by the water. Mwaba documented the teacher's narration about how the water pollution happened and affected their lives. As can be seen in the work, central to the black shade-cloth, is a "scorched" huge circle layered with colours, which looks like a scene viewed through Mwaba's camera lens. The process to create this representation of the polluted landscape is also engaged with "scorching", as Mwaba (2019:53) describes it:

I start by laying down plain newsprint onto which I paint in abstract shapes using preferably raw colours from the tube, red, ultramarine blue, yellow, the same colours I have used in the *Chinese Cabbage* (2014) piece. The next process is to cover the painted newsprint. I stretched the carport material on top, gluing to the surface with a transparent acrylic gel medium. With a blowtorch, I burn the surface creating raindrop shapes with the heat.

Approaching from the perspectives of his cousin and other young miners, Mwaba shifts the focus from the controversy about China's ownership of the artificial mountain to the lived-experiences and spaces of these individuals under a globalised system, to foreground their stories and insert their subjectivities. In *Mapping Black Mountain Land*, the mismatch between the highlighted life trajectory of the young miners and the colonial resource-plundering map indicates the fact of exclusion in a globalised system, as these youths can only mine the dump sites black mountain, far away from the old mining sites exploited under colonial rule and sold to international investors, including Chinese companies during the privatisation process. In this sense, Mwaba, through his art, makes visible

his original knowledge about black mountain based on his research into this topic, and the current and past Chinese presence is situated in a historical context of mining in Zambia. Meanwhile, these young miners, whose livelihoods are closely connected to these sites, have to confront the danger of being buried alive, as shown in *Tracing, Marking the spots: Buried Alive*, and the environmental pollution that affects their living space, as in *Scorched Land*.

To this historical narrative, Mwaba inserts the subjectivities of these youths in these spaces. The narration of Mwaba's cousin that informs the works contains "the young miners' knowledge of the space" and memories of how they "know, experience and encounter the space" (Mwaba 2019:50). Moreover, as Lee (2017:136) points out, these re-mining activities, legal or illegal in different conditions, can be arguably read as "counter-movements" – "an everyday form of class resistance". The young miners' informal economic activities are results of exclusion under globalisation, but also "aspiration and capacity from below" (Lee 2017:123). These young locals, by digging into the dump sites and trading with Chinese businessmen, present their subjectivity at the margin of a globalised system and meanwhile reclaim their own future with both hopes and fears. As highlighted in a 150x180cm painting [Fig.3.12] from the *Black Bodies* series, a young man is looking at the world from the canvas plane, with a colourful background akin to aspiration of an imagined future. However, the similar process of scratching that visually links this work to *Scorched Land* as well as the sense of heaviness created by enamel paint, to some extent, reveals how the failed "expectations of modernity" (Ferguson 1998) in a globalised world weighs on their future.

Through his artistic practice, Mwaba inserts his agency into the discussion around Zambia–China relations by emphasising individual perspectives. His work does not aim at providing an answer to the rhetorical question of

neo-colonialism circulating in the popular domain, but rather delinking from it, as well as other grand narratives alike, in order to highlight the everyday lived-experiences of ordinary people. And by shifting the focus to their perspectives in understanding the past and present of black mountain, as well as encounters with Chinese, Mwaba's works suggest the potential to seek a different future from the current vision where little narratives are hardly seen and known.



Fig.3.12 Stary Mwaba, *Black Bodies* (2018), enamel on canvas, 150*180 cm Source: photo courtesy of Stary Mwaba.

CHAPTER FOUR: Texturing the South: Possibility of Comparative Perspectives and Hidden Artistic Networks

Following the discussion of the representations of individual encounters, this chapter explores the artistic encounters between art from African countries and China with a focus on the works by artists from Zambia and Zimbabwe and, by doing so, joins the discussion about the connections and contacts in the context of the global south. More specifically, this chapter unpacks the way in which the China bag has been adopted as a symbol of migration by artists from both Zimbabwe and China in order to explore the possibility of a comparative perspective in contemporary art of and across the global south. Furthermore, this chapter provides insight into Zambian artist Martin Phiri's artistic experience to foreground the historical hidden network between Zambia and China. By doing so, this chapter highlights the detailed texture of the south embodied in visual arts. To lay out the foundation for further analysis, this chapter starts with a brief discussion of the notion of the global south in relation to the topic of the thesis.

4.1 Disaggregating the global south

The global south itself is still a debated and diversely mobilised term (Grovoğu 2011) discussed by scholars from different disciplines, regions and from different perspectives and dimensions. According to Papastergiadis (2017: 72), the foundational reference of south as a metaphor for uneven social-economic development is an incomplete essay "Some Aspects of the Southern Question" by Italian Marxist philosopher and communist politician Antonio Gramsci, who provided detailed observations of "the Italian bourgeoisie in the industrial North with an acerbic critique of the relegation of the peasant-based society of the South as an internal colony". In current discourse, the global south is often traced back to twentieth-century anticolonialism, the 1955 Bandung Conference, Cuba's

tricontinentalism, and the Non-Aligned Movement and is associated with Third World, postcolonial states, and undeveloped countries (Papastergiadis 2010; Grovogu 2011; Levander and Mignolo 2011; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Patricia 2018; Mahler 2018; Gupta, Pamila, et al. 2018; Simbao 2019b). While the southern hemisphere is still used by some intellectual networks³⁸ as the analytical position to address the imbalance of the global system, many scholars from various fields consider the term beyond fixed physical geography. Scholars such as Raewyn Connell (2007), Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff (2015) and Bonaventura de Sousa Santos (2012;2015) propose the theoretical reorientation and epistemological shift to the global south. Works by writers and scholars such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986) and Walter Mignolo (2009; 2011) aim at decolonising knowledge production and language paradigms as well as other creative practices. While some scholars claim the end of the south as a site of emancipatory resistance (Papastergiadis 2017), other scholars postulate the term as a symbolic designation with political implications and a multifaceted movement that captures the spirit of the Third World³⁹ and “underscores the need for a postcolonial international community of interest that advances the objectives of equality, freedom, and mutuality in the form of a new ethos of power and subjectivity through foreign policy, international solidarity, and responsibility to self and others in an international order free of the institutional legacies of colonialism.”

(Grovogui 2011:175)

Discussions about the global south in relation to contemporary arts are consistent concerns of the works by scholars including Miguel Rojas-Sotelo,

³⁸ For example, the South Centre at Oxford University mentioned in Papastergiadis's 2010 essay “What is South”.

³⁹ 37 For more information about the history of Third World and the relation between Third World and global south, see Grovogu (2011), Papastergiadis (2010;2017) and Simbao (2019b).

Nikos Papastergiadis and Ruth Simbao, among others. Rojas-Sotelo (2011; 2018) focuses on the Havana Biennial, which has been known as “the tri-continental art event” presenting artists from Latin America, Africa, and Asia, as well as artists living in the Northern diasporas. With the Havana Biennial as a case study, Rojas-Sotelo (2011:153) joins the debates in global art with geography of power and reveals the “the potentiality of alternative thinking and cultural subjectivity in the Global South”. Here, the global south as a geopolitical space is closely associated with the former Third World and “emerges in the lexicon to denote a tendency of becoming aware of how the forces of the modern/colonial axis dominate the social and political landscape of the territories of the hemispheric south by the inhabitants of such territories” (Rojas-Sotelo 2011:164). The global south is utilised by Papastergiadis (2010) as an intermediary concept to redefine the context of art within a wider hemispheric frame. He emphasises that the south “does not refer to a geo-political entity that possesses a singular territorial bloc with an attendant unified cultural and political identity” (Papastergiadis 2010:143) and that it is useful to understand certain

cross-cultural networks in contemporary art practices where “spherical consciousness from the South” can be glimpsed. This “spherical consciousness”, according to Papastergiadis (2010:148) is “the cultural consciousness of the ways and means by which neo-liberalism jigsaws into the cuts made by colonialism, or the manner by which settler claims, diasporic aspirations and indigenous rights rub against each other”. In his later article on the global south, Papastergiadis (2017) goes further, interpreting south as a temporary and transient sphere with its shifting forms embodied in contemporary visual art. Although it deserves more discussion, Papastergiadis’s claim of the end of the global south as a creative counter-force in the global expansion of neoliberalism, his route into the cultures of the global south also inspires the discussion in this chapter with a bottom-

up approach through the stories of embodied solidarity in contemporary art practices.

In her pertinent discussion about Africa–China engagements in relation to contemporary visual arts, Simbao (2019b) proposes the term “strategic southernness” to “indicate a sideways reach that is manifested in terms of the people one builds solidarity with (usually based on experiential resonances) and in terms of the knowledge frameworks that one uses.” “Sideways reach” or “reaching sideways” in Simbao’s work is referred to as “1) South–South and intracontinental scholarly engagement that does not always look “upwards” to the theories, methodologies, and institutions of Europe and North America and 2) non-hierarchical—or at least less hierarchical—ways of learning in educational and other contexts that emphasize reciprocal, horizontal learning” (Simbao *et al.*, 2017:17). In light of the principles of self-determination and non-interference of the Bandung Conference and the complexity of “Third Worldism” and “Third World” rhetoric, Simbao (2019b) seeks potential to active “strategic southernness” in contemporary arts, which “un-script” and “push back” the often-reductionistic “China–Africa” discourses. Simbao (2019b) writes:

In-depth research in the visual arts can also complicate the rhetoric of twentieth century camaraderie and friendship, and the thin contemporary rhetoric of southsouth co-operation and solidarity espoused by some African and Chinese politicians who merely follow well-rehearsed scripts. Artists can play a critical role in shifting conversations out of parliament chambers, boardrooms and five-star hotels, and importantly can ‘push back’ from below.

Following these trajectories, this chapter explores the connections, mobilities and tensions of the global south embodied in visual arts, focusing on the artistic practices that engage both China and African countries,

specifically Zimbabwe and Zambia. Here, “global south” is not referred to as a fixed geographical location but a framework drawing from the geopolitical relations and the historical origins discussed in the scholarly works mentioned above. However, instead of discussing global south based on the “top-down vision of social-economic development and cultural homogenization” (Papastergiadis 2017:69), this chapter adopts a bottom-up approach to explore the relational texture of and in the global south by close-up analysis through the lens of visual arts.

4.2 The possibility of a comparative approach: the China bag as *lingua franca* of migration in the south



Fig.4.1 China bag with red-blue-white pattern

Source: <https://www.zkhiphani.co.za/tribetuesday-see-chuenes-creative-vernac-bags/china-bag/>

This part focuses on the China bag and its plaid pattern [Fig.4.1] which is adopted by artists from both Zimbabwe and China, as a symbol and marker of migration, as well as other relevant issues such as xenophobia, displacement, belonging and mobility, in order to explore the possibility of a comparative perspective in contemporary art of the south. The red-blue-

white woven bags made of polypropylene fibre, are visible as everyday objects in many social spaces: grocery stores, bus and train stations, street markets and various borders. The bag is often used by travellers and traders, mainly the lower class, due to its portability, durability and affordability. In China, where the bags are originally produced, they are often seen in minibuses travelling from/to rural areas, in second class carriages on the train and also at the stations. The plastic sheeting of the same material and pattern is often used as covers for sidewalk food stalls, ceilings for outdoor feasts and also as wallpaper in shacks. In most cases, the bag is associated with migration and movements. The naming patterns of the bag are often associated with the immigrant demographic. It is called “民工包” (min gong bao, migrant worker bag) in China, and it is referred to as “China bag”, “Zimbabwean bag” or “Ghana-Must-Go bag” in different African countries. The various naming patterns, with different meanings owing to specific contexts (Cheng 2018:20), point to the phenomenon of the bag’s wide circulation in African countries associated with poor migrants, while the “woven bag” in the north has been “appropriated” in fashion design by luxury brands such as Louis Vuitton and Celine⁴⁰.

Besides the visibility of being used as a container in daily life, the red-blue-white plaid pattern has also become a prominent visual element by artists in contemporary arts from Africa. Simbao (2012a:6) first noticed the association of these bags with forced migration, refugee status and poverty in, for example, Nigerian artist Dotun Makun’s *Ghana-Must-Go* (2010-2011) painting series, Zimbabwean artist Dan Halter’s work and also in the work of Chinese artist Chen Qiulin. Cheng’s article examines the transformation of the China bag in contemporary African arts to rethink the paradigms of mobility of the global south as it “embodies a sense of transience and transgression that alludes to understandings of the South as

⁴⁰ See http://www.sohu.com/a/116184102_349182.

a passage without settled destinations” (Cheng 2018:18). Exploring the same pattern of the China bag, Huang (2019) focuses on the way artists deploy the bag to critique xenophobia in the specific context of South Africa. Based on their pioneer and empirical works, I further highlight the woven pattern as a symbol of migration, with a focus on Zimbabwean artists Ronald Muchatuta and Dan Halter in relation to their own experiences of migration. To explore a comparative point of view in the context of the global south, this section brings the works by Chinese artists Shen Hua and Chen Qiulin into discussion.

Over the past two decades, the political and economic crisis in Zimbabwe has transformed the country into a major global source of migrants and refugees (Crush, Chikanda and Tawodzera, 2016:13). While debates about the term “diaspora” are characterised by migrants from south to the north, Zimbabwean migration to other countries in the south, especially South Africa, is well documented (ibid.) Zimbabweans are deemed to be one of the largest groups of migrants in South Africa, both legal and illegal (Mawadza, 2008:1). These diasporas assist their family back home to obtain food and necessities for survival and their remittances come to about five to six times what Zimbabwe used to obtain through donor funding before the Western sanctions (Fay 2015:161). Many Zimbabwean migrants, especially the third wave, roughly from 2005, “no longer see South Africa as a place of temporary economic opportunity for survival but rather as a place to stay and build a future for themselves and their families” (Crush, Chikanda and Tawodzera, 2015:363).

Several artists mentioned in this thesis are among the Zimbabweans who work and live in South Africa, such as Gerald Machona, Richard Mudariki and Vulindlela Nyoni. Dan Halter and Ronald Muchatuta discussed in this section were settled in South Africa in the mid-1990s and 2007 respectively. Many of them have constantly expressed and explored the experiences of

migration through their works. Nyoni (2018:410) points out that “personal narrative and self-reflexive dialogue regarding art-making and its exigencies hold the potential to produce a deeper philosophical insight into the increasingly diasporic human condition, which is needed both to undo malicious stereotyping and to validate the contributions made by migrant identities to the decolonial project”. Both Halter and Muchatuta choose not to separate their practices from personal experiences as immigrants in South Africa. Dan Halter (Halter n.d.) states that:

My artistic practice is informed by my position as a Zimbabwean currently living in South Africa. My work deals with my sense of dislocated national identity, human migration and the dark humour of present realities in Southern Africa. This is largely a backlash due to a history of oppression that continues to manifest today.

Ronald Muchatuta also approaches his work from his position as a Zimbabwean in South Africa to a global perspective. Tracing the subject matter in his works, Muchatuta (2019) explains that:

I use Zimbabwean (in South Africa) as a reflection, as a mirror, as a reference and a take of stand point. Many questions start from here in South Africa, treatment, how you see things and how things grow and escalate. And then it became a panAfrican question when I start thinking about what happened between Ghana and Nigeria, Sudan and Senegal, Ethiopia and Somalia. Then I tend to think what else besides that and start thinking the global aspect of things and it all intertwines and becomes a post-colonial narrative.

The red-blue-white pattern of the China bag is constantly adopted in Halter’s and Muchatuta’s works as a symbol of migration to address relevant issues. Dan Halter has been using the new or used plastic-weave bag as a material in his artwork since 2008 and often exchanges used bags

with new ones from marketplaces in Pretoria and Cape Town. Many of these works have been interpreted in detail in previous scholarship (Simbao 2012b; Hennlich 2016; Cheng 2018; Huang 2019), such as *Space Invader* [Fig.4.2] which appropriates the images of alien combatants from an arcade game and “links the stuffed ‘Zimbabwean bags’ with the hostility African migrants are facing in South Africa” (Cheng 2018:22).



Fig.4.2 Dan Halter, *Space Invader* (Customs House, Cape town, 2008), photographic Lambda print mounted on aluminium, 255*375 mm, photo by Matthew Partridge

Source: <http://danhalter.com/space-invader-bags/>

Expanding his personal experience as an immigrant, Halter deals with migration and migrants in a broader context to intervene in the global issue with his artistic practice, which is exemplified by his work *Rifugiato Mappa del Mondo (Refugee's Map of the World)* [Fig.4.3], in which “faded and tattered red, blue and white checked bags are used to map the countries that people often try to escape, whereas the brighter, newer bags map the most desirable destinations—destinations of relative opportunity and wealth.” (Simbao 2012b:17). The bag is used as a representation of migrants, “typically illegal aliens who often use these bags due to the fact that they are cheap, come in many sizes and are relatively durable” (Halter 2019).



Fig.4.3 Dan Halter, *Rifugiato Mappa del Mondo 4* (2012), new and found plastic-weave bags, 183*380cm

Source: <http://danhalter.com/rifugiato-mappa-del-mondo-4-2012/>

The bag is again predominant in Halter's recent sculptural series which is shown in the exhibition *Cross the River in a Crowd*⁴¹ at WHATIFTHEWORLD Gallery in Cape Town, 2019. *Kuzvuva Dumbu* [Fig.4.4] is a sculpture of a crawling character made from found plastic-weave bags and a wire frame, which depicts the struggling posture and moment when the immigrants are trying cross the river, as indicated in the exhibition title.

⁴¹ For more information about the exhibition see the gallery website: www.whatiftheworld.com.



Fig.4.4 Dan Halter, *Kuzvuva Dumbu* (2019), Found plastic-weave bags and wire frame, 230*100*38 cm, Source: <http://danhalter.com/kuzvuva-dumbu-2019/>



Fig.4.5 Dan Halter, *Mai Mabag (Back)*,(2019), used plastic weave bags and wire frames, Black Serpentine, 110*122*240 cm, Edition of 5 + 1 AP
Source: <http://danhalter.com/mai-mabag-2019/>

Another work central to this exhibition is *Mai MaBag* [Fig.4.5] which is a stone sculpture of a woman dressed in the red-blue-white fabric, crossing a river with a child on her back and three filled China bags on her head. The title is a mix of Shona and English which literally means “Mother Bags”. The woman and the child are surrounded by red-blue-white crocodiles in the installation. *Mai MaBag* recalls Halter’s 2013 work *The Ears of the Hippo* [Fig.4.6] which depicts a similar scene with the same elements of China bag. In an interview with John Claude (2019), Halter addressed the recurring theme of mother and child in his works:

In Shona sculpture, the abstract mother and child embracing is so common that it is often found as a curio. In this version of mine, the mother is carrying her child on her back and a load on her head in a way that is common in Zimbabwe. The load in my work is vastly exaggerated and suggests the balancing rock formations common to Zimbabwe that are also depicted on many Zimbabwean bank notes. For me, the image of a mother and child, half-submerged in a river border crossing, with all her worldly possessions on her head, suggests the height of desperation. (Halter in Claude 2019).



Fig.4.6 Dan Halter, *The ears of the hippo* (2013), black spring stone, found plastic-weave bag, life-size

Source: <http://danhalter.com/the-ears-of-the-hippo-2013/>

While the woven-plastic bag in Halter's work points to the moments in the process of migration across the border, Muchatuta uses it to address the issue of xenophobic violence in the specific context of South Africa, which is a destination for many migrants from other African countries. His renowned series *The African Immigration*, also referred to as *The Necklacing* series, started from a moment that he "experienced a shift in how he read his presence in South Africa" when he witnessed the xenophobic attacks begin in Durban and he "went through a process of identification of self as a foreigner, and yet still was protected by the 'safety net of white privilege' that he was surrounded by at the time" (Nyoni 2018). It is a collection of paintings which are featured prominently with figures textured with pattern of the red, blue and white woven-bag and tyres of "necklacing", which is a "collectively witnessed execution that originated in the 1980s execution of political opponents of the African National Congress and United Democratic Front in 'people's counts'" (Huang 2019:16), whereby a victim would wear a rubber tire filled with petrol around chest and would be set on fire and burnt to death. This lynching method has again been used in post-apartheid South Africa to kill black foreign nationals in townships (Huang 2019:17). In *Children of the Necklace VI* [Fig.4.7], the figure is squatting down on the ground and supported by /the legs and arms, with a fire-shaped pattern coming out of the huge "necklacing" tyre. It seems that the head is burning and the whole body is fading away, deplorably, in the colour of the woven bag which is a symbol of migrants. In another work *Zulu Tribal Affair* [Fig.4.8], a burning tyre is rolling towards a figure who holds his head and curls up without any chance to escape. These paintings create an artistic archive for the experience of the immigrants and foreground their emotion during the xenophobia attacks. The China-bag, through the artist's visual language, transforms into an inherent and inescapable nature of the figures as migrants who are vulnerable, attackable and current victims of a historical legacy.

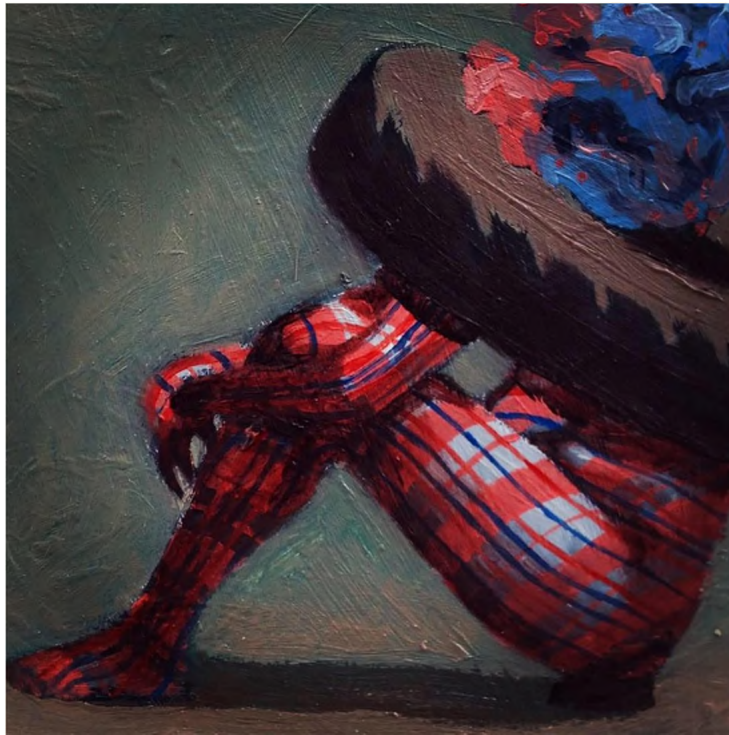


Fig.4.7 Ronald Muchatuta, *Children of the necklace VI* (2015), oil on board, 27*27cm Source: <http://afripopmag.com/2015/12/16/ronald-muchatutas-african-immigration-serieshighlights-xenophobia/>



Fig.4.8 Ronald Muchatuta, *Zulu Tribal Affair* (2016), Oil on Board Source: <http://sacreativenetwork.co.za/2015/12/ronald-muchatuta-strives-for-national-unitythrough-the-african-immigration-series/>



Fig.4.9 Shen Hua, *Fenyan Portrait* (2012), oil on woven bag, 50*60 cm

Source:

<http://show.artintern.net/index/image/html.php?id=14618&page=44>



Fig.4.10 Chen Qiulin, *Xinsheng zhen* (2006), installation view

Source: <http://longmarchspace.com/zh/chen-qiulin-migration/>

It is intriguing and noteworthy to bring into discussion that the red-blue-white woven pattern is also adopted by some Chinese artists to symbolise the experience of migration.

Chongqing⁴² based artist Shen Hua's most well-known work is his series portrait of migrant workers⁴³, a specific type of Chinese proletariat travelling from rural areas to cities for their livelihood. In one of his works, *Fengyan Portrait* [Fig.4.9], the profile of a male figure is painted on the woven bag with his typical heavy brushstrokes to depict the powerful and contorting facial muscles. The blue-red-white is used as a pattern to identify the man as migrant worker that the bag "*min gong bao*" (migrant worker bag) is named after. As a symbol of migration, it also speaks to the situation that the workers have to confront in the cities. In many works by Chen Qiulin, the blue-red-white fabric symbolises the forced migration in relation to Three Gorges Dam Project (*Sanxia gongcheng*)⁴⁴. According to Wu Hung (2009), the project has provoked sharp controversy since its inception on 14 December 1994 and many artists also responded to the project through their artistic expression. Artist Chen Qiulin grew up in Wanxian, a city located on the upper reaches of the Three Gorges Dam. Over half of the urban area was submerged and a quarter of a million residents were slated for resettlement according to the plan of the project (Wu 2008). Witnessing the social upheaval of this area, Chen has been working on a couple of projects since then, in order to respond to the changes, to keep her personal memory of her childhood life and to address the lived-experiences of local people during and after the forced migration. The installation *Xinsheng Zhen*

⁴² A major city in southwest China where a significant art institution, the Sichuan Fine Arts Institute is located.

⁴³ In the context of China, migrant worker refers to the peasant who migrates from the countryside to urban areas for non-agricultural employment, usually without changing their status as farmer and being accepted as citizens by the cities.

⁴⁴ Three Gorges Dam is the largest hydroelectric power station in the world, which is located in Hubei Province. There were controversies about problems caused by the project, such as forced migration and environmental problems as it affected a large area in Hubei.

[Fig.4.10] is also an artistic migration project to “race against disappearing” (Waltemade 2011:9), in which she transports the debris of three stores from a disappearing historical street at Xinsheng Zhen town to the exhibition space. In the installation, the blue-red-white plastic sheet is spread upon the floor as a symbol of forced migration, resettlement and displacement of the local people.

In this sense, the China bag as a symbol of migration provides the possibility of a comparative approach to contemporary arts across the global south. The blue-red-white bag, as medium or visual elements represented in art, creates a transient space, in which the common experience of lower-class migration can be expressed through this lingua franca, and thus temporarily achieves “strategic southernness” (Simbao 2019b). What should be noted is that, the same woven pattern has also been adopted to represent Chinese presence by artists from Zimbabwe, however, in a distinct manner compared to their works about African immigrants mentioned above. In contrast to his empathetic expression of the Zimbabweans crossing the border, Halter’s work *Going Out/Zou Chu Qu* [Fig.4.11], which addresses the increased Chinese immigrants in Africa with three Chinese characters 走出去 (going out) on the woven pattern, is more in a static and documentary way, as Halter (2019) states that “I do not really have an opinion as whether it (Chinese presence) is a good thing or not, but it is interesting to observe”. In a more sceptical manner, Muchatuta’s *Made in China* [Fig.1.7] turned the blue-redwhite pattern into distorted faces replacing the face of Cecil John Rhodes to question Chinese presence in Africa engaging with the neo-colonialism paradigm (see chapter 1). In this sense, the visual element of red-blue-white pattern is full of expressive capability and, besides resonating experiences, also illustrates tensions within the global south. Therefore, it is worthwhile to adopt a comparative approach as the China bag provides possibilities to connect the global south as well as “push back”

the “thin contemporary rhetoric of south-south co-operation and solidarity” (Simbao 2019b), connecting the representations of migration within Africa, within China and also in the context of the Africa–China relations.

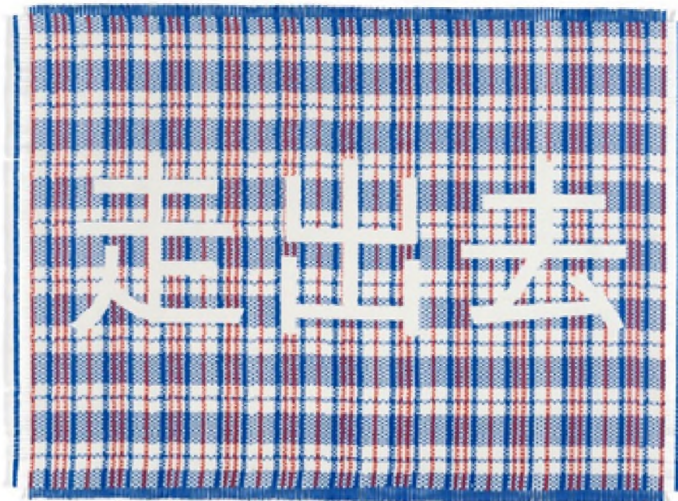


Fig.4.11 Dan Halter, *Go Out/Go Global* (2016), Hand-woven archival inkjet prints 64 x 90 cm

Source: <http://danhalter.com/go-out-go-global-blue-2016/>

4.3 The hidden network within the south: Marin Phiri’s artistic experience between Zambia and China

In 1982, Zambian artist Martin Phiri (1957–1997), together with his later classmate Kumoyo Simutanyi travelled to Beijing after they received a Chinese government scholarship for a BA Fine Art Degree at the Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA), which is one of the top art institutions in China [Fig.4.12]. They first studied Chinese language for one year at Beijing Language and Cultural University and then started their five-year degree majoring in Sculpture at the School of Plastic Arts at CAFA in 1983, the first year⁴⁵ that regular recruitment was restored at CAFA since the end

⁴⁵ The national exam for university recruitment was abolished during Chinese Cultural Revolution from 1966 and was restored in 1977. The Sculpture Department at CAFA only resumed enlisting students in 1977, 1978 and 1980, and the regular recruitment started in 1983. More information about Chinese government’s policies about foreign students, especially African students, during and beyond Cultural Revolution, see Liu Haifang (2017).

of Chinese Cultural Revolution. Phiri and Simutanyi were the first foreign students to undertake a full degree course at the Sculpture Department and they graduated in July 1988 [Fig.4.13], the same year that Phiri returned to Zambia and led the “revolution” (Mulenga 2017a: 67) in the Zambian art scene.



Fig.4.12 Martin Phiri at studio in China, photo of Martin Phiri
Source: photo reproduced by Lifang Zhang, Lusaka, 2018



Fig.4.13 Martin Phiri's graduation certificate of Central Academy of Fine Arts

Source: photo by Lifang Zhang, Lusaka, 2018

In the decade between his return from China in 1988 and his mournful decease in 1997, Phiri played many roles in the Zambian art scene: artist, art lecturer at Evelyn Hone College in Lusaka, and the founder of the Zambia Visual Arts Council. According to Andrew Mulenga (2016:67) who is a Zambian art journalist and a PhD candidate in the *Arts of Africa and Global Souths* research team:

[Martin Phiri] can be said to have been the instigator of a ‘movement’ that would culminate in the formation of the Zambia National Visual Arts Council (VAC), indefinitely re-configuring the environment of contemporary art practice in Zambia; a perceivable shift from the likes of the defunct Lusaka Art Society and the Art Centre Foundation before it. It can also be argued that Phiri is furthermore the “father” of conceptualism in contemporary Zambian art.

Although Phiri left a significant artistic legacy within his short life, very little has been documented and written about his works and also his practices to promote Zambian visual art. It is impossible today to integrally map his experiences based on a handful of works, the few scattered archives and the fragments of fading memory held by people who lived or worked with him more than 20 years ago. But it is undoubted that his study experience in China had a defining impact on his artistic practices. Phiri was born in 1957 at a small village called Javane Villages in Eastern Province in Zambia. He grew up and was educated around the same area. He didn’t receive any professional training in fine art except some courses in secondary school but was always fond of drawing (Phiri 2018). When Phiri was working as a registry filing clerk at the Ministry of Education after secondary school, he learnt about the Chinese Government Scholarship from an official document and successfully applied for that in 1981 with his old drawings (Phiri 2018). In the following year, Phiri went to China and

studied in Beijing from September 1982 to July 1988, the heyday of artistic movements in China that witnessed the landmark events in contemporary Chinese art⁴⁶ after the end of the Cultural Revolution.

In his revisionist project to trace the genealogy of conceptualism in Zambian art, Mulenga (2016) considers Phiri as the founder of conceptual arts in Zambia and recognises his engagement with Chinese contemporary art. In relation to the artistic movements in China that Phiri experienced during his student life at CAFA, Mulenga (2016:73) surmises that:

It can be claimed, therefore, that Phiri acquired a revolutionary disposition as a young student in China. ... Phiri may have been motivated to challenge the existing art administration system that he found upon returning home; he may have also felt excluded by Mpapa Gallery, the sole art space – with all its worthy effort and intentions ... Phiri may have also been one of the many students who had visited Rauschenberg’s ROCI at the China National Art Gallery, and could have had contemporaries among the many young Chinese artists who had started experimenting with new vocabularies of art-making, such as ready-mades and installations, and may have himself experimented in it. Phiri could have therefore found the painting and sculpture-oriented art scene in Zambia restrictive and perhaps archaic, and this may have led him to iconoclastically create works considered radical, such as the *Casket Series*, not only to challenge accepted notions of artistic expression but also to interrogate the general perceptions of a conservative public in Kenneth Kaunda’s neo-socialist one-party state.

Although we need to consider the Western influence in Chinese art in relation to Mulenga’s argument that “conceptualism is not entirely the

⁴⁶ For example, the “85 new wave movement” which was an avant-garde art movement during the period from 1985 to 1989.

domain of the West in any case, as Phiri, engaged with conceptualism in China, and not in Europe” (Mulenga 2016:66), it is fair to say that Phiri’s works featured with more conceptual elements to reflect on art itself were to a large extent directly inspired by Chinese artists’ appropriation of ideas from Western modern art to promote changes in both art and society after the cultural confinement for a long period. According to Simutanyi (2019), the other Zambian student who went to CAFA together with Phiri, they observed the art changes in China over the years and they were for the first time exposed to those masters of Western modernist art as they did not receive any education in art history before they went to Beijing. Phiri also cultivated his mind and extended his understanding of arts by reading books, communicating with students from different countries and he even persuaded the university to subscribe to the *South China Morning Post* from Hong Kong, as the newspaper provided more information about culture and art beyond China (Simutanyi 2019). At a time (even today) when visual arts in Zambia were prominently featured by decorative small-scale paintings and sculptures⁴⁷, Martin Phiri’s works after he came back from China can be viewed as radical and revolutionary, with *Casket II* (1995–1996) [Fig.4.14] as the most controversial one. One of Phiri’s former students, Willim Miko, who is keeping the work now, describes it impressively:

Casket II was made out of fluorescent light tube covers. They were welded into an adult full coffin-sized casket shaped with a proper small window with which an upward movable cover for viewing the face of a corpse is allowed – just like real caskets are designed. MAP went on to cast his own face using plaster of Paris and placed it inside well wrapped in a white cloth just as a funeral parlour prepares a dead body for a funeral service. He touched up the facial cast with some oil paints to

⁴⁷ This is based on Mulenga’s works, the interviews I conducted with William Miko and Laurence Yombwe, as well as my observation visiting many art collections, galleries and museums in Lusaka, such as Henry Tayali Art Gallery, Lechwe Trust Art Gallery, Namwandwe Collection, and so on.

achieve the real complexion of a dead body and made it look so real as a dead body's face lying down in that coffin ready for body viewing. This face was exactly his own (Miko cited in Mulenga 2016:74).

This work was displayed with a video, in which Phiri's wife was mourning, combined with some scenes captured in a real funeral. It is the very first video installation in *Zambian art* (Miko 2018). *Casket II*, because of the form of expression and the content as a taboo in the culture, shocked the audiences when it was first shown in the mid 1990s and still provoked debates at a recent group exhibition in 2009 (Chulu 2018).



Fig.4.14 Martin Phiri, *Casket II* (1995-1996), fluorescent light tube cover, plaster

Source: photo by Lifang Zhang, Lusaka, 2018

At this stage, it is significant to spotlight on the other face of Phiri's experience in China – the five-year strict artistic education of social realist⁴⁸ style he received in CAFA, which was obviously continued in his later career as a lecturer in art at Evelyn Hone College. According to Cao (2014),

⁴⁸ For further reading on "Social realist" in a Chinese context see Cao (2014).

European classic realist sculpture, which was introduced to China from France and Russia, laid the foundation of the teaching system at the Sculpture Department at CAFA. When universities were restored into normal recruitment after ten years of chaos of the Cultural Revolution, artist Fu Tianchou, who is known for his monumental sculptures, was appointed as the Head of the Sculpture Department and most of the lecturers at that time were artists who had studied abroad in the Soviet Union (Cao 2014:33). Courses at the Sculpture Department gradually resumed to the curriculum of social realist style at the beginning of the 1980s. From 1983 to 1984, for example, when Phiri was in his first year, clay sculpture was divided into eight different courses for students in different grades, focusing on head sculpture, bust, body, texture, and so on (Cao 2014:34). Phiri's classmate Kumoyo Simutanyi still holds a deep impression of the teaching system which "was designed on the focus social realism" with Michelangelo and Rodin as icons in sculpture (Simutanyi 2019). He recalled:

We started with drawing. Martin and I were exposed to quick sketches, detailed drawings and yearly college sponsored trips to places of interest - Xinjiang, Gansu, Hainan Island. As well a range of materials including charcoal, pencils, cone and anything we could lay our hands on. In sculpture we mainly worked in clay, occasionally casting finished pieces in plaster. The focus was in mastering techniques and processes. We were constantly reminded that we would only become artists after graduation. We had to be true to form, going as far as using callipers to get the proportion right. Life models were our constant subjects (Simutanyi 2019).

Phiri's graduation work, bronze sculpture *Ngoni Warrior* [Fig.4.15], got a high score of 96/100 and took centre stage at the graduation exhibition (Phiri 2018; Simutanyi 2019) in 1988. This body-sized sculpture was made in clay and cast in plaster based on the image of a warrior of the Ngoni people, the

ethnic group Phiri belongs to. It is now standing outside the Henry Tayali Visual Arts Centre in Lusaka, where the Visual Arts Council founded by Phiri is located. The technique of realist style Phiri acquired in his five-year study, was illustrated in his sketch books [Fig.4.16] that he brought from China and the hand-drawn textbook [Fig.4.17; Fig.4.18] he used for lectures in Evelyn Hone College. As shown in the images, the textbook created by Phiri with the ball-point



Fig.4.15 Martin Phiri, *Ngoni Warrior* (1988), bronze sculpture, life-size.
Source: photo by Lifang Zhang, Henry Tayali Art Gallery, Lusaka, 2018



Fig.4.16 A page of Martin Phiri's sketch books
Source: photo by Lifang Zhang, Lusaka, 2018

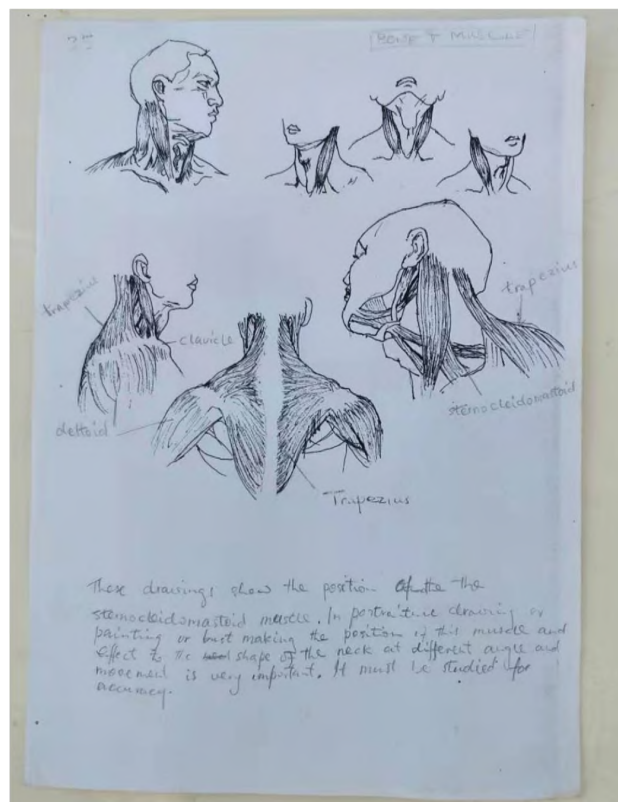


Fig.4.17 Page 35 of Martin Phiri's hand-drawn textbook
Source: photo by Lifang Zhang, Lusaka, 2018

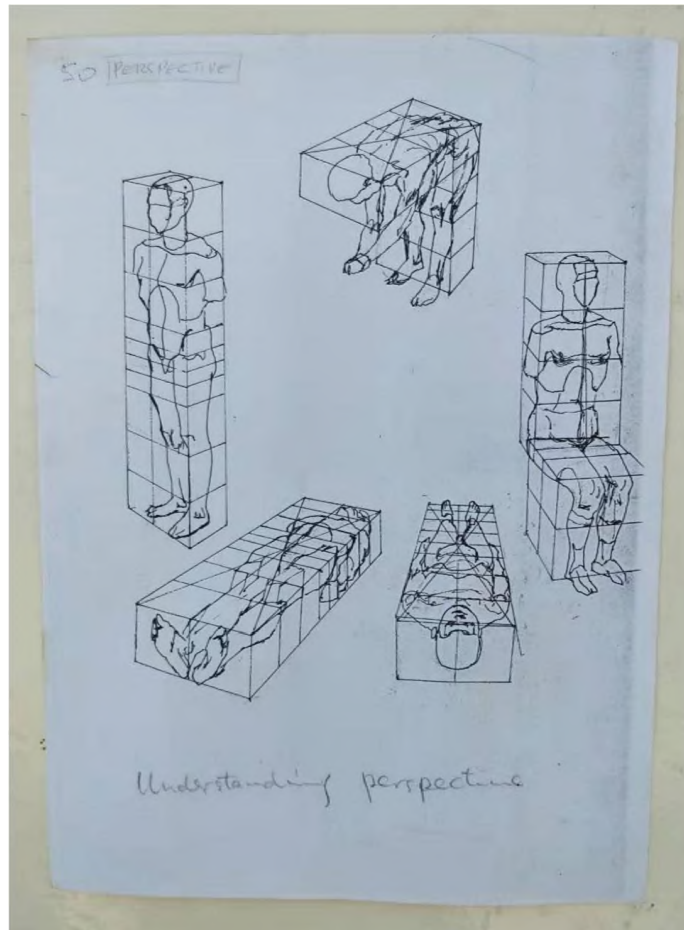


Fig.4.18 Page 50 of Martin Phiri's hand-drawn textbook Source: photo by Lifang Zhang, Lusaka, 2018

pen was composed of short text notes and illustrations of detailed faces, bodies, skeleton structure and muscles with different expressions, gestures, gender and ages. According to his student, Emmanuel Muntanga (2018), who was lectured by Phiri for three years at Evelyn Hone College, there was no professional lecturer in sculpture before Martin Phiri, and Phiri was the first one to teach them anatomy at college. Phiri introduced a similar teaching system of realistic styles, starting with quick sketches, detailed drawings based on anatomy, portrait and figure in first year; casting life-sized sculpture with free composition in second year; and a project for a final exam piece in third year (Muntanga 2018). Muntanga inherited the realistic style introduced by Phiri and is the only student of Phiri who still works on sculpture. His representative work, the 3.2 metre statue *Harry*

*Mwaanga Nkumbula*⁴⁹ [Fig.4.19] stands outside the airport at Livingstone, Zambia. This is the second bronze sculpture in Zambia and, more importantly, the first bronze sculpture designed and created by local Zambian artists. Phiri himself also had very few realistic works such as *The Holy Family* [Fig.4.20] commissioned by Matero Boys' Secondary School in Lusaka.



Fig.4.19 Emmanuel Muntanga, *Harry Mwaanga Nkumbula* (2013), bronze sculpture, height of 320cm Source: photo courtesy of Emmanuel Muntanga

⁴⁹ Harry Mwaanga Nkumbula (1916–1983) was a Zambian nationalist leader and the international in Livingstone is named after him. Emmanuel Muntanga was commissioned to create the statue of Harry Mwaanga Nkumbula which was unveiled in 2015.



Fig.4.20 Martin Phiri, *The Holy Family* (1994-1995), wood, around 120*100cm Source: photo by Lifang Zhang, Matero Boys' Secondary School, Lusaka, 2018

It is intriguing that the contrast between Phiri's experimental exploration in art making and his practice in art teaching was so similar to his experiences in China – new art movements outside the college and strict realistic style training in the campus. He continued the teaching system of realist style at Evelyn Hone college, while his own works were mostly experimental and revolutionary, opening up more space for possibilities in the Zambian contemporary art. This path was also taken by his former classmates, especially Zhan Wang⁵⁰ who is one of the foremost artists in Chinese contemporary sculpture. Art historian and curator Gao Minglu (2007) regarded Zhan Wang as “one of the first to begin an in-depth investigation on the relationship between sculpture and contemporary art”. After graduation in 1988, Zhan Wang broke from the socialist realist tradition of sculpturing important political figures by choosing ordinary people as

⁵⁰ Zhan Wang is a contemporary Chinese artist best known for his series of Artificial Rock sculptures and is one of the most commercially successful sculptors in China. He is now an Associate Professor of Sculpture at the Central Academy of Fine Art. His work has been exhibited globally including the 54th Venice Biennale. His work is held in collections such as Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

subjects in his series *The Sidewalks* in the early 1990s and later went further with his own language in *Artificial Rock* [Fig.4.21] series to explore what he called “conceptual sculpture” (Zhan 1998). In 1993, Zhan Wang created a series of sculptures titled *Mao Suit* [Fig.4.22] – “a set of cloths moulded in the shape of dramatic body movement frozen in time” (Wu Hung 2007)– which was shown in his 1994 exhibition *Kong Ling Kong-Temptation*. In 2002, after these works were shown at the Guangzhou Triennial, Zhan did a performance burying them underground. Somehow, the action of “burying” resonates with Phiri’s *Casket II* where he cofined “himself” – a radical gesture towards contemporary sculpture to explore the boundaries between sculpture and installation, subject and object, and the “relationship between sculpture and contemporary art” (Gao 2007).



Fig.4.21 Zhan Wang, *Artificial Rock #10* (2001), stainless steel, wood stand, 75*45*19 cm

Source: <https://www.artsy.net/artwork/zhan-wang-zhan-wang-artificial-rock-number-10-jia-shan-shi>



Fig.4.22 Zhan Wang, *Shell of Mao Suit* (1993-1994), bronze, life-size
Source: <http://www.zhanwangart.com/works/22>

Besides being an artist and lecturer, Phiri was also an art incubator with his lasting legacy to Zambian art – the Visual Arts Council Zambia (VACZ) – on which he spent most of his time during the ten years before his death after he came back from China. VACZ was founded by Martin Phiri together with three students: Agnes Yombwe, Harry Kamboni and William Miko in 1988 to 1989 and it is an artists-run organisation which is the most vibrant art organisation in Zambia and still functioning today. As shown on the VACZ website, it is a “nation-wide artists body with provincial branches in all the provincial capitals. Four of these have Art Centres and VAC enjoys a membership of well over 1000 members” (Visual Arts Council Zambia n.d.). VACZ was a revolutionary movement in the Zambian art scene in the late 1980s as the contemporary art scene was dominated and shaped by European patrons who also “subjugated indigenous creative expression” as “local Zambians were not given enough room to assert their own agency in terms of their own knowledge production as artists” (Mulenga 2016:1, 4). Although VACZ is supported by different sponsors such as Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), foreign embassies and the Zambian government, it is a fully artists-run platform to promote

Zambian arts in a more organic way, with workshops, exhibitions, studios and so on. The Document Department of VACZ was started by Phiri with its goal to register all Zambian artists and to provide more opportunities for them. It is hard to tell how the organisational form of VACZ might be inspired by the Chinese Artists Association which is also a nationwide organisation with provincial branches and an official one founded since 1949 with more than 15 500 members currently. But as mentioned by Phiri's students, both Miko (2018) and Yombwe (2018), in a place that art was shaped by European patrons and at a time these supporters were nearly defunct except one private commercial gallery, the VACZ initiated by Martin Phiri was very "socialist".

Materials on Martin Phiri are scarce with respect to his artistic legacy. Mulenga (2016) re-locates Martin Phiri in the chronology of contemporary arts of not just Zambia, but also Africa, by including him in Salah Hassan and Olu Oguibe's⁵¹ frame of conceptualism in contemporary African arts. It is worthwhile to explore Phiri's practice further, such as the meaning of VAC as a fully artists-founded and -run organisation cooperating with government and various sponsors, in relation to today's rising artists-run art projects. What is the inspiration of his vision and exploration to insert the agency of artists from the global south in firstly, the local art scene and then, the global art scene? More pertinently, Phiri's engagement with the Chinese art scene also invites the question of more possible hidden networks within the south. To elaborate the relational texture of the global south is important to understand south-south engagements of today and the future, and in a broader context; "a closer look at other global patterns of contact and circulation allows for the histories of modernisms in the Global South to

⁵¹ This refers to the list of artists in Salah Hassan and Olu Oguibe's *Authentic/Eccentric: Conceptualism in contemporary African art*. For more information, see Mulenga (2016).

shift away from being anchored to artistic life and art markets in the Global North” (Van Beurden, 2018:157).

Conclusion

Through visual analysis, interviews and fieldwork, this thesis has provided a systematic investigation of contemporary arts of Zambia and Zimbabwe in relation to Africa–China encounters, engaging with four dimensions: the discursive field, the material presence, individual experiences of encounters, and the broader relational connections within arts. These four dimensions embody some of the major aspects of Chinese presence in Zambia and Zimbabwe, as well as the ways in which artists engage with the Africa-China relations, which are not just thematic, but also material; not just in a discursive dimension, but also in historical facts with the mobility of people, objects and ideas. Firstly, Africa–China relationship as a topic of close attention has become a discursive tug-of-war in the public fields to an extent that politicians can opportunistically use the discourses for political purposes such as election campaigns. This thesis has unpacked how visual arts “talk back” (Simbao 2012c) to the media and political discourses and, thus, take an active role in this meaning-making space by reflecting on the intensification of Africa-China engagements, exploring the impact of Chinese products or challenging the grand narratives about the relations. Furthermore, the facts of African-Chinese relations embodied in whether the materiality of Chinese commodities or the story of individual encounters, have impacted the everyday experiences of ordinary people while, in turn, are being shaped by people on the ground. These perspectives and stories of the ordinary individuals, however, are often neglected by the mainstream narratives. In this thesis, I have highlighted how visual arts provide a channel to foreground these nuanced experiences about specific objects and people, complementing and challenging the narratives about Africa-China relationship. Moreover, by unfolding the artistic contacts and connections in the framework of the global south, this thesis has explored the resonated experiences, the hidden networks or the moments of activating “strategic

southernness” (Simbao 2019b) between China and African countries, specifically Zambia and Zimbabwe. It is important to discuss the artistic engagements in the framework of the global south, in order to critique the northdriven narratives of China-Africa relationship, and also, in a broader context, to explore new possibilities beyond the “phantasmal relation” (de Sousa Santos 2015:48) between northern theory and southern practice including art creation from Africa. In this sense, the bottom-up approach adopted in this thesis—viewing the broad social-political issue through the lens of specific artworks—is necessary and has significant meaning to the knowledge production based on the “epistemologies of the South” (de Sousa Santos, 2015).

Unfolding the details of the works and the art making processes, this thesis has demonstrated that the artists’ creative practices are inseparable from their personal experiences and social concerns, and as such, there is value in approaching the Africa-China relations from the perspective of arts. Both Dan Halter and Ronald Muchatuta grapple with the issue of migration, including Chinese immigrants in Africa, expanding from their personal experiences to a broader context. Sary Mwaba’s concept of little narratives is also based on the stories of his family members. Takadiwa’s use of the consumer wastes of Chinese products derives from his experiences in the extreme situation of material scarcity. Meanwhile, many of the artists, with their strong sense of social responsibility and intension of social critique, have reacted to, resisted against and intervened in the social process through their artistic practice, exemplified by Richard Mudariki’s continuous concern with the politics in Zimbabwe, Moffat

Takadiwa’s collaboration with the local community and Martin Phiri’s founding of Visual Arts Council Zambia after he came back from China. Therefore, this thesis asserts that, these artists’ expressions about Chinese presence are not simply passive representations of the unidirectional arrival

of China in Africa, but are motivated by their own histories and realities to reflect on the social issues as well as the lived experiences of people in a space where global forces encounter each other. The artists from Zambia and Zimbabwe discussed in this thesis, form part of the engagements between Africans and Chinese and insert their agencies in the south-south relations through their artistic practices. This thesis argues that, with the social concerns of the artists and the expressive capacity of creative forms, visual arts are able to embrace diversities, dynamics, complexities and contradictions, and, therefore, can proceed the topic beyond the stereotypical narratives about Africa-China relations to a more nuanced understanding of African-Chinese encounters in specific contexts.

There is need for further discussion about the following questions in future research which are developed from this thesis: 1) More research about Martin Phiri's experience at CAFA could be conducted in China to provide further insight into the influence of this experience on his artistic practice after he returned to Zambia. The study on Martin Phiri also invites the question of other hidden artistic networks within the global south. 2) As a visual symbol of migration adopted by artists from China and Zimbabwe, China bag has suggested the possibility of a comparative approach, which could be adopted to conduct more research in order to explore the solidarity as well as tension within the south. In the specific context of Africa-China relations, investigation into the mutual "gaze" in photographic works about Africans in China by Chinese artists and about Chinese in African countries by artist from Africa might contribute to deeper understanding. 3) Besides Stary Mwaba, artists such as Sammy Baloji have also created work in relation to Chinese involvement in copper mining, specifically in the Congolese part of the copper belt which is located in central Africa. It would be meaningful for further research to be conducted on the theme of African-Chinese engagements in mining through the lens of visual arts. 4) As

exemplified by Dan Halter and Moffat Takadiwa, Chinese presence also has impact on the material aspect of arts and the materials play a significant role in the meaning production of their works. A systematic survey in the materiality of arts of Africa in relation to Chinese presence would hopefully provide new perspectives in understanding the continental phenomenon—the appropriation of everyday objects that have been used with a non-art function—as well as the engagements between African and Chinese. I plan to develop some of these ideas further in my future research for PhD study.

Bibliography

- Akpang, C. E. (2016) *Nigerian modernism (s) 1900-1960 and the cultural ramifications of the found object in art*. PhD Thesis. University of Bedfordshire.
- Alao, A. (2014) “China and Zimbabwe: The context and contents of a complex relationship” in *Global Powers and Africa Programme*. South African Institute of International Affairs.
- Alden, C. and Large, D. (2018) *New Directions in Africa–China Studies*. Routledge.
- Appadurai, A. (1988) *The social life of things: Commodities in cultural perspective*. Cambridge University Press.
- Barnard (2018) “Interview with Richard Mudariki / Barnard / Investec Cape Town Art Fair 2018 - ART AFRICA”, *Art Africa Magazine*, 20 February. Available at: <https://artafricamagazine.org/ictaf18-richard-mudariki/> (Accessed: 31 August 2019).
- Binder, L. M. (2008) “El Anatsui: Transformations”, *African Arts*, 41(2), pp. 24–37.
- Brown, B. (2004) *thing theory.*” *Things*. ed. Bill Brown. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Chagonda, T. (2016) “The other face of the Zimbabwean crisis: The black market and dealers during Zimbabwe’s decade of economic meltdown, 2000–2008”, *Review of African Political Economy*, 43(147), pp. 131–141.
- “Chamisa: I will kick out Chinese investors” (2018) *NewZimbabwe.com*, 2 May. Available at: <https://www.newzimbabwe.com/chamisa-i-will-kick-out-chineseinvestors/> (Accessed: 31 August 2019).
- Chatelard, S. G. (2011) “Unpacking the New “Scramble for Africa”: A Critical and Local Perspective of Chinese Activities in Zambia”, in *States, Regions and the Global System*. Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft mbH & Co. KG, pp. 175–199.
- Chen, A. Y., Huynh, T. T. and Park, Y. J. (2010) “Faces of China: new Chinese migrants in South Africa, 1980s to present”, *African and Asian Studies*, 9(3), pp. 286–306.

- Cheng, Y. (2018) ““The Bag Is My Home”: Recycling “China Bags” in Contemporary African Art”, *african arts*, 51(02), pp. 18–31.
- Chikukwa, R. (2016) *Mawonero / Umbono: Insights on Art in Zimbabwe*. Bielefeld, Germany: Kerber.
- Chingono, H. (2010a) “Zimbabwe Look East Policy”, *China Monitor*. Centre for Chinese Studies, University of Stellenbosch.
- Chingono, H. (2010b) “Zimbabwe sanctions: An analysis of the Lingo guiding the perceptions of the sanctioners and the sanctionees”, *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, 4(2), pp. 66– 74.
- Chipaike, R. and Mhandara, L. (2013) “Evading punishment: An analysis of Zimbabwe–China relations in an age of sanctions”, *China–Africa relations, governance, peace and security*, pp. 146–162.
- Chiumbu, S. and Musemwa, M. (2012) *Crisis! What crisis?: The multiple dimensions of the Zimbabwean crisis*. Hsrc Press.
- Chiurai, K. (2018a) “Genesis [Je n’isi isi]”, *Transition*, (125), pp. 10–16.
- Chiurai, K. (2018b) *Interview with Kudzanai Chiurai*, Harare, November 10, 2018.
- Chulu, Z. (2018) *Interview with Zenzele Chulu*, Lusaka, November 13, 2018.
- Claude, J. (2019) “Cross the River in A Crowd: Interview with Dan halter”, *Africa Is Now Magazine*, 10 July. Available at: <https://africaisnowmag.com/cross-theriver-in-a-crowd/> (Accessed: 30 August 2019).
- Coltart, D. (2008) “A decade of suffering in Zimbabwe”, *Development Policy Analysis*, CATO Institute, Washington, DC.
- Comaroff, J. and Comaroff, J. L. (2015) *Theory from the South: Or, how EuroAmerica is evolving toward Africa*. Routledge.
- Connell, R. (2007) *Southern theory: The global dynamics of knowledge in social science*. Allen & Unwin.
- Corrigall, M. (2015) “Invisible Communities and Their Visible Cameras: The Landscape Photography of the Chinese Camera Club of South Africa”, *african arts*, 48(3), pp. 48–57.

- Corrigall, M. (2018) “A spirit of cosmopolitanism happily prevailing in art: the Chinese Camera Club of South Africa and transnational networks of photography”, *de arte*, 53(1), pp. 3–26.
- Corrigall, M. D. (2016) *A History of the Chinese Camera Club of South Africa*. PhD Thesis. University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies.
- Crush, J., Chikanda, A. and Tawodzera, G. (2015) “The third wave: mixed migration from Zimbabwe to South Africa”, *Canadian Journal of African Studies/Revue canadienne des études africaines*, 49(2), pp. 363–382.
- Crush, J., Chikanda, A. and Tawodzera, G. (2016) “The making of a southern diaspora: South-south migration and Zimbabweans in South Africa”, in *Diasporas, development and governance*. Springer, pp. 221–238.
- Du Preez, A. (2008) “(Im) Materiality: on the matter of art”, *Image & Text: a Journal for Design*, 14, pp. 30-41.
- Edinger, H. and Burke, C. (2008) *AERC scoping studies on China-Africa Relations: a research report on Zimbabwe*. Available at:
<https://www.africaportal.org/publications/aerc-scoping-studies-on-china-africarelations-a-research-report-on-zimbabwe/>.
- Eisenman, J. (2005) *Zimbabwe: China's African Ally*. Available at:
<https://jamestown.org/program/zimbabwe-chinas-african-ally/> (Accessed: 23 August 2019).
- Enwezor, O. and Oguibe, O. (1999) *Reading the contemporary: African art from theory to the marketplace*. InIVA.
- Enwezor, O. and Okeke-Agulu, C. (2009) *Contemporary African art since 1980*. Damiani Bologna.
- Fay, C. (2015) *Zimbabwe Looking East*. Mlilo weFundo.
- Ferguson, J. (1999) *Expectations of modernity: myths and meanings of urban life on the Zambian Copperbelt*. University of California Press.
- Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, E. and Daley, P. (2018) “Introduction: conceptualising the Global South and South–South encounters”, *Routledge Handbook of South–South Relations*. Routledge, Oxford, pp. 1–28.

- Flockemann, M. *et al.* (2009) “Performing xenophobia: a conversation with Jonathan Nkala and Bo Petersen”, *South African Theatre Journal*, 23(1), pp. 207–220.
- Fraser, A. and Larmer, M. (2010) *Zambia, Mining, and Neoliberalism: boom and bust on the globalized Copperbelt*. Springer.
- Gao, M. (no date) *Return to Craftsmanship, Return to Material*. Available at: <http://www.zhanwangart.com/en/article/22> (Accessed: 28 August 2019).
- Gell, A. (1998) *Art and agency: an anthropological theory*. Clarendon Press.
- Gosden, C. and Marshall, Y. (1999) “The cultural biography of objects”, *World archaeology*, 31(2), pp. 169–178.
- Grabski, J. and Magee, C. (2013) *African art, interviews, narratives: bodies of knowledge at work*. Indiana University Press.
- Grovogu, S. (2011) “A revolution nonetheless: the global south in international relations”, *Global South, The*, 5(1), pp. 175–190.
- Guene, E. (2018). *Oldies but Goodies: The Phenomenon of Artistic Revival in the Copperbelt*. Available at: <http://copperbelt.history.ox.ac.uk/2018/12/05/oldiesbut-goodies-the-phenomenon-of-artistic-revival-in-the-copperbelt-enid-guene/>. (Accessed: 20 August 2019)
- Gupta, P. *et al.* (2018) *The Global South: Histories, Politics, Maps*. Duke University Press.
- Halter, D. (2017) Presentation notes at chinafrika conference, Goethe Institut, Johannesburg.
- Halter, D. (no date) *Statement, Dan Halter*. Available at: <http://danhalter.com/text/statement/> (Accessed: 30 August 2019).
- Harrison, P., Yang, Y. and Moyo, K. (2017) “Visual representations in South Africa of China and the Chinese people”, *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 29(1), pp. 25–45.
- Hendriks, T. and Malaquais, D. (2016) “Sammy Baloji’s Kolwezi: Imaging the Congo-China nexus”, Dominique Malaquais & Nicole Khouri (eds.), *AfriqueAsie*, pp. 213-228, Presses universitaires de Rouen.

- Hennlich, A. J. (2016) “Space Invaders: border crossing in Dan Halter’s Heartland”, *Safundi*, 17(4), pp. 365–383.
- Hoskins, J. (2006) “Agency, biography and objects”, *Handbook of material culture*, pp. 74–84.
- Hoskins, J. (2013) *Biographical objects: how things tell the stories of peoples’ lives*. Routledge.
- Huang, M. (2019) “The foreign and the familiar: Reading the China bag in South Africa”, *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, pp. 1–22.
- Hubbard, P. (2009) “The Zimbabwe birds: interpretation and symbolism”, *Honeyguide: Journal of Birdlife Zimbabwe*, 55(2), pp. 109–116.
- Jedlowski, A. and Thomas, M. W. (2017) “Representing “otherness” in African popular media: Chinese characters in Ethiopian video-films”, *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 29(1), pp. 63–80.
- Jewsiewicki, B. (2016) “Leaving Ruins: Explorations of Present Pasts by Sammy Baloji, Freddy Tsimba, and Steve Bandoma”, *african arts*, 49(1), pp. 6–25.
- Kabamba, M. (2018) *Fatal climb at Black Mountain – Zambia Daily Mail*. Available at: <http://www.daily-mail.co.zm/fatal-climb-at-black-mountain/> (Accessed: 31 August 2019).
- Kasozi, D. (2019) “Paper Beads on the Move: Mobilizing Trajectories and Subjectivities to Shape Contemporary Art in Uganda”, *african arts*, 52(2), pp. 40–51.
- Kawadza, S. (no date) *From Sunshine City to garbage town*, *The Herald*. Available at: <https://www.herald.co.zw/from-sunshine-city-to-garbage-town/> (Accessed: 31 August 2019).
- Kearney, A. (2016) *Beyond the readymade: found objects in contemporary South African art*. PhD Thesis. University of Witwatersrand.
- Kopiński, D. and Polus, A. (2011) “Sino-Zambian relations: ‘An all-weather friendship’ weathering the storm”, *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 29(2), pp. 181–192.
- Large, D. (2007) “Beyond “Dragon in the Bush”: The Study of China Africa Relations”, *African Affairs*, 107(426), pp. 45–61.

- Latour, B. and Woolgar, S. (2013) *Laboratory life: The construction of scientific facts*. Princeton University Press.
- Leeb-du Toit, J. (2017a) *Isishweshwe: A History of the Indigenisation of Blueprint in South Africa*. University of KwaZulu-Natal Press.
- Leeb-du Toit, J. (2017b) “Referencing China in contemporary South African art: New ‘orientalisms’ in a context of sinophilia, sinophobia and xenophobia” in Michael MacGary (eds.), *Chinafrika*, metroZones and All Theory. No Practice, Johannesburg, pp. 44-47.
- Leeb-du Toit, J. (2019) “China referencing in current South African art: new “orientalisms” in a context of sinophilia, sinophobia and xenophobia”, *something we Africans got*, 2019, pp.234-241.
- Lee, C. K. (2018) *The specter of global China: Politics, labor, and foreign investment in Africa*. University of Chicago Press.
- Levander, C. and Mignolo, W. (2011) “Introduction: the global south and world dis/order”, *The Global South*, 5(1), pp. 1–11.
- Li, S. (2017) *Mediatized China-Africa Relations*. Springer.
- Liu, Haifang (2018) “Associations as Social Capital of “New Chinese Migrants” in Africa: Empirical Investigations of Ghana, Zimbabwe, Tanzania and South Africa”, in *Migration and Agency in a Globalizing World*. Springer, pp. 69–90.
- Mahler, A. G. (2018) *From the Tricontinental to the global South: Race, radicalism, and transnational solidarity*. Duke University Press.
- Mano, W. (2016) “Engaging with China”s soft power in Zimbabwe: Harare citizens” perceptions of China-Zimbabwe relations”, in *China”s media and soft power in Africa*. Springer, pp. 163–180.
- Manyeruke, C. (2006) “The impact of Chinese products on Zimbabwean women”, *Eastern Africa Social Science Research Review*, 22(2), pp. 85–106.
- Mapondera, W. (2018) *Zimdisia Democratic Party* (Facebook Page), Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/Zimdesia-Democratic-Party-1990690747610800/> (Accessed 13 July, 2019).
- Mawadza, A. (2008) “The nexus between migration and human security Zimbabwean migrants in South Africa”, *Institute for Security Studies Papers*, 2008(162), p. 1– 12.

- Mbiba, B. (2017) “Harare: from a European settler-colonial “sunshine city” to a “zhing-zhong” African city”, *International Development Planning Review*, 39(4), pp. 375–398.
- Meldrum, A. (2005) *Mugabe turns back on west and looks east* | *World news* | *The Guardian*. Available at:
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/apr/19/zimbabwe.andrewmeldrum> (Accessed: 31 August 2019).
- Mignolo, W. D. (2009) “Epistemic disobedience, independent thought and decolonial freedom”, *Theory, Culture & Society*, 26(7–8), pp. 159–181.
- Miko, W. B. (2018) *Interview with William Miko*, Lusaka, November 15, 2018.
- Miller, D. (2005) *Materiality*. Duke University Press.
- Mohan, G. and Lampert, B. (2013) “Negotiating China: Reinserting African Agency into China–Africa Relations”, *African Affairs*, 112(446), pp. 92–110.
- Monson, J. (2009) *Africa’s freedom railway: how a Chinese development project changed lives and livelihoods in Tanzania*. Indiana University Press.
- Monson, J. and Rupp, S. (2013) “Africa and China: new engagements, new research”, *African Studies Review*, 56(1), pp. 21–44.
- Moyo, T. and Mdlongwa, T. (2014) “Look East or look least? The Zimbabwean experience of Chinese economic investment in selected texts and examples”, *African Journal of Governance and Development*, 3(2), pp. 5–15.
- Muchatuta, R. (2019) *Interview with Ronald Muchatuta* (electronic), January 2019.
- Mudariki, R. (n.d.) *From Cape to Cairo*, *Johans Borman Fine Art*. Available at: <http://www.johansborman.co.za/contemporary-artists/mudariki-richard/fromcape-to-cairo-2013-71-x-50-cm.jpg> (Accessed: 31 August 2019).
- Mudariki, R. (2019) *Chinese tailor*, *Johans Borman Fine Art*. Available at: <http://www.johansborman.co.za/contemporary-artists/mudariki-richard/40richard-mudariki---chinese-tailor-2013-100-x-100-cm.jpg> (Accessed: 31 August 2019).

- Mulenga, A. (2016) *Contemporary Zambian Art, Conceptualism and the "Global" Art World*. Rhodes University.
- Mulenga, A. (2017a) "Germinating in the cracks: the identity of contemporary Zambian art", *Sambia—72 Volksgruppen bilden einen Staat: Einblicke in eine postkoloniale Gesellschaft*, p. 61-84.
- Mulenga, A. (2017b) *The Man Who Changed the Zambian Art Scene | Contemporary And*. Available at: <https://www.contemporaryand.com/magazines/the-man-whochanged-the-zambian-art-scene/> (Accessed: 27 August 2019).
- Muntanga, E. (2018) *Interview with Emmanuel Muntanga*, Lusaka, November 14, 2018.
- Musanga, T. (2017) "Perspectives of Zimbabwe–China relations in Wallace Chirumiko's "Made in China"(2012) and NoViolet Bulawayo's We Need New Names (2013)", *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 29(1), pp. 81–95.
- Mwaba, S. (2015) *Stary Mwaba-Life on Mars: Künstlerhaus Bethanien*. Dortmund: Verlag Kettler.
- Mwaba, S. (2018) *Interview with Stary Mwaba*, Makhanda, from August to October 2018.
- Mwaba, S. (2019) *Petits récits: Creative perspectives of Chinese encounters in Zambia*. MFA thesis, Rhodes University.
- Mwanawina, I. (2008) *China-Africa Economic Relations: The Case of Zambia, Africa Portal*. Available at: <https://www.africaportal.org/publications/china-africaeconomic-relations-the-case-of-zambia/> (Accessed: 23 August 2019).
- Norman, N. (2013) "Taking the Road Less Travelled", *Third Text*, 27(3), pp. 400–406.
- Ntali, E. (2018) ""The situation is unbearable": Life under Zimbabwe's economic crisis", *African Arguments*, 31 October. Available at: <https://africanarguments.org/2018/10/31/zimbabwe-economic-crisis-situationunbearable/> (Accessed: 31 August 2019).
- Nyoni, V. P. (2018) "Diaspora in dialogue: Zimbabwean artists in South Africa", *South African Journal of Philosophy*, 37(4), pp. 410–422.

- Ojakorotu, V. and Kamidza, R. (2018) “Look East Policy: The Case of Zimbabwe– China Political and Economic Relations Since 2000”, *India Quarterly*, 74(1), pp. 17–41.
- Papastergiadis, N. (2010) “What Is the South?”, *Thesis Eleven*, 100(1), pp. 141–156.
- Papastergiadis, N. (2017) “The end of the Global South and the cultures of the South”, *Thesis Eleven*, 142(1), pp. 69–90.
- Park, Y. J. (2013) ““Fong Kong” in Southern Africa: Interrogating African Views of China-Made Goods”, in *ASA 2013 Annual Meeting Paper*.
- Phillips, C. (2018) “Oldies but Goodies: The Phenomenon of Artistic Revival in the Copperbelt – Enid Guene”, *Comparing the Copperbelt*, 5 December. Available at: <http://copperbelt.history.ox.ac.uk/2018/12/05/oldies-but-goodies-the-phenomenon-of-artistic-revival-in-the-copperbelt-enid-guene/> (Accessed: 23 August 2019).
- Phiri, A. (2018) *Interview with Martin Phiri’s brother Missile Abasi Phiri*, Lusaka, November 14, 2018.
- Postel, H. (2017) “Moving Beyond “China in Africa”: Insights from Zambian Immigration Data”, *Journal of current Chinese affairs*, 46(2), pp. 155–174.
- Ranger, T. (2004) “Nationalist historiography, patriotic history and the history of the nation: The struggle over the past in Zimbabwe”, *Journal of southern African studies*, 30(2), pp. 215–234.
- Rhodes University. (2019) *Arts of Africa and Global Souths*. Available at: <https://www.ru.ac.za/artsof africa/> (Accessed: 18 November 2019).
- Roberts, J. L. (2017) “Things: Material Turn, Transnational Turn”, *American Art*, 31(2), pp. 64–69.
- Rojas-Sotelo (2011) “The Other Network: The Havana Biennale and the Global South”, *The Global South*, 5(1), p. 153.
- Rupp, S. (2008) “Africa and China: Engaging postcolonial interdependencies”, *China into Africa: Trade, aid, and influence*, pp. 65–86.
- Sandberg, H. G. (2013) *Why Zamrock is back in play*, *the Guardian*. Available at:

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jul/22/zamrock-zambia-music-rerelease> (Accessed: 23 August 2019).

Sautman, B. and Hairong, Y. (2007) “Friends and interests: China’s distinctive links with Africa”, *African Studies Review*, 50(3), pp. 75–114.

Sautman, B. and Hairong, Y. (2009) “African perspectives on China–Africa links”, *The China Quarterly*, 199, pp. 728–759.

Sautman, B. and Yan, H. (2006) “East Mountain Tiger, West Mountain Tiger: China, the West, and “colonialism” in Africa”, *Maryland Series in Contemporary Asian Studies*, 2006(3), pp. 2-71.

Sautman, B. and Yan, H. (2008) “The forest for the trees: Trade, investment, and the China-in-Africa discourse”, *Pacific Affairs*, 81(1), pp. 9-29.

Scully, R. (2012) “Constructing the Colossus: The Origins of Linley Sambourne’s Greatest Punch Cartoon”, *International Journal of Comic Art*, 14(2), pp. 120– 142.

Simbao, R. K. (2006) “A crown on the move: stylistic integration of the Luba-Lunda complex in Lunda-Kazembe performance”, *African arts*, 39(3), pp. 26–46.

Simbao, R. 2011. “The Proximity of Distance: A Topographic Diary of Sino-African Dialectics”, *JACANA: Journal of African Culture and New Approaches* 1, 8-21.

Simbao, R. 2012a. “China-Africa relations: research approaches”, *African Arts*, 45(2), pp. 1-7.

Simbao, R. 2012b. *Making Way: Contemporary Art from South Africa & China*, Exhibition Catalogue, VIPAA (Visual and Performing Arts of Africa), Makhanda (Grahamstown).

Simbao, R. 2012c. “Artists and New Mobilities: Re-Visualising the China-Africa Debate”, Conference paper presented at the International conference Chinese in Africa/Africans in China, Monash University, Johannesburg.

Simbao, R. 2012d. From China with Love by Gerald Machona. Available at: <https://www.ru.ac.za/artsof africa/exhibitionsperformances/fromchina withlove/>. (Accessed: 31 August 2019)

- Simbao, R. 2014, “Walking into Africa in a Chinese Way: Hua Jiming’s Mindful Entry as Counterbalance.”, in Dominique Malaquais & Nicole Khouri (eds.), *Afrique-Asie*, Presses universitaires de Rouen, Havre, pp. 193-211.
- Simbao, R. 2016. “From socialist camaraderie to neo-liberal investment: ZambiaChina relations in the works of Anawana Haloba and Sary Mwaba”, Seminar presentation at the Cape Town International Arts Fair.
- Simbao, Ruth. 2017a. “A Song of Uhuru and a Difficult Dance: Anawana Haloba’s Sound Memories of TAZARA” in Michael MacGary (eds.), *Chinafrika*, metroZones and All Theory. No Practice, Johannesburg, pp. 24-27.
- Simbao, Ruth. 2017b. “The Direction of Place and the Orientation of Discourse: Portrayals of “China” that Reach Sideways”. Keynote address at the symposium “Referencing China and East Asia in Southern African Visual Culture”. Goethe Institute, Johannesburg.
- Simbao, Ruth. 2017c “Situating Africa: An Alter-geopolitics of Knowledge, or Chapungu Rises.”, *african arts*, (50)2: 1-9.
- Simbao, R. 2019(a). “Pushing against China-Africa slowly and with small stories”, *something we Africans got*, 2019, pp. 228-233.
- Simbao, R. 2019 (b). “Reaching Sideways Beyond Bandung Audacious Solidarities and Contingent “China-Africa” Scripts in Contemporary Visual Art” (upcoming) Simutanyi, K. (2019) *Interview with Kumoyo Simutanyi* (electronic), August 2019.
- Smith, CA. (2014) *We’re a Zambian Band*, Available at: <http://theappendix.net/issues/2014/7/were-a-zambian-band> (Accessed: 24 August 2019)
- Snow, D. A. (2013) “Discursive fields”, *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social and Political Movements*, John Wiley & Sons.
- de Sousa Santos, B. (2012) “Public sphere and epistemologies of the South”, *Africa Development*, 37(1), pp. 43–67.
- de Sousa Santos, B. (2015) *Epistemologies of the South: Justice against epistemicide*. Routledge.

- Stiftung, F. E. (2004) “The “Look East Policy” of Zimbabwe now focuses on China”, *Policy Paper*. Harare: Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung.
- Storey, J. (2018) *Cultural theory and popular culture: An introduction*. Routledge.
- Sun, Y. (2014) *The deployment of history in the exploitation of minerals: The past in the present of China-Zambia relations*. Thesis. Oxford University.
- Takadiwa, M. (2017) Presentation notes at chinafrika conference, Goethe Institut, Johannesburg.
- Takadiwa, M. (2018) *Interview with Moffat Takadiwa*, Makhanda, July to August 2018.
- Taylor, I. (2007) *China and Africa: engagement and compromise*. Routledge.
- Thiong’o, Ngugi wa *et al.* (1986) *Decolonising the mind: The politics of language in African literature*. J. Currey.
- Thornber, K. L. (2016) “Breaking Discipline, Integrating Literature: Africa–China Relationships Reconsidered”, *Comparative Literature Studies*, 53(4), pp. 694– 721.
- Tyburn Gallery. (2016) *Foreign Objects*. Available at: <http://www.tyburngallery.com/exhibition/foreign-objects/> (Accessed: 9 September 2019).
- Van Beurden, S. (2018) “The Zairian Avant-garde: Modes of African Modernism”, *Radical History Review*, 2018(131), pp. 151–158.
- Vava, B. (2017) *China in Africa: China’s media image in Zimbabwe: the case of the Herald and NewsDay*. PhD Thesis, Witwatersrand University.
- Vhumbunu, C. H. (2018) “China-Zimbabwe Trade Relations in the 21st Century: An Analysis of the Trends, Patterns and Prospects”, *International Journal of China Studies*, 9(2), pp. 227–248.
- Visual Arts Council Zambia. (n.d.) *The Visual Arts Council*. Available at: <https://visualartscouncilzambia.wordpress.com/about-the-visual-arts-council/> (Accessed: 28 August 2019).

- Wasserman, Herman. (2012) “China in South Africa: Media responses to a developing relationship”, *Chinese Journal of Communication*, 5(3), pp. 336-354.
- Wasserman, H. (2015). “South Africa and China as BRICS partners: Media perspectives on geopolitical shifts”, *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 50(1), pp.109-123.
- Wu, Hung. (no date) *The Art Experimentation of Zhan Wang*. Available at: <http://www.zhanwangart.com/en/article/24> (Accessed: 28 August 2019).
- Wu, Hung., McGrath, J. and Smith, S. (2008) *Displacement: The Three Gorges Dam and Contemporary Chinese Art*. Chicago: Smart Museum of Art.
- Wu, Hung., Xiao, T. and Wang, P. (2009) “The Three Gorges Dam and Contemporary Chinese Art”, *Orientalism*, 40(1), pp. 67–73.
- Yan, Hairong and Sautman, B. (2013) ““The beginning of a world empire”? Contesting the discourse of Chinese copper mining in Zambia”, *Modern China*, 39(2), pp. 131–164.
- Yombwe, L. (2018) *Interview with Lawrence Yombwe*, Lusaka, November 16, 2018.
- Yonan, M. (2011) “Toward a fusion of art history and material culture studies”, *West 86th: A Journal of Decorative Arts, Design History, and Material Culture*, 18(2), pp. 232–248.
- Youde, J. (2007) “Why look east? Zimbabwean foreign policy and China”, *Africa Today*, pp. 3–19.
- “Zambia launches construction of memorial park to remember Chinese heroes”, (2019) *CGTN Africa*, 14 May, Available at: <https://africa.cgtn.com/2019/05/14/zambia-launches-construction-of-memorialpark-to-remember-chinese-heroes/> (Accessed: 31 August 2019).
- Zapiro (2009) *The Rhodes Colossus - 118 years later*, Zapiro. Available at: <https://www.zapiro.com/090405st> (Accessed: 31 August 2019).
- Zhang, C. 2014, “China-Zimbabwe Relations: A Model of China-Africa Relations?”, SAIIA Occasional Paper No 205. Available at:

<http://www.saiia.org.za/occasional-papers/china-zimbabwe-relations-a-model-of-china-africa-relations>. (Accessed 3 April 2018)

Bibliography in Chinese

- Zhang, Y. “The Ground Breaking Ceremony of Zimbabwe’s new parliament building constructed by China”, (2018) *Belt and Road Portal*, 1 December, Available at: <https://www.yidaiyilu.gov.cn/xwzx/hwxw/73235.htm> (Accessed: 31 August 2019). (张玉亮, 2018, 《中国援建的津巴布韦新议会大厦开工》, 中国一带一路网。)
- Cao, H. (2014) *Six Decades--Revolution of CAFA Sculpture Department*. PhD dissertation. Central Academy of Fine Arts, Beijing. (曹晖, 2014, 《六十年的步履——中央美术学院雕塑教学体系的传承与革新》, 博士论文, 中央美术学院。)
- Liu, Haifang. (2017) “A study on the evaluation of policy and performance of Chinese scholarship to African students”, *Annual Review of African Studies in China (2015)*, pp. 141–192. (刘海方, 2017, 《中国对非留学生奖学金政策沿革与绩效研究》, 《中国非洲研究评论·博雅非洲论坛特辑》(2015), 总第五辑, 141–192 页。)
- Yan, Hairong and Sautman, B. (2017) *China in Africa: discourses and reality*. China Social Sciences Press. (严海蓉, 沙伯力, 2017, 《中国在非洲:话语与现实》, 社会科学文献出版社。)
- Shen, Xiaolei. (2017) “The Assimilation Dilemma for New Chinese Immigrants in Zimbabwe”, *The Journal of International Studies*, (2015):5, pp. 129–152. (沈晓雷, 2015, 《试析中国新移民融入津巴布韦的困境》, 《国际政治研究》, 第 5 期, 129–152 页。)
- Zhan, Wang. (1998) “Conceptual Sculpture—Materialized Concept”, *Art Research*, 3, pp. 73–74. (展望, 1998, 《“观念性雕塑”——物质化的观念》, 美术研究, 第三辑, 73–74 页。)