

**Atlantica:  
Contemporary Art  
from Mozambique  
and its Diaspora**



**Books**



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# Practice in an entangled world

Storm Janse Van Rensburg

*Atlantica: Contemporary Art in Mozambique and its Diasporas* comes at a significant juncture in the writing of our own narratives and discourses. The story of contemporary art from Africa can get stuck in a reductive and homogenising groove, currently fuelled by an international art market feeding bite-size chunks of the next best thing. The 'African group show', often gathered together by well-meaning American and European institutional curators making one research stop on the continent (somewhere tourist friendly) has set a disappointingly pedestrian precedent.

Part of the conundrum relates to perception and positioning of contemporary art from the continent as something that is produced for, presented, and theorized *elsewhere* – a value chain that circumvents engaging or dealing with the complexities, challenges and opportunities of its sites of production.

The work of the late, great, Bisi Silva (1962-2019), founding director of the Centre for Contemporary Art (CCA), Lagos, was centred on forging a space for the critical engagement with contemporary art, not only as a commodity for actual or symbolic export, but also to contribute to the building of capacity within its particular context. *Àsikò*, a roving, experimental and itinerant pedagogical model followed, an initiative geared towards the development of a critically engaged practice. It addressed not only the art historical contexts of its various host countries between 2010 and 2017 (Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal, Mozambique and Ethiopia respectively), but also invited a pan-African and international faculty to work closely with emerging artists and curators to enrich and develop practices from a departure point of entanglement and complexity.

*Àsikò*'s contribution to plurality, and specificity – with its emphasis on both collectivity and self-writing as complementary modes of actualization – has set



an important benchmark for an engaged and committed practice. The 2015, four-week-long iteration of *Àsikò* took place in Maputo, and a number of participants and faculty members are included in this publication.

From within a young institution, Zeitz MOCAA, aspiring to promote contemporary art from the African continent and its vast diaspora, our mandate could have led to a replication of the system set out in the opening paragraph. How does an organization represent a continent and its diaspora? We believe that it is through the individual voices of artists, and the particularities of their practice, that we unlock and develop an African art history that foregrounds multiplicity, interconnectedness and relation.

This publication marks a significant moment and makes an essential contribution to the ongoing work to centre Mozambican artists, African artists, and their practice in an entangled world, where locality and context is part of an important and necessary articulation. Our art history and self-writing is one of constant excavation, re-visiting and re-assertion. The work continues.

# Atlantica: the east coast

Ângela Ferreira

*Atlantica* is the word that recurs in the titles of two books that document contemporary artistic practices from Angola and Mozambique, and the critical discourses that relate to them. In her introduction to *Atlantica: contemporary art from Angola and its Diaspora* (2018), Mónica de Miranda undertakes a widely researched historical and geographical appraisal of the name, dating back to classical mythology. Its meaning is loaded with interpretative potential, relating it to issues of location, geography, exile, migration, separation, exodus, diaspora and displacement. As is well-known, *Atlantica* is closely connected to the well-researched history of the infamous slave ship crossings of the South and North Atlantic. Paul Gilroy, for example, in his seminal book, *The Black Atlantic* (1993), describes it as the substratum on which oppression travelled. He argues that the time of coast-to-coast transport of this human commodity enabled the creation of communication links between individuals which, in turn, spread across the vertices of the Atlantic triangle, thus creating political and cultural identities with great spatial fluidity – where the Atlantic is seen as a ‘conductor’ of ideas about issues of nationality, autonomy and citizenship, particularly pertaining to Africa. In the light of this, one cannot but conclude that as Africans we do not underestimate the power of the political metaphor of the image of the Atlantic Ocean: it has become a continental concept and therefore appropriate for both books.

The guiding principle underlying the series was conceived to fill a gap in the international range of contemporary art publications, by focusing on artists from Portuguese-speaking African countries. The idea was to showcase contemporary art in the ever-growing competitive global contemporary art context of galleries, biennials, museums, bookshops, etc. We wanted to highlight practices that engage with

international contemporary discourses and debates, rather than present the work as solely dependent on geographical, historical or national characteristics and traces. In this sense, these publications are uncompromising. Artists have been included because we felt strongly that they are relevant in the present. The structure of the series was predefined by Hangar Books, with the idea of it comprising two individual titles. They are mainly organised around visual essays on each artist included who, in turn, chose the author they preferred to write about their work. Each artist's practice is thus presented in conjunction with a critical discussion by an invited writer. We hope that this allows for practices, which are less visible, to insert themselves in critical transnational discourse and, simultaneously, to broaden the existing discourse to include new practices from the two countries the books focus on.

It is true, however, that the term *Atlantica* will surprise some Mozambican readers. The country is, after all, on the east side of the African continent, with a coastline that stretches along 3000 kilometres – from Tanzania to just below the Tropic of Capricorn in Southern Africa, so long that the water between Madagascar and Mozambique is called the Mozambique Channel – and, therefore, intrinsically connected with the Indian Ocean and other Southern African countries. Originally dating from colonial times, it is known as the 'Pearl of the Indian Ocean' – an evocative expression that captures the cultural, symbolic, geographic and spatial relationship with the Indian Ocean, the atmosphere of which is distinct from that of the Atlantic. As Elena Brugioni demonstrates, the label has survived independence and is still used today (Brugioni 2015, 94). The fact that the engagement with and effects of modern travel and slavery in the Indian Ocean have been studied less should not encourage us to ignore these topics. They are of relevance because the expanse of water defines a complex set of relationships that are not necessarily about homogeneity, but rather about difference and composite dimensions that are clearly identifiable in the variety of artistic practices brought together in *Atlantica: Contemporary Art from Mozambique and its Diaspora*. In addition to the individual essay on each artist, this book also contains a series of more general texts that highlight common concerns, as well as an interview which gives voice to artists and curators from Mozambique.

Given the unique location of the country, as mentioned above, we need to consider the strong connection that some artists have with places situated in the middle of the Indian Ocean, such as Madagascar and Mauritius. At a time when globalisation of the contemporary art world continues to move apace and African artists experience renewed international interest in their work, mainly from the more traditional art centres in the West, Mozambican artists have not stopped connecting with these more remote territories. These places appear as sources of inspiration or as sites for further studies or residencies, or function as points of departure from which to attempt to launch careers: the cultural ties embedded in the images of some of the works represent ongoing attempts to explore the connections with these places.

We should also consider the impact of contact with India. Since the mid-

nineteenth century, the presence of a large Indian community established a cultural and economic triangle across the Indian Ocean. One example of this triangulation is present in the work of one of Mozambique's most celebrated photographers, Ricardo Rangel. An image taken in 1961, on the day of the declaration of independence of Goa from Portuguese colonial rule, Rangel captured a group of men, mostly white settlers, standing in the street reading the newspaper on a wall – worried faces anticipating their own future, a prelude to the end of colonial rule. This picture, although historical, is of great interest as it points to the extraordinary early development of photography in the country, and to its intrinsic connection with the international relations influenced by geographical factors of the east coast of Africa and the Indian Ocean. The role of photography and film in Mozambique is important and so influential in today's art practices that it warranted the contribution from Drew Thompson in one of the general texts.

Photography, as a political tool, also makes us consider the specific geopolitics of the continent and the various political, economic and cultural engagements that Mozambique has had within the region, particularly with South Africa. Therefore, we have to take into account the notion of place as one of major importance in photography in the Southern African region. Although we have no confirmation of any direct connection between the extraordinary production of politically driven images, in both South Africa and Mozambique, the fact remains that both countries harbour a vast heritage of photographic work that is unique and highly political. Despite the lack of material proof of a dialogue between practitioners, our knowledge of this common heritage is inspiring to curators, thinkers and artists alike. Furthermore, South Africa's closeness is also evident in artists' work, which is expressed as a shared history of migratory labour and various interconnections of colonial, liberation and post-independence wars that extend into tensions in the Cabo Delgado region today.

In the section of general essays in this book, we see a thoughtful attempt to contextualise and reflect on the roots and origins of contemporary Mozambican art while thinking conceptually on how to leave behind the practices of the years immediately after independence. In his proposal on how to read Mozambican contemporary art in the face of the all-powerful and long-lasting 'script' of the post-independence, one-party state years, Álvaro Luís Lima intertwines his thoughts with impressions from writers, poets and visual artists. It is a sensitive, caring and hopeful overview that also subtly highlights the relative isolation of these contemporary artists until very recently, and allows the reader to envisage a positive future. To artists like ourselves, who are still dwelling on the relationship of the Mozambique liberation and the post-independence pressures that ensued, this is a most constructive contribution towards self-reflection.

Since independence, the Mozambican art scene has revealed some more-or-less predictable directions, protagonists and orientations, many of which were very tied to either colonial practices or post-independence rhetorical party line approaches.



However, early in the twenty-first century, a group of art activists appeared out of a set of unexpected circumstances, who threw the art milieu suddenly into the discourse of contemporaneity. The appearance of Muvart – two of its founder members, both practising artists and curators, are interviewed here by Azu Nwagbogu – succeeded in peacefully generating a space for contemporary art practice that enticed a whole new generation of artists and gained attention from the international community. This group was unique in that they were politically motivated art activists struggling to gain ground in a world from which they had been mostly isolated or were ignored by. In this book we also endeavour to give voice and credit to this group. In the above-mentioned interview, Azu Nwagbogu challenges them to reflect on how contemporary art is viewed in Mozambique, on Afrofuturism, or even broader issues, such as restitution and reparation.

Women have a strong presence in this publication. Sihle Motsa, also included in the general texts, critically introduces us to the concept of ‘Lusophone’ as a space in which issues of gender were acted out in the colonial past and that persist in the neocolonial present. It is with this unique perspective in mind that she analyses the specificity of Mozambique.

Diasporic Mozambican artists naturally reflect on a variety of different experiences: the Mozambican diaspora does not present itself as a homogeneous group with a set of common concerns. Questions of migration differ between those who migrated to countries like the Ukraine and have returned to Mozambique, those who migrated within Africa, and those who migrated to other parts of the world, like Europe. Issues of belonging and the relationship between the West and Africa are present in some practices, and are accompanied by questions of distance, identity, home, house, travel and abroad. The idea of memory underpins many practices represented here too, which can mostly be seen through the documentation of spaces. Whether in paintings, photographs or videos, the images created take us from urban coloniality to social postcolonial urban complexity. Spatiality and architecture recur, sometimes through recalling and reclaiming political space, other times through images that reveal a softness or a tenderness.

Finally, a note about my role as an artist and editor in this publication: I have always avoided the role of the artist as curator – finding it difficult to reconcile the idea of judging or selecting from among my peers. However, when Hangar Books invited me to work on this series, Mónica de Miranda argued that this was a project by artists and for artists, which was crucial for me in accepting the invitation. My first task was to bring together a group of advisors – artists, writers and thinkers – to guide me in the process, to share the burden and the doubts of selecting, choosing and inviting. Shared editing was an incredible opportunity to interact more frequently with Mario Pissarra, Rafael Mouzinho, Alda Costa, Jorge Dias, Mónica de Miranda and Camila Maissune, who are my extended bearers of responsibility in this project. I am deeply thankful to them.

# Atlantica: Contemporary art from Mozambique and its diaspora

Mónica de Miranda

The first book of the *Atlantica* series featured Angola and its diasporas, and was published in 2018. This second book of the series, focuses on Art from Mozambique and its diasporas. Framed around the same concepts and curatorial reflections, it is edited by the artist Ângela Ferreira. The curatorial framework highlights contemporary artists in and from Mozambique practicing, from the turn of the millennium to the present. These artists engage with research, experimental and conceptual art practices that delve into colonial and postcolonial narratives. The works of the artists represented in this book are diverse in medium and approach, and address social issues such as identity and body politics, place, memory and history. The new millennium has witnessed unprecedented cultural production, characterised by a mixture of radicality and marginality, nostalgia and utopia. These artists are mainly engaged in challenging fixed notions of place and asserting connections between artistic production and political, social, ideological and personal formations.

*Atlantica*, as a title and organising principle, evokes themes of separation, exodus, diaspora and displacement, and represents the movement of leaving one's homeland – a common experience for many of the Mozambican artists represented in this publication and the Angolan artists represented in the series' first book. *Atlantica* also points to the flows and fluxes of migration and globalisation, processes that have given rise to the cross-pollination that characterises visual practices in Mozambique. As such, it signals the art production that often combines similar approaches in terms of style and format, as the blending of history and narrative with elements of fiction.

Mozambique and Angola, share the experience of colonial history that had created a difficult social landscape for artistic endeavour to survive, especially, due to decades of civil war and economic and social inequalities that still prevail nowadays.

Nevertheless, the beginning of the new millennium has created better conditions for art. The cultural landscape in the post-war and independence period has witnessed, if not fostered, the development of art practices that underscore the dynamic interaction between place and time, space and identity, past and present, present and future.

The unsettled political, social and economic context of Mozambique, since its independence from colonial rule, in 1975, to the end of the civil war, in 1992, and to a resurgent political conflict, from 2013, has ushered in a new generation of artists, who have sought to find and forge creative languages in order to deal with the struggles and adversities of the past and present. This current conjuncture is foreshadowed by the long struggle against colonial domination, the turbulent years of civil war, resistance to authoritarian rule, corruption and repression and, more recently, the economic crisis precipitated by the failures of raging capitalism.

The phrase *Contemporary art from Mozambique* is highly contested territory, in and of itself – and one that has been thoroughly discussed in the making of these book series. *Atlantica* does not intend to lay out taxonomies of contemporary Mozambican artistic production. Instead, it reflects upon the historical and cultural particularities of artistic practice, in an effort to open up the current discussions among the growing corpus of artistic and critical researchers. If this book discards monolithic notions of identity, considering them unfixed and unstable, it also sets out to investigate the artists' points of view and cultural narratives.

The art production in the first decades of the twenty-first century that this book addresses has witnessed an increased exchange between artists and intellectuals, and the proliferation of spaces facilitating such a contamination. This has paved the way for strong intercultural shifts, which place particular emphasis on a host of decolonial concerns. This book aims to foreground these critical concerns and does so by including the practices and perspectives of artists as part of these discussions, interrogating the thorny relationships between art, politics, social engagement and visual and discursive strategies, in order to “detropicalise” discourses on artistic production. It seems that the only immutable condition of contemporary art from Mozambique is change itself. New artists, curators and directions are emerging, and the language with which contemporary art is discussed is under development. *Atlantica* offers a glimpse into the creativity of the visual idioms and artistic voices flowing in and out of Mozambique and its diasporas.

Maimuna Adam  
Filipe Branquinho  
Jorge Dias  
Ângela Ferreira  
Gemuce  
Eurídice Kala  
Gonçalo Mabunda  
Mário Macilau  
Celestino Mudaulane  
Félix Mula  
Eugénia Mussa  
Marilú Námoda  
Mauro Pinto  
Camila Maissune



# Maimuna Adam, or the aesthetics of diaspora

Raquel Schefer\*

The work of Maimuna Adam (Maputo, 1984) enters into a dialogue with different cultural and aesthetic traditions, affirming an aesthetics of diaspora against the background of the artist's cosmopolitan and transnational biography. Born in Mozambique during the revolutionary process, Adam spent part of her childhood in Sweden, studied Arts at the University of Pretoria, and currently lives in the United Kingdom. This nomadic background shapes culturally and aesthetically her artistic work; its reflection, on historical, political, cultural and epistemic issues, such as identity, colonialism and postcolonialism, the history of Mozambique, and the feminine condition.<sup>1</sup> Situated across the boundary of diverse cultural and aesthetic traditions, Adam's work embraces a formal system founded upon processes of circulation: temporal and spatial circulation of tropes and forms, objects and apparatuses. The eclecticism of the motifs and forms of Adam's work contribute to engendering eloquent pieces about Mozambican history and culture, a transcultural "contact zone" (Pratt 2005, 231-258) of the Indian Ocean trade. As it approaches Mozambican history, culture and identity through different disciplines and media, the art production of Adam situates itself in a transcultural, transdisciplinary and transmedial "contact zone."

Stuart Hall theorises postcolonial identity as a "'production', which is never complete, always in process and always constituted within, not outside, representation" (Hall 1990, 222). Two fundamental gestures structure Adam's work.

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1 For instance, in the film *Entwined* (2011).

On the one hand, rethinks Mozambican postcolonial transcultural identity and its contextual, historical, and political components from the sphere of representation and through the artistic practice. On the other, it addresses and reviews crucial operations of modern art, such as the surrealist practice of displaying *objets trouvés*, and the readymade as one of its operative principles, through a principle of disjunction<sup>2</sup> between content and form – forms getting disjoined from their original referents and applied to new historical and cultural contexts, specifically postcolonial ones. These gestures are assumed as decolonial strategies of representation. The methodological choices aim to extricate the residual colonial elements of the intervened objects and to oppose the way colonial history was constructed by the hegemonic discourses. Moving along different art disciplines and media (drawing, installation, writing, performance, film) and assuming the diaspora experience as one of its main subjects, Adam's work affirms an aesthetics of diaspora as it critically appropriates formal elements from, quoting Kobena Mercer, "the master-codes of the dominant cultures and 'creolises' them" (Mercer 1998, 57). In other words, Adam disarticulates and de-centres dominant artistic forms in her practice, combining them with other cultural sites and relating these forms to issues linked to the history of colonialism, anti-colonialism, and the history of Mozambique. The dialogue with the history and forms of modernism is indeed entwined with a reflection on the history of Africa and Mozambique. This paper examines these issues by combining cultural critique with formal analysis.

Dealing with multiple objects and elements, such as ink, charcoal, and coffee, Adam's work retraces their material history, the political and cultural history they archive. The gesture of drawing with coffee, recurrent in Adam's artistic practice, evokes its Black history, the history of the Atlantic slave trade, plantation economy and colonial monoculture, and the history of its commodification. As Françoise Vergès notes, "to observe the connections between the world of plants and colonialism" allows for an examination of "the way in which economies of predation and productivism conceive Nature from a utilitarian standpoint, as a commodity, and have managed, as such, to transform our relationship with plants" (Vergès 2017, 323). Works as the series of drawings *Family History* (2011), conceived with coffee among other materials, point, therefore, not only to the relationship between coffee, the colonial-capitalist system and the symbolic economy of the Western world but also to the way the commodification of Nature has transformed our relationship with plants, a fundamental issue in a period of environmental catastrophe and collapse of the capitalist system. Drawing with coffee or over banana fibre paper, a procedure that traverses Adam's work, fosters the reviewing, in the words of Teresa Castro, of our "colonizing grip on 'nature'" (Castro 2019).

In the installation *(M)atrimónio [(M)arriage, 2011]*, Adam combines a raw

2 This conception is inspired by Erwin Panofsky's principle of disjunction (*Disjunktionsprinzip*) (Panofsky 1990), my translation. All translations are my own.

canvas wedding gown, a pot filled with coffee, a capulana,<sup>3</sup> an artist book, and drawings over banana fibre paper. The artist articulates different cultural elements, and evokes the colonial history of raw materials and commodities such as coffee and bananas. The design of the wedding gown takes inspiration from the garments used by the workers of São Tomé and Príncipe's colonial coffee and cocoa plantations. The gesture of designing a wedding dress inspired in the garments used by São Tomé and Príncipe's colonial workers evokes the history of plantation economy of the island nation and of the Portuguese colonial system, deconstructing, in parallel, the colonial iconography and symbolic economy. The use of these raw materials and commodities in artistic work points to their colonial-capitalist history and seems to question the conventional dualism Nature/Culture. Adam puts in place decolonial strategies to review the colonial legacy and the persistence of colonialism's epistemic binary structures, common to the fundamentals of European hegemonic modernity, from the sphere of representation.

The act of collecting is also central to the artistic practice of Adam. The project *¡Toma!* (2014), presented at the Mozambican-German Cultural Institute (ICMA – Goethe Zentrum), in Maputo, assembles a collection of books and other objects. If the principles of cataloguing and inventory are explicit in this project, they seem to traverse Adam's work as a whole. The artist assembles and displays systematically fragmentary objects, sometimes *objets trouvés*, to form organic systems. In other words, the objects are organically related, but interdependent through their relationships to each other and the system as a whole. This process implies not only general ordering strategies but also the establishment of relationships between the objects integrated into micro-collections. Tension and affection, related to the artist's personal and family history, guide the selection of objects and structure the establishment of relations between them, as well as the formation of micro-collections. Furthermore, the display of objects produces a tension that opens up their political dimension and evokes their material history. In *Retrato Materno (Mother's Portrait, 2013)*, Adam combines her mother's photographic camera and the audio of an interview in which she tells an event from the past. The choice of the vintage photographic apparatus was determined by its "sentimental value" (Schefer 2019).<sup>4</sup> However, this object – and the tension between the unseen lost photographic images and the audio record – evokes a family history embedded both in the history of Chile, where the experience told by Adam's mother, a Chilean exile, took place before the 1973 *coup d'état*, and the history of Mozambique, particularly, the important and relatively invisible history of photography and film during the country's Liberation Struggle and revolutionary period (Gray 2012, Thompson 2013, Schefer 2018). The sense of belonging – to a family, a community, a country – emerges from temporal movement and displacement, circulation through family and historical spectres and sites.

3 A type of a sarong worn in Mozambique.

4 Unpublished interview with author, Maputo and Paris 2019.

In the video *Pack Your Bags* (2011), Adam assembles a miniature collection of objects related to Mozambique and Sweden, including a Swedish translation of Mia Couto, in a vintage toiletry bag. Mozambique is imagined from Sweden through a series of objects and their *mise en tension*. Circulation is here not only a motif but also the driving force behind the film's formal invention. Through techniques of animation, Adam conceives objects as impregnated by animistic forces. They come autonomously out of the bag, in a tensional play with the film's character, Adam herself, who, like Buster Keaton in *Sherlock Jr.* (1924), seems to be expelled from cinematic "reality." This strategy points to geographical displacement, but also to the ritualisation of memory processes, central in Adam's work. Reorientation and repositioning emerge from the denial of fixity – attachment to a unique spatiotemporal position –, and the assumption of the unfixated. Through the repetition of the play (Agamben 1993),<sup>5</sup> Adam sensorially re-enacts the elusive and unstable experience of departure, its cyclical dimension, and eventually links personal and family history to the historical processes of transatlantic circulation.

If Walter Benjamin defines the experience of the collector as governed by "a dialectic tension between the poles of order and disorder" (Benjamin 2015, 42), this tension seems to saturate Adam's work. Ordering and disordering is, indeed, the constitutive principle of *Pack Your Bags*, pointing to the impossibility of fixity, and the difficulty of transposing the complexity of lived experience into a plastic or audiovisual representation. A political and epistemological dimension underlies the acts of ordering and disordering. Benedict Anderson considers that "the colonial state did not merely aspire to create, under its control, a human landscape of perfect visibility; the condition of this 'visibility' [sic] was that everyone, everything, had (as it were) a serial number" (Anderson 1991, 181). It is worth remembering that the historical colonial project was entangled with the epistemological programme of European modernity. As argued by Boaventura de Sousa Santos and Maria Paula Meneses (Sousa Santos and Meneses 2009), all social knowledge practices opposed to Western modernity were (and we could add that they are) systematically suppressed by the colonial capitalist system. The historical colonial project was, therefore, based on procedures and technologies of archival ordering of the territorial, human, cultural, and epistemological landscape, linked to scientific disciplines as geography and anthropology. The principle of ordering constituted one of the foundations of colonial domination and one of its places of power. In other words, this principle was inseparable from the exercise and the functioning of colonial power. Incessantly disordering any fixed order, Adam's work opposes the principle of ordering as one of the places of colonial power, pulverising what remains in the old objects from the colonial order.

As stated before, Adam's work may be approached as a decolonial artistic practice. One of its fundamental procedures is the way it addresses the history of modernisms, their visual forms and operative principles, in particular, the *objet trouvé* and the readymade as crucial gestures of modern art. If, in general terms,

we can consider a decolonial artistic *praxis* as a set of methodological choices seeking to detach aesthetics epistemically from the paradigm of colonialism that is inseparable from modernity, Adam's decolonial gesture lies fundamentally – even if not only – in the de-centring of dominant artistic forms and their diasporic “creolisation” (Mercer 1998). Modernist practices and forms related to the *objet trouvé* and the readymade are creolised, disjoined from their original referents and applied to postcolonial contexts, and issues related to the history of colonialism – and anti-colonialism – in particular the history of Mozambique.

Through the display of *objets trouvés*, a paradigm of Surrealism (Breton 1976), together with chosen objects, Adam allows the emergence of the aleatory and the *hasard* (chance) in her artistic practice. These elements, along with the usage of familiar objects in unfamiliar situations, reinforce and complexify the tension between order and disorder. As already stated, certain procedures are related to the readymade, in its proximity to the *objet trouvé*, as an operative principle of modern art. According to Thierry de Duve (1994, 60-97), the readymade emphasises the enunciative function of the work of art, addressing issues related to the field of reception more than with the field of production itself. Adam's work displaces the readymade, as an operative principle, to a different historical framework and a diverse cultural formation. Through this displacement, it disjoins it, as stated before, from its original referents. By doing so, the readymade's enunciative function addresses the field of reception and the field of production simultaneously. On the one hand, the readymade principle in Adam's work aims to highlight the conditions of reception and circulation, namely through the artist's participation in shows at unconventional exhibition spaces such as the headquarters building of Clube Ferroviário of Maputo in 2010. On the other, it also seeks to emphasise the position of enunciation itself, i.e. Adam as a contemporary Mozambican artist who disarticulates in her artistic practice modern art procedures, forms and their ideological paradigm to oppose, through these formal strategies, the dominant discourses on the history of colonialism and the discourse of colonialism itself. The critical diversion of formal elements from the dominant culture and their creolisation is indeed one of the main procedures of Adam's artistic practice, an artistic practice situated in a “contact zone” also at the level of its methodologies.

Adam's film production deals with the *topoi* of memory, gaps between past and present, interstices between temporal layers and spatial positions. Shot at her father's house in Maputo, *O Lar* (*Home*, 2010) examines the interstitial zones between past and present, the public and the private spheres, the general and the personal history, evoking, through the view from the windows, the Indian Ocean trade. If Homi K. Bhabha describes the interstice as “the overlap and displacement of domains of difference” (Bhabha 1994, 2), pointing to its political and epistemic aspects, *O Lar* produces new spatiotemporal configurations through the work of the interstitial. The place of the observer, the woman in the window – Adam herself – is central, as it constructs and organises self-reflexively in situ a perspective on space and

time. The presence of a suitcase, an intratextual element in Adam's work, points to the centrality of the processes of circulation, processes that are reinforced by the spectral appearance and disappearance of visual components, a *continuum* in her film production. On the edge of early and experimental cinema, affirming the historical transversality of film forms transposed to a new politico-cultural context, *A Espera* (*The Wait*, 2012), a kaleidoscopic view, embraces a comparable formal system, based on the spatialisation of memory, i.e. the search for spaces and elements, as the ocean – and correlative formal strategies – metonymical of memory.

Windows are major elements in Adam's film work in the same way as the cages and the glass cases in her installations. Those elements reinforce the enunciative function, targeting the field of reception, the spectator. They mediate the perceptive and cognitive processes, disturbing, in the case of the film work, the relation of representation with "reality". Windows, cages and glass cases address the tensions and interdependencies between what is inside and outside, general and particular, identical and dissimilar. This aspect is particularly relevant in the video piece *Libertação* (*Release*, 2013-2015), in which a screen-whiteboard showing images of different spaces-times has the same role as the windows and other mentioned elements. If the title of the film – *Libertação*, in Portuguese, a word that can be translated as "Liberation" – hints at the history of Mozambique and, in particular, the history of the Liberation Struggle, the screen-whiteboard might evoke the pedagogical purpose of militant cinema, a central form of Mozambican revolutionary cinema. The board motif is abundant in Mozambican revolutionary cinema – as in other militant and engaged cinemas –, and Jean-Luc Godard, who had an important role on it, often uses the board metaphor to describe his conception of "political cinema".

Once more, Adam dialogues with the history of Mozambique – notably, the country's anti-colonial history – from the sphere of representation. It also dialogues with a set of film forms and motifs, in this case of non-hegemonic cinema as militant and engaged cinema. The screen-whiteboard becomes an epistemic apparatus and the body of the artist, unfolding the latter device, a screening surface interconnecting disjointed spaces (Mozambique, Portugal and the spaces in-between), and times (the history of Mozambique, the enunciative present and the successive temporal horizons). As *Libertação* exemplifies, Adam's work affirms an aesthetics of diaspora through a general system of circulation: circulation – entailing transformation – of motifs, forms, objects and apparatuses through heterogeneous spaces, times and politico-cultural contexts.

# In search of nothing: Filipe Branquinho and the void of modernity

Álvaro Luís Lima\*

In Filipe Branquinho's *Intervalo* (2014), a group of municipal guards poses for the camera during a break from work. Positioned around an empty swimming pool, two members of the group rest on the diving board, trying to make do with a space that was not designed for them, let alone for their breaks. Now a public area, the pool was originally part of a club located in Gurué, a town in the north of Mozambique, that artist Berry Bickle described as "an outpost of modernity" (Bickle 2014). Like most of the town, the club was built under the Portuguese colonial regime, reflecting Gurué's growth into a centre of powerful tea plantations and, beginning in the 1930s, attracting a small but prosperous elite (Artur and Xavier 2003). Economic expansion brought, hitherto unseen infrastructure development in the area boasting an airport, a cinema, a hotel and several other institutions supporting Bickle's qualification of the town. Nearly ninety decades later, Gurué is filled with spaces created to accommodate a political system that has long since been defeated, an economic model that no longer exists, and a group that has not inhabited the area for decades. The people in Branquinho's image appear as guards of a cemetery of ideologies.

Part of a series named after the town, *Intervalo* registers the guards strictly as workers. Their mint-green uniforms and the shadow partially concealing their faces minimise individual expression and contextualise the space within their day-to-day. The focus on the guards' break underscores the atmosphere of inertia, emphasising the stillness of their routine rather than the active role of their job. The pool's unkept state only adds to this atmosphere. Besides depicting a work break, the image captures an interruption from the ideologies that once filled the

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swimming pool. As an image of the contemporary, *Intervalo* gives visual expression to what Paul Rabinow has defined as “the afterlife of modernity” (Rabinow 2017, 5). Whereas modernity is predicated on a linear and positivist drive towards progress, contemporaneity is not an advancement from the modern so much as an altogether new relationship to time. Far from being a mere residue of an outdated past, the pool is at the centre of an image for which the guards do not provide a discourse of transformation. They live *alongside* the pool’s temporality, which is simultaneously familiar and distant from contemporary Guroé. The emptiness of the pool punctures the image with absence, an epistemological gap marking contemporary experience.

Branquinho’s oeuvre explores the emptiness in this pool. Like much of the photographer’s work, *Intervalo* draws attention to the gap left by an unresolved modernity, a void known in psychoanalysis as the uncanny. His images confront this overwhelming emptiness by registering the sites where modernity appears as a failed project: the empty pool, the deserted airport, the overfilled archive, or the depleted cinema.<sup>1</sup> The modernist project, whether colonial, scientific, socialist, or otherwise, is motivated by the prospect of closing any possibility of a void, seeking to build a continuous symbiosis between nature and language. Mladen Dolar argues that modernity strives for the condition in which “the spiritual would directly spring from the material,” aiming to close any epistemic gap between them (Dolar 1991, 17). In this utopia, there is nothing strange or mysterious: society is whole, an all-encompassing system, in which everything has a place, purpose, and meaning. Ironically, the lack of a space reserved for the uncanny, which had previously been contained in the sacred or the taboo, has sparked its outburst: “the uncanny became unplaceable, it became uncanny in the strict sense” (Dolar 1991, 7).<sup>2</sup> Without fixed terrain but great irony, the uncanny emerges from the very institutions of modernity shown in Branquinho’s images.

Branquinho’s use of photography reflects his interest in looking at the uncanny within modernity, since this medium is a hallmark of modern times. According to Walter Benjamin, in photography, “the technique of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the domain of tradition” (Benjamin 1939, 221). Without an original, photography dissolves the aura of the work of art, abandoning any residue of ritual, magical, or sacred (Benjamin 1939, 223). Like photography itself, Branquinho shows buildings, places, and people devoid of a soul, and yet it is through the photographic language that he encounters the uncanny, which is no longer located in the uniqueness of the work of art as an aesthetic object (Krauss

- 1 Since neither Freud’s original term, *unheimlich*, nor its English translation to “uncanny” have an obvious parallel in French, Lacan created the neologism *extimité* to emphasise its significance as a clash in the dichotomy between interior and exterior (Dolar 1991, 6).
- 2 The uncanny is not exactly Lacan’s *tuché* or Barthes’s closely related term, *punctum* (Krauss 2009, 187–88; Elkins 2011, 116). While the *tuché* is the touch of the radical lack of the real, the uncanny is the formal function circumscribing this lack as it emerges in the familiar, including in the project of modernity itself (Dolar 1991, 20).



1999, 290). The search for the uncanny in photography highlights the failures of modernism to fulfil its wish for wholeness.

Although José Forjaz argues that Branquinho has the “eye of a reporter” (Forjaz 2015, 59), the photographer’s work is not strictly documentary: his images do not attempt to objectively capture a space so much as to estrange it from the viewer. Most of the photographed spaces are immediately recognisable to residents of the area, and yet, Branquinho makes these locations unfamiliar by inviting them to be seen “through new angles” (Notícias 2015). Very little in *Aeroporto de Gurué* (2014), if anything, makes the space a recognisable airport, while *Casa Vermelha* (2014) presents a mysterious and cinematic landscape rather than a descriptive image of the area. Forjaz is on point when describing the colours in Branquinho’s work as “unreal”, pointing to the red bowl in *Historical Archive* (2011) as an example of the photographer’s focus on the strangeness of Mozambique’s historical spaces (Forjaz 2015, 61). At the same time, viewers unfamiliar with these sites may find something recognisable in the images of institutions such as the library, the cinema, or the archive. This complication of established delineations punctures much of his images. It is between the familiar and the strange, the local and the international, the empty and the full, the nostalgic and the disturbing past, that the uncanny emerges. The clash of temporalities – modern and contemporary, colonial and aftermath – speaks to the postcolonial dimension of this encounter with the uncanny. The guards of *Intervalo* must make their way around an empty swimming pool flooded with an unsettled colonial past. Without having to add any fictional element to his images, Branquinho explores modernity’s failure to make everything familiar.

Nothing is done to fill in the cracks of modernity: the strength of Branquinho’s work is to show these gaps as spaces lacking any repair, witnessing the crumbling of past ideologies that made their mark in Mozambique. Avoiding an attempt to fill this void, his work shows that any project aimed towards totality is a dead-end. Thus, the photographer does not seek to re-inscribe the uncanny into legibility, leaving his images at the edge of interpretation. Branquinho shows a contemporary Gurué that turns the failure to create a total discourse into a daily reminder, unearthing modernity’s skeletons and displaying them for all to see.

I.

In *Showtime* (2012-2013), Branquinho goes back to the birth of modernism by focusing on one of its most provocative symbols. The photographer follows the history of how the image of the prostitute came to express much of the anxiety towards modernisation. T. J. Clark situates Manet’s *Olympia* as “the founding moment of modern art,” pointing to the painting’s prostitute as the defining sign of its modern sensibility (Clark 1984, 79). Breaking boundaries between private and public, she reflects the commoditisation of all aspects of society, including one’s body, that can

be made available for a price (Clark 1984, 102).<sup>3</sup> The dialectic tension between a progressive continuity and the rupture of a new, revolutionary, or decadent mode of being, is central to the temporality of modernity that the sex worker came to embody. In another continent and over a century after *Olympia*, Branquinho picks up the image of the sex worker as an enduring embodiment of modernity with unique reverberations in twentieth century Mozambique.

The series presents semi-nude sex workers posing in hotel rooms located on Bagamoyo street, Maputo's famous red-light district. Often smiling and seemingly comfortable with the photographic gaze, the women are juxtaposed with detailed shots of hotels, known for rooms charged by the hour and locally referred by the English word "showtime." The women on and by the rooms' beds bring attention to the space surrounding them, enriching the dialogue with the architectural images displayed next to their portraits. The juxtaposition of these two types of photographs points to the liminal space between public and private: curtains, hallway stairs, reception, and public restrooms, making the separation of these two spheres increasingly blurred the more one looks at the images. Branquinho emphasises the *mise-en-scène* of the brothel, combining spatial elements that create the atmosphere of the sex market: dim hallway lights, old wooden stairs, or a beaten leather couch join the women's bodies in disrupting established social and spatial boundaries. This blurring evokes the fear that leads to the marginalisation of paid sex. Like the guards in *Intervalo*, the prostitutes are not given psychological depth, which highlights their social function. As all subjects in Branquinho's photographs, these women are shown as effects of historical discourses.

The sex worker had been located at the centre of much of Mozambique's intellectual energy since colonialism, which is why Branquinho looks at this figure to revisit visual and political narratives at the junction between local and international modernities. In Mozambique, the image of the prostitute received iconic status through Ricardo Rangel's series *Our Daily Bread*, compiled from the 1950s through the 1970s. Rangel, who Branquinho knew personally since childhood, was the first biracial person to break through professional photojournalism during colonialism and became one of the most influential photographers in the country.<sup>4</sup> His work in *Our Daily Bread* presents fashionably dressed women strolling through the streets and clubs of Lourenço Marques. To a naïve viewer unfamiliar with the context of the images, these women could appear simply as bohemians having a blast. But their position as sex workers in a sharply racial and gendered divide creates a clear visual expression of the pervasive violence and exploitation of the colonial regime (Hayes 2014, 74). The women in Rangel's images came to represent colonial excesses

3 Clark's articulation of gender and racial dynamics in *The Painting of Modern Life* has been put into question and persuasively revised (Pollock 1988; Murrell 2018).

4 Following independence, Rangel continued his politically engaged work, which included his editorship of the magazine *Tempo*, the newspaper *Notícias*, and his founding of the Centre for Photographic Training (Sopa 2002, 27–28).

indulged at Mozambique's expense. Their influence on Branquinho's work indicates his interest in the historical representation of women, particularly women of colour, as objects of Western conquest in a global South of sexual licentiousness (Said 1978, 187).<sup>5</sup> Long after the end of colonialism, the public discourse on prostitution continued to hold a central role in Mozambique's debates about boundaries and sociability. The socialist regime saw the profession as the ultimate expression of an urban decay symptomatic of bourgeois values, leading to continuous attempts to eradicate urban expressions of prostitution from the new Mozambique (Sheldon 2002, 155). This discourse peaked in 1983 with Operation Production, which sought to formalise the displacement of large numbers of people seen as deviant, including many female sex workers, to re-education camps in rural areas (Machava 2011, 607). The prostitute, historically associated in Mozambique with a dystopian development and urbanity, is a fitting starting point for articulating the void of modernity.

*Showtime* does not suggest an interest in perpetuating or rebuking the fantasies projected upon the sex worker; rather, it views them as modern signs circulating through a system of exploratory market expansion. The function of a woman as a sign of exchange is a well-known observation of Lévi-Strauss, who notes her as carrier of a fundamental value in a given patriarchal society, therefore, exchanged under the rules of exogamy (Lévi-Strauss 1969, 481). Elizabeth Cowie further elaborates on this point by arguing that, "the term 'woman' is part of a semiotic chain of communication with a sender and a receiver and an object of exchange – woman – which is the sign produced, signifying the 'social contract'" (Cowie 1978, 125). Like other signs whose signifiers hold an arbitrary relationship to the ideas they convey, the "woman" in patriarchal cultures does not carry any intrinsic attributes of what is communicated through her "exchange." Cowie's insight helps to explain the ways in which the images of women, and particularly of sex workers, have a long history of being at the centre of political battlegrounds. As a sign, the sex worker conveys the decay of traditional norms of exogamy in favour of the crude rules of exploitation by economic or political forces dictated by modernity. The sign of the prostitute can only express such a wide range of shifting ideologies of modernity, from colonial exploitation to bourgeois excess, because of the emptiness of its signifier. Branquinho's attempts to evoke these key discourses of modernity, both from Mozambique and beyond, only help underscore a void in any intrinsic meaning in the images of these women.

*Showtime* also addresses the role of the gaze in modernity, a theme preoccupying Branquinho's many images of cinemas, auditoriums, and performance spaces. Concerning his interest in photographing sex workers, Branquinho explains, "every customer has a fantasy and I, as a customer, paid for the rooms and the women to be there and my fantasy was to photograph them" (Branquinho 2013).

5 Branquinho's interest in representing women as signs of colonial exchange is already present in his first series of drawings, *Harem* (2007-2012).

Branquinho is keenly aware of the power positions at play. He does not avoid this delicate territory, but rather embraces the conflict that it expresses. As his statement reveals, his investment in these women is fully voyeuristic, speaking to modern dichotomies of object and subject, and sustaining a pleasure of containing women as objects of the gaze. This pleasure is analysed by Laura Mulvey, who explains that patriarchal culture imposes “the silent image of woman still tied to her place as bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning” (Mulvey 1999, 834). By demonstrating how this familiar visual objectification of women operates as a tool of modernist and Mozambican historical narratives, Branquinho distances the viewer from a purely pleasurable reception of such images. We see them as if walking through the corridors of an old museum, as objects of historical significance to be analysed with ceremonial detachment. This sense of distance within the familiar is strengthened by visual cues suggesting that established dichotomies are not as stable as they may appear: the otherwise inviting women challenge the viewer’s position as voyeur by confidently looking back. Seen as an empty signifier, the women’s look is a gaze from lack itself.<sup>4</sup>

## II.

*Ocupações* (2011-2014) continues to explore modern signs by shifting focus from the sex worker to the worker more broadly. Through this figure, the photographer extends his investigation to an important expression of the People during Mozambique’s first years of independence, when the country declared itself Marxist-Leninist. Embodying the promise to fulfil the social shortcomings of the time, the worker is a clear indication of Branquinho’s interest in exploring the void of modernity beyond colonialism. The series presents individuals posing in their workplaces, fulfilling the photographer’s interest in the spatial inscription of labour. With few exceptions, the workers always stand alone in the foreground and, as in *Intervalo*, little is learned about the individuals portrayed besides the trade that the title of each image specifies. Art historical references hold a strong presence, just as in other series; here, the work of one of the pioneers of modernist photography, August Sander, is alluded to. Writing of Sander’s famous photographs of social strata in Weimar Germany, Walter Benjamin argues in his essay *Little History of Photography* that, unlike many photographers’ of the time, Sander’s oeuvre is “a training manual” for comparing the various types of his time (Benjamin 1931, 520). Similarly, Branquinho’s photographs do not aim to capture the individual so much as the gap between the person and the discourses instrumentalising him or her. This photographic language, characterised as an “architectural approach” to images of people (Baker 1996, 82), strongly resonates with

Branquinho, who also places emphasis on the ways in which spaces shape subjects.<sup>6</sup>

While the German photographer became famous for capturing his own time – one of his books was even titled *Face of Our Time* – Branquinho’s images, despite their stark similarity with Sander’s, look for something across temporalities (Branquinho and Jürgens 2015, 48), registering more than the present, thus marking them as contemporary precisely for their anachronism.<sup>7</sup> The workers appear outdated despite having been recently photographed. The focus on the obsolete within our time further emphasises the condition of the series as contemporary which, according to Giorgio Agamben, is defined by making the present appear archaic (Agamben 2009, 50). Even the emphasis on a person’s connection to the workspace seems to date from a time in which work was not a “career.” Unlike Sander, whose approach aimed to capture various social types, the Mozambican photographer limits his purview to blue-collar occupations, ratifying his interest in revisiting his country’s Marxist rhetoric of the 1970s and 1980s. As sign, the worker was anonymous and useful only as a representative of the larger collective, personifying the People as a leading political force in the creation of a radically new society after the end of colonialism. By reflecting a vestige of a Mozambican modernity, Branquinho’s portraits only highlight the feeling of an era long gone, but unexpectedly returning to haunt the present.

The photographic series helps to identify important intersections between the regimes before and immediately after Mozambican independence, despite their otherwise fundamentally different contexts. Whether looking back at Mozambique’s colonial or socialist period, Branquinho captures signs of political ideologies predicated on an idealised future.<sup>8</sup> Yet, the viewer looks at these images from the future, a vantage point that can only emphasise the deadness of the ideologies evoked. We are confronted by the shortcomings of a utopia envisioned by the past, a failure that is substantiated by our own misrecognition between ourselves and the projections looming from these historical references. Roland Barthes famously describes his experience of looking at a photograph of a young man who was to be executed soon after the picture was taken: “I observe with horror an anterior future

6 Branquinho’s attentive eye for the social dimensions of space dates to his training in architecture at Maputo’s Eduardo Mondlane University and the Londrina State University, in Brazil. It was during his studies in this field that Branquinho began experimenting with the visual arts.

7 For Giorgio Agamben, “contemporariness is, then, a singular relationship with one’s own time, which adheres to it and, at the same time, keeps a distance from it. More precisely, it is *that relationship with time that adheres to it through a disjunction and an anachronism*” (Agamben’s emphasis; Agamben 2009, 41).

8 As explained by Matei Calinescu: “Indeed the rage for utopia – either directly and positively or by way of reaction and polemicism – pervades the whole intellectual spectrum of modernity from political philosophy to poetry and the arts. [...] Utopian imagination as it has developed since the eighteenth century is one more proof of the modern devaluation of the past and the growing importance of the future” (Calinescu 1987, 63).

of which death is the stake. By giving me an obsolete past of the pose (aorist), the photograph tells me death in the future” (Barthes 1981, 96). Barthes’s description of the photograph as an impending catastrophe resonates with *Ocupações*, in which deadness is not solely in the viewer’s past. The subjects in the images are dead as workers and alive as contemporary subjects, suggesting that our own experiences will soon be outmoded, if they are not already. We are faced by an experience of rupture from the past and the present. The worker’s ghost is alive through the image of flesh-and-blood people. Among many other abandoned utopias shaping the country’s past, the promise of an unalienated future of the People is in ruins, while also being unnervingly present.

### III.

Qualifying his intellectual project as archaeology, the early Michael Foucault meant to move away from the discipline of history, a concern that he explains as follows: “In relation to a history of ideas that attempts to melt contradictions in the semi-nocturnal unity of an overall figure, or which attempts to transmute them in a general, abstract, uniform principle of interpretation and explanation, archaeology describes the different *spaces of dissension*” (Foucault’s emphasis; Foucault 1969, 170). Archaeology does not attempt to erase the unknown or contradictory, but to accept it as an essential part of its analysis, making room for a confrontation with the uncanny. The discipline witnesses the emergence of contradiction and puzzlement within space. Branquinho’s *Interior Landscapes* (2011-2015) gives visual form to the role of space in the tension between archaeology and a history of ideas. The series presents a study of selected spaces from the Historical National Archives, Radio Mozambique, the Museum of Natural History, cinemas such as Cine Africa and Cine Scala, and other institutions in Maputo. The focus on such historic buildings shows Branquinho’s concern with the institutionalisation and transmission of knowledge.<sup>9</sup> Yet, there is a stark contrast between these institutions’ role as spaces where knowledge is produced, classified, and diffused, and their presentation through the eyes of the photographer. The images highlight the effects of time on these institutions, where technical equipment is so outdated that even when not already broken it becomes effectively unusable. Given that the institutions were all conceived during colonialism and intended for the diffusion of knowledge, the absence of the human figure in all the series’ images further underscores their sense of futility. If modernity moves towards progressive and expansive development, its spaces are shown as depleted. As in all the photographer’s images, the ambitions of

<sup>9</sup> I use Foucault’s conception of knowledge here, which he defines as follows: “This group of elements, formed in a regular manner by a discursive practice; and which are indispensable to the constitution of a science, although they are not necessarily destined to give rise to one, can be called knowledge” (Foucault’s emphasis; Foucault 1969, 201).

modernity, inscribed by its buildings and intended purposes, are presented as dead.

The mounted animals shown in *Natural History Museum, Taxidermy* (2014) are no longer objects for the study of the Mozambican fauna or the bewilderment of children visiting the museum on a Sunday afternoon, but mere carcasses left to rot in storage. In Foucault's words, for natural history to emerge as a field of study "it was necessary ... for History to become Natural" (Foucault 1970, 128). Natural history and its museums express the modern attempt to produce and classify a total body of knowledge about the world, in which, as Foucault explains, history and nature converge. In this modern fantasy, history is no longer a social articulation of time, but a natural process occurring beyond the human, closing the gap between the social and natural. Yet, rather than expressing natural history as a celebration of modern ambitions of epistemic wholeness, the image emphasises absence by the juxtaposition between the animals and the two empty chairs. The animal heads are removed from their original function as objects of public display and rendered useless, much like the toilet placed under the taxidermist's desk. While these institutions express the ambitions of a past world, Branquinho's photographs show their now fragmented and disjointed nature before contemporary eyes. The irony is that the objects once meant to be displayed, are now part of a space that is presented for analysis and inspection of the viewer, but in a much-changed context. Rather than being taught about the life of owls or gazelles, we are provided with clues of how contemporary life adapts to the hostile conditions of the modern space. The image touches the uncanny for showing artefacts that have become useful precisely through their uselessness. Through the photograph, these objects have acquired the function of showing the viewer their irrelevance as taxidermy lacking display. If they are photographed because of their spatial and temporal seclusion, the image also brings them to life, making them strangely familiar: is the owl flying over the desk mimicking Goya's *The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters* (1797-1799)? Nothing would be more fitting.

The cinema is the space that best resonates with Branquinho's vision. He documents several: one in *Gurué*, while *Interior Landscapes* presents three, as well many other auditoriums and performance spaces. Branquinho shows the grandeur of the cinemas' facades and beautiful views to the stage, but he is equally interested in their restrooms, console tables, or engine rooms. The cinemas are empty, with no screenings, many of the seats broken, revealing the marks of time. More than expressions of nostalgia, the images show that the photographer has an eye for deciphering key elements shaping the institutions he photographs. In *Africa Theatre, Engine Room* (2014), the broken blinds of the window provide only partial protection from the sun, a significant shortcoming for a room meant to project films. The wall in the background shows holes where engines might have been previously installed, underscoring the lack of any visible equipment in the cinema's engine room. There is no sign of a projector, the heart of a cinema. The machine's absence is circumscribed by a few cables left on the floor, sided by a fragment of the exhaust



system hanging from the ceiling and over several desks cluttered in the room's corner. Institutions that were once dedicated to the pleasures of the gaze are left to perish in front of our eyes.

The photographs showing cinema stages and movie screens, dialogue with the work of Hiroshi Sugimoto, who has been taking photographs of cinemas for the past forty years. But, ideologically, there are important differences between these two photographers. Joshua Petitto argues that Sugimoto's images are means to "counter the forces of modernity and restore a sense of the religious in the profane" (Petitto 2016, 107). Influenced by Shinto and Buddhism, the Japanese photographer attempts to create spaces that break the fast-paced linear and irreversible temporality of modernity. Branquinho's work looks at the spaces of a decaying modernity for analysis of their role in the contemporary. The spaces are presented as carcasses of this ideology, only emphasising the absence of the engines moving their former existence. Just as these cinemas were once cutting-edge institutions, images of the future, when looking at Branquinho's work our present may itself already appear outmoded. For Petitto, the nothingness that fills Sugimoto's oeuvre attempts to break free from modernity, whereas in Branquinho's images, nothingness appears as an investigation into the life and death of modern structures of meaning.<sup>10</sup> If society has been organised as spectacle in Guy Debord's world (Debord 1970), no audience is left to partake in Branquinho's images, which presents us with the void as the only spectacle remaining.

In searching for the nothingness, Branquinho brings the function of the uncanny to the foreground of his photographs, showing the limits of the epistemic project of modernity. If modernity, in all its expressions, sought to create a totalising discourse, Branquinho shows the gaps apparent in every modern sign captured by his images. His reflection on cultures of display and the medium of photography forces us to think of our own contingent position in face of nothingness. When faced with this void, we get a glimpse of our radical vulnerability as subjects embedded in ideologies that can never be whole. At their most immediate level, the images place us in the familiar position as viewers of both the cinema stage and the photographic image itself. But the void at the heart of these photographs challenges this perception and turns the images around: no longer viewers, we are the ones being viewed by the void of the photographs and their spectacle.

10 Beyond Petitto's interpretation of Sugimoto's work, there is much to be said about the dialogue between the Japanese and the Mozambican photographer. At times, Sugimoto speaks of his work in a way that strongly resonates with Branquinho's oeuvre: "I came to realize that photography is a process of making fossils out of the present" (Sugimoto 2005, 4).



# What Jorge Dias is interested in is the voices of the world that reach him in several languages and formats<sup>1</sup>

Alda Costa\*

Jorge Dias's work is not defined by a specific medium: the artist uses paintings, sculptures, objects from various origins, which he appropriates, associates and combines in several ways to installations and other expressive means. He reflects his time, tackles themes that define the current world, explores the relationship between the local and the global, contemplates the complexity of the society in which he lives, selects objects that represent the various cultures coexisting in Mozambique, experiments and deconstructs the traditional supports, re-invents the ways of presenting painting and sculpture, even if the painting, at times, gains a sculptural trait and the sculpture gains a pictorial one, while contributing to the continuous renewal of the concept of sculpture.

As Jorge Dias told the newspaper *Zambeze* on 24 November 2005, shortly after his return to Mozambique from Brazil:

I've embraced a new way of making art [...] I use languages that include techniques and procedures. They are three-dimensional works. What I do is take possession of objects, form and create new objects that make me reach out to new forms of interpretation, to new forms of being [...] since they grant the possibility of saying what a simple object can't say.

1 The title was inspired by Mia Couto's introductory text to the catalogue of the *Indefinição: Tempo e Espaço* exhibition, held at FFLC headquarters, Maputo, 2017.

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What he does is different; “weird, different” were some of the first comments received for the works he showcased in Maputo<sup>2</sup>, which are not always immediately understood by the people who have access to his creations. Contact with his work requires a keen vision and knowledge that allows one to form the connections. Jorge Dias “has the courage to announce that, in the end, his work will have very little in common with what some might expect. In other words, he assumes he does not go with the tide,” says Mia Couto. For António Cabrita<sup>3</sup>, Jorge Dias “explores the ‘destruction’ of art’s canonical language” and, “faced with the myths that haunt us, the ones that weave cultures and identities and paralyse critical thinking, [...] it brings us back to the “perspective of things”: he weaves them into non-places that spark the need for change.”

Since, in art, everything is complex, and because the relationship with his art demands an additional interest from us, maybe for that reason Jorge Dias’s work has not always been accessible in a country such as Mozambique, where access to art is still limited to a few, and as an artist, he hasn’t had a following. Still, it is necessary to note that his influence is felt as a professor, especially in the Visual Arts School<sup>4</sup>, which he even ran; as a founding member of the Mozambique Contemporary Art Movement (MUVART)<sup>5</sup>, which he enlivened for several years, with Gemuce and other artists, as a critic and an author, contemplating and writing about his own work, as well as the work of other artists. I’d also like to highlight the influence he had as a curator. Jorge Dias was enthusiastic in this role, which was new on the local scene, particularly so, since the first contemporary art exhibitions organised by MUVART were held in Maputo in 2004, with the *Expo Arte Contemporânea Moçambique*<sup>6</sup>. He continues to perform this role to this day. As I told the newspaper *Notícias* at the time, on 22 October 2005, the country needed “curators and commissioners that were interested in new productions, also due to the fact that there isn’t much interest in understanding the new artistic trends”, or rather, I would add, who are interested in understanding how the artists tackled the challenges of their time. After all these years, the art world became more complex; it expanded, and the institutions among us became more fragile. Innovative initiatives arose, as well as alternative spaces incentivised by artists, programmers, and cultural managers. But locally, there is still

2 See *Expo Arte Contemporânea Moçambique* exhibition catalogue – 2004, p.2. The exhibition took place in Maputo’s National Art Museum.

3 Text included in the catalogue of the *Plano das Coisas* exhibition, which took place in the Camões Institute – Portuguese Cultural Centre in Maputo and in Beira, 2017.

4 The Visual Arts School began operations in 1983, in Maputo. In the ex-Cultural Studies Centre, created by the then-Minister for Education and Culture of Mozambique, there was a Visual Education course before the creation of the school.

5 The Mozambique Contemporary Art Movement (MUVART) was created in 2003, in Maputo.

6 The MUVART embraced a strategy which aimed to widen the existing realm of creation possibilities. That strategy included the organisation of several actions, including exhibitions. The first edition was the *Expo Arte Contemporânea Moçambique* – 2004. For more information, check out its catalogue, p.9.

a need for art historians, curators, and critical reflections that encourage innovation, showcasing contemporary creations while disseminating them among a wider audience, locally and internationally.

### From Mozambique to the world, with a stopover in Brazil

Born in 1972, just before the independence of Mozambique, Jorge Dias started his schooling (1987-92) in the Visual Arts School, in Maputo, where he had teachers from several countries. Ulisses Oviedo awoke his interest in History of Art; Adriana Hernandez and Dias Machete for ceramics, which he chose as a speciality, and for sculpture.

The then-dominant cultural policy, from which artistic creation derived, was inspired by ideas of the liberation movement and was built upon the idea of creating a national culture, a nation, and constructing a national identity. In his book *Questions of Cultural Identity*, Stuart Hall tackles the various and complex issues related to building a nation, including nations born from the disintegration of colonisation. In the case of Mozambique, the search for a national culture and for the identity of 'being Mozambican' pivoted between looking back in time, being modern, and building a future that did not depend on the past. Using the author's own words, "It was ambiguously located between the past and the future." (Hall 2011, 56) The eagerness of this ambiguous construction in which the differences of its members were forgotten, the search for identification, for cultural identity, for national unity or even the search for a cultural consistency became entangled and conflict arose. The artists demonstrated a diversity of attitudes in their quest for what Mozambican art would be: from works with an immediate political meaning to the search for other themes, to experimentation and to an individual search. Jorge Dias lived those days and it influenced him both in his training and in his early artistic activity. Painting (mural, oil), drawing, engraving and sculpture (especially wood) were the most common means used by the artists from other generations he joined. While some used exterior themes, languages and forms, echoes from other modernist ideas as a reference, others sought to recreate them with the specificity of the local history and culture. As he has said numerous times, Jorge Dias wanted to go beyond searching and deepening his roots, culture, identity. However, his individual identity processes, his African, Oriental and European roots have always been a presence in his work and a subject to be explored. At the time, perhaps they were but a part of his many questions. The larger group of artists with no formal training was being joined by the first graduates from an art school, as he was. A figurative art committed to the political and social ideas of the time – building a new country, free of colonialism – timidly coexisted with art of abstract languages. Like many other young people, Jorge Dias started as a painter but did not disregard the changes that were starting to happen in his artistic environment, brought about by local artists, mainly painters, among whom we can highlight Eugénio Lemos, Naguib and Fátima

Fernandes, or by young artists who, like him, had first studied in Mozambique and continued abroad. Gemuce and Bento Mukeswane are two examples. Some years after Independence (1975), there was room to present different proposals. Naguib (born 1956) displayed his urban origins. It was not the past he wanted to paint, but the world around him<sup>7</sup>; after almost two decades of absence, Eugénio Lemos (1930-1995) returned, faithful to his aesthetic options. As Mia Couto said, he used “his soul with truth, not caring about any disguise”.<sup>8</sup> For Fátima Fernandes (born 1955), who believed art should bring pleasure to the one who creates it and the one who takes it in, paints and brushes were not enough, and she used bags, newspaper clippings, paper, fibreglass, objects<sup>9</sup>. In the 1990s, with the country at peace and going through political changes in search of greater freedom and more democracy, the number of young people aspiring to be artists had risen and there were several opportunities for education, exchange, debate and exhibition. However, as he himself wrote, “The artists who sought new paths went unnoticed and unacknowledged by the existing artistic circle.”<sup>10</sup> And the opportunity to continue studying, discover more of the world and search for new paths in art came for Jorge Dias.

Going to Brazil in 1997, where the training experience and the exposure to a very different artistic context from the one he knew, became part of the work he carries out to this day. It was there he graduated in sculpture at the Fine Arts School of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), in 2002. In Brazil, he came in contact with what had been, in the past, the search for a new Brazil and a new visual representation, with movements that had abandoned the quest for a national spirit and sought to affirm and legitimise a new conception of art. He delved into the artistic movement which opened the most paths to him, different from the ones he had been following until then. He experienced an art which was entwined with social and political issues, political and educational activities, an art that invited more participation of the audience, to overcome the old definitions of art. He grew closer to an artistic process in search of a more direct relationship with reality, an art built on the object and experimentation as a means of redefinition and transformation. As before, he was inspired by teachers, artists, bold artistic proposals. He was enthused by the work of artists such as Hélio Oiticica and Lygia Pape, with their research, the new categories created, the use of exterior spaces, their positions and their freedom of thought.<sup>11</sup>

Jorge Dias started using multiple techniques and means, understood the subtle boundaries between them, how little relevance there is in framing what artists did in previously known categories, the possibility of using one or another means

7 *Notícias*, 22 May 1987.

8 Text included in the leaflet of the *Eugénio Lemos Pintura* exhibition, Photography Association of Mozambique, Maputo, 1990.

9 Magazine of the 3rd season of the Galeria do Horizonte Arte Difusão/HAD – Art season at the Beira City, 1989.

10 Introductory text of the Mozambican artist for the International Fair of Contemporary Art, ARCO 2006, Madrid.

11 Interview given by Jorge Dias to ARTECAPITAL.NET on 15.01.2009.

depending on the needs of each project he was involved in, the changes to what happened in terms of the creation processes. He embraced, as he puts it, a new way of making art. It is during his stay in Brazil that I can locate the central references of the artistic activity he does engages in: Questioning art and the work of art, the themes he explores, recognising the excessive force in things, using ephemeral materials, uncommon or everyday materials, plastics, clothing/fabrics, footwear, rope and strings, paper pulp, materials that refuse being displayed as aesthetic objects, the existence of objects in the real world, creating movable, malleable and suspended sculptures, the active involvement of the audience, being open to the public space, using animals such as insects and mice, cut outs, painted, made from plastic, paper pulp, wire or wood. It is difficult to follow what Jorge Dias does without calling to mind, among other works, the *Caixa de formigas* and the *Caixa de baratas* by Lígia Pape or some of the works of Nelson Leirner, such as *Terra à vista (A Primeira Missa)*.

Still in Brazil, in 2002, and about to return to Mozambique, Jorge Dias displays his final course work, *Sistemas e Conexões*. His sculptures, *Casulos*, *Sistemas e Conexões* and *Linha Contínua*, used plastic and fabric and were displayed in the exhibition space in the Main Hall of the Niterói Advanced Campus. Starting with his experience in Brazil, the world became the object of Jorge Dias's works.

### Mozambique and the world

Free of the national identity speech and assuming his multiple identities and unconcerned that it might look “too African or not African enough”,<sup>12</sup> he began to structure his thoughts about what he wanted to do as an artist. Therefore, he first met with Gemuce, followed by artists from Maputo who were in the recently-created Mozambique Contemporary Art Movement, which was intended to encourage the practice of contemporary art. These new acquaintances influenced his path after returning to the country. The time was perfect to question and discuss what was locally meant by art, artist, audience and artistic practices. There was room for this challenge (Costa 2004). Starting in 2002, with the action of this group comprised of artists from various backgrounds and paths, we saw the “(re)construction [...] of a field of artistic action, the acknowledgement of new ways of artistic expression, their induction and spread” (Teixeira 2006, 5).

Jorge Dias was an active participant in all the production that then took place. With him were his students, who saw and embraced a different way of working. The *Casulos*, made from newspapers and ropes, started being displayed in Maputo, in the Fortaleza galleries, in the Franco-Mozambican Cultural Centre (CCFM), in the National Art Museum, suspended, adjusted to the nature of the spaces, causing

12 In the interview to ARTECAPITAL.NET, the artist refers to several comments about his work in Brazil and in Mozambique, regarding the idea of it being “too African or not being African enough”.

amazement and speaking differently to the audience, in constant change. The *Humano* exhibition, in 2005, held in conjunction with Gemuce, also kick-started his own path of approach to art by questioning the role of art and the artist in his time, and getting involved with daily life. Since then, and from what he calls “platforms” of spiritual, social and political scopes, Jorge Dias has been consistently deepening these dimensions in each project he undertakes, each project being developed from previous works tied to already initiated ideas and projects, with references to the past, connecting past and present, and rooted in the contexts he experiences and explores, creating and recreating, establishing bridges. The *Plataforma Espiritual* (Spiritual Platform) gained a life of its own and was showcased at the exhibition *Zoologia dos Trópicos* (2005) in Lagos/Portugal (together with Nelson Leirner) and at the exhibit *Zoologia dos Fluxos* (2007) in the CCFM, his first individual exhibit in Maputo. There, he displayed his paintings from his first artistic years in Mozambique, taken and re-utilised for the series *Trabalhos Antigos Novos Projectos* (1994-2004). Paintings from the 1990s on paper and cardboard were cut out, glued to different supports, and received the inclusion of additional elements such as wire insects. This led to new works, which is usual for the artist, in a constant shift and connection process. He also displayed *Habilitação ao Zero* (2004), *Casulos* (2004), *Coisas & Casulos* (2004), projects that translated new expression possibilities, a greater complexity and a strong symbolism. *Habilitação ao Zero*, a work here displayed incomplete, is a pair of eyes (sieves) watching and assessing reality, working exactly like a sieve itself. It is a critique of the separation, exclusion and limitation of freedoms. The artist takes hold of objects from the local material culture, in this case a household object – commonly used sieves and objects manufactured by craftsmen – coloured wire insects, which multiply in order to create a stronger visual impact. In *Transparência: Processos Criativos e Devaneios* (2010) the artist continues to deepen his creative processes by bringing other series of works and new compositions. Gemuce, an admirer of Jorge Dias’s work, called him a sort of “inventor of uncanniness”, a creator of unusual shapes, located in inappropriate places and with no apparent reason for being, but which is only a fleeting sensation. “Things [...] are crafted very consciously, with intelligence, wisdom, calculation and enthusiasm. Pieces of himself are also found in them, a kind of invitation to visit the spices of his cultural universe.”<sup>13</sup> The artist continues some of his previous projects, which he associates with a support for the *capulana*, the rectangular cloth that covers the body, a hybrid object that many insist on considering “typically African”. He uses printed images, motifs clipped from *capulanas*, laces, flowers, new objects associated with improbable compositions that will continue being transformed, given their brief nature. *DNA* is a work in which the artist expresses the cultural hybridity and reflects upon his search for identity references. The *capulana*, the lines, the

13 Text integrated in the catalogue of the exhibition *Transparência: Processos Criativos e Devaneios*, Camões Institute – Portuguese Cultural Centre, Maputo, 2010.

local objects, the fabric flowers, and the other objects used come together, “stitched through their difference”, with no order of importance, all having the same value. In *Lugares de Passagem* (2015), as Eden Martin says, the artist seeks to “construct a place where the many, the reproduced, the vulgar become unique.”<sup>14</sup> He builds places of passage and gives them a sense of direction, which are accessible through our interpretation. However, Jorge Dias hopes that those who see his work will join him in a more involving and interactive contact. For that, another choice has been an installation that has both interior (galleries and the like) and exterior spaces. In the installation *Praga* (2007) the enormous mice (made from paper pulp) that filled one of the CCFM exhibition rooms become relational objects and evoke several of the artist’s childhood memories in which they are present. Being in the middle of them warns us of the existence of non-places, or of places where insecurity and uncertainty reign. In *Transparência* (2010), while occupying the largest room in the IC-CCP, the artist creates a completely filled environment where he himself is involved. *Lugar e Leitura-uma abordagem silenciosa* (2016), created from architectural elements and the library concept-space, used the exterior space of the renewed and re-opened IC-CCP library and reflected on the exterior-interior relationship and the potential of books and reading. For the artist, the installation has no inside or outside, neither does it have front or back. It exists and it can be experienced from any point and location. *Origem e estrutura arquitectónica* (2018), displayed in the exhibition *Pancho: Outras Formas e Olhares*, with Sónia Sultuane,<sup>15</sup> is inspired by the composite personality of the architect Pancho Guedes, in his interest for all the arts and his architectural legacy resulting from multiple inspirations. The search for cultural sources unites both artists in different times. In *Coisas entre Linhas* (2019), the *Coisas* (things) talk to the exterior (and interior) space of the Fortress of Maputo, therefore augmenting the relationship between sculptures-objects created in 2004 and the different spaces. *Coisas* (things) from the past and the present, past and present narratives, a colonial fortification and a local contemporary work of art talk to each other, not without tensions or disputes, and open to new reassessments and reformulations in an endless process. To conquer the challenge of scale and the materials so that *Coisas* (things) could be displayed in this specific space was another challenge for the artist. The installations *Lugar e Leitura – uma abordagem silenciosa* and *Origem e estrutura arquitectónica* were already displayed in other places, the first on the main campus of the UEM, in Maputo, in the library and the student cafeteria, and the second in several spaces of the Island of Mozambique. There, the installations were readjusted to each new space, to the Chapel of the Palace of St. Paul, the gallery and room provided by the Bank (BCI). New installations were born out of these processes.

14 Introductory text for the catalogue of the exhibition *Lugares de Passagem*, Franco-Mozambican Cultural Centre, Maputo, 2015.

15 The vast and diverse work of architect Pancho Guedes (1925-2015) inspired these artists, and it resulted in the exhibition presented in Maputo, at the National Art Museum, at BCI headquarters building and, later, on the Island of Mozambique.

Jorge Dias, as I have tried to convey, uses his works to explore local and global themes. He captures, on his own terms, the moment he lives through in his complex daily routine, split between being an artist, curator and cultural programmer. One thing is certain: the artist remains focused on daily issues and everything that concerns us, interested in expressing his points of view in his artistic work. And, as Mia Couto said, the voices of the world keep reaching him, in various languages and formats.



# Imagining history anew: Ângela Ferreira and the Art of Decolonization

Drew Thompson\*

Ângela Ferreira's professional career spans 30 years across a range of geographic locations. She eschews labels traditionally used to categorise art and inhabits the seemingly oppositional roles of artist, architect and historian. Histories of colonial occupation, liberation, and the displacement associated with such phenomena, are sources of inspiration and conflict for the artist. Ferreira uses sketches, drawings and architectural plans to construct audio-visual structures, like radio towers, broadcasting screens and film projectors that nation-states, like Portugal and Mozambique and solidarity movements deployed in their respective quests for recognition and power. By giving form and, sometimes, voice to erased histories of protest, physical displacement and state formation, she illuminates the liminal and in-between spatial experience of decolonisation, the moments of transition that accompanied the end of colonial rule and the start of independence. Her practice is hard to write about. Through a performative engagement with space and an experimentation with scale, Ferreira interrogates the linguistic, the narrative, and the visual underpinnings of colonial and liberation histories, along with the politics behind their making and (re-)telling.

In Ferreira's words, her "life has followed revolutions."<sup>1</sup> Born in Mozambique, during Portuguese colonial rule, she lived between the capital city of Lourenço Marques and the countryside. She moved to Lisbon in 1973, a year before the military coup called the Carnation Revolution (*Revolução dos Cravos*, also referred

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1 Ângela Ferreira, Interview with author, Skype, October 2019.

to as the *25 de Abril*) toppled the authoritarian fascist regime and ignited the beginning of the end of Portuguese occupation in Africa. Ferreira's own political and artistic education entered a new phase when she moved to South Africa in 1976, a matter of months after the Soweto Uprising that entailed widespread and effective student protests in response to the apartheid government's oppressive language policy and use of force. As South Africa's military destabilised neighbouring nations, in a last-ditched attempt to defend white minority rule, she enrolled at the University of Cape Town's famed Michaelis School of Fine Art. Relocating over the course of her life from Mozambique to Portugal, to South Africa and back to Portugal, has presented Ferreira with questions about citizenship and belonging, and has highlighted the fluctuating identities and political exigencies imparted by such dislocations and relocations.<sup>2</sup>

Retracing her own connections to Mozambique, as the site of her birth and of Portuguese colonialism, is a mainstay of her artistic practice. To such an end, she models the architectural forms and ideas that not only bolstered colonial rule but determined people's vantage points on colonialism and independence in Africa. In 1975, Mozambique declared independence from Portugal after a 9-month transition period. Various circuits, networks and channels relayed news on Mozambique's independence, and served as the backdrop against which certain ideological divides surfaced over the end of colonial rule and the start of independence. For *Mozambique* (2008), one of Ferreira's more widely exhibited works, illustrates how Mozambique's independence from Portugal inhabited people's imaginations along with the racist and non-neutral impulses of cinema cameras as tools of representation and political protest. Modelled-off the drawings of the Latvian-Russian Communist photographer and propagandist Gustav Klutis, the wooden kiosk provides the scaffolding for the display of a screen and documents – in effect the aesthetic practices and philosophies – that characterised the first images of Mozambique's independence. The screen allows for the juxtaposition of Bob Dylan's performance of "Mozambique," a song that neglects to mention Portuguese colonialism and decades of anti-colonial struggle, with footage of a film produced under the direction of the French filmmaker Jean Rouch, using Super 8 film cameras. Ferreira first confronted the legacy of Rouch as an engineer and filmmaker, working in Niger on *Maison Tropicale*, her 2007 recreation of the modernist houses designed by French architect Jean Prouvé. Also, on display is an agreement between the Mozambican government and the French filmmaker Jean-Luc Goddard to complete a video project that would lay the foundation for experimental television, and provide footage for a film *Nord contre sud* (*North against south*) or *Naissance (de l'Image) d'une nation* (*Birth 'of an Image' of a Nation*), a counterpoint to D.W. Griffith's controversial 1915 film, *Birth of a Nation*. There is no visual evidence

2 Ferreira, interview with author, Skype, October 2019

that Jean-Luc Goddard's video project ever materialised.<sup>3</sup> Ferreira refuses to allow for the whitewashing and erasure of Goddard's and Rouch's time in Mozambique, which was not without controversy.<sup>4</sup> She provides a spatial context to visualise the images of independence that eluded international filmmakers and their Mozambican understudies. The artwork displays the disconnection between what a person aspired to picture in the euphoria of the moment and what a person could actually see, either through a camera or an image – an issue that has long fascinated the ruling party in Mozambique, *Frente da Libertação de Moçambique*. Ferreira's work, and the research that has since followed on her insight, highlights Goddard's and Rouch's conflicting visions for film in Mozambique, and how they resulted in the training of a new generation of Mozambican filmmakers and technicians who the state relied on to produce an image of itself long after Goddard and Rouch departed.<sup>5</sup>

As Mozambique's history took centre stage in her artistic practice, Ferreira introduced the history of Mozambique's coloniser, Portugal, into the same visual and spatial frame. For Ferreira, decolonisation and independence are not one and the same historical phenomena. While living in Portugal after departing Mozambique in the years before the Carnation Revolution, she vividly recalls “a very quick decolonisation process,” one where she lived and shared spaces with populations who had returned to Lisbon from Portugal's African colonies and who were not “progressive.”<sup>6</sup> Ferreira notes that in that moment “she first [was] becoming conscious of what democracy could be and what the logic of democracy could mean in Africa.”<sup>7</sup> At a time when the political elite of Angola, a former Portuguese colony, invested heavily in Portugal, and when many Portuguese sought work in Portugal's former African colonies due to high unemployment, Ferreira exhibited “Messy Colonialism, Wild Decolonization” (2015), an ode to the often-ignored history of the “retornados.” For this installation, she constructs a replica of the shipping containers that Portuguese populations living in places like Angola and Mozambique used to ship their belongings back to the metropole. The stacked and disorganised crates act as a screen for Ferreira to project footage of the boxes littering the streets of Belém

3 Daniel Fairfax, “Birth (of the Image) of a Nation: Jean-Luc Goddard in Mozambique,” *Acta Univ. Sapientiae, Film and Media Studies*, 3 (2010): 56.

4 Goddard would deny that he was ever in Mozambique. Also, while living in Mozambique, Goddard claimed that Kodak film products were racist because of how they portrayed black skin. Ferreira, Interview with author, Skype, October 2019; Pedro Pimenta, Interview with author, Maputo, Mozambique, December 2010.

5 See Ana Balona de Oliveira, “Revolution in Crisis: The Ruptures of Revolution and Ruptured Revolution through the Ruptures of Artistic Practice,” *Revista de História da Arte*, 12 (2015): 107-123; Ana Balona de Oliveira, “Ângela Ferreira Monuments in Reverse,” *Buala*, 7 January 2015, <https://www.buala.org/en/to-read/angela-ferreira-monuments-in-reverse> (accessed 18 June 2020); Ros Gray, *Cinemas of the Mozambican Revolution: Anti-Colonialism, Independence and Internationalism in Filmmaking, 1968-1991* (Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2020).

6 Ferreira, Interview with author, Skype, October 2019.

7 *Ibid.*

near the *Padrão dos Descobrimentos*, a monument to the nation's colonial ambitions and explorations. The wooden crates conceal their content, and through Ferreira's reconstruction, one gets the sense of the space they took up as well as the non-transferable nature of the spoils gathered in the colonies to the metropole – a direct reference to the social discord and economic hardship that greeted the “*retornados*.”

In *Tendency to Forget* (2015), Ferreira expands on the notion of decolonisation as defined by moments of loss and erasure introduced initially in “Messy Colonialism, Wild Decolonization”. The film consists of images that show people walking through the streets of the colonial capital, Lourenço Marques, and socialising on its sunny beaches. The only indication of colonial occupation comes through voiceovers, which do not comment directly on the images but, instead, consist of audio recordings gathered by anthropologists Jorge and Margot Dias. At one point, images of an unidentified rural setting appear as Margot Dias comments on her surprise to see black women turn their backs on her in order to avoid being photographed. Dias expresses disappointment upon learning that the women wanted money in exchange for having their picture taken. The exchange exposes the desensitising effects of still and moving images that characterised the colonial gaze along with the varying, distorted and often ill-informed views people had on Portuguese colonialism. The unsavoury and sinister relationships that Jorge and Margot Dias established with Portugal and its colonial projects in Africa, throw into sharp relief the fraught nature of decolonisation and the political stakes of looking at colonial history through the lens of decolonisation.

There is an interactive and performative aspect to Ferreira's body of work. She often rebuilds and reconstructs works for the specific spaces where she exhibits, and in so doing, illustrates the elusiveness of visions of independence and liberation, stories of participatory politics and the constructivity of a particular political position. Her own movements and experiences in a type of Diaspora (Mozambique – Portugal – South Africa – Portugal) provide the context for (re-)visiting and (re-)telling histories of colonisation and liberation, while casting new light on the largely-ignored historical phenomena of decolonisation. Her work ignites the more conceptual, design, video art and architectural elements that remain underdiscussed in the history of art in Mozambique. Through her expansive research – and labour – intensive practice, she offers new angles and models to question the role of the sensory in moments of colonisation and liberation, and the afterlives of these historical moments, whether experienced from former African colonies or European metropolises.

# Gemuce, the painter in the city

António Pinto Ribeiro\*

“Painter in the city” defines well artist Pompílio Hilário Gemuce and his work, which is contemporary and interventional. Regarding the painter in the city, we could succumb to the temptation of evoking the Baudelairean figure of the artist-*flâneur*. However, Gemuce is a long way from that figure, both temporally and as a citizen. Pompílio Gemuce is an attentive observer and an active participant in the life of the city, Maputo in particular. This translates in many ways, not only in his ability to use multiple media for the production of his works, but also in the wide range of visual arts that he experiments, depending on the purpose of each work, series or public intervention.

After finishing school in Kiev (1990), where he studied painting and showed particular interest in murals, Gemuce had his first solo exhibition *Muhipiti*, in 1994, in Maputo. His first works, with strong figurative character, are compositions organised in a rather classical way, rooted in a twofold heritage: the influence of modern European painters, like Salvador Dalí, Gustav Klimt, Marc Chagall, and the influence of his predecessors, i.e. Mozambican artists like Bertina Lopes, Malangatana, Victor Sousa, Naguib, Chichorro, Samate, Sitóe, Miro, Kheto. This influence of simultaneously European and African visual formulations, translates in a “hybridity” of artistic languages, recurring in artists who, like Gemuce, emerge in a postcolonial context and in countries that gained independence recently.

This hybridity<sup>1</sup> is a posteriori advantage. It is from this multiple assimilation that

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1 In this respect see the thesis Néstor García Canclini in *Culturas Híbridas: Estratégias para Entrar e Sair da Modernidade*, 1990.

the artist seeks new and varied experiments, creating compositions that are free from the weight of fulfilling an established canon. This would be Gemuce's path during several works and several exhibitions, working effectively the transition from two-dimensionality of painting to sculpture and installation.

But the city is the subject, the context and the setting for the many, more or less, figurative representations and compositions. The city represented by Gemuce is certainly African, but it does not have a fixed geography and identity. It is a city marked by exuberance, movement, social inequality and work.

The installation "Deixa andar" (2005) consisted of models of women wearing capulanas. At the same time a video was projected on corrugated zinc plates, commonly found in the constructions of the peripheral neighbourhoods of African cities. In a long sequence, the video showed the movement of people walking swiftly and the models were placed in a starting position; the hurried life and the world he observes every day are recurrent themes in Gemuce's work, which he records in his notebook: "On a Saturday in April 2005, in one of Catembe's neighbourhoods, in my subconscious I recorded women in movement. I noted rushing feet crossing other feet and moving in all directions, as if they were saying to each other "let me walk". I also noted walls made of different materials on the sides of the road and on one of the zinc plates, the inscription "deixa andar".

This everyday life narrative is not limited to installations; it is also present in the two-dimensional works. In a group exhibition – Maputo: a tale of one city (2009) at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Oslo, the curators Daniela van Dijk-Wennberg, Marianne Hultman and Bisi Silva drew attention to the fact that "in his series of swing paintings, Gemuce depicts ordinary citizens in the streets of Maputo: a police officer, a Muslim lady, the artist himself, children, all floating in the air (...)"<sup>2</sup>. And, in the curators' view, by depicting people on a swing, "the artist draws attention to the precarious living conditions, symbolising the pendulum that characterises urban life".<sup>3</sup>

However, I believe that in this series of paintings, the use of the swing, just like the use of the bicycle in other series, represent metaphors of a city life still marked by a transition from the rural ways of life, that the thousands of African people who migrated from the rural hinterland bring to the main cities, where movement is driven by instruments and routines from the countryside and basic urban technology is used.

This transition between lifestyles that oscillate between the city and rural life, provides this painter a paradoxical and unusual setting, which he captures in scenes like *A partida do cabrito* (2015), an image of a bicycle seen from behind, literally buried under a pile of volumes, bags and packages, strapped together.

In the middle of all these packages, one can see a young goat looking back, being the only eye contact with the viewer. Only the cyclist's feet on the pedals can

2 Daniela van Dijk-Wennberg, Marianne Hultman, Bisi Silva. *Maputo: a tale of one city*, in Maputo, (preface to the catalogue), Oslo Museum, (2009, p. 12).

3 Ibidem

be seen. The aesthetics is of enormous beauty and has a poetic touch conveyed by this volumetric painted assemblage, and the light colours of the painting. The picture also conveys a certain rural melancholy associated with experiences the artist had in the beginning of his activity, in northern Mozambique. It is as if the bicycle rider carried his rural life into the city inside the bags and packages; He takes the goat and the hoe.

I would also like to mention, within the most recent series of paintings, the transformation performed by the artist in the way he approaches speed. In these recent series, the painter discards the objects used in other works as a metaphor for speed, and paints the traces and effects of speed on his figures and context. I do not know if Gemuce knew Marc Chagall's paintwork (we know he studied modern European painters), but it is not far-fetched to consider that these new figures fly in the air and leave traces of their passage. These are characters suspended in a limbo, usually in blue, flying in the sky or moving in space; The painted traces of their passage are most evident.

The painter's attention to the changes taking place in societies of southern African cities guides him towards two types of intervention in his works: one, stemming from his careful study of mural painting, makes him produce mural works in the traditional sense of the term – bas-reliefs on large surfaces, – but also a skilful subversion of the concept of mural that translates into paintings in which murals and power struggle scenes, as in *Alinhamento de valores* (2014), where Muslim women make graffiti on a wall, or situations limiting individual freedom, are converted into murals within those same paintings.

The cross-disciplinary practice of Gemuce, mentioned before, arises from an extension of the two-dimensionality of painting to the three-dimensionality of objects and installations. This other intervention by the painter is closely linked to "fieldwork", sometimes in collaboration with anthropologists or other artists, which results in objects that can both claim heritage from Duchampian art or from Mozambican sculpture and handicraft. Examples of this are *corrida viciada* (2009) or *jogo democracia* (2014).

Gemuce is a painter in the city, painting an African city where Maputo is always present.

# Circulating *capulanas*, wedding gowns and black dresses: Race and gender across time and space in the work of Eurídice Kala aka Zaituna Kala

Ana Balona de Oliveira \*

Eurídice Kala aka Zaituna Kala (in homage to her grandmother Zaituna) has reflected on various movements across space and time. She has done so based on her own experiences of moving between Maputo and Johannesburg; on trans-generational, family memories, such as her grandfather's recollections of having built crates for the departing Portuguese in 1975; and on pre-, colonial and postcolonial Mozambican collective history, marked as it is by the circulation of people, commodities and ideas across the Indian and Atlantic oceans, between Africa, Asia, the Americas and Europe. Beyond the migration of the departing Portuguese settlers, fleeing with their possessions urgently packed in crates, she has examined wider human and material transits including the Indian and Chinese presence in southeast Africa; the Indian ocean as an oft-neglected chapter in the history of the transatlantic slave trade and ensuing black Atlantic cultures; the colonial penetration not only of Portuguese but also of British culture in Mozambique; anti-colonial, pan-African and anti-apartheid internationalism, notably through women's voices; and historical and contemporary practices of labour-based, material and cultural border crossings between Mozambique and South Africa. These circulations emerge in research-based

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installations, comprising photography, video, text, sound, sculpture and performance (by the character *That [BLCK] Dress*), where Kala's inhabitations of and dislocations between times and spaces become a poetic and political lens through which to examine collective histories and their contemporary legacies.

In the mixed-media installation *Will See You in December... Tomorrow (WSYDT)* (2015), Kala sculpturally renders wooden settler crates. She has explained that this work was prompted by a Sunday conversation with her grandfather, a carpenter all his life. He recounted his memories of the great decolonizing, nation-building years immediately following independence (before the beginning of the civil war in 1977), of Samora Machel's leadership,<sup>1</sup> of the Portuguese who stayed, forging new identities as Mozambicans; and of all those who left. He told her of the commissions he received to build the large crates where departing settlers packed not only their transportable property, but also ambivalent affections: past lives and something with which to begin again; objects, memories and desires, travelling back across the Indian and the Atlantic oceans, "sacked from Maputo to Portugal" "as violently as they arrived".<sup>2</sup>

Thinking of such colonial and postcolonial material and affective border crossings in turn prompted the artist to reflect on the past and present migratory routes at the very heart of one of the most potent material symbols of Mozambican cultural identity – the *capulana* fabric. Commonly worn by Mozambican women, the history of the *capulana* goes back to the precolonial commercial routes established in east and south-east Africa by Arabs, Indians and Chinese, among others. The *capulana* partakes of the rich migratory history of precolonial influences and colonial and postcolonial adaptations of south and south-east Asian fabrics and techniques.<sup>3</sup> Originating mostly from India and Indonesia, these cloths were later mass-produced in Britain and the Netherlands, and today are often made in China. The material and affective transits of the *capulana* as it travels to South Africa, notably in the hands and on the bodies of Mozambican women, are also part of Kala's examination, as she reflects on her own diasporic experience as a Mozambican young woman living in Johannesburg for several years, and on the wider context

- 1 See Machel 1985. Samora Machel was the leader of FRELIMO and the first president of independent Mozambique. FRELIMO is the acronym for *Frente de Libertação de Moçambique*, the liberation movement led by Eduardo Mondlane until his assassination on 3 February, 1969, and by Machel until his death on 19 October, 1986. The aeroplane in which Machel was travelling from Zambia to Mozambique crashed in a mountainous area in South Africa. There have been suspicions, never confirmed, that the South African government might have been involved in the accident. The Mozambican civil war (1977-1992) opposed FRELIMO to RENAMO, the *Resistência Nacional Moçambicana*. Rhodesia sponsored the founding of RENAMO in 1975 to fight against FRELIMO's support to Rhodesian liberation movements. Contrary to what happened in Angola, South Africa did not invade Mozambique but intervened in the war by supporting RENAMO against the FRELIMO government.
- 2 See work synopsis in document provided by the artist. See also <https://mub.me/WOs> (accessed 20 October 2019); <https://mub.me/rHLu> (accessed 20 October 2019).
- 3 See Machado et al. 2018.

of the past and present migratory routes of Mozambicans crossing the border to work in South Africa. “How much is lost or gained? Can she/it stand on [her/] its own? What does it carry forth? And [what] brings it back?”, Kala asks.<sup>4</sup>

Exhibited at MUSART (the National Art Museum) in Maputo and at the Ansteys Building in Johannesburg in 2015, the work involved conversations with the Mozambican photographer Mauro Pinto, and includes photographs taken by the Johannesburg-based Zimbabwean photographer Masimba Sasa on the trajectories of the *capulana* in the South African financial capital. Hung on walls and available for movement as take-away postcards, these images portray the lives of *capulana*-wearing Mozambican “informal” hairdressers in downtown Johannesburg. The wooden crates, with mirrored surfaces reflecting transportable plants, the other components of the installation on the walls, the exhibiting space and the viewer, are placed on wooden pallets or wheels and are covered with glass-protected layers of *capulana*, into which the artist “wove” layers of text.

These words were gathered by Kala in the performance *Come Iron Out History: What Do Mozambicans Do in Neighbouring South Africa?*, undertaken by her character *That [BLCK] Dress* in Maputo. At points of arrival and departure, such as the train and bus stations, she placed an ironing board with sheets of paper and an old iron, and talked to passers-by, commuters and travellers, collecting their views on Mozambicans who migrate to South Africa, first- and second-hand migration experiences and opinions on recent waves of xenophobic attacks against the Mozambican community in Durban and Johannesburg. Unlike during the colonial period, when migration to South Africa was mostly by men and for long periods of labour in the mines (often through forced recruitment),<sup>5</sup> movement across the same borders has become more diverse. It ranges from permanent or long-term work or study stays to short-term visits for buying goods – as the work’s title evinces – by both men and women. Such border-crossing experiences, recorded on paper and archived inside the open iron, became readable in translucent stickers on the *capulana* that covers the top surface of the sculptural crates. That is, they became yet another layer in the palimpsest made up of the *capulana* and the crate; yet other material and cultural signifiers of arrivals and departures. The work thus puts into relation various movements across time and space: pre-, colonial and postcolonial; apartheid and post-apartheid; forced and voluntary; violent, despaired and hopeful.

The installation comprised a second performative moment, during which Kala’s *That [BLCK] Dress* “ironed out” Mozambican and South African, colonial and apartheid collective histories of oppression by bringing into relation the Mueda massacre perpetrated by the Portuguese on June 16, 1960 and the Soweto Uprising on June 16, 1976. While Mueda marked a turning point in the history

4 See work synopsis.

5 See Harries 1994; O’Laughlin 2002.

of Mozambican resistance to Portuguese colonialism, having contributed to the beginning of the FRELIMO armed struggle in 1964,<sup>6</sup> the Soweto Uprising, similarly, became a decisive moment for the hardening of the anti-apartheid struggle. The performance involved ironing directly on a small wooden board, in front of a wall inscribed with those two dates and events, and leaving the hot iron (the same used in the first performance) on a small wooden board until it burnt, in front of a wall inscribed with those two dates and events, and then putting out the fire. Besides being a process tool (with which the artist imprinted Machel's currency portrait, a drawn crate and triangulation, and the anchor and boat of a capulana store's old logo on pieces of capulana hung on the adjacent walls),<sup>7</sup> the burning iron gained a metaphorical quality in this second performative instalment of WSYDT. It signalled the memory of both massacres, with the fire evoking their violence and trauma; and its subsequent extinction, the possibility of healing and closure. Finally, the installation also comprises a video component – Show Terrain – documenting a walk between Maputo and Johannesburg on a digital map.

As a whole, WSYDT connects multiple, adjoining spaces through which the viewer can meander to find other spaces, past and present, utopian and dystopian. Dream, desire and re-beginning are at work when hopeful boundaries are crossed, both spatial and temporal; as are the histories and visions of oppression and violence that many crossings have also entailed. The artist draws on Foucault's heterotopia – spaces enclosing and, at the same time, variously opening onto other spaces (such as mirrors, tombs and gardens, colonies and boats)<sup>8</sup> – and on ideas of an “other side”, of being diasporically “unhomed” and of a cosmopolitan “return to the source”.<sup>9</sup> They become visible as research material, punctuating the installation's walls and the mirrored surfaces of the crates, and include references to Foucault's *Of Other Spaces*

6 FRELIMO was founded in 1962 and began its armed struggle in 1964 in northern Mozambique, that is, in the area not only of the Mueda massacre, but also next to the border of Tanzania, Malawi and Zambia, territories that gained their independence from Britain between 1961 and 1964, and where FRELIMO found support. The war of liberation had begun in 1961 in Angola and in 1963 in Guinea-Bissau. On the Mueda massacre, see the film *Mueda, Memória e Massacre* (1979-1980) by Ruy Guerra.

7 The store is Casa Pandia, opened in Maputo in the 1970s by the Pandya, a Mozambican family of Indian origin.

8 Foucault wrote: “The mirror functions as a heterotopia in this respect: it makes this place that I occupy at the moment when I look at myself in the glass at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there (...) it is from the beginning of the nineteenth century that everyone has a right to her or his own little box for her or his own little personal decay (...) and all the vegetation of the garden was supposed to come together in this space, in this sort of microcosm (...) Heterotopias always presuppose a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable (...) This latter type would be the heterotopia, not of illusion, but of compensation, and I wonder if certain colonies have not functioned somewhat in this manner (...) The ship is the heterotopia par excellence” (1986, 24-27).

9 On unhomeliness, migration, diaspora and cosmopolitanism, see Bhabha 1994.

(1986), Rubén Martínez's *The Other Side: Notes from the New LA, Mexico City and Beyond* (1992), and Amílcar Cabral's anti-colonial writings in *Return to the Source* (1973).<sup>10</sup> A diverse archive of objects, images, words and gestures is drawn into a poetic confluence of personal and collective narratives on past and present migration and border crossing. The migratory quality of the work's processes and contents is in turn underscored by its own exhibition history: in transit not only between Maputo and Johannesburg, but also crossing the border between the outdoors, within the architectural space of MUSART, and indoors, at the Ansteys Building.

Kala also examined personal and collective histories and their enduring legacies in works such as *Entre-de-Lado* (2012-2017) which, created in several stages, culminated in the video *Measuring Blackness and a Guide to Many Other Industries* (2016) and the installation *Imagine if Truth was a Woman... And Why Not?* (2016), shown at the 12th Dakar Biennial in 2016.<sup>11</sup> Kala's practice, I shall argue, deconstructs the whitewashing of history – including the patriarchy at work in many anti-colonial narratives – and advances a politics aligned with intersectional feminism, in the sense that gender and sexuality are perceived as structurally intersected by, and inseparable from, race and class.<sup>12</sup> Besides drawing on public archives, and without being overly autobiographical, Kala's research often begins with the private archive that originates her own personal experience as a migrant black African and Mozambican woman, and in her family's experiences, as the analysis of *WSYDT* made evident.<sup>13</sup> The name with which she authors her work and pays homage to her grandmother signals this trans-generational feminist politics.

*Entre-de-Lado* began as a historical and critical reflection on the introduction of western wedding traditions and dresses into Mozambican cultural practices during the colonial era. Kala examines the psychological, social and political implications of this appropriation from the perspective of her own personal history – that is, based on her past lived experience as a bride and married woman – and from a broader perception of the problematic nature of processes of internalisation, naturalisation and social implantation of western cultural and religious practices, especially for women.<sup>14</sup> Undertaking archival research in Mozambique and Portugal, Kala investigated the impact of the material and visual culture focused on representations of the western wedding and wedding dress in disseminating white standards of beauty and feminine

10 The exhibition text also mentioned Delius et al. 2014.

11 See Njami 2016.

12 On intersectional, black and decolonial feminisms, see hooks 2015; Davis 1983; Hill Collins 2009; Crenshaw 1989; Vergès 2017 & 2019.

13 See Kala's views on "becoming the archive" in Kala & Cotter 2017. After her migratory experience in Johannesburg, Kala is currently living in Paris.

14 Such a perception does not mean that other forms of patriarchal oppression do not exist in Mozambique or, more generally, in Africa, be that in autochthonous traditional practices or those originating in Islam. Insofar as the artist's own experience is that of the westernized marriage of Christian origin, this is the cultural practice examined in this particular work.

respectability in non-western spaces since the nineteenth century.

In particular, she analysed the circulation of photographs of the famous wedding of Queen Victoria of England to Prince Albert on February 10, 1840. The ceremony was represented pictorially, and would have circulated as an engraving, but photographs of the event – dated 1854 and depicting, therefore, the wedding’s re-enactment – were distributed widely throughout Europe and the colonised territories, making the white wedding dress a popular trend. The reign of Queen Victoria (1837-1901) was a period of British imperial hegemony and, although under Portuguese colonial rule, Mozambique has always been susceptible to British cultural influence via neighbouring South Africa.<sup>15</sup> Her reign also coincided with the height of a British industrialism for which slavery had become economically dispensable (it was abolished in the British empire in 1833), whilst remaining structurally dependent on colonialism. Moreover, Queen Victoria became a model for, and symbol of, white female morality and sociability, mores which were exported through the assimilating forces of colonisation and of its supposed civilizing mission. In love with Albert, she remained in mourning from his death until her own, often wearing her wedding veil, with which it was her wish to be buried.

In fact, beyond the western female character of the bride dressed in white, Kala also looked at a related figure, a sort of “post” to the white bride: the old widow dressed in black. Besides the Western symbols of honoured white womanhood represented by the bride and the widow that Queen Victoria personally embodied and powerfully endorsed, Kala examined the mostly dispossessed Portuguese women left behind by the men who departed to the so-called discoveries and, later, to the colonial war (the wars of liberation in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau [1961-1974]).<sup>16</sup> The artist sees these elderly women, associated with oppressive stereotypes of female resignation and permanent mourning, as still prevalent in Portuguese society, notably the poor, rural and religious. Whether imperial or impoverished, powerful or poor, the figure of the widow was also propagated by the processes of colonisation. To this white and patriarchal female sartorial blackness, Kala counter-poses the figure of *That [BLCK] Dress*, the character that she performs and with which the black dress

15 Mozambique belongs not only to the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP), but also to the Commonwealth. Besides South Africa, the country shares borders with Swaziland, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi and Tanzania, which were also British colonies.

16 The widow dressed in black appeared in the Lisbon-based part of *Sea (E)scapes* (2015-2018). This work examined connections between Lisbon and the Portuguese coast, in Portugal, Maputo, Nampula and the Island of Mozambique, in Mozambique, the Cape of Good Hope, in South Africa, and São Luís do Maranhão, in north-eastern Brazil, based on the history of the *São José – Paquete de África*, a Portuguese slave ship travelling between Mozambique and Brazil when it wrecked off Cape Town in 1794 (Balona de Oliveira 2019a & 2020).

becomes a symbol of resistance to racist, patriarchal and capitalist whiteness.<sup>17</sup>

Western so-called ideals were disseminated through photography, as occurred with the images of Queen Victoria's wedding. The development and circulation of photography was significant in colonial contexts and, mostly by and for white subjects, helped implant western cultural practices and their associated moral and social values in the colonised territories. Photography was a powerful tool, among others, with which to serve the western desire to know in order to dominate.<sup>18</sup> Not incidentally, Prince Albert's passion for the (then) new medium of photography gave rise to a significant photographic collection and the founding of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London in 1852 (following the 1851 so-called Great Exposition), one of the most important museums in Britain and one of the largest in the world. The forming of ethnographic (and other) museums in Europe (and later in the United States), in close correlation with the colonial exhibitions, is inextricable from the colonial military campaigns and (pseudo-)scientific expeditions,<sup>19</sup> and would become decisive in the modernist developments of western art history.<sup>20</sup> Along with cinema and other media, photography served the coloniser's cultural, ideological and propagandist agenda of domination – and would come to play a defining role in the anti-colonial and anti-apartheid struggles.<sup>21</sup>

In *A Conversation I* (2013), one of several images made in Johannesburg for the series *Entre-de-Lado* (2012-2017), Kala reflects on these larger histories and their legacies from a personal perspective. We see the artist performing for the camera, wearing and interacting with her own white wedding dress in front of a white wall. Everything in this image appears significantly decentred, *de lado* (in Portuguese), to one side. The artist is sitting on a chair in the foreground, but not at the centre of the image. She appears on one side, issuing a possible invitation for another subject to enter from the side (*entre de lado*) – from the other side of the image – and join her conversation. The emptiness of the chair next to her also points towards her personal experience of ending her marriage, a gesture of putting herself in the foreground.

17 Besides *WSYDT* (2015) and *Measuring Blackness* (2016), *That [BLCK] Dress* also performed in works such as *Telling Time: From Compound to City* (2014), a performative and conversational piece (with video) that took place twice a day (4am and 1pm) at the Jeppe train station, in Johannesburg. Kala reflected on the apartheid and post-apartheid commuting of black labourers to the city centre. In the early morning, in the absence of any announcement at the station – an apartheid legacy –, she announced the train times. In the afternoon, following a strategy similar to the one she would later use in the Maputo-based performance of *WSYDT*, she offered tea to commuters in exchange for their stories and memories of Johannesburg, whereby they also told of time, past and present. A camera recorded and screened their entering and exiting the conversation.

18 See Pinney 2011; Lowndes Vicente 2014.

19 See Coombes 1994.

20 See Foster 1985; Clifford 1988.

21 See Enwezor 2001; Enwezor & Bester 2013.

Her conversation, therefore, is also with herself, with her personal history and with a political understanding of it, in the framework of those broader collective histories, whereby her solo conversation emerges as inescapably dialogic.

*Entre-de-Lado* was expanded thereafter to include other histories and materials in the black-and-white, silent and performative video *Measuring Blackness and a Guide to Many Other Industries* (2016).<sup>22</sup> The wedding dress re-emerges, but it is no longer on the body of the artist, who is now *That [BLCK] Dress*. Traditionally considered a symbol of white female purity, the white wedding dress becomes a kind of standard measurement based on which other white materials are weighed upon a set of scales. These are some of the materials associated with the history of the European colonial conquest in Africa (in particular, Mozambique), the trafficking of enslaved African people across the Indian and Atlantic oceans,<sup>23</sup> slavery and forced labour (which, in the Portuguese empire in Africa, including Mozambique, and despite changes in the law, lasted practically until independence in 1975).<sup>24</sup> This is why the work's title points towards an actual *measurement of blackness* by means of the weighing of white materials. This weighing also hints critically at the ways in which, from enslaving so-called Renaissance and Enlightenment, to colonial and capitalist industrialisation, to post- and neocolonial global capitalism, whiteness has become a widespread and deep-rooted trope, even as a colour, for what is generally deemed better, superior or more valuable. Hence, next to the wedding dress, and depending on its weight, the artist places on the scales some of the African (more specifically, Mozambican) raw materials commercialised by the Europeans (in

22 After the making of *Measuring Blackness*, Kala presented *Entre-de-Lado (As Queen Victoria)* (2017) in the collective exhibition *Being Her(e)* at the Galeria do Banco Económico, in Luanda, in 2017-2018. Here she expanded *Entre-de-Lado* with a mixed-media installation. The work's title makes explicit her previous research on Queen Victoria's wedding (Balona de Oliveira 2018 & 2019b).

23 This and other works by Kala – such as the above-mentioned *Sea (E)scapes* (2015-2018) – contribute to the opening up of theories on the Black Atlantic (Gilroy 1993 & 2010) and the Lusophone Black Atlantic (Naro et al. 2007; Vale de Almeida 2004), insofar as they explicitly include the Indian ocean in the history of the transatlantic slave trade and black Atlantic cultures, as well as calling attention to the trans-Indian slave trade (Harries 2016; Vergès 1999).

24 Mozambique's, Cape Verde's, São Tomé and Príncipe's and Angola's independence occurred in 1975, while Guinea-Bissau's was unilaterally declared by the PAIGC in 1973. On the continuities between slavery and forced labour in the Portuguese empire, see Bandeira Jerónimo & Monteiro 2019; Castro Henriques 2019. On forced labour in the Portuguese empire until 1962, see Monteiro 2018. On forced labour in Mozambique, see O'Laughlin 2002. In the video work *Not a Time for Labour* (2012), Kala analysed forced labour in Mozambique, predominantly female in the fields and male in the mines of neighbouring apartheid South Africa (labour was often forced even when contracted, as also happened to the Mozambicans who were recruited to the coffee and cocoa plantations of São Tomé and Príncipe); the manifold forms of resistance to it; the enormous socio-economic and psychic wounds it left behind; the ways in which Machel's socialist revolution promoted its conception of a "new man" (*homem novo*) around various forms of work that were considered necessary for the construction of the new nation; and the changes that took place in neo-liberal times.



particular, the Portuguese): ivory (which, “too scarce to be filmed”, the artist warns us in words written on a sheet of paper, stuck on the wall behind her, is substituted with paper), salt, bone (made from candle wax), coconut, cotton and (plaster) powder (used in construction).<sup>25</sup>

Through visual and material presentation and performance, Kala deconstructs the notion of the European civilizing mission.<sup>26</sup> She unveils the intimate relationship, made visually, materially and performatively explicit, between such purportedly benign civilizational ideals (notably female) and the violence of commodification (*measurement*) and genocide of black lives, and of the cultural epistemicide that accompanied them – a violence that, for black women living under slavery in plantation economies, acquired specific features, especially (although not exclusively) sexual ones, with enduring legacies.<sup>27</sup> The work’s title presents this genocidal *measuring* of *blackness* as *a guide to many other industries*, thereby underscoring the necropolitical racialization (with its particular forms of [un]gendering black women outside of respectable white womanhood) at work in the capitalist and colonial exploitation of black bodies and labour by European modernity and industrial revolution (both before and after the abolitions) – a racialization that, under neocolonial guises, continues to thrive in the present.<sup>28</sup>

Kala’s critical analysis of whiteness is intensified chromatically by the fact that the entire space in which the performance unfolds is painted white, including the wall on which a map and other visual and textual elements are stuck, the table, the scales on which the artist determines the quantity of the raw materials based on the weight of the wedding dress, and the gloves with which she handles them, as if she had decided not to touch them with her bare hands, protecting herself. She thus highlights the blackness of her own body and dress, whilst at the same time signalling, by means of this very emphasis on black as a colour, that race is not only a social construct, but also a powerful one, with very real consequences for racialized subjects, and that racialization occurs both along and beyond purely colourist lines. Indeed, colourism as a preference for lighter skin tones is yet another instance of *measuring blackness* against the so-called standard of a white backdrop.

In Kala’s deconstruction of whiteness, the black skin neither internalises, nor

25 When presented at the Dakar Biennial in 2016, the installation comprised text pieces with the written names of the six white materials. Kala worked purposefully with Mozambican materials: the salt and the wax came from Matola, near Maputo; the cotton, from Nampula, in northern Mozambique; the plaster powder, from a cement site near the Maputo airport.

26 On the Portuguese so-called civilizing mission between the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century, see Bandeira Jerónimo 2009.

27 See hooks 2015; Davis 1983.

28 See Mbembe 2003, 2001, 2013 & 2016; Ferguson 2006.



allows itself to be made invisible by the white masks, including female ones.<sup>29</sup> In line with intersectional feminism, she examines how white supremacy, white feminism and patriarchal anti-racism have denied the specificity of black women's experiences and the multiple forms of discrimination they face (for example, attempts to escape stereotypes of over-sexualisation have often culminated in conceptions of female respectability far stricter for black women).<sup>30</sup> In contrast to the whiteness of the wedding dress and the similarly alienating white blackness of the widow, while also differing from sartorial expectations of Africanness and African femininity associated with the use of the *capulana*, *That [BLCK] Dress* reasserts blackness as an embodied, historically conscious, non-normatively gendered and performative space of resistance to intersected racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia and capitalism.

Not surprisingly, then, Kala does not silence the patriarchy at work in the African liberation movements and post-independence governments. Despite the equalitarian rhetoric and the strong participation of women in all sorts of capacities, including military (alongside the undeniable exclusion from leadership and the attribution of caretaking roles in education and health), even the anti-colonial and revolutionary history of building both the nation and the so-called "new man" has often been told, written, drawn, painted, woven, sculpted, performed, sung, photographed and filmed "in the masculine", which has helped canonise anti-colonial male leaders and overlook the role played by women (with very few exceptions, such as Josina Machel in Mozambique; Deolinda Rodrigues, Irene Cohen, Engrácia dos Santos, Teresa Afonso and Lucrécia Paim in Angola;<sup>31</sup> Titina Silá, Amélia Araújo and Lilica Boal in Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde; and Alda Espírito Santo in São Tomé and Príncipe).

Kala invites us to consider the diversity of subjects in the history of pan-African liberation struggles in yet another video component, which, together with *Entre-de-Lado (A Conversation I)* and *Measuring Blackness*, comprises the installation *Imagine if Truth was a Woman... And Why Not?* (2016). In the text-based and silent video diptych *Names and Other Names* (2016), she places a screen, on which a list with the names of the main leaders of the continent's anti-colonial and anti-apartheid movements and post-independence governments unfolds, *alongside (ao lado de)* another screen, where another series of names is made visible, but here with each name appearing at a time. These are the names of the women that were partners of those men, many of whom were involved in those struggles, such as Josina Machel, Janet Mondlane (a white North American), Winnie Mandela and Pauline Lumumba,

29 See Fanon 2008; Mama 1995. Whiteness and "white masks" have also taken the shape of black faces on white bodies. In the performative video *Unlike Other Santos* (2013), Kala critically subverted, by appropriation, the entrenched racism of the stereotypical representations of the black body in the Dutch blackface tradition of the *Zwarte Piet* (Black Pete). Displaced by a black female body – the artist's own –, the blackface was further disrupted by the cutting and shaving of the black hair and by a warrior-like face painting.

30 See hooks 2015; Davis 1983.

31 On the role of women in the liberation struggle and the civil war in Angola, see Paredes 2015.

among others. Through this exercise in memory and in opening up the anti-colonial, anti-apartheid and pan-African archive (both Lusophone and beyond), these women are invited to *enter – de lado*, alongside, next to, on the same footing as the men – *the conversation*.

The notion of “truth” proposed in the title of Kala’s installation implies the decisive gesture of conferring visibility to real but forgotten subjects, who have been devalued in, and by, hegemonic narratives. The phrase *Imagine if Truth was a Woman... And Why Not?* is inspired by the opening of Friedrich Nietzsche’s *Beyond Good and Evil* (1998 [1886], 3). Here, the figure of the woman-truth allows Nietzsche to present to his male (and, presumably, cisgender and heterosexual) peers – philosophers as subjects searching for the truth as an object of epistemological apprehension or seizure – a non-moral and non-Platonic conception of truth, thereby making way for his perspectivism. In this configuration, woman as the truth to be seized by the philosophers, whom Nietzsche addresses, retains an objectified position, incapable of becoming the subject of philosophical knowledge. Nietzsche turns out, after all, to be quite indebted to Plato – to his misogyny (alongside that of many other philosophers).

Kala’s installation reveals, on the contrary, that historical truth is that which includes women – especially, black African women (either cis- or transgender) – as full subjects of emancipatory thought and action, both theoretical and practical, philosophical and political-military, among others. Inspired by the example of these anti-colonial women, while also aware that, in certain traditional African cultures, women have been the bearers of wisdom, Kala makes a decolonial feminist reading of the Nietzschean phrase, deconstructing it. What she retains from this phrase, beyond the suggestion of an extended notion of truth, is the conception of truth as an interpellation directed at the interlocutor of a conversation – a position that the artist attributes to the viewer – and which, to be fair, Nietzsche himself had already taken, whilst transforming, from Plato’s dialogic tradition and, above all, from Greek theatre (in particular, Dionysian tragedy).<sup>32</sup> The truth thus proposed by Kala becomes an invitation to retell and reimagine – openly and dialogically, individually and collectively – past, present and future histories that are more rigorous and just.

Kala raises these questions about the ethics and politics of history and memory, in order to think the present and the future, through artistic practice. This means that the counter-hegemonic narratives, to which she ascribes several kinds of visibility in her installation (photographic, videographic and performative), and which she condenses, not without irony, in the hypothetical inquiry of its title, are not exhausted in the search for conclusions, while, at the same time, not fully giving up on these. Indeed, her narratives inhabit the poetic and political terrain of the right questions to be asking.

32 See Nietzsche 1999.

# Gonçalo Mabunda: A farewell to arms

Afonso Dias Ramos\*

*You could see broken chairs everywhere, tables without feet,  
sofas without springs, bicycles without wheels, rocking chairs,  
destroyed cannons. A piano with broken keys stood out,  
crowning the strange objects scattered on the ground,  
awaiting a symphony that never came.*

Ungulani Ba Ka Khosa<sup>1</sup>

Gonçalo Mabunda's (b. 1976, Maputo) work consists in recycling deactivated firearms used in nearly three decades of armed conflict in Mozambique – the liberation struggle (1962-1974) and the civil war (1976-1992) – into formally inventive sculptural assemblages, welding the waste of industrialised warfare into human, mask, and throne-like shapes. With a modern world order, founded on militarism and enforced by an ever expanding global arms trade, guns have consistently exerted a morbid hold on contemporary culture and visual art.<sup>2</sup> Mabunda's practice belongs to a specific genre, however, a pacifist strand of arms-to-art projects that seeks to ascribe a second life to these material objects, thereby pushing the transformative powers of conflict and art into unfamiliar grounds. Such a process is, of course, redolent with symbolic implications – breathing new life into old tools of death, turning killing machines into playful inventions, rendering destruction into creation. But first and foremost, it is a socially engaged endeavour to curb gun violence and to promote – as community – peace based campaigns to take lethal weapons off the streets, public education initiatives around buyback, trade in, and handover programmes, activist opposition to the military-industrial complex and arms trade, and repurposing of ordnance in the aftermath of war to foster violence-prevention, peace-keeping and nation-building. The ethical motives behind the long-established movements to recycle decommissioned weapons are self-evident whether in Cambodia, Liberia or Mexico. But it was in Mozambique that

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1 Ungulani BaKaKhosa, *Os sobreviventes da noite* (Maputo: Texto Editores, 2008), 16.

2 See, for example, the 1997 exhibition "Bang! The Gun as Image" curated by George Blakely at the Museum of Fine Arts at Florida State.

they achieved unprecedented purchase and prominence. This is not surprising. As the only country with a rifle in its national flag, the hallmark of national liberation that has been the source of contestation for its overt militaristic message, is not only one of the parts of the world more intensively flooded with military equipment per capita – with an estimated number of firearms to match up the population of nearly sixteen million, and the scarcely believable reported influx of six million AK-47 assault rifles in the civil war<sup>3</sup> – but one that received them from the broadest reaches of the world – China, Eastern Europe, North Korea, Portugal, or Soviet Union. This traffic speaks to the proxy nature, destructive impact, and toxic afterlife of the protracted conflicts. It also stresses the urgency with which Mozambican artists twist and bend decommissioned arms into symbols of peace and healing, thereby refashioning the spent artillery and ammunition as symbols of resistance, markers of trauma, memory objects and, perhaps most importantly, as the harbingers of non-violence.

After the peace accords were signed in Rome in 1992, countless guns were buried and hidden across Mozambique in case they would be needed again, regarded as future assets for conflict or commerce. As the country reeled and rebounded from a state of war, the secret stockpiles, stashed caches, forest hideouts, and the surplus weapons became a nightmare for conflict resolution. Under a UN-overseen demobilisation, the government vowed to get rid of the leftover weaponry. However, by 1995, the poor performance of disarmament efforts led Bishop Dinis Sengulane of the Christian Council of Mozambique to launch, with the support of Christian Aid, the project *Transformar Armas em Enxadas* (TAE – Transforming Weapons into Ploughshares). The aim was to collect discarded firearms (nearly one million to date) from the local communities in exchange for bicycles, farming tools, and sewing machines.<sup>4</sup> As part of efforts to destroy, render unusable and recycle war material removed from circulation, in 1997, the council reached out to *Núcleo de Artistas* in Maputo, a longstanding exhibition space that showcases up-and-coming artists. They set up a workshop and invited a group of ten young artists to sculpt objects of peace out of the disused material – including Gonçalo Mabunda, Kester, or Hilário Nhatugueja.<sup>5</sup> They took apart the raw material made available to them and used the remains to make a range of eloquent objects assembled through labour-intensive processes. For most of them, turning military technology into an aesthetic experience

- 3 The quantity, ownership, location, misuse and traffic of firearms continues to be an enigma to this day.
- 4 There are important historical precedents for this. In Europe, after World War II, the military surplus was in some cases converted into agricultural machinery. In the 1970s, in the US, there was an anti-war tradition of adapting decommissioned rifles to guitars. In the 1980s, in Canada, the church-led “Plowshares” movement sought to damage and destroy modern weapons, in a pacifist statement.
- 5 See Sílvia Raposo, “As balas no dorso do crocodilo: escultura, memória e resistência em Moçambique”, *Fórum Sociológico*, 31 December 2017. Available at: <http://journals.openedition.org/sociologico> and also Amy Schwartzott, “Healing the Pain of War Through Art: Mozambique’s Grassroots Approach to Post-Conflict Resolution – Transformação de Armas em Enxadas”, *Mozambique on the Move* (Brill, 2018), 211-234.

and a socially transformative practice was not only an attempt for bridging polarising divides but also a highly personal experience, invested in ongoing efforts to cleanse the country of the weapons that litter the territory and remain a source of instability, often via the experience of relatives killed or forcibly recruited as child soldiers in the war, and in response to the spiralling mortal costs of gun-related crime.

“They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.” (Isaiah 2:4) This biblical passage adorned one famous 1950s Soviet-gifted sculpture inside the United Nations building in New York City, in front of which stands a gun welded as a symbol, one of thirty-one sculpted replicas around the world of a 45-calibre revolver, made by Carl Fredrik Reuterswärd, with a knotted barrel and a muzzle pointing upwards. But it was also the motto used for the arms-for-tools programme in Mozambique, under which the weapons previously used by combatants were not only voluntarily exchanged for agricultural, domestic and construction tools, but also, fundamentally, turned into art objects. Soldering mountains of discarded cartridges, shell casings, expended rockets, scrapped guns, or castoff equipment, every artist does something different out of each lock, stock, mounting and barrel, bringing together social experiences and aesthetic languages in the pursuit of new moral imaginations.

Among many artists working in the same vein, Gonçalo Mabunda has emerged as the most prominent practitioner. He started working with the Associação Núcleo de Arte in 1992, then a painter without formal education. In 1996, he took part in the *Ujamaa IV* workshop as an assistant to South African sculptor Andries Botha, who invited him to undertake metalwork training for some months at Technikon Natal (now the Durban University of Technology), in South Africa. After joining the first rank of artists invited to work the disused war material in 1997, Mabunda established himself as a full-time artist. The works produced in his studio in central Maputo, a scrapyard off Karl Marx Street, have travelled to and found home in five continents. They have been showcased in venues such as Institut Fondamental d’Afrique Noire (Dakar), Hayward Gallery (London), Johannesburg Art Gallery, MoMA (New York), and the Mori Art Museum (Tokyo), and biennials such as Gwangwon (2018), Ouagadougou (2018) and Venice (2015 and 2019). In addition to commissions by high-profile institutions, like the Vatican and the Bill Clinton Foundation, the work has been acquired by revered collections as the Centre Pompidou (Paris), the Brooklyn Museum, or the Tropenmuseum (Amsterdam). This notoriety has made him a household name in Mozambique, and one of the most profiled contemporary African artists in the global media – CNN (2012 and 2015),<sup>6</sup>

6 Tim Hume, “Artist creates objects of beauty from instruments of death”, CNN, 22 March 2012.

*Le Monde* (2015),<sup>7</sup> *The Guardian* (2014),<sup>8</sup> *The Washington Post* (2012),<sup>9</sup> *Financial Times* (2017),<sup>10</sup> and *Huffington Post* (2012).<sup>11</sup>

In what is more the telling of the current state of art criticism than of self-promotion, the otherwise unassuming Gonçalo Mabunda made a stellar ascent in the global art circuit. Yet, notwithstanding the heaps of texts written about him, there is remarkably little in-depth and serious critical engagement with his work beyond a circular repetition of well-trodden tropes. Among them, there are essentially two sets of responses. They either focus on the message or the medium, frequently in a mutually exclusive way. The critics who privilege the message tend to disengage with the works as material objects, in their right, taking them as mere random symbolic vessels to relay hope and optimism. The critics foregrounding the medium tend to insist on straightforward analogies with modernism, and specifically Cubism, invariably quoting Braque and Picasso. It is worth unpacking this duality of readings, which, either way, say little or close to nothing about what makes these works so relevant. In the first instance because the same message is after all shared by a vast range of artists, and hence, Mabunda's work ends up being pinned down to but a set of neo-modernist aesthetic criteria – its prolific outpouring, stylistic originality, versatile experimentalism, impeccable finish, and its gamut of neo-Cubist figurative strategies like fragmented bodily structures and disjointed surfaces. There is, indeed, much to be said about the unnerving visual appeal and technical virtuosity of the individual pieces. But if such readings rightly point out a formal throwback to early twentieth century practices, their obsession with authorial intentionality and formalist aesthetics undercuts, downplays, and even hijacks the illuminating complexities of the work.

If André Malraux once contended that the transformation of African masks into Cubist sculptures had been one of the most expressive metamorphoses of the time, one must then consider what it means to do this a century later, as an aesthetic, political and social practice. There is, doubtlessly, bitter irony at work here. Such masks have historically been some of the most massively expropriated objects from Africa and then served as props for the avant-garde in the global north. Yet here they are back in the guise of fully automated weapons that have been massively exported into the continent from all over the world. This is a telling reversal, in terms of remediation but also recirculation, as a hot commodity in the global art market.

7 Adrien Barbier, "Gonçalo Mabunda et la guerre civile mozambicaine recyclée", *Le Monde*, 18 June 2015.

8 Janise Elie, "Art of war: melding arms into weapons of mass attraction", *The Guardian*, 6 March 2014.

9 Sudarsan Raghavan, "In Mozambique, transforming guns into art", *Washington Post*, 8 November 2012.

10 Maya Jaggi, "The hero of a new generation", *Financial Times*, 24 June 2017.

11 Katherine Baldwin, "Turning Weapons of War into Works of Art", 17 February 2012. Available at: [www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/katherine-baldwin/goncalo-mabunda-mozambique-turning-weapons-of-war-in\\_b\\_1284882.html?guccounter=2](http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/katherine-baldwin/goncalo-mabunda-mozambique-turning-weapons-of-war-in_b_1284882.html?guccounter=2).

It is also worth recalling that when Picasso made the first public admission that his works had been shaped by African art, he specifically spoke of African masks as “weapons”.<sup>12</sup> Mabunda, however, turns the misreading on its head. Instead of tools of terror or tokens of the primitive, the weapons are turned into complex masks and not the other way around, countering the extreme depersonalisation (figurative and literal) of modern production practices and industrialised warfare with a symbolic re-personalisation at an individual level, the finely wrought act of artisanal handling as if in traditional handicraft. This cuts against the grain of a certain belligerent ethos of Euro-American modernist aesthetics undergirded by the cult of the machine – “I almost desire a monstrous war”, declared Paul Valéry in 1891, in a shared sentiment among some intellectuals, followed by Marinetti, for instance, whose founding manifesto of futurism stated in 1909, “We want to glorify war – the only cure for the world – militarism, patriotism, the destructive gesture of the anarchist, the beautiful ideas which kill, and contempt for women”.<sup>13</sup> Mabunda’s artworks, conversely, are driven by unmistakable anti-war politics. These imaginative conglomerations of shells, bullets, brass, aluminium and steel are nothing if not an attempt to turn weaponry into something disarming, actually and metaphorically. So, while it may retain formal referents and kindred figurative strategies, this work set out to shift the modernist relationship between violence, technology, and art. Its dextrous manipulations of conflict-related aspects are not some gimmicky aestheticism, but cut to the sensuous qualities of war objects and tap into their memory-evoking power. To make sense of this transfiguration, one might then read Mabunda’s work as being animated by specific meditations on the object – and indeed, the virtually endless array of artworks that have been made from the debris of industrialised war globally largely preceded the modernist obsession with found objects, engaging with the particularity of weapons as material culture, always semiotically unstable compacts of history, dense with symbology, and mapping onto larger scripts of identity, bias and nation.

The status and nature of the artistic object is one of the crucial questions at stake here. Indeed, in 2015, the US customs seized one of Gonçalo Mabunda’s arms chairs, imported by a Philadelphia art collector, and then threatened to destroy parts of the chair since it could be reconstituted as weaponry (rifle parts, hand grenade casings, mortar shells, bullets, barrels of large-calibre artillery). They required the collector to apply for a firearms import permit to get the work, eliciting a two-year legal battle to litigate the status of the arms chair as a cultural artefact and artistic object.<sup>14</sup>

12 Pablo Picasso, “Discovery of African Art, 1906-1907”, in Jack Flam, Carl Einstein and Miriam Deutch, eds., *Primitivism and Twentieth-Century Art: A Documentary History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 33-34.

13 Cited in Herschel B. Chipp, *Theories of Modern Art: A Source Book by Artists and Critics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 286.

14 Henri Neuendorf, “US Law Enforcement Wants to Destroy Artwork Made from Decommissioned Weapons”, *ArtNews*, 9 September 2015. Available at: <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/us-customs-seize-war-throne-sculpture-331123>.



Interestingly, this contested status brings out the contradiction inherent in the objects themselves, with their world-making and breaking potential. Partaking equally of death, memory, and art, Gonçalo Mabunda's assemblages encapsulate the paradox of war (that destroys and creates simultaneously), insisting upon the dual life of war objects, denotatively as actual tools with a solid and concrete mass that has drawn real blood, colliding with lives in often unpredictable yet in intensely personal ways, but also connotatively as ciphers for danger, identity, conflict, and division, taking on different trajectories and new meanings. This ambivalence, then, substantially alters something that was industrially produced with the intention to kill, whilst fleshing out, that it most probably bears within its material history, the lives that it has claimed and destroyed permanently. Mabunda is thus emphatic that these objects serve a utilitarian and mnemonic purpose at the same time and inextricably: "If we destroy the weapons, the same weapons are not going to kill anymore", adding that they "represent each [person] who died with this same material".<sup>15</sup> The imaginative ways in which Mabunda reroutes the original purpose of these objects, tapping into the sensual, emotional, psychological, practical and symbolic afterlives in a process which endlessly reconfigures, revalues and re-represents them via novel and previously unimaginable liaisons, also stems from a renewed approach to the nexus of subjects and objects – one that mirrors the fictional writing that emerged out of the conflict in Mozambique as, for instance, in Mia Couto's fiction, *The Sleepwalking Land*, where the prophet states loud and clear: "You have turned into beasts of the wild, without family, without a nation. [...] Now, weapons are your only soul. They have stolen so much from you that not even your dreams are your own, nothing of your land belongs to you, and even the sky and the seas will be the property of outsiders."<sup>16</sup> But it also calls up the emerging field of post-phenomenology in the philosophy of technology, which addresses the relationships users develop with the devices they use. This, of course, is not to over-intellectualise the issue – as Mabunda points out in relation to his work, "I did not know what I was doing, I had no idea what contemporary art was or anything else. I do what I feel and can see. If people like it, I'm very honoured."<sup>17</sup> Yet, these repurposed objects do occupy a dynamic interplay between animate and inanimate worlds, inviting us to consider the constantly re-negotiated meanings and relations between objects and people, linking the living and the dead in an ever-changing relationship between past and present. Such an artistic mediation – aligned with contemporary philosophy's revisionist reaction to Heidegger's influential theorisation that technology "enframes" human actions – abandons the subject-object dichotomy between things and people, highlighting things' tendencies toward subject-ness or object-ness. It refuses to cleave them apart and to place them into neat categories (often further blurred here

15 Hume, "Artist creates objects".

16 Mia Couto, *Sleepwalking Land* (London: Serpent's Tail, 2006 [1992]), 210.

17 Mafalda Anjos and Antónia Silva, "Gonçalo Mabunda: um artista cool", *Expresso*, 9 April 2013.



by a recurrence of anthromorphic shapes). The subject and the object are mutually constitutive – as Bruno Latour famously pointed out, the question of whether guns kill people or people kill people makes no sense, since there is a mediation between the human subject and object that previously did not exist, and which modifies both actants. There is a mutual transformation at the moment hand and gun come together: the pistol becomes a weapon, the person a murderer.<sup>18</sup> Muddying these borders constantly, Mabunda's assemblages remind us that people and things always undergo a mutual conversion, that neither is ever static or final, predetermined or complete. One of the most quoted lines in academia, today, is Fred Moten's declaration that "the history of blackness is testament to the fact that objects can and do resist".<sup>19</sup> Mabunda complicates this further, demonstrating that objects can and should transform the history we have inherited, as subjects and objects implicate each other as much as they invent one another. If war is the transformation of matter through the agency of destruction, then this is surely its antithesis.

18 Bruno Latour, *Pandora's Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

19 Fred Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 1.

# To change people's mind: The transformative lens in Mário Macilau's photography as social practice

Nomusa Makhubu\*

Transformation is elusive. In Mozambique, as in many other countries, political and socio-economic transformation is encumbered by exploitative, competitive and disruptive global capitalism. In this context of inequality, it is people's agency that creates humanising spaces – or as the Marxist geographer David Harvey (2000) terms it, spaces of hope. This is at the crux of the creative practice of the photographer, Mário Macilau. Based in Maputo, Mozambique, Macilau dedicates his work to documenting social conditions in urban, peri-urban and rural areas, focusing on portraits of people, as well as on the ways in which people relate to the history of colonialism and conflict entrenched in the landscape. His photographic work, he asserts, is “not just art” but is also “an element to change people's minds.”<sup>1</sup>

Macilau began his practice in 2003 and has documented people in their working and living conditions as well as landscapes or urban-scapes. His approach involves long-term research during which he takes time getting to know people, immersing himself in communities and to understand the spatial politics of labour. The photographs reflect a process-based, socially oriented practice through which he demonstrates the significance of images as a tool that can change social attitudes and mobilise popular agency. He reveals day-to-day interventions by the unemployed and working-class people, as they negotiate the effects of the Mozambican debt

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1 Mário Macilau, Interview and personal correspondence with author, 15 January 2020.

crisis. The current conditions, Macilau argues, are a product of history – a spectral presence of the past.<sup>2</sup>

This spectrality characterises his colour photographs, *Cycle of Memory* (2019), a set of works that has taken three years to complete. In one photograph, an image of reeds is superimposed over a portrait of a man whose facial contours seem to merge with the landscape. In another, there are women carrying children, but they are difficult to discern as they fade into landscapes of fallen trees, reeds and homes. There is also the photograph of a mother and two children where a young boy carries a baby on his back. They are there and not there at the same time. They are ghost-like, appearing as a fleeting memory. This presence-absence in Macilau's photographs is precisely what makes them powerful. It defines a transformative aesthetic in his work, one that casts light on the politics of visibility and invisibility among those who are marginalised. In some ways, these photographs evoke erasure or the displacement of people.

In an interview, Macilau states that the construction of space and time is important in his work.<sup>3</sup> He is curious about how urban and rural spaces are usurped, privatised and transformed into alienating spaces of incomplete or dilapidated buildings and bridges. More importantly, however, is how that process has not only displaced people but devastated the environment. Tackling spatial politics, Macilau, depicts spaces as though they were portraits, illustrating feelings, sensibility and loss. By doing this, he also alludes to a historical time-based trajectory of dispossession. Colonial buildings – a haunting reminder of Portuguese colonialism – are still present, reflecting obstinate social attitudes. It is as if the past persists as and in the present. Spatio-temporality, Macilau shows, is key in establishing the link between the social values and land, countering the apportioning of land as commodity.

Macilau's concerns about the politics of space and time in relation to labour and the environment influence his approach to portraiture which depicts contemporary struggles but, in their representation of abject labour, allude to images of slavery during Portuguese colonialism. Furthermore, the presence of that history is reflected in repressive infrastructure such as the buildings that were built for colonial administration, roads and railroads. What is striking about Macilau's work is the interplay between *permanence* (of buildings, land, etc.) and *transience* in the movement of people from place to place through time. For example, the migrant labour system established through Portuguese colonialism had implications for generational demise.

In the 1870s, Portugal “grant[ed] concessions to various capitalists in the hope that these concessions would attract development capital to the colony [Mozambique]” and established companies “with quasi-sovereign powers” (Vail 1976, 390-391). Companies such as Nyasa Consolidated Company, which received concessions in 1891, used labour as a source of income (Vail 1976). Given the

2 Macilau, Interview and personal correspondence with author, 15 January 2020.

3 Ibid.

extortionist hut taxes imposed on people, the recruitment of cheap labour from Mozambique to South African mines intensified. British-sponsored companies in Mozambique likewise supplied forced labour to neighbouring British colonies, such as South Africa in the early 1900s. Mining in South Africa flourished because of the cheap labour acquired from neighbouring southern African countries through the migrant labour system. According to Francis Wilson (1972, 128), during the early 1900s there were about “100 000 [men] recruited annually” in Mozambique through the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association (WNLA), a recruitment agency that was established by South African gold mining companies in Southern Africa (Mozambique, Angola, Zimbabwe, Swaziland, Botswana, Namibia, Malawi, and Lesotho). The internal Portuguese labour policies, which stipulated that “those who cannot find employment within the carefully regulated labour market of Mozambique cities, must face the alternative of emigrating to the mines or of being conscripted as *shibalos* [forced labour],” resulted in increased numbers of men leaving to work in the mines. In the 1990s, environmental conditions such as drought and cattle disease left many with no choice but to look for work in the mines (Smit 2001, 534). The migrant labour system created a very distinct urban – rural and racialised workforce. It also destroyed homes, divided families and radically changed the environment to which people relate (Smit 2001).

Macilau’s personal narrative is significant and locates him within this historical context. His father left Mozambique for South Africa in 1991 to look for work, leaving his family behind. As a result of his father’s absence, Macilau spent a lot of time at the market trying to make ends meet, sometimes sleeping on the streets of Maputo. Time and space are therefore central in how Macilau represents people for whom the meanings and value of their labour has been altered by the extractive colonial economy over many years and across generations.

That labour is also tied to the devastation of the environment. As Macilau points out, working class people would never “simply cut a tree” because their traditions shape the way they see their environment.<sup>4</sup> However, they could be forced by their circumstances to be part of the labour that is used by big companies to remove trees in order to construct industrial buildings and infrastructure for capitalist expansion. In an article by Neo Maditla (2018), Macilau makes this link explicit. He states:

I attempt to explore the way in which conditions of labour, cultural heritage and the environment alter over time. I have always concerned myself specifically with how these conditions are articulated through the environment in which people live, and the relationship that people have to that environment. How do humans sustain themselves and adapt to shifting environments, when their

4 Macilau, Interview and personal correspondence with author, 15 January 2020.

labour, their lives, and by extension, their relationships to one another are all affected by that environment.<sup>5</sup>

It is within this framework that Macilau's photographs can be defined as social practice art, a term that encompasses an array of process-based collaborative socially responsive, public, live, activist, participatory and dialogic art forms (see also Schruers and Olson 2020). The photographs unveil the polarisation of urban and rural spaces where urban spaces, although considered to represent "progress", "technology" and "prosperity", are dependent on the labour and resources of people from rural areas. More importantly, this photographic practice shows this polarisation as tragic: spaces where people become dehumanised and forgotten. Juxtaposing rural and urban spaces and focusing on portraits of people, his projects carve, even if momentarily, humanising spaces of hope within the photographic frame.

The jumble of urban buildings, some dilapidated and others incomplete, superimposed onto each other, allude to the scarring of the landscape as a mishmash of unhomely structures. The modularised buildings, in the photograph, appear to be on the brink of collapse – portrayed as rubble or the detritus of colonialism and neocolonialism. It evokes what Ann Laura Stoler (2013, 2) terms "imperial ruins," the debris where colonial infrastructures, traditions and social attitudes are "the 'rot' that 'remains'". She argues that ruins show the "ongoing nature of imperial process" which "joins psychological disablements to the imperial genealogies of dislocation and dispossession" (Stoler 2013, ix). Ruins, she suggests, affect the people living in them and "hold histories, [that] are the ground on which histories are contested and remade" (Stoler 2013, 14). In Macilau's photograph, the dilapidated buildings are like a rubbish heap of history. The cityscape – as a chaotic bricolage – is portrayed as a paradox, a space where life can be made, recycled or destroyed.

In the interview, Macilau laments the fact that these buildings serve as a negation of meaningful human interaction and an annihilation of environmental consciousness.<sup>6</sup> He asks what might have the landscape looked like when there were no roads, infrastructure and buildings, that were built as part of the colonial spectacle?<sup>7</sup> How might it have changed the environmental conditions? These photographs are symbolically linked to the project that Macilau undertook documenting people making a living by searching for recyclables in a badly managed dump site known as the Hulene dump.

If we consider the dump site as a space that mirrors the city, where people are displaced, then the "ruins" can be seen as dehumanising. Macilau's photography

5 Maditla, Neo. Mozambican Photographer Mário Macilau on Documenting the Lives of Society's Most Vulnerable, *Design Indaba*, 20 March 2018, <https://www.designindaba.com/articles/creative-work/mozambican-photographer-mario-macilau-documenting-lives-societys-most> (accessed 16 January 2020).

6 Macilau, Interview and personal correspondence with author, 15 January 2020.

7 Ibid.

reveals the association between the construction of urban buildings in Africa in the service of extractive industries and the transformation of people into exploitable labour and consequently as disposable surplus. In an interview with Jacki May (2018), Macilau points out that people often die while working in the dump:

There is no control so the victims cannot be identified after such accidents. I consider these people as normal workers who deserve normal labour protection according to labour law. What really surprises me is our ignorance. After the accident I saw so many posts on Facebook about the subject but, over the past ten years, since I've been working there, I have seen so many people disappearing and dying. The only difference now this time it is a huge number of victims.<sup>8</sup>

The fact that people wade in garbage to survive is troubling, but that people die, mostly unaccounted for, is profoundly unsettling. Macilau's photographs confront the viewer with images that can be seen as a call to action against the normalisation of death, against a biopolitical war waged against the marginalised, through the everyday processes of capitalist economy.

In his projects, Macilau has focused on women and children, whom society deems the most vulnerable. It is, in many cases, women who are left to fend for their children in the absence of the men. In the photographs, people seem to fade as the environment is eradicated. It is as if to say that the destruction of the natural environment is the destruction of people and of their livelihoods. In some ways, the superimposed images of locations allude also to the devastation of people's homes during natural disasters, such as cyclone Idai. The cyclone "destroyed more than \$773 million in buildings, infrastructure, and crops."<sup>9</sup> Activists and critics linked the cyclone to the dependency of global capitalist accumulation on natural resources. The repercussions of climate change, they argue, are felt most in poorer countries.<sup>10</sup> For example, an article in the *Climate and Capitalism* journal, published in March 2019, declares: "Environmental activists in southern Africa describe the destruction as another illustration of how climate change, caused by the rich, is having its worst effects in the world's poorest countries."<sup>11</sup> In crises, women and children often disproportionately bear the burden.

8 May, Jackie. 2018. Q&A: Photographer Mário Macilau on his Work and the Collapse of the Mozambican Trash Heap, Twyg. <https://twyg.co.za/qa-photographer-mario-macilau-on-his-work-and-the-collapse-of-the-mozambican-trash-heap/> (accessed 21 February 2020).

9 <https://www.worldvision.org/disaster-relief-news-stories/2019-cyclone-idai-facts> (accessed 17 January 2020).

10 See <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/05/mozambique-cyclone-idai-climate-change-hits-poorest/> (accessed 17 October 2020).

11 <https://climateandcapitalism.com/2019/03/19/rich-countries-must-pay-for-cyclone-devastation-in-southern-africa/> (accessed 17 January 2020).

Taken in a different place, including where the cyclone hit, are images of women and children in rural areas. Having travelled far from the city to create these works Macilau sought to document an environment that has been “untouched” by the industrialism of the city. In these areas, people live as subsistence farmers, without the trappings of modern infrastructure, sustaining untarnished landscapes. This is also an agricultural area where people plant banana trees to sustain themselves. However, the surplus of banana is sold to dealers who purchase it in bulk to sell in the city. In many ways, Macilau’s work demonstrates the vitality of place as well as the dependency of cities on the resources of “the rural,” such as produce and labour of people.

The notion of a pristine landscape, as an environmentalist ideal, is constantly threatened by the encroachments of the city in the urban areas. Macilau points out that people often have to abandon their houses if they get destroyed by severe weather conditions and move to places where they find the floor and build the walls. Other houses were built in the colonial era, but people have adapted to live in them. Landscapes are therefore marked by abandoned buildings or cement houses and constant construction. That is, the landscape represents both permanence and transience.

In one photograph from the *Cycle of Memory* series, a woman wearing a red kanga and holding her baby, is portrayed in a landscape of rubble, the debris of a house that has broken down. Another portrays a boy, and in the far distance, one can see the skeleton of a dilapidated house. Others depict women working or positioned within the buildings (near the staircases, for example) and where walls are covered with graffiti. In these overlaid images, space becomes a fecund historical narrative revealing the different forms of imperialist destruction.

The photograph in which the image of a shack is superimposed with that of a destroyed reed structure juxtaposes a home that is made of natural elements and one made of industrial metals – both unlike the urban buildings that seem to be collapsing over each other. As an unstable concept, the capitalist notion of private property and of “home” is part of the ecological crisis. Houses made of brick, houses made of corrugated iron and houses made of grass or mud determine the social class that one is part of and the extent of the devastation one is exposed to. Therefore, this overlay of two different types of building material is powerful. It destabilises the idea of home as permanent, and casts light on the ways in which the excesses of capital, where “leftover” industrial products become part of the materials with which homes are constructed, impel dislocation.

In Macilau’s photography one is not only looking at victims of disaster and global capitalism but at an empathetic portrait of people and their social experience. In some ways, this work humanises. What do we see when we look at the faces that fade into the natural surroundings? What do we see when we look at the photograph of a boy holding a gun and standing in front of a wall with the words “Fak you?” And what about those who seek spaces in dilapidated buildings, underneath bridges and pavements to sleep? Globally, the black subject, argues the political philosopher and

psychiatrist Frantz Fanon (2008, 2), “is the result of a series of aberrations of affect, he is rooted at the core of a universe from which he must be extricated.”

Although Fanon conceptualised this condition in relation to the black subject in the context of France and Algeria, his impactful work bears relevance for the black subject globally, and particularly the formerly colonised black subject. The images in Macilau’s oeuvre intimate a dialectic that Fanon (2008, 2) defines as the zone of non-being and the zone of being. The zone of non-being, he suggested, is a descent to hell, a condition in which the black person is objectified, pathologised and relegated to the zone of non-being. Ramon Grosfuguel (2016, 10) extends this Fanonian idea by not focusing on racism solely on the basis of skin colour or biological determinism. He discusses the positionality of inferiority (race, class, ethnicity, language, religion, etc.) defining racism as “a global hierarchy of superiority and inferiority along the line of the human that has been politically, culturally and economically produced and reproduced for centuries by the institutions of the ‘capitalist/patriarchal western-centric/Christian-centric modern/colonial world-system’” (Grosfuguel 2016, 10). He states that “the people classified above the line of the human are recognized socially in their humanity as human beings and, thus, enjoy access to rights (human rights, civil rights, women rights and/or labor rights), material resources, and social recognition of their subjectivities, identities, epistemologies and spiritualities” while “the people below the line of the human are considered subhuman or non-human; that is, their humanity is questioned and, as such, negated” (Grosfuguel 2016, 10). This, as Fanon (2008) suggests, is a reality to be transcended and transformed.

By layering intimate portraits of people over place, Macilau draws attention to social positionality. Suggested through his photographs is the sense that transcendence and transformation – as the creation of spaces of hope – requires a politics of care. In defining spaces of hope, David Harvey cites the Zapatistas:

The name ‘globalization’ signifies, they suggested, the ‘modern war’ of capital ‘which assassinates and forgets.’ Instead of humanity, this neoliberalism ‘offers us stock market value indexes, instead of dignity it offers us globalization of misery, instead of hope it offers us emptiness, instead of life it offers us the international of terror.’ Against this international of terror, they concluded, ‘we must raise the international of hope.’<sup>12</sup>

Addressing people globally, Macilau’s photographs can be seen as a call to action. Macilau is not an outsider looking in with a sympathetic gaze, he has had a shared experience with generations left to pick up the pieces from a destructive historical past. This is reminiscent of Jamaica Kincaid’s (1988) lament in *A Small Place* where she articulates the violence of colonial presence and that of the tourist against the native in Antigua. She states that instead of a glorious empire she sees “the millions



of people, of whom I am just one, made orphans: no motherland, no fatherland, no gods, no mounds of earth for holy ground, no excess of love which might lead to the things that excess of love sometimes brings" (Kincaid 1988, 31).

Macilau's portraiture is a result of the politics of care or, as he puts it, a way to "touch people's hearts."<sup>13</sup>

Transformation is slow. It requires time. And it requires spaces of deliberation. In the interview Macilau explains that it is as if nothing is shifting.<sup>14</sup> When the government builds a school, he argues they present this as a favour and not a mandate. In general, postcolonial governance rarely, if at all, practices care in relation to its citizens.

Merging portraiture and landscape, Macilau traces history as a continual process of rendering some things visible and others invisible, of creating the semblance of permanence where there is transience and vice versa. It is this elusiveness, present in his photographs, that characterises transformation in contexts where history seems to be repeating itself. Through the concept of a cycle of memory, Macilau points the importance of focusing on how the commodification and territorialisation of space and time can determine limitations to the sense of one's humanity and belonging. It is through this approach that his work is a form of social practice art. Photographs taken over a long period of time, requiring the immersion and full understanding of his subjects and communities in which people find themselves, uncloak the evils of inequality. Macilau's intention is more radical – it is about changing social and cultural attitudes to class difference; it is about changing people's minds.

12 Harvey 2000, 73.

13 Macilau, Interview and personal correspondence with author, 15 January 2020.

14 Ibid.

# *Visual aphorisms:* Drawings by Celestino Mudaulane

João Silvério\*

Celestino Mudaulane was born in Mozambique in 1972. He attended the National School of Visual Arts in Maputo in the 1990s, where he studied ceramics and later enrolled as a teacher of drawing and ceramics. He was one of the founding artists of the Contemporary Art Movement of Mozambique, MUVART, in 2002, a collective movement of Mozambican artists that promoted and encouraged new approaches to contemporary artistic production in Mozambique, gaining international impact and visibility.

In this context, between the traditional legacy and the renewal that experimenting with new approaches and new techniques brought to the artistic work of this new generation, Mudaulane forges a sculptural path using ceramics and other objects, sometimes of natural origin, worked proportionally in large-scale works that integrate drawing, mainly in ceramic objects. This creates descriptive representations associated with motifs and topics familiar to him, but subject to his own language that will mark and distinguish his work. Although Mudaulane's drawing method has that strong connection to his three-dimensional work, between his natural imagination and some traditional techniques, his artistic production is not tethered to this pre-existing aesthetic, and instead seeks other forms and solutions when being created. This can be seen in the themes and in the formal and pictorial configuration on paper, either in black and white drawings, or in drawings in which the colour displays a contained but intense palette.

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Concern for the social, and sometimes emotional, context of Mozambican society features heavily in the paper drawings from the PLMJ Foundation's collection. A state of mind that is essentially displayed through the titles of his works, for example: *The State of Mozambican Culture* (2010), *Our Education* (2010), *The Weight of Calamity* (2011) or even *Thorny Love* (2011) which is a particularly exemplary drawing in this context. In this piece, with a remarkable scope, we can see how the artist builds the composition, in this case in black and white, combining patterns and geometric elements from popular and urban roots with plant elements, as if the drawing was a sculpture. Sculpture is an artistic practice ingrained in his working process and it is present in the bi-dimensional compositions. However, these drawings are autonomous, built on a process in which the drawing manifests itself as a composition that continuously reorganises itself on the paper, as if it was a maze produced and replicated by the very act of drawing. The graphical elements, almost abstract, vary in size, providing very diverse rhythms which make us scour the image as if it was constantly moving. Returning to the importance of the word, evident in the title, we are faced with a universe of affections and emotions grounded in social tension and the memory of the war, reflected in the metaphor of the "angry brothers" of Mozambique, "as we can sense from the representation of an AKM machine gun".<sup>1</sup> In this respect, the various symbolic representations used by the artist are not found in the confines of everyday life, and are therefore non-descriptive, but reveal the symptoms of a changing society that only recently freed itself from a long and heavy colonial historical legacy transitioning into a war between the Mozambican brothers, these "angry brothers". As Alda Costa says about the social and artistic context: "This was a period of reflection and questioning for all of them, to question their role in the society that was being built. A new internal war deeply affected this young country and the work of its artists".<sup>2</sup> It is in this new array of possibilities that the artist arranges his visual vocabulary, built on his own iconography that expresses a unique language, as we can see in the work *Boleia VIP* (2011).

The composition takes up almost all the space in this drawing, also in black and white, and brings us closer to a cumulative process of signs and symbols, like a fish on top of the sheet as if supported by a hand rising between the crossing bodies, or the small flower pots at the bottom of the drawing, which remind us of daily life and the fervour of the city built inside this composition. Similarly, the patterns drawn evoke the fabrics of the local clothing used by women, the capulanas, which despite not being a cultural expression exclusive to this country, express a form of identity, among others, from the cultural multitude seen in the south of the African continent, as well as a historical relationship with other peoples in this area of the globe, incorporating an idea of diaspora, but mainly of diversity, and consequently of relationship with

1 Amado 2014, 104.

2 Costa 2012.

others. However, in this work *VIP Ride* there is a critical view of society, made clear by the ironic use of the adjective *VIP*, an appropriate stereotype of western jargon which refers to people of high social status and which lends this image a certain ambiguity in the direct relationship with the intense reality of the city where the artist lives and works. That city, just as so many others in the global universe, is marked by the accumulation of people and activities linked to their survival, and by the scarce, if not absent, comfort a more equal society could promote, and which Mudaulane represents as figures that merge within the drawing, like a maze of visual patterns that are the complete opposite of the supposed *VIP* distinction. This drawing is like a mobile container: notice the figure in the upper left corner, sitting in a position reminiscent of a driver; in this aspect, the word 'ride' evokes this representation of the local imaginary, which we identify as a means of transportation known as the 'chapas', common within the social dynamics of the city and used by the poorest classes.

Another aspect, no less important, is the way the works confront us with a poetic and metaphorical content that is transformed into micro-narratives that address the duality of individual and private condition, with the very present political context and thus the relationship with the public sphere, in a close connection between art and life. It is through this relationship, shifted from the individual to the universal in which the artist is not constrained to the local condition for each theme featured in the titles, that Mudaulane confronts questions of social inequality that are shared by contemporary societies. Take, for example, the works entitled *The Weight of Disaster* or *Our Education*, which directly refer to the real inequality that affects the *modus vivendis* of the Mozambican people, but occur within a globalised, yet fragile world, regardless of the geographical location, social integration systems and political regime.

In some of these drawings, we find these topics as micro-narratives, integrated in the composition as portraits of a wider story of which only a few fragments are tangible, leaving the viewer in an ocean of questions, as if the work stated an act of resistance. Mudaulane expresses an awareness of being African, in daily life situations in the communities, and of the correlations that cross the social context as if they were visual aphorisms, expressed through a visual language – a drawing with a simple construction, but featuring a strong and defined graphic line, is apparently identifiable with an aesthetics inspired by traditional practices, as mentioned by Isa Márcia Bandeira de Brito regarding the work of the artist: "Traditional aspects are part of the themes of this artist, since his formal and aesthetic language admit this"<sup>3</sup> as if, for example, they were executed from the engraving, or incision, in artefacts of wood or ceramics, or if they had a magical aura, symbolising the scarred body. But the composition is closer to an urban language, to a relationship between images as a large-scale gesture reassembled in micro-events, as fragmentary elements extracted from a continuous mural of drawings.

3 On this aspect of the artistic practice of Celestino Mudaulane, see the thesis by Isa Márcia Bandeira de Brito, 2012.

# Archipelagic painting

Maria do Mar Fazenda\*

*Out loud, to mark the diversion*  
Édouard Glissant

I met Eugénia Mussa (b. 1978, Maputo) in Lisbon, in 2005, through a common Cape Verdean friend. We were neighbours in São Bento at the time. I had recently returned home after living in London for a time (coincidentally, Eugenia lived there too) and was I returning to the house where I had lived since I was seven. From her bedroom window and (then) studio, Eugenia could see the rear of the building where I lived. Our houses were separated by a series of gardens, wastelands, abandoned spaces and, finally, bringing them together, the river. Even before I met her, one day our mutual friend passed on to me a record with songs compiled by Eugenia. Before I saw what she did, I heard what she listened to.<sup>1</sup> Maybe that is why I never separated music from her painting.

This personal snapshot serves to *mark the diversion* that I am going to make in this road-text<sup>2</sup> in which I use the *pensée archipélique* of Édouard Glissant to approach Eugénia Mussa's painting according to the route made by all the paintings that make up this publication.

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1 This mention of music and sonority refers, above all, to the memory of an emotional environment, of an age and an experience of Lisbon, which I link to the moment I met Eugenia. Deep down, it is also a personal retrospective gazing.

2 Expression taken from the text *Cada texto, um amigo* by Djaimilia Pereira de Almeida published in the book *Pintado com o pé* (Lisbon: Relógio D'Água, 2019), 19. I consider Djaimilia Pereira de Almeida's writing to be an intersection between various wanderings that gain political strength, for being a black female author inscribing that same path.

The thought of Édouard Glissant<sup>3</sup> remains very current, especially in the urgency of separating globalisation (a term he renamed *mondialité*) from the effect of cultural homogenisation. Glissant focuses on our ability to transform the result of moving ourselves in the world not by the elimination of differences, but rather by praising differences and the right to opacity. The geography and history of the Antilles inform his “archipelagic thinking”, in that it is based on the power that arises from the exchange and dialogue between multiple places, even though they remain as islands with a single outline and bathed by a sea that constantly renews that coastline. This field of possibilities in permanent reinvention, namely language (creolisation), has no place in a continent that is invariably Europe: colonialist, imperialist, totalitarian, that imposes its languages, ways of being, ways of looking, etc. Although the image of the archipelago vs. the continent is more productive than its discrimination, writes Glissant in *Le Discours antilloise*:

Continents reject mixtures whereas archipelagic [sic] thought makes it possible to say that neither each person’s identity, nor a collective identity, are fixed and established once and for all. I can change through exchange with the other without losing or deluding my sense of self.<sup>4</sup>

In that sense, I propose in this text that the artistic practice of Eugénia Mussa be described as *archipelagic painting*. In particular, by the absence of a fixed centre both in her visual work and in her life journey. (The use of the word *centre* here is intentional because neither the idea of *style* or *family*, nor the idea of *origin* or *homeland* apply in her painting). If the interrelationship between the two dimensions of life and work is unquestionable, as well as their eventual translation into the imagery of her painting, on the pretext of writing this text I took the opportunity to learn more about Eugénia’s itinerary and to search for traces of the images produced by her practice.

This selection of artistic practices was also made through the lens of the African diaspora, in this volume, in particular, of Mozambique. The word diaspora comes from the Greek word for dispersion, *διασπορά*. In its most archaic sense, this dispersion refers to the diaspora of the Jewish community throughout the world from times gone by. The reason for the dispersion is associated with religious or political persecutions. Finally, it broadly represents a departure from the respective homeland – in this sense, diaspora is synonymous with emigration.

The latter comes closest to the experience of Eugénia. The concept of *homeland* (or of *origin*, or the above-mentioned concept of *centre*), having as reference the

3 Édouard Glissant b. 1928, Martinique; d. 2011, Paris

4 Édouard Glissant, quoted in Hans-Ulrich Obrist’s essay “Mondialité” in *Ways of Curating* (London: Penguin Books, 2015), 15.

journey of her life (and of how this journey is translated into her work) seems to be unrelated to her. Perhaps in Eugénia's case the image of a dispersed identity is better applied rather than, for example, a "double identity" as Homi Bhabha defined the diasporic condition of belonging to two places.

It was in 2005 that I first invited Eugénia Mussa to participate in a group exhibition entitled *Vista Parcial*,<sup>5</sup> which I co-curated with Antonia Gaeta. The departing point for this show was precisely the framework of displacement from Africa to Portugal. Responding to the proposed, the participant artists aimed to represent artistic practices of a post-25 April generation – a premise that "left out" artists like Ângela Ferreira.<sup>6</sup> It is necessary to highlight that these fifteen years that have passed since then, were felt in different theoretical and practical forms in the representation of artistic and cultural practices in the Portuguese postcolonial context.<sup>7</sup> Thus started the late reconfiguration of the Portuguese society's identity, in the face of its colonial past, as did the late distribution of subjectivities and responsibilities in the political space within which we live.<sup>8</sup>

Despite the context of our first collaboration, I do not regard Eugénia as an artist of the diaspora. (Since then, other moments have followed to think and present her work from other perspectives and in different contexts).<sup>9</sup> Our generational and personal proximity may contribute to my perception. But what is more important is that her work is not restricted to this identity hue, nor it is its main emphasis. Naturally, this does not mean Eugénia erases part of that identity in her work, but rather

5 The exhibition *Vista Parcial* was conceived in response to a proposal by the then Councillor for Culture of Oeiras Municipal Council, Jorge Barreto Xavier, and presented at the Galeria Municipal Lagar do Azeite in Oeiras, in 2005. The following artists participated in the exhibition: Ana Silva, Eugénia Mussa, Francisco Vidal, Manuel dos Santos Maia, Sílvia Moreira, Teodolinda Varela, with the rapper Primeiro G partaking in the exhibition opening by a performance.

6 Nevertheless, Ângela Ferreira participated in a conversation, organised in the context of the exhibition, together with Roger Meintjes, José António Fernandes Dias, Jorge Barreto Xavier and the artists participating in the exhibition.

7 Examples of this theoretical and practical focus on postcolonial thinking, within this same chronological frame are: the two volumes organised by Manuela Ribeiro Sanches for Cotovia, *Deslocalizar a "Europa"*, *Antropologia, Arte, Literatura e História na Pós-Colonialidade* (2005) and *Portugal não é um país pequeno: contar o "império" na pós-colonialidade* (2006). The ArtAfrica Project started in 2001 and, in 2010, the Buala digital platform was created with a cross-disciplinary dimension on these themes. Also in 2005, the exhibition *Looking Both Ways. Art of the Contemporary African Diaspora* took place and was presented at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation with the subtitle *Das Esquinas do Olhar*.

8 The book by Grada Kilomba, *Memórias da Plantação. Episódios de Racismo Quotidiano* (Lisbon: Orfeu Negro, 2019), dissects in detail the delay of the Portuguese society in acknowledging its colonial past. This book is also a sign of this delay because it was written in English, in 2008, in the context of her doctorate in Berlin, but it was only translated and published in Portugal, in 2019.

9 Since 2005, I have been closely following Eugénia's artistic practice and, in addition to having written about her work on several occasions, been following the assembly of the exhibition *Expectations and Vocations* that Eugénia presented at a bankrupt store in the building where she lived in 2012; in 2013, I curated her solo exhibition *Retrospectiva*, included in the Espaço Arte Tranquilidade programme.

that she overlaps, crosses and goes through various experiential remnants of her life journey in her work.

In my opinion, this life path<sup>10</sup> is, by its wanders, characterised by more than a diasporic condition. An extended identity, without a fixed centre, although with constant returns and passings through its root, undergoing constant renewal in different places. In *Poética da Relação*, Glissant articulates the concept of wander and exile with the image of rhizome:

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari criticised notions of root and, perhaps, of rooting. The root is unique, it is a source taking all upon itself and killing all around it. They compare it to the rhizome, a differentiated, polymorphic root, a network that spreads either in the ground or in the air, with no predatory rootstock taking over permanently. The notion of rhizome maintains, therefore, the idea of rooting but challenges that of a totalitarian root. Rhizomatic thought is the principle behind what I call Poetics of Relation, according to which all identity is extended through a relationship with the Other.<sup>11</sup>

The elaboration of this text was a reason to explore this itinerary and gaze, as far as (im)possible, at what precedes the decision of the gesture, the choice of colour and the density of the design of a given figure, landscape or abstraction. I am sure I will always return to that gaze before her painting. Within that surrounding, I expect that a constellation of life is mapped, with which we relate and in which we prolong ourselves. I understand the work of Eugénia Mussa as a particular cultural and identity field and, in that sense, with the ability to show us a given historical moment and simultaneously *making history*.

To draw this timeline of her life, I made a double backward movement: a departure from what I know about the work of Eugénia Mussa (that gaze, the reverse

10 The multiplicity of places where Eugénia lived derives primarily from the impermanence between Mozambique and Portugal. She was born in Maputo Central Hospital, in 1978. When she was eight years old, she moved to Lisbon to live with her grandparents, returning to Mozambique during holidays. Eugénia lived in Mozambique under several periods: she finished high school in Maputo; in 2002, she lived in Pemba for one year; and in 2009, she lived in Tofinho (“where there was little electricity and, at night, I had only the moon reflected in the sea to guide me. I lost my fear of the dark for good”). In the 2000s she lived for a period in London. In 2006 she lived in Quito, Angola, and in 2016 she divided her time between Lisbon, Australia, Bali and Mozambique. Her artistic training at Ar.Co also sets out a winding path: in 2003, when she came back from London, she enrolled for the first time in Drawing, interrupting her attendance to live in Pemba, and in 2008 she enrolled again at Ar.Co, this time in Painting.

11 Édouard Glissant, *Poética da Relação*, transl. Manuela Mendonça and Manuela Ribeiro Sanches (Porto: Porto Editora, 2011), 21.



behind her painting) and a departure in time (knowing her past beside her date of birth). To do so, I followed a hesitant working method between two methodologies: interview and biography. I sent Eugénia a set of questions,<sup>12</sup> written in a gust, starting with her childhood<sup>13</sup> and following according to what I imagined was her path. I also sent her a chronology from her date of birth until now. For her part, Eugénia gave me back a zigzagging answer between the questions and the timeline of her life, letting her remembrance guide the type of memory (an environment, a journey, an emotion) and her relationship with time.

I propose a back and forth reading between her life journey and the itinerary composed by her paintings, that can be understood as dialectical images, in the sense given by Walter Benjamin. In *O que vemos, O que nos olha*, Georges Didi-Huberman takes up this Benjaminian notion, arguing that “there is no dialectical image without a critical analysis of memory, in the confrontation with everything that remains as indicator of all that has been lost”.<sup>14</sup> Opening the way to the thesis that, alongside this dialectic, lies a critical dimension, simultaneously of crisis and symptom: the critical image.

Let us return to the back and forth, and the connection between images (Eugénia’s paintings) and words (which inscribe her life) which is also necessarily “dialectic, ever restless, ever open, in short: without *solution*”.<sup>15</sup> This without *solution*” is key in Eugénia Mussa’s painting. Even with greater historical knowledge about those images, the relationship between what we see and what *looks back at us* is in constant change. As in Benjaminian dialectical images, in her paintings – *Skull*, 2013; *Ice cream girls*, 2014; *Boy outside*, 2019; *Soda girl*, 2019; *Swimmer*, 2020; *6. Trampolin*, 2020; *Girls Dancing*, 2020; *Man returning*, 2020; *Solo carrier*, 2019; *Anastomose*, 2019 – there is a structure to operate “but she does not create well formed, stable or regular forms: she creates forms in formation, undergoing changes; therefore, effects of perpetual *deformation*”.<sup>16</sup>

We are left to play around with images and words. For example, recurring memories (“I remember...”) of a feeling, a pretence, a joke, an adventure, a journey, a return, an abandonment, a love, a loss, a disease, a fear, etc. and convey these images back onto the paintings – knowing that we lose more than we gain by looking again.

12 The writing of this “biography” resulted from the exchange of emails this summer between me and Eugénia. We ended with a visit to her studio, where we looked at work done over a long period of time, showing the bends that her painting also does in time: in the recurrences of environments, in the resumption of landscapes, in painting over old backgrounds, etc.

13 For a first glimpse at her “emotional” biography I recommend reading the testimony written in the first person, that Eugénia wrote to accompany the set of works recently integrated into the Modern Collection of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation <https://gulbenkian.pt/museu/novas-leituras/borracha-donut-e-pinata/>

14 Georges Didi-Huberman, *O que nós vemos, O que nos olha*, transl. Golgona Anghel and João Pedro Cachopo (Porto: Dafne Editora, 2011), 147.

15 *Ibid.*, 157.

16 *Ibid.*, 145.

A text is an assembly of images, or a montage to evoke the cinematographic sense of the word, just as it is, more obviously, a certain selection and sequentiality of images printed in a book. In both formats a common leitmotif is created binding the set of images. And Eugénia's archipelagic painting is also felt by its heterogeneity. Just one other reference, by its distance from the personal memory already widely evoked here, the images taken from home-made videos that she finds on Youtube. This link (clash), between the personal life and the unknown, contributes to the production of ambiguity in the image that she produces – ambiguity and enigma are attributes that, for Benjamin, define the work of art.

Further regarding the cinematic quality of this set of works, I would like to draw attention to the fact that, in this selection, all the paintings are figurative and the characters are the focus of the narrative of the painting. Except in paintings where the figures are immersed in the theme: *Skull* (2013) is a *vanitas* in which the element that symbolises the *memento mori* – remember that you will die – is introduced in a “living nature”, in *Anastomose* (2019) the figures are unfilled by the experience of the forest and the journey of life that is revealed in *Man returning* (2020).

Finally, I would like to highlight that this road-text led me to know better the islands that make up Eugénia's archipelago-life. May the waters that separates us continue to make us find ourselves in her archipelagic painting.

# Between life and art: Félix Mula, a ‘tradero’ artist<sup>1</sup>

Rui Assubuji\*

This text is an illustration of the photographic series called *Idas e Vindas*, created by Mozambican artist Félix Mula. Here, the creation is treated as a visual object composed by photographs from Reunion Island and Mozambique, two locations that mark the life of the photographer. The text emerges from a compilation of opinions by various artists and scholars that talked to me about art in Mozambique and of the work of Félix.<sup>2</sup> It addresses art in Mozambique, the origins of the artist and positions his photographic series as a contemporary intervention on memories of pasts and narratives constructed on the base of empirical evidence of history.<sup>3</sup>

- 1 I owe this concept of ‘tradero’ to Professor Severino Ngoenha. See, *A (IM) Possibilidade do Momento Moçambicano: Notas Estéticas* (Maputo: Alcance, 2016). Filimone Meigos adopted the concept in ‘Dinâmica das Artes Plásticas em Moçambique’. Thesis presented for the degree of Doctor in Sociology from the University of Beira Interior (Covilhã: July 2018), 202. I’m thankful to them and others who contributed to this conversation. A special mention to the artists himself, Félix, and his companion Rafael Mouzinho, Pearl Boltman, my wife, my colleague Anaïs Nony and the 2019 writing retreat organized by the CHR-UWC in South Africa.
- \* Rui Assubuji is a fellow at the Centre for Humanities Research, University of the Western Cape, South Africa.
- 2 Félix is how everybody calls him and is also how he prefers to be called.
- 3 These notions are inspired by arguments such as the ‘conflicted pasts’ and ‘negotiations with present’, in Shawn M Smith, *Photographic Returns. Racial Justice and the Time of Photography* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020), 2.

## Prelude

Three days had passed since Félix Mula started his journey on foot, leaving his family's house in the Maxaquene neighbourhood in Maputo, where he lived with his father, mother, mother-in-law and younger brother. His destination was the grave of his grandfather, a legend whose saga inspired the artistic project he had set out to develop. In the Macia area, about 200 kilometres from his departure point, the unknown Félix was detained and questioned by local people. Fresh in their minds is the death of a shepherd, murdered by cattle thieves who plagued the region. For the artist, the moments that followed could have been the last acts of his performance.<sup>4</sup>

Félix Mula was arrested and accused of belonging to Renamo, the armed movement that plunged the country into sixteen years of civil war. Despite the peace agreement, signed in 1992, the conflict is still very alive. Transformed into the largest opposition party, Renamo maintains an active armed wing, contesting the government lead by the Frelimo party in power since the country's independence in 1975.<sup>5</sup>

In 2011, the year the artist took his journey, the political and social instability created high levels of tension in Mozambique. Absorbed in the production of art, Félix only remembered these aspects when he found himself surrounded by hostile people, angry and ready to lynch him. His backpack contained pans, canned goods, objects – such as a knife and matches – for his survival along the road where the population lived in scattered settlements. Dirty, with hair and beard unkempt, his rugged look did not help him. The growing crime in the region only worsened his situation.

Félix felt the arrival of his death ending the journey to the desired destination, the grave of his legendary grandfather. The letter he wrote during the preparation of

4 Félix Mula was born in Maputo in 1979. He attended the School of Visual Arts in Maputo and the photography course in Centro de Documentação e Formação Fotográfica (CDFF) before taking four years' residence in the Reunion Island where he studied at École Supérieur d'Art de la Réunion. Currently, he teaches at the Superior Institute of Arts (ISARC) in Maputo. He learned the rudiments of photography at an early age with his father, a commercial photographer. As an artist, he closely followed and participated in activities of the contemporary art movement of Mozambique (MUVART). This text arises from an engagement with his photographic series titled *Indas e Vindas*, winner of the eleventh edition of the Portuguese Novo Banco prize in 2016.

5 Mozambique was a Portuguese colony and became independent in 1975. In 2020 the Renamo military section acting in total disagreement with their politicians, attacked roads and places in the centre region of the country. Another war is intensifying in the northern province of Cabo Delgado. In the text some titles are translated from Portuguese to English to facilitate the reading.

6 Pompílio Hilário Gemuce is a prominent Mozambican artist with formal art education in Ukraine and France. He taught at Escola de Artes Visuais (School of Visual Arts) in Maputo. With his wife Hélia Gemuce he currently owns a gallery called Arte de Gema, in Maputo. We met in his atelier, 5 February 2020.

the trip saved him. It was a statement in which he, the artist, expressed the intention of his performance recognized as a manifestation of art. His teacher and friend, Pompílio Gemuce, recalls:

Félix brought me a letter and asked me to sign it before reading it. Since I hesitated, he questioned our mutual trust, and then I decided to participate in that artistic playfulness. I still have the original, somewhere.<sup>6</sup>

### Locating the artist

Mozambique artists participated in shaping and challenging art policies. Alda Costa refers to the appearance and promotion of indigenous art in the colonial period, and speaks of discussions and institutional positions on ideas and guidelines that steered the artistic activity after the country's independence.<sup>7</sup> Then, Luís B. Honwana's authorized voice of the government defined the artist as "an innovator, creator of the future and a questioner of the present."<sup>8</sup> In the life of postcolonial arts in the country, Filimone Meigos identifies two distinct periods: the Samoriano (1975-1986), which promoted the utopia of the new man, and the Dolarcracia (1987-2016), defined by the open market. One utopian, the other dystopian, contradict each other. Using different artistic languages and techniques, artists played a particular role during these periods.<sup>9</sup>

Notably in Maputo, two schools are growing: one linked to the *Núcleo de Arte* gallery, frequented mainly by artists who learned from colleagues in the neighbourhoods and the other established by artists from formal institutions of art education, inside and outside of the country. "We have practitioners with intrinsically artistic value," comments Ngoenha. He believes the Festival Nacional de Canto e Dança (Singing and Dance National Festival) birthed contemporary Mozambique in cultural terms, by bringing the entire country together.<sup>10</sup> "We have different artistic traditions," he said, "but we don't have artistic autonomy."<sup>11</sup>

7 Alda Costa, *Arte em Moçambique: entre a construção da nação e o mundo sem fronteiras:1932 -2004* (Lisboa: Verbo, 2013), 281. Costa is a Mozambican scholar and for years was the director of the Museums department in the Ministry of Culture. Currently she directs the cultural center of Universidade Eduardo Mondlane (UEM).

8 Ibid.

9 Filimone Meigos, 'Dynamics of Fine Arts in Mozambique.' Thesis presented for the degree of Doctor of Sociology from the University of Beira Interior (Covilhã: July 2018), III. Meigos is a sociologist and currently directs the Superior Institute of Arts (ISARC) in Maputo.

10 It echoes L.B. Honwana which considers the great festivals of the late 1970s, the most interesting moments to reflect about the culture of Mozambique. See, L.B. Honwana, 'A rica nossa cultura,' in *A velha casa de madeira e zinco*, 63-75.

11 S. Ngoenha, Maputo, 2020.

The artist Pompílio Gemuce (the friend who signed Mula's letter) approaches the question of contemporary art from the perspective of the Movimento de Arte Contemporânea de Moçambique (MUVART).<sup>12</sup> He is one of the founders and among their ideals is the creation of a biennial to place the country on the global route of world culture.<sup>13</sup> Jorge Dias, another founder, brings a different perspective emphasizing the need to make institutions accept artistic production outside the classical norm.<sup>14</sup>

Between 2004 and 2006, MUVART hosted several exhibitions. At different levels, their creators express political and social concerns. However, the purpose is mainly to participate in the debate, since "art does not solve problems."<sup>15</sup> In the liveliness of the current moment, Dias notes the reduction of youth involvement, things happen but they lack a binding element. Gemuce remarks that:

the so-called contemporary art is becoming more and more political, as trends demand. On the other end, it breaks routines, which is also good. To be creative is a way to be in art, a permanent innovation. It has an aesthetics that seeks to consider differences and tries to undo the Eurocentrism of art history.<sup>16</sup>

The contemporary movement certainly brings more artistic freedom but it is complicated to talk about freedom in creativity, in a country where the freedom of expression is practically non-existent. According to the young artist Nelsa Guambe, there is not much optimism in Mozambican society, which is the energy emanating from the *Status Quo*, the title of her exhibition in reaction to the government financial scandal exposed in 2015. "Yet, it is not the artist who is sad but the country. It is necessary to reverse the situation."<sup>17</sup>

12 MUVART is a movement of contemporary art created in 2003 by a group of young artists most of them with formal art education and recently returned to the country after completing their studies abroad. The Director of the National Art Museum of Mozambique welcomes the movement as "a wish and a concretization of a new way to be in art." See Julieta Massimbe, *Expo Contemporânea Moçambique – 2004* (Maputo: MUVART, 2004), 2-3.

13 Gemuce, Maputo, 2020.

14 'First the oil, after the acrylic', recalls J. Dias here in conversation with Rui Assubuji, Maputo, 4 February 2020. Besides his artwork, he is also a curator and professor of fine arts. For some time, Dias was the curator at the National Museum of Art, and currently directs the Brazilian Cultural Center in Maputo.

15 Ibid.

16 Gemuce, Maputo, 2020.

17 Nelsa Guambe exhibits in and out of the country. Her recent ones, *Sharks of Maputo and Status Quo*, both reflect preoccupations related to the Hidden Debts, the financial scandal involving the government, disclosed in 2015. Associated with her sister Kika Guambe, also an artist, they opened The Deal, an art space and gallery in Maputo. There, surrounded by the distorted faces of her creation, Nelsa, as she is mostly known, kindly shared with me her understanding of the present in Mozambique, 15 February 2020.

To speak about contemporary art presupposes a timeline that contemplates the existence of classical, baroque and modern art. It makes little sense in the context of Mozambique. Thus, Ngoenha suggests the concept of *traderno* for the symbiosis between the traditional and modern observable in national art.<sup>18</sup> He considers that, in Makonde art, the figure of Shetani represents the one who eats, who takes possession and the concept of Ujamaa unites the family, both express social concerns diluted in different cultural aspects. Figure and concept work as a binary in the national artistic production.

Nelsa laments there is not a single store selling art materials in the country. Despite the government's promises to support art, artists exist without protection, living in "a society without dreams."<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, argues Félix, "those who are in the field and make objects without having a discourse are doing craftwork and rely on the objects they sell."<sup>20</sup> On forays to locate himself in the art field, he visited the rock paintings of Chinhamapere in the mountains of Manica, accompanied by his working partner, Rafael Mouzinho. They were at the same place where Ricardo Rangel took a photograph of the details of the paintings with their guardian, a local woman.<sup>21</sup> Félix also photographed the site, this time, with the woman's daughter, the current guardian.<sup>22</sup> It is a sacred place where local people perform rituals dedicated to the spirits of their ancestors.

## The performance

A performance by a Thai artist who spent a year in a cell and punched the time clock every day is one of Félix's references. He trusted me with thoughts and memories, talking in the living room of the family home, where he always lived

18 S. Ngoenha, talking to R. Assubuji. Maputo, 2020. For Ngoenha, tradition is not a closed body but open to modernity, it's in transposition to a project of modernity that African authenticity is found. See, Severino E. Ngoenha, *Das independências às liberdades: filosofia africana* (Portugal: Paulinas Editora, 2014), 107.

19 See Silva Dunduro, 'As Artes como Explicação da Vida e do Estado de Espírito de um Povo'. Introductory text in the catalogue, *Estados das Almas em Moçambique*. Published by the Ministry of Culture, Maputo 2017. The catalogue features fifty Mozambican artists of different generations.

20 Félix Mula in conversation with Rui Assubuji. Maxaquene, Maputo, 17 February 2020.

21 Ricardo Rangel (1924-2009) is the icon of photography in Mozambique. He is the first non-white photographer to work in the press, beginning in 1955. He created and directed the Centro de Formação Fotográfica (CFF), the school of photography in Maputo, in 1984. The institution became the Centro de Formação e Documentação Fotográfica (CFDF) in 1998, to accommodate the archive. The above-mentioned photograph features in the catalogue *Olhar Moçambique* vol 2, (Maputo: CFDF, 2002), 63.

22 The rock art at Chinhamapere was made by bushmen, the first communities to inhabit the region, 300 a.c. See, Joaquim Notice, 'Pinturas Rupestres de Chinhamapere: Uma Perspectiva da Preservação do Património Sócio-Cultural de Moçambique, no Contexto da Gestão Ambiental' (Boletim Campineiro de Geografia, v. 5, n 2, 2015), 368.

and lives. He departed from there on a trip walking a distance of about 300 km to visit the grave of his grandfather. That was his performance for the photographic series presented here. On his computer, he showed me a photo of his footprints at the beginning of the walk. He was wearing a pair of quality boots, brought from the Reunion Islands, where he lived for four years on a French scholarship to study art. His late father took the photographs of his departure, and his younger brother took some video footage.<sup>23</sup>

Just before his departure, his father insisted that Félix take one of several photocopies of his letter that circulated among a few close people. The letter explained the trip that the family did not agree with because they did not understand the reason for such a journey. It had an artistic purpose which lasted seven days, like the biblical creation of the world, recalls the artist. It was essential for the construction of his work: the performance is part of the discourse that makes his art conscious.

Félix's first stop was at his sister's house in a peripheral neighbourhood of the city, still in the early hours of that morning. Staring at the picture on his computer, he comments that children in the image had grown a lot since 2011, and the now taller tree in the back. His second stop was at his grandmother's house in Marracuene. Returning from the field, she offered mangoes that he eats right there. He shows me the photo he took of his grandmother, and the place, and said they are simple pictures from Marracuene without the impact of the new Maputo circular road.<sup>24</sup> During his travel, he spent the first night at the little mosque in Bobole. His backpack and boots, already replaced by slippers at the time, are signs of his presence in the image.

The second night was spent in Manhiça, well-received by a family.<sup>25</sup> The following night, in Incoloane, the police authorities gave him a place to sleep, but kept his possessions because they suspected him to be a criminal.<sup>26</sup> His belongings were all returned the next day, when he resumed his trip. It was later that day, already in the Macia district of Gaza province as described earlier, that the artist's life was at risk. To the crowd surrounding him, he explains that going by bus never occurred to him. In a desperate gesture, he presents the letter forgotten in one of his pockets. It calmed the agitated population that let him go. But the artist lost all his energy and slept at his uncle's house, where he arrived around 5 pm and left

23 His late father was a photographer employed in a commercial photographic house in Lourenço Marques (Maputo) in 1970s-80s. His father passed in 2014 in that very house of the family where we met. His young brother is a videographer, trained at ISARC. Félix documented his *performance* by taking photos along the journey.

24 Marracuene is a district of Maputo Province, located more or less 30 km north of Maputo city.

25 The Manhiça district is in Maputo Province, about ninety kilometres from the departing point.

26 Incoloane is a locality of the Manhiça district.



the next day around noon. He shows me the picture and tells me, “this kid died in a road accident. These photos have these stories – some people no longer exist!”<sup>27</sup>

He had to cross a river to reach the family lands. A photograph depicts the boy who rowed the boat that took him to the other bank. He had finally arrived at his destination, the Mula’s homestead, small and not known by many, located near Chissano.<sup>28</sup> There, at the place called Gutsuine, he finds his grandfather’s grave. He shows me photographs.

### The photographs

On the trips to his family’s land since childhood, Félix has seen many abandoned canteens, and that aroused immense curiosity. The elders explained to him that canteens were stores where the population would purchase supplies they did not produce. They belonged to Portuguese people who received local names, to signal local appreciation. The canteens had a significant social role because they accepted payment on credit. For example, wives would get goods knowing their husbands would pay the bills on their return from the mines in South Africa.<sup>29</sup>

One of the serious issues associated with the canteens is the “wine for the blacks.”<sup>30</sup> Also credited to them is the proliferation of the capulana, a “mark of Mozambicanity.”<sup>31</sup> More can be said, but in Félix’s experience there were many canteens. He asserts with conviction: “Portuguese men called Pandlane or Cossa? The Machanganes welcomed them as members of the family, and gave them names from the village.”<sup>32</sup> However, his family’s relationship with these Portuguese is very difficult. To this day, the whereabouts of his grandfather’s brother, who disappeared the night he was caught in a sexual relationship with his boss’s daughter, is still unknown.

27 F. Mula to Rui Assubuji. Maxaquene, Maputo, 2020.

28 Chissano is the land of Joaquim Alberto Chissano, who replaced Samora Machel as the president of Mozambique in 1986.

29 Related to the mines and migrant labour in the south of Mozambique, see Luís Covane, *As Relações Económicas entre Moçambique e África do Sul* (Maputo: Arquivo Histórico de Moçambique, 1989); Ruth First, *O Mineiro Moçambicano: um estudo sobre a exportação de mão de obra em Inhambane* (Maputo: Centro de Estudos Africanos-Universidade Eduardo Mondlane, 1998); see also Ruth First, “The Gold of Migrant Labour.” Text in [www.sahistory.org.za](http://www.sahistory.org.za) (accessed March 2020).

30 See José Capela, *Vinho Para o Preto* (Porto: Edições Afrontamento, 1973). The social problem not only affected the rural areas but the urban as well, and was vehemently denounced by local newspapers such as *O Africano*. See for example, C. Braga-Pinto and Fátima Mendonça, *João Albasini E As Luzes de Nwanzengele*. *Jornalismo e política em Moçambique, 1908-1922* (Maputo: Alcañe Editores, 2014), 84, and 244-48.

31 Valdemir Zamparoni, ‘Entre Nharros e Mulungos: Colonialismo e paisagem social em Lourenço Marques, c. 1890 c. 1940.’ PhD dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences of the University of São Paulo, 1998.

32 Félix to Assubuji. Maputo, 2020.

With his uncle, by car, he returned to identified places. He only photographed canteens about which he found little information. Many other names and addresses he discovered in the different archives consulted in Lisbon, and through tips given by occasional people. He found traces in many places, including cemeteries. In the series there is a photograph of a 'cemetery in St 2012.' The image is from Reunion Island, the other location in the artist's produced visual object.<sup>33</sup> There was, so to speak, his diaspora.<sup>34</sup>

Also, from his diaspora, Nelsa likes the photograph of a car engulfed by vegetation for its serenity and richness.<sup>35</sup> In some dismal way, the picture of the two countries conveys a sense of abandonment. Is this a series about dysfunctionality? The artist replies: "Exactly, it matters because it relates to things that become dysfunctional with political changes."<sup>36</sup> The two locations in the series celebrate distinct historical events, the end of slavery, and colonialism. Looking at one photograph, Dias commented:

I am closed and the window allows me to aim for another space on the other side of the wall, green, full of light. Nothing is seen inside, it is all dark.<sup>37</sup>

For Gemuce, the predominantly black space in the image contains a tiny bright trace that appears to be an accident. Isn't it a timid gesture that raises questions related to memory? For the author of the image, that element in the dark balances the composition. He says that it is a door with a crevice and a window. In those abandoned places, Félix recalls not thinking about aesthetics, but the desire to hear stories and to photograph whatever he wanted.

## Conclusion

Meigos considers traderno a phase of contemporary art in the country, sometimes ephemeral, other times perennial, where there is creative freedom, a fusion between life and art, and the appreciation for the concept.<sup>38</sup> Felix's tradernismo is not in what he does but in how he thinks, sustains Ngoenha.<sup>39</sup>

33 The visual object is the photographic series here celebrated and combines images from Reunion Island and Mozambique.

34 Diaspora as a work produced in a hosting territory, and about the origins of the author. The idea was expressed by Jorge Dias to Assubuji. Maputo, 2020.

35 Nelsa is the artist mentioned earlier, Maputo, Feb 2020.

36 Félix. Maxaquene, Maputo, 2020.

37 J. Dias. Maputo, 2020. The caption of the photograph is St., 2012.

38 F. Meigos, 'Dinâmica das Artes Plásticas em Moçambique', 202.

39 S. Ngoenha, Maputo, 2020.

The artist speaks about precision. In photography, he works with medium format and has a predilection for slide film. Consequently, he said:

If I buy a slide film, I have to be responsible... 12 or 10 photos... you have to think carefully before taking the photo.<sup>40</sup>

The photographer does not look superficially; the image seems to come out of his own life. He understands photography as an objective record of personal testimony, an actual real moment, as well as an interpretation of that reality.<sup>41</sup> In fact, regarding the dichotomy he once questioned, Félix is now convinced, there is no separation between life and art.<sup>42</sup>

40 F. Mula. Maxaquene, Maputo, 2020.

41 Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (London: Penguin UK, 2013), 26.

42 See Félix Mula's Master thesis, "Entre L'Art Et La Vie. Existe-t-il une Distance entre l'Art et la Vie? Memoire de DNSEP", École Supérieur d'Art de la Réunion, 2011.

# Death on home soil

Nkule Mabaso \*

“The African bourgeoisie that inherited the flag from the departing colonial powers was created within the cultural womb of imperialism,” Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o wrote in *Moving the Centre: The Struggle for Cultural Freedoms*, a collection of essays published in 1993.

So even after they inherited the flag, their mental outlook, their attitudes toward their own societies, toward their own history, toward their own languages, toward everything national, tended to be foreign; they saw things through eyeglasses given to them by their European bourgeois mentors (Thiong’o 1993, 102-103).

The two works by Námoda, that I discuss below *Collective Suicide* (2015) and *Memórias de uma língua de cão* (2019), embody and expand on this sentiment as expressed by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o (1993) and reveal her concern with the prevailing coloniality on the continent. The thematics contained in her work, while specific to herself and her experiences in Mozambique, also relate and are informed by the shared experience of all people in the formerly colonised world. This paper explicates Námoda’s practice as an exploration of the neocolonial psyche in contemporary African societies, from her particular vantage point as a black Echwabo woman.

Námoda’s work takes on the position of being anti-hegemonic in its interrogation of what it means to be a black woman in Mozambique today; it specifically addresses the need to deal with the present situation of neocolonialism and coloniality while

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still in need of being a liberated postcolonial subject. Her work brings forth questions that investigate the degree to which mental liberation may be concisely achieved by occupying a subject position, and pushing the boundaries of self-representation in order to determine the overt structures overdetermining her life. She also considers the racist “civilising logic” that accounts for much of the sustained coloniality of power in social and political conditions existing in sub-Saharan societies, and the impediments they might constitute towards the project of becoming mentally free and achieve the complex subjectivity of black female bodies.

The thematics concern in Námoda’s work are corrective and look at the ideological basis upon which the current contemporary experience of being a black woman in Mozambique may be premised, from the ongoing concerns from a troubled past in order to navigate a hopeful present. Her artistic approach blends self-therapy practices and radical feminist political education in order to navigate between language, performance art, photography, film and installation. She uses archival research to animate the materials that lead to her video works and installations, within which the original and reconstructed sound play an integral part to convey the personal and family experiences, and delve into personal and collective memory.

### The centrality of self-narration and identity

These concerns weave themselves through her practice and are conveyed through the embodied expressive modes she employs to tackle how negative images imbibed through Eurocentric formal education systems and social interaction may become internalised. This internalisation of negative stereotypes, can manifest as various forms of personal neurosis, where indigenous people experience oppressive forms of cultural assimilation, as is especially pronounced in places with settler-colonialist societies.

*Collective Suicide* (2015) is an intimate reflection on kinky hair, beauty, femininity and identity. Through this work I face childhood experiences that have built a relationship based on self-rejection towards my hair and self-image, in contrast with the established standards of beauty. Biography meets her story to expose how the social concept of beauty and femininity incorporates self-hate for black women.<sup>1</sup>

Námoda’s *Collective Suicide* (2015) is an installation in which the camera is set so as to film the room itself. The resulting projection is a live feed of the people that enter the room and interact with the installation. The speakers, that are interspersed in the room, form part of the installation and from them emanates audio narrating the relationship with her hair. The installation is a self-reflection about beauty constructs and self-identity formation. The installation resembles, somewhat, an ad hoc hair salon; the empty chairs waiting for their sitters. The naked speakers are mounted on stand and

1 Email correspondence from Námoda to Mabaso, 16 November 2019.

resemble hair dryers. On some of the mounts sit multiple wigs. In some images where there are people seated, we begin to see and further imagine how this installation would have played out. The chairs and dryers face one direction towards a projection. The projection is a reflection and mirror of the room, and because of where the camera is placed to capture the room when a person sits on the chairs, their silhouette is altered by the wig. The alteration is voluntary on the part of the sitter, who may have not been aware of this being the outcome of taking a seat within this installation. The provocations held within this work are multiple and use the weave and hair pieces as the signifier for the body transfixed at the intersection of race and gender. The understanding that hair is uniquely suited to address the most personal and universal issues of identity has brought on, for a number of artists and the general public, a focus on hair as a medium and subject that elicits diverse, but powerful, reactions when it lives independently from the body and makes significant statements around selfhood.

In her description of the work, Námoda offers this provocation: “What defines beauty when the colonial legacy is embroidered with patriarchy and capitalism?” In the dismembered wigs and speaker-heads, together with the title of the work *Collective Suicide* (2015), Námoda sees the continued glorification of the soft and flowing hair, ideal to the virtual exclusion of the coarse and kinky texture, natural to black hair, as a kind of self-harm. Media imagery that persistently fuels the disassociation of attractiveness with blackness still abound and enforce that “black women’s natural hair is undesirable and requires alteration in order to be represented as beautiful” (Haanyama 2007, 86). This continual negative representation, exclusion and ostracization of black female bodies in mainstream capitalist societies, present the oppositional ideologies that lie between the wearing of ‘natural hairstyles’, and hairstyles that use weaves and chemical techniques to alter the appearance of the black hair, as representing self-love and a “diseased state of black consciousness”, respectively (Rookes 1996; hooks 1992; Mercer 1994). This, by implication, means a practice like hair with weaves and straightening one’s hair symbolises an aspect of the unilateral cultural appropriation of all things white and is a symptom of “psychic inferiorisation”. The symptoms are explicitly apparent in the abandoning of one’s natural hair for blonde wigs or ever lengthening weaves that embody “an aesthetic that suggests black women, while appealingly ‘different,’ must resemble white women in order to be considered really beautiful” (hooks 1992, 73).

While this interrogation into hair may relate directly to her own experience of aesthetic hair practises, it also speaks to the social control that occurs around black women and their hair with publicly explosive examples of this control occurring against African-American, Afro-European and Southern African women. This installation, taken in the totality of its elements, and the subjective position of the artists does not make clear if she acknowledges that black women, in general, are often acutely aware of socio-cultural expectations regarding their hair and, rather than simply acquiescing to these normative expectations, black women often “consciously seek power by either accommodating to these expectations or resisting

them” (Weitz 2001, 683); this way, making contentious hairstyling practices like hair straightening is just another style choice. The presentation should not fail to consider that all hair is always manipulated and that black women do make agentic choices when it comes to hair straightening and weaves, rather than still being associated with self-hatred theories, which contend that individuals who practice hair straightening not only support but also internalise and act on the ideologies that underlie their own subordination (Weitz 2001).

In the search for contemporary black female identity, hair braiding and cornrows take on increasing significance, especially when considered from the perspective of not subordinating one’s hair in order to placate the fears of white society about the transgressive other, but exploiting the possibilities of black hair to encourage and prescribe new meanings to longstanding practices and, in this way, “destroy the negative stereotypes” (Foster 1973, 436) and cultivate contemporaneous racial pride through hair artistry.

#### Suicide on home soil

In *Memórias de uma língua de cão* (2019), Námoda sits in front of the camera with the crown of her head out of frame; the screen is in landscape orientation, giving the viewer a close up of her neck and chest. She sits in front of a sheen, crinkled black background that resembles a refuse bag. We see her tongue and mouth move in what appears to be oral motor exercises to strengthen the range of motion for one’s jaws, cheeks, lips and tongue. These exercises are normally reserved for people with trouble speaking clearly, swallowing problems, or muscle weakness of the mouth, who may benefit from these exercises.

Ngug wa Thiong’o has well theorised on how the colonial classroom became a tool of psychological conquest in Africa and beyond. Perhaps here in Námoda’s work they are employed to suggest the extensive oral distortion that indigenous children undergo to unlearn their home languages and the violence undergone to acquire a European tongue. In most parts of Africa, the language of the former colonial masters that form the bureaucratic “official” languages, followed by a litany of few “indigenous” languages as a secondary or third official language just for window dressing. This denial persists in every formerly colonised society. From the entanglements of language to access to land, there is no doubt that language remains at the contested political front in Africa. *Memórias de uma língua de cão* (2019), her work, considers self-estrangement, whether through the exploration of self-identity or of the fragmented relationship she has with her indigenous language – Chwabo. The body is presented here as a living archive of forbidden and interrupted learning processes. Námoda encounters this self-estrangement, most personally, in that her legal name is Marilú da Conceição João, and in an act of self-definition and working on her identity has given herself the names Marilú Mapengo Námoda. Námoda describes *Memórias de uma língua de cão* (2019):

is an immersive installation that arises from my childhood memories. Memories imprinted on my relationship with my mother tongue – Chwabo – an ever present past filled with prohibited, interrupted and fragmented learnings. Memories that serve to remind us of the racist conceptions of civilisation that were created and imposed on us and that we unconsciously reproduce every day. The central element of this artistic proposal is a new alphabet recreated, based on visual references and meanings, extracted from the Bantu ancestral writing system. The installation intends to question ethnic identities in the postcolonial era and build a utopian space (*pastopias*) of re-signifying this historical legacy as a healing experience for inter-generational traumas related to identity.<sup>2</sup>

In our correspondence she further states:

*Memórias de uma língua de cão* has started from a childhood memory I have of my grandma prohibiting me of speaking my indigenous language – Chwabo – because, according to her, Chwabo was a dog’s language... For me, it is tragic how this hate discourse has been transformed into a loving discourse within our families. Meaning that, by assuring I would only speak Portuguese, she was protecting me from different forms of violence she had witnessed or probably suffered by the colonial Portuguese Police *PIDE* under the colonial assimilation policies, and by the Mozambicans who reproduce the violence in multiple forms.<sup>3</sup>

Formally, the framing of *Memórias de uma língua de cão* (2019) mimics Lerato Shadi’s 2016 *Motlhaba wa re ke namile* single-channel video projection. Both women in their respective videos perform the act of geophagia.

The video *Motlhaba Wa Re Ke Namile* was shot on location, in Shadi’s home village of Lotlhakane in Mahikeng, Northwest Province, South Africa. The video references the slave mask used on enslaved people; specifically, how the mask was used to prevent the slaves from committing suicide through the act of consuming soil. The work looks at how the act of eating soil to commit suicide has, over the years, been overlooked as a form of resistance (Shadi 2002, 22).

2 Email correspondence from Námoda to Mabaso, 16 November 2019.

3 Ibid.



Geophagia is the practice of eating soil, and it is regarded as either “a psychiatric disease, a culturally sanctioned practice, or a sequel to poverty and famine” (Sosibo 2016). Shadi’s rendition references how enslaved people committed suicide through the act of consuming soil. “The work looks at how the act of eating soil to commit suicide has, over the years, been overlooked as a form of resistance. The video also makes reference to the challenges on land dispossession, belonging and displacement” (Sosibo 2016). Shadi chokes and gags on home soil, the work speaks to “her sense of belonging while tapping into the political milieu of her home province, where vast slabs of platinum are extracted every day by the deliberately erased and voiceless.” (Sosibo 2016). The work is even more poignant right now within the current discourses in Southern Africa, around land expropriation and where black women remain in the shadow and are deprived of access to land and other protections.

Námoda’s video-work follows Shadi’s in the sense that we see Námoda struggle and furiously beat her tongue, and progressively begin to introduce objects into her mouth. The objects are all symbolic in the conversation around socialising control of colonisation and its impact on indigenous people, the earth, the leaves, the bark and other herbs, dehydrated animals, the fork and knife, all pass before her lips and tongue. Her body is the main archive source used in the work:

My body as a political and living archive of memories that are physically, emotionally and spiritually stored in us. Digging into this archive, I was committed to answer questions like: *How were these moments when grandma prohibited to talk Chwabo? How did she seemed and how did the tone of her voice sound like? What were other sounds, smells, materials or objects surrounding us? How do I feel towards these memories today?...* They helped me define the basic elements for the performance but, the performance itself, brings questions and answers that I can’t put into words (Námoda 2019).<sup>4</sup>

Located somewhere between this struggle to consume and the struggle to speak up and out, Namoda’s performance articulates the subjective experience of being at the intersection of multiple oppressions, expressed on the black female body all at once.

Námoda’s artistic practice centres around the journey of self-definitions and is explored against a heavy backdrop of problematic assumptions, projected onto the black female body. She sensitively considers how performance may offer a space of contemplation and self-definition for black women, otherwise restricted by exclusionary social constructions. These two examples from her body of work, reveal Námoda’s practice as a self-implicating exploration of the neocolonial psyche in contemporary African societies. It offers ways one may negotiate a space for oneself in inhospitable locations by tracing the edges of conflict as writ on our bodies

<sup>4</sup> Email correspondence from Námoda to Mabaso, 16 November 2019.

and psyches, and following our attempts to exist beyond a public form of erasure. Moving away from self-rejection and looking at oneself through foreign eyes towards a nuanced self-understanding and vocabulary for self-love.

# Mauro Pinto: Emotional documentaries<sup>1</sup>

Paula Nascimento \*

An informal conversation with Mauro Pinto about his practice invariably begins with his childhood references and citations of his maternal family. An introvert child, who at an early age started to attend the Núcleo de Arte<sup>2</sup> in Maputo, he discovered through this early contact with artists, particularly painters and sculptors, that the arts could be a way of communicating his world view. “I thought at first”, says Pinto, “that maybe painting could be a way of communicating with the world and with my immediate surroundings, but the contrary happened. I became more introverted and only when I started to discover photography through the father of a school colleague and started taking lessons, I understood that there could be a more direct language to communicate”.<sup>3</sup>

This narrative, which has been replicated several times, sets the foundations for understanding Pinto’s approach to photography and to his thematic subjects. Born in 1974 in Maputo, in the same year as the independence of Mozambique from Portuguese colonial rule, he experienced the effects of the ensuing civil war in the country<sup>4</sup>.

1 The expression “emotional documentary” is taken from the essay *Emotional Documentary* (2018) by Alexandre Pomar.

\* Paula Nascimento is an architect and independent curator.

2 Núcleo de Arte is a cultural organisation that exists in Maputo since 1921. Its main objective is educational, focusing on the development and promotion of fine arts in Mozambique.

3 The artist in an interview with the author, 2019

4 The civil war in Mozambique began in 1977, approximately two years after the independence.

It is possible to establish an overlap between the period concurrent with the independence, Mauro's childhood influences with the birth of Modern photography in Mozambique – departing from photojournalism, passing by documentary up to artistic avowal, photography is one of the most important and known means for cultural and identity affirmation. The long tradition of photojournalism dates back to the colonial times and has evolved into different documental images – from the 1960s ruptures proposed by the images focused on documenting the cruelties of colonialism as well as the social history of Mozambique, up to the school of photojournalism, founded in 1983 by Ricardo Rangel (Pomar 2015). Rangel was part of a generation of photographers whose photojournalism work reflected social and political concerns of the time. Pinto worked both with José Machado and with Rangel, and this experience was important in focusing his awakening of social and political themes – his eye and camera turned towards reflecting and capturing the effects of the civil war on Mozambican landscape, the shifting urban dynamics, the effects of globalisation in the cities where he travels to and, more importantly, human survival strategies – of rendering visible the neglected or marginalised narratives.

Mauro Pinto's series *Portos de Convergência* (2003) is an example of the way the artist works with his subjects – each project demands a constant process of negotiation between himself and the subjects captured, without editing or artifice.

Here he travels to places such as Luanda, Maputo, Lubumbashi, capturing the ports and places of migration that bear traces of the brutality of the Slave Trade. More than mere representations of what those spaces look like, Mauro's focus and subject matter is the memory of those places and the way in which they disclose or unveil the history they embed. The result is a series of images of destroyed or ruin-like places on the one hand and, on the other hand, a series of melancholic and intimate interiors of homes and commercial spaces, shot mainly in black and white analogue film. The choice of black and white film is not accidental, as the artist himself says "it was also a philosophical choice, in that I wanted to reflect on the issue of black(ness) and white(ness) with respect even to the themes that I am treating". His lyrical eye interrogates the broader sociological context of the spaces he is shooting, oscillating between social documentary and poetic expression.

### Dá Licença (2011-12)

Two blue chairs, two wooden chairs, a small table, some baskets, some spare and used objects, bottles, and an open window whose outside light illuminates the interior room. The way in which the space is occupied and inhabited, the single vantage point in every image gives the viewer the feeling of being inside someone's house. The first image of the series *Dá Licença* was photographed between November 2011 and January 2012, at Bairro da Mafalala in Maputo.

The expression "*Dá Licença*", meaning "excuse me" or in some cases "can I come in?", is an expression Mauro has heard through his childhood and the same he used to start

his process of negotiation with the house owners. It also refers to the viewers – as if before looking attentively at these images, one needs to ask permission to enter into the intimacy of those spaces and experience the details of the lives that occupy them.

Mafalala is an historical neighbourhood and one of the most well-known, located in the centre of Maputo and rooted in the emergency of a cultural and political identity in opposition to the Portuguese colonial rule. It was there that, in the 1950s and 60s, emerged some of the figures behind the revolution. Similarly to many other cities in the continent, real-estate speculation is erasing the history of the neighbourhood and there is a danger that over the coming years the old houses will disappear. The project pays homage to this historical place, by documenting one of the most important features of the neighbourhood – the houses made of wood and zinc. Again, space is the subject matter, the careful light that brings the objects, materials and details of lives. The absence of people liberates the images from a temporal fixation – everything that could be from the past, present and future – the images are way more than a historical or sociological study. They are dimly lit, yet the careful disposition of the objects highlights a sense of order, life and humanity, and they possess a timeless character that is, simultaneously, the result of a personal testimony and an embodiment of the collective memory:

What I am drawing in this proposal is neither a map nor bordering lines (previously colonial lines) between the “City of Cement” and Mafalala, or the topography of urban fabric with the pulsating real-estate speculation. What I bring here is a narrative, a personal and collective birth certificate. It is a genealogy described in this furniture, in this light, in these buggies, belonging to these blacks, mestizos, emigrants and immigrants, as resistant. *Dá Licença* thus becomes an affirmative interjection to start a report and affirm an existence.<sup>5</sup>

### Ce n’est Pas Facile (2018)

Taken during a trip to Burkina Faso, in 2018, this series captures the Leaf Masks of the Bwa village of Boni. Those masks are considered to be the most sacred ones, as they embody Dwo, the god of New Life and Rebirth in the springtime and of the power of nature and vegetation.<sup>6</sup> The dances happen at harvest, to restore the balance of the land and the masks are destroyed<sup>7</sup> by cultivation.

Pinto’s images focus on the Masquerades interacting with their surroundings, with nature and with each other, in playful and relaxed poses and sometimes as

5 Mauro Pinto in interview at RDP Africa, 2012.

6 <https://bwavillageofboniburkinafaso.wordpress.com>.

7 The masks have to be burned at the end of the day.

portraits. The playfulness of these portraits challenges the ethnographic and colonial gaze that would portray the figures within the ritual. The sophistication of those garments – the fan-shaped crest atop the mask is made of millet stalks supported by porcupine quills, while the rest is made of scattered leaves of Karite tree – at times resemble fashion portraits.

Pinto's commitment to the process of image-making is the result of a long and complex process of meditation and negotiation, even before any technical decisions – he engages with the realities and subjects he wishes to portray and every detail is discussed and agreed, to the point that the subjects become co-creators of the shot. This results in works that are deeply personal but also critical. His gaze departs from photojournalism, whose main aim is to depict reality, and evolves into a more contemporary language that brings to limelight new thematic and formal concerns. The images are not straight documentaries either, in the sense that they are not literal readings and interpretations of reality, they oscillate between social commentary, artistic imagination and an experimental approach that results in more complex aesthetic and formal solutions. By making evident the subjectivity and agency of his subjects, and filling them with humanity, Pinto reveals specific realities that negotiate between the abundance and scarcity, between the local, regional and global, and always full of poetry and emotion.

# Body and flesh: Camila Maissune's '3x4'

Delinda Collier\*

Camila Maissune's 3x4 series is easily identified as a critique of the State and its mechanisms; it is less easily understood as documentation of cruelty. Between August 2010 and October 2011, Maissune worked with incarcerated women at Maputo Civil Prison and Ndlavela jail, spending every day from 7:30 to 5:30 with the women. Maissune had initiated the project as a documentary of the generations of political prisoners during Frelimo's struggle for Independence, of which her two parents, Camilo de Sousa and Isabel Martins, were key players. Instead, Maissune quickly realized that the urgency of the situation of incarcerated women was more of her own time and generation. Global in its references to mass incarceration and femicide, 3x4 is at the same time intensely personal and intimate. It includes several series of photographs, installations, and her thesis called *Contemporary Prison Photography: bodies, pain and affection*.<sup>1</sup> Some photos shift the standard format of the photo ID, picturing the back of several women's heads instead of their face; they are jail photos taken in Cadeia Civil, an infamous site of the struggle for independence from Portugal, in the 1960s and 1970s. Others straddle a representational line between body and flesh, with various images of women posing on their beds in their cells; Maissune's thesis explains that these were done after the women were convicted and transferred to Ndlavela Prison and were able to wear their own clothes again. The most striking of the series, are intimate close-up photos of scars that establish a history

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1 Camila Maissune Martins Abranches de Sousa, "Fotografia Contemporânea de Prisão: Corpos, Dores e Afetos," MA in Art and Visual Culture (Universidade Federal de Goiás, 2015).

of the women's abuse by husbands, fathers and the state. The confinement of the 3x4 photo ID is akin to the confinement of the jail where the women were found by Maissune. If one looks at the history of biopower through the history of the secular state, as Michel Foucault so famously did, one finds a certain use of photography in enumerating an individual who is present in a particular way. The history of photography in Africa is one of "experimental [scientific] evidence" combined with colonial and a postcolonial state control.<sup>2</sup> The disciplining of male bodies has been featured in its critique, but the way women are depicted and disciplined is rarely discussed.

When is a photograph art and when is it evidence? In 3x4, format is stretched by subject matter, but still preserves some of the alienating effects of Bertillon's use of the photo, but inventorying parts and "unique features" that provide positive identification. If it now appears in the setting of art, we could ask ourselves who we are as the viewers of the pictures. Are we viewers who are part of an institution, and if so, which? Are we meant to arrive at a truth about the women, according to the evidence that Maissune brings? Who are these women to us? The ability for empathy in social practice work is constantly threatened by the medium of the lens and the final picture, as Maissune indicates in her use of format. 3x4 is deductive, operating within the constraints of the photo ID format, and providing an inventory of what Foucault called disciplinary structures. Bertillon used photography like an art historian uses art, using unique features, like ears, to identify and attach varying levels of agency to individuals. In 3x4, this confluence of art history is indicated by Venus-like portraits of women on humble beds, referring to a long-gendered art history. In addition, pictures of paint peeling off of cement walls suggest the feebleness of these structures, something that Maissune explains is part of a contention about the character status of Cadeia Civil in the imagination of the Independence movement in Mozambique.<sup>3</sup> Lists of women's names with cleaning chores which demonstrate everyday care and routine, even familiar structures, in state-run institutions. In others we see close-up pictures of scarred skin; pictures of lab specimens, like bones and vitrines, containing a fetus, heart and brain section floating in formaldehyde; a deshelled bird fetus. All of these objects coalesce around the strange material worlds of captivity, fetishes of the state whose banality masks the structural violence they stand for. 3x4's simplicity in creating this inventory of objects and bodies is precisely that we also connect the dots from individual trauma to the very epitome of structural violence: the prison.

We know that the State conjugates flesh according to race and gender, which Maissune writes about when she describes her interactions with the women who came to trust her enough to have their pictures taken. But this series also reminds us of

2 Rosalind C. Morris and Daniel H. Leonard, *The Returns of Fetishism: Charles de Brosses and the Afterlives of an Idea* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 7.

3 Camila Maissune, interview with author, 9 June 2020.



the extent to which certain bodies matter more than others within certain regimes. Or, to put it another way, in Mozambique, as in so many other nation-states, women are denied certain privileges of citizenship but still must bear the burden of its duties and punishment.

Thus, returning to Maissune's pictures of the women that hover between body and flesh, she makes her audience face the relationship between the two, what Hortense Spillers calls "the distinction as the central one between the captive and liberated subject-positions."<sup>4</sup> Now, Spillers' essay was a ground-breaking examination of the grammars of black representation in the United States. So, for it to be so helpful in decoding what I see in Maissune's series is the extent to which these visual grammars of modern bondage and captivity have spread to what is, in our days, a global carceral system. And, as it takes up themes that have multiple iterations across the world, Maissune's work is "global art." As Maissune notes, the women she depicts in the photographs are usually doubly victimized: first of spousal domestic abuse, then by the state when they use violence to escape it.<sup>5</sup> Similar stories multiply in women's prison populations across the globe. The carceral system has, typically, treated women in prison the same as men, even though around 95% of women in prison have experienced physical and/or sexual abuse, and the majority of crimes that women commit is closely linked to their attempting to ameliorate conditions of poverty for themselves and their families. Mozambique's women's prison population comports with averages around the world.

When Maissune attempted to procure funding for the project, she remarked on the opinion that some expressed about 3x4, that the images were pornographic; she and others expressed surprise that anyone could consider the images titillating.<sup>6</sup> But there is something related to the sexually explicit pornography, what Spillers calls "pornotroping". She writes, "as a category of 'otherness', the captive body translates into a potential for pornotroping and embodies sheer physical powerlessness that slides into a more general 'powerlessness', resonating through various centres of human and social meaning."<sup>7</sup> Alexander Weheliye elaborates on pornotroping, that troping is a mangling of speech, a deviation from normal ways of speaking.<sup>8</sup> He concludes that Spillers' "coarticulation" of porno and trope suggest a doubling of the sexualization and brutalization that renders a body into flesh.<sup>9</sup> Spillers and Weheliye are primarily concerned with the legacy of the transatlantic trade in enslaved people, however, the vestigial structure that survives into today's capitalistic carceral state renders the body of woman fragile and revocable. Indeed, as Maissune points

4 Hortense Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: an American Grammar Book," *diacritics* (Summer 1987): 67.

5 *Ibid.*

6 Camila Maissune, interview with author, 9 June 2020.

7 Spillers, 67.

8 Alexander Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 90.

9 *Ibid.*, 90.

out, the carceral state is now global. 3x4 interrupts the trope, subtly undermining the program and the format of the standardized image, and the standardized daily experience of an incarcerated body.

I have not been able to look away from a tightly-cropped photo of a bare-chested woman with severe scarring on her right breast. I feel, with a force, her vulnerability as she exposes herself to Maissune's camera. Her arms instinctively draw into the centre, but stop just short of covering herself. A light source floods in from the right of the photo and burns out one section of the image, just touching the edge of the field of scarring. This tactility occurs often in 3x4: it nearly literalises the notion of flesh but also repair and resilience, which features strongly in Maissune's overall project of empathetic commitment. The images thus have an affective investment, which makes their aesthetic register on par with the women's willingness to show themselves.

Maissune writes of Laura, who asked her to take a picture of her scarred breast, where her husband had thrown hot oil onto her.<sup>10</sup> There were no mirrors in the prison, so Laura wanted to see the scar. She framed the photograph close in, essentially creating an ID of the scar. Maissune, as she writes, was suddenly too much "inside" the prison and had lost the objectivity of the photographer. Laura detected her fear and said to her, recounted in Maissune's thesis:

Camila, it doesn't hurt anymore. If you want you can even touch it, to see it doesn't hurt. It's just a scar that I wanted to see. Sometimes, in the evening, you want to remember because I killed my husband and I am now in this place. And if you show people this photo, they will understand why I am here, why I couldn't suffer like that forever.

And it is precisely that risk of Maissune's empathetic act that makes this collection of images so powerful; they are able to be misread as pornography because of the risk of her and our exposure to indescribable pain. While much social practice of art today is committed to working with and on behalf of incarcerated populations, let us remember that the risk of exposure for the incarcerated is great, being that their overall social status is threatened by greater visibility. For women who have been abused, the gesture is one of profound trust extended to us, the viewers. Some choose to be named and others seemed not to want it. I submit that the same intimacy and force that I feel as I gaze at the private parts of this stranger's body (breasts, scars, skin texture, etc.) is the same intimacy that is sexualised by those who cannot face up to the violence or risk of their gesture. It is the same risk that Maissune writes that demonstrates that the women have claimed their "sensuality and own movement".<sup>11</sup> She goes on to suggest that this slow and

10 Camila Maissune [fn 11]; on fn 12 "Fotografia Contemporânea de Prisão", 157.

11 Camila Maissune, "Statement" in 3x4, 4.

methodical process of gathering the pictures is one of putting the body back together again to be whole, against the biopolitical or Spillers' mere flesh. The fuller installation includes sound and poetry written by some of the women. It does not seem necessary to have to humanise people who are incarcerated, and yet it always is, as long as the state conjugates flesh.

Maissune's photographs live at the confluence of art and science which, historically, is where photography gained its traction. The pornotrope predates photography, which developed along the representational scaffolding that was long established by literary descriptions and hand-wrought illustrations. Photography evolved, that is, along with a secular state that substituted holy objects for rational ones, conjugating bodies in new and more subdivided methods of control. And, as Bertillon's methods gained traction, the mugshot established criminality, not just suspicion, to the extent that it cleaved apart body and flesh. The disciplining of the body accompanied the disciplining of light with the lens. The program of the camera, as one of several types of lenses that literally mediate the world, was borne of this confluence of light and writing, "the word was God." The lens has served to enlarge and miniaturize the body; the mugshot today becomes one of the trillions of evidentiary photos that pass through and between machines, never to be seen by the human eye. The mugshot relies on the wholeness of the body in representational conventions, even as its ultimate aim is to piece it back out into fleshy, less-than-human parts.

The re-disciplining of lenses, or a reprogramming of photography and film, became a major project of Third World Cinema, and related projects, such as in Mozambique, where Maissune's father Camilo de Sousa broke filmic ground with Samora Machel after Independence, in 1974. There would be debates about how to best discipline the brand-new film and television of Mozambique, whether to see its excesses as part of an avant-garde search for incoherence, or if coherence was to be established in the absence of an extensive lens-based culture there.<sup>12</sup> The struggle for independence was fought in lens-cultures worldwide, all of which exploited the lens's two-sidedness to flip the program.

Writing about the lens flare as the first effect created for Photoshop, Sean Cubitt writes that the defect of the medium becomes a "positive value," where the program is effectively reversed by its own obsolescence and representational excesses. That which escapes discipline, is then doubled in this photograph I admire as the scarring in the photograph of the scarred woman: excess skin cells that congeal around a wound. A cellular excess then becomes a positive sign of the healing of traumatic breaks and fissures of skin. I am reminded of the postcolonial notion of repair, central to the work of Kader Attia, who uses the history of a visible site of repair, in

12 See Daniel Fairfax, "Birth (of the Image) of a Nation: Jean-Luc Godard in Mozambique" *Film and Media Studies* (2010): 55-67 and *Kuxa Kanema* (2003), dir. Margarida Cardoso, 52 mins.

artwork, bodies, and history, as an allegory of return, remembrance and resilience. Attia writes that repaired art objects, that he researched in collections of African art worldwide, were unable to be categorized because “the objects belong to an aesthetics that the West is unable to understand, particularly when this aesthetics integrates elements which are understood to be cast off objects”.<sup>13</sup> Attia’s resulting photo series combines photographs of art in different states of repair and military evidentiary shots of war-damaged faces of soldiers, suggesting that the violence in iconoclasm is part of the same impulse as violence against bodies. Both become victims to their own certitude if it threatens the stability of a hierarchical order.

I will conclude with Cubitt’s contention that the type of representation reflected in digital photography and its dissemination, has lead us to what Kant called “cosmopolitan intent”, but it is organized under the massive technological order that essentially is a “pursuit of coherent light.”<sup>14</sup> Not only does this present us the ability to view trillions of light-based “digital” images that circulate as freely as water, but also the responsibility to undermine their totalitarian format by connecting empathically with the women who are depicted: not because the photograph is invisible and we have “real” access to them, but precisely because we do not. This is the power of Maissune’s project in its totality, a social practice artwork that utilizes the ghostly substance of photography. It gestures to the cleaving of flesh and body, as well as the institutional format that it seeks to undermine.

13 Kader Attia, “Open Your Eyes: ‘La Réparation’ in Africa and in the Occident,” *Third Text* 32:1 (2018), 29.

14 *Ibid.*, 58.

Azu Nwagbogu  
Drew Thompson  
Álvaro Luís Lima  
Sihle Motsa



# Conversations with Gemuce, Jorge Dias and Rafael Mouzinho

Azu Nwagbogu\*

Artist-led and non-commercial spaces are often the site of curatorial practice on the African continent. They find themselves in perpetual existential crisis. The postcolonial approach to art history all over Africa often leads active curators to self-censure. Doubt is essential because it forces one to ask relevant questions, but if the questions are always the same, then we are caught in a vortex whereby progress is stilted and remediation slowed down. In Mozambique, Muvart<sup>1</sup> is one of the most prominent spaces that constitutes an amalgamation of artists in a non-commercial space. The three artists I interviewed are also curators. They are filled with doubt but they ask different questions and seek solutions to the art practice in Mozambique, for both artists and society at large. The interviews with these curators were conducted remotely, via Skype, and later transcribed and edited to present a sort of condition report on curating in Mozambique through the eyes of Gemuce, Jorge Dias and Rafael Mouzinho, all of whom are prominent players in the local art scene in Mozambique. They have been generous and enthusiastic with their ideas and time, and they care.

Curatorial practice is simple and comes down to one word: care – “one responsible for the care (of souls),” from the Latin *curatus*, past participle of *curare* “to take care of”. Caring leads to hosting. We host ideas, artists, artworks, objects and we situate them in a way to create meanings, to stimulate new ways of seeing, and to encourage more people to care and take notice. When depicting a time,

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1 Movement of Contemporary Art (Maputo)

a place and a people, the artist cares and draws from society and presents the world with alternate views of everyday events. We know that art is, therefore, a reflection of society as the artist sees it, and the curator seeks to decode and mediate the artwork.

After many centuries of cultural disruption, the African continent is left with a distorted social image. The artist in Africa is forced to work from a cultural database which is lacking in some information but not lacking in authenticity and agency. The fate of contemporary and future art from Africa depends critically on the availability of shared knowledge from the past, and the consistency of knowledge production that is inherent to art in the current African reality and its diaspora. Getting close to this knowledge allows us to find points of view that are useful to understand the past and envision the future.

It is the role of curators and cultural agents to create situations that facilitate this process of information and cultural restoration, through the development of archives, repositories and systems which the artist can use to produce meaningful artworks. At the same time, curators explore ways in which various institutions can connect to neighbouring African societies and its diaspora to ensure cross-cultural collaborations and strengthen bonds.

The following conversation spotlights the work being done in the Mozambican art scene through three key curators: **Jorge Dias, Gemuce and Rafael Mouzinho**. All three have had a major impact on the art community over the past two decades. We follow their journey from their beginnings and early work to their visions of the future.

### Interview between Azu Nwagbogu and Gemuce

Azu Nwagbogu (AN): So, tell me, Gemuce, about your curatorial journey. How did you become a curator?

Gemuce (G): I was part of an artistic movement in Mozambique, from 2003 to 2013, called MUVART – Movement of Contemporary Art (Maputo). I was the executive manager of all activities, in charge of mobilising financial resources and creating networks between the artists. Also, I was often asked to discuss curatorial projects with my colleague who assumed curatorial responsibilities. That's where my most concrete curatorial experience comes from. In an earlier period, I also had some insight through another artistic association – *ARTE FELIZ* – that I created with my fellow colleague Bento Mukeswane in 1996, and through the fact that I was a teacher of art



at Visual Art School. These two platforms allowed me to create and debate with myself and other artists and publics about philosophical concepts and meanings. Later, I started curating my own exhibitions and helped curate some local artists' projects. I also participated in some curatorial projects with the Portuguese curator, António Pinto Ribeiro, with Lerato Bereng, Joseph Gaylard from South Africa, Bisi Silva, etc. But I don't consider myself a curator. I prefer to be on the other side, producing art as an artist and curating part-time, as I am doing now with my gallery, Arte de Gema, since 2015.

AN: What was the aim of MUVART? Did you have a philosophy or particular focus?

G: The idea was to create a platform and thorough debate on art production in Mozambique. As you know, Mozambique is a young country in political terms, only independent from colonialism since 1975. So, you can imagine the gaps in intellectual protagonism for an international participation of Mozambicans in the art scene. In other words, I can say we were mostly closed and frozen to ourselves, with our own thin debates, not aware of what was going on in other African countries, culturally and generally around the world. The strategy of MUVART was to promote debates, workshops, exhibitions, theorising, etc. At that time, since 2003, we organised debates around contemporary art as the aesthetics of the time and as testimonies based on singular human and contemporary treasures.

AN: How many editions of the Muvart biennial took place?

G: During the 10 years that MUVART was engaged in activities, we had 5 biennales, the first was in 2004.

AN: Do people think that painting is not contemporary art in Mozambique?

G: Let's say, in general, there is a debate among intellectuals over how to define contemporary art. Some people think that contemporary art means occidental aesthetics. I see it differently. I see contemporary art as a platform, where the artists are challenged to express themselves, not only through the media they choose but also by giving primacy to the concept they define for each expressive approach. The world is invited to listen to the artist in a different way, to be involved in their concerns, to take into account their attitudes and ideas, and to allow the artist to express and explore their creativity, in the medium in which they feel most comfortable. For a long time, Africa has not been included in the history of art and this is an opportunity for artists to participate in this debate on art, to address their message and to be included.

AN: Today, when one looks at a lot of art in relation to Africa, one observes works that relate to identity politics. What do you think of identity politics as a common theme?

G: I think the world is becoming more open to different natures. And art has been used to express issues that are not heard or that audiences don't sense in a particular way.

AN: And what about the fact that one sees an increase in the representation of the Black body in contemporary art? Black bodies all the time, whatever gender?

G: I think the exhibition of the Black body in art is a natural response of African artists to the need for expression. I don't see it as a form of political reclamation relative to its censorship in the past. I see this attitude more related to anthropology, as a revolution of the freedom of expression. But politicians may manipulate it in favour of their projects. First, I must agree with the idea that art is a democratic space where everything can make sense when framed in the artistic context. Therefore, this democratic sense places the artistic realm in a vulnerable situation which can be used by movements that seek validation in society. After all, humans are social beings. The marginalised groups who don't feel represented enough to be heard, to make changes in different fields can also find in art a platform to voice, to question, to revolt, and to show their eagerness for justice for what was done in the past, and what is currently happening. The struggle is over but prejudice continues. But, as we have been talking throughout this conversation, the contemporary project is supposed to encourage a platform stripped of prejudices.

AN: What about activism?

G: We must do it intelligently, and each artist and curator has to do her part. We must first admit that art, today, is more political than philosophical. Artists are more concerned to claim than raise questions. But I think that art critics and curators have a mission to bring up this debate. The only thing that I can say is that, as artists and curators, we must not be fooled by demands. Trends must not define what contemporary art is. So, what's the issue with contemporary art, really? I think we have to make artists understand what the issues are. We can go back to debates in art history, and consider how we can be included in a very intelligent way. But, of course, there are many other issues to debate and some of them are not limited only to identity politics. Let's widen our views. Let's look forward and embrace the role of activism. This is the challenge for artists and curators of this generation.

AN: Do you think that we have a strong enough foundation in modern art, when we're talking about contemporary art? Do you think that we have enough information on artists of the modern period? I'm talking about artists and producers from the 1920s through to the 1960s. Do we have enough grounding, respect and understanding of the modern period and what it did for artists in Africa, at the time?

G: This question is interesting as it touches the wound of the African context. Let's take a look at what is happening in our countries politically. The book *Africa* by curator António Pinto Ribeiro poses a general question about the concern that the anti-colonial liberation project has been abandoned in Africa. The same revolutionaries lost their charismatic feelings towards their country and its people, etc. we've witnessed all that. This is because

they pretend that the past is over. But we are back there again with all kinds of problems. If we were previously debating the importance of restoring stolen artefacts from the past colonial era, then to ignore modern art would be to cut out this history too. I think the most important thing is that we regain our pride.

AN: Do you think that one of the problems we have in Africa is that we don't have enough archival material that we can look back on?

What do you do when the focus is primarily on what is trending? So that what you produce may be relevant now and then another young curator comes along and everybody forgets about your work? How do we generate knowledge, so that the work you do can be useful to the next person coming along after you? So that we are building on knowledge to build our history. Now, everybody's talking about contemporary art, but there were artists working in the 1920s that were contemporary for their time. Contemporary art goes beyond the time of its production. How much articulation and understanding do you have – or do you believe you should have – of the modern and traditional art that relates to Africa? What about artists that made work around independence and were fighting for freedom from Portuguese colonialism? What about literature? What about music? How do those intersections play out in your curatorial practice? There is an archive of knowledge which you can reference.

I find that when I want to curate an exhibit, I often start with literature as a way of articulating history in a fictional way. So, even though I do not live in the time of *Things Fall Apart*, when I read Chinua Achebe's novel, I get a sense of that time; I can visualise that period. Does literature serve as a source of archival information for your work as a curator?

G: Well, it's important to take this journey and make people understand their origins and how these have influenced modern art. As I said earlier, art history, especially regarding African art, must not rely only on the books written by voices with ethnographic, anthropological or political views. For sure we need to build our knowledge, by reading through our lens, speaking with our voices and having access to all those artefacts. We can use many tools to really get there – literature, music and choreography, for instance, are other ways to approach a theme. Artists are sponges, they absorb from society and give back to society. For instance, I have in mind a work by Bertina Lopes, which you may approach through an Agostinho Neto poem. I mention Bertina, but could just as easily name Malangatana, Alberto Chissano (sculptor), Craveirinha (writer), Noemia de Sousa (writer) and others, especially during the struggle for independence. In my practice, these intersections play a big role, because I often find myself reading or listening to music, chatting with a philosopher or just local people who are related to the research theme and, from that perspective, I get a deeper and

wider view, which allows me to explore other areas of knowledge.

AN: Finally, what do you think of geographical categorisations in describing or presenting art and artists from Africa?

G: I think artistic movements are the result of humanity's prejudices and these prejudices are part of our essence, therefore, they motivate our artistic actions.

### Interview between Azu Nwagbogu and Jorge Dias

Azu Nwagbogu (AN): Tell me a little about your journey curating art.

Jorge Dias (JD): It's a long story. It all started at school, the National Art School, here in Maputo. I started to show my art in galleries in 1992. Years later, I curated exhibitions for artists like Malangatana Ngwenya, Victor Sousa, Chicorro, Eugénio de Lemos, Gemuce, Maimuna Adam, Anésia Manjate and many others. I went to Brazil to study sculpture, in 1997, at the School of Fine Arts at Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. I came back, in 2002, and joined ten other artists to create MUVART (Mozambican Contemporary Art Movement). MUVART began with the artists, Gemuce, Ivan Serra, Anésia Manjate, Quentin Lambert, Marcos Muthewuye, Vânia Lemos, Carmen Maria, Xavier Mbeve and, later, Mudaulane Machakosa and myself joined.

AN: What about curatorial training? Was there an opportunity to train artists, at MUVART, and give them some tips and skills? Were artists invited from Africa, and beyond, to provide training or just some form of mentoring?

JD: There were not a lot of opportunities for curatorial training. Those that came up were for artistic production and exhibitions. Our artists had the opportunity to work with others from overseas, as MUVART hosted artists from Brazil, Italy, South Africa, Portugal, Sweden, USA, and Angola. They participated in workshops in Mozambique, South Africa, Congo, Portugal and Brazil. MUVART was part of two important exhibitions of contemporary art held in Lisbon and Madrid. Later on, in Italy, in South Africa and several more in Mozambique. A documentary film on MUVART was produced by a Mozambican filmmaker in 2004. MUVART participated in Mozambique Expo of Contemporary Art in 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010 and 2012.

AN: Is censorship one of the reasons why some works are rejected, or can't be shown? Are there religious or political themes that are sensitive?

JD: Censorship is very strong here, and it has been for years, both religious and political. Music is gaining ground and is not censored so much. However,

the new is not well perceived, here in Mozambique, and the strangeness of it is perhaps what makes it hard to accept. The art I engage with is new and this is not easily accepted.

AN: What do you think we can do to promote contemporary art in Mozambique and make it less alien to the public? Is there a possibility of curating a non-commercial contemporary art show or festival?

JD: Currently, I'm part of an institution, the Brazil-Mozambique Cultural Centre. Other venues are passive towards creating these kinds of exhibitions. Here, at Brazil-Mozambique, we try to create spaces for young artists, but at the same time we have to maintain a balance between them and the more stable, established artists, who still need to show their work. We also create spaces for brainstorming about art, holding meetings and planning exhibitions.

AN: What do you think, as a curator about working with archives?

JD: I have worked with the National Museum and its archive. So, I learned a lot about Mozambican art from these archives. This experience gave me a different understanding of the dimensions of producing Mozambican art. I have learned that the history of an artwork, and explaining that artwork, is very important when you are creating an exhibition. I am now learning to work with the museum's art repository. However, there is a lack of history around the objects in our repository and we need to do something about that. What we do have are stories of how they were made. From that, it's possible for us, as artists, to create another history. This was very influential for my work. I believe my role as a curator is to tell stories. The most meaningful projects for me are the ones where I get to work with archives.

AN: What do you perceive to be the current trends in contemporary art?

JD: Here in Mozambique people don't really consume art. So, it's not the most lucrative endeavour. We only have two art galleries here. They sell the more classical art. So, the contemporary artists that sell are those who have made a name for themselves overseas. There are about six or seven artists I know who sell, but they don't sell here. They sell their work overseas despite being Mozambican artists. What is trending now is photography.

AN: What do you think about that?

JD: What's most important is the message being conveyed through these artworks. So, I'm not too concerned about the materials themselves as I am about the message. In Mozambique, nationalism is used as a basis for art. So, there is a nationalist approach to artworks presented to the public. From Mozambique to the world, what is usually exported is art that represents a good image for the country.

AN: What exhibition would you like to curate if you had complete freedom and

full financial sponsorship? What would that exhibition look like, and which artists would you invite?

JD: It's not a fair question. But I would probably build a museum of contemporary art.

### Interview between Azu Nwagbogu and Rafael Mouzinho

Azu Nwagbogu (AN): In Mozambique, there is a condition of triple alienation: number one – the language, number two – geography, and number three – the disconnection caused by colonialism. How do you handle that as a curator? How do you create networks within Africa and diaspora?

Rafael Mouzinho (RM): My curatorial activity is still undergoing a process of consolidation. I act under the assumption that it is important to know the present and the foundations of production that are inherent to art in the current realities experienced in Africa and its diasporas, particularly in Mozambique. Getting close to this knowledge allows one to find points of view that are useful to engage with the past and envision the future. Unfortunately, language is still an obstacle when we look at the role it played in the history of colonisation. At this critical crossroads, it is urgent to find ways to overcome the blockages to networks, whether it is in Africa or the West, and whether you speak English, French or Portuguese.

One of the weaknesses of the artistic structure in Mozambique resides in the underdeveloped production of knowledge pertaining to the arts. Lately, however, there has been increased interest in research on topics related to art produced in Mozambique or from Mozambique, mainly in foreign academia. Just by glancing at our artistic scenario, we can deduce that this area of activity has only been given proper attention in the last few years, first with the publishing of *Arte em Moçambique: Entre a Construção da Nação e o Mundo Sem Fronteiras, 1932-2004*, by Alda Costa and, more recently, Filimone Meigos's doctoral thesis on visual arts, entitled *Dinâmicas das Artes Plásticas em Moçambique*<sup>2</sup>. If we assume that curatorial activities require, as a premise, an expert knowledge of the history of art as one of the critical and analytical tools for the production of discourse around artistic activities, we are in trouble. In Mozambique, this discipline has not yet found enough room to crystallise and allow us to know the history of art in Mozambique, but also in Africa.

2 The Dynamics of Plastic Arts in Mozambique

AN: How do you negotiate grants and sponsorship for residencies, curatorial workshops?

RM: The structure of sponsorship, residencies and curatorial workshops is very important. I have already personally benefited from some of them. My contact to curating only began following my training in the visual arts at Instituto Superior de Artes e Cultura (Higher Institute of Arts and Culture, in Maputo), in 2012. Since 2013, I have been part of the collection management team, at Eduardo Mondlane University, led by Alda Costa. In 2016, I took part in the residency of “*De Porto em Porto*” project, which focused on visual arts and education services. This included a special focus on the foundation’s collection and was supported by Suzanne Cotter (former director of the Serralves Museum) and by the Camões Institute, in partnership with Eduardo Mondlane University.

AN: Who would typically host these collaborations?

RM: Most of the artistic and cultural infrastructure such as museums, galleries and cultural centres is located in Maputo. And the relationship between the artist and these venues, especially the galleries, is still based on purely commercial models and criteria. There is a lack of urgency to increase platforms that are open and informed by the methodology of artistic activity itself. I’m talking about a structure that allows for a new relationship, that highlights the role of the artist, the curator, the critics, the academics, the museums and galleries, the dealers, the collectors, the audience and more. In that sense, the art collection of Eduardo Mondlane University, where my work is included, is developing a collection that can contribute to support education and research in art history. Another goal is to curate temporary and permanent exhibitions, provide artistic residencies, educational programmes, conferences and debates for academia and for the general public. The effectiveness of this undertaking still faces the inertia of public and private investment in this area.

AN: What are your curatorial and artistic references?

RM: My artistic contacts took shape during my training at the National Visual Arts School, from 1999 to 2004, during the peak of the emergence of numerous initiatives in Africa, that set the foundations of the artistic and cultural perspectives we see today. In Mozambique, we were still feeling the after-effects of the civil war and the implementation of reforms that were imposed by the new geopolitical reconfiguration that came with the end of the Cold War and Apartheid in South Africa. In that context, information on contemporary art only reached us through some issues of transnational magazines such as *Revue Noire*, in French, and *NKA Journal of Contemporary Art*, in English, available at the school library at the time. In Portuguese there was practically nothing. The debate and circulation of texts on contemporary art produced in Africa and other contexts

broadened with the emergence of MUVART in 2002. My participation in projects in South Africa allowed me to follow the work of Trinity Session, at the time composed of Katryn Smith, Stephen Hobbs and Marcus Neustetter, and the work of Moataz Nasr, in the Darb 1718 venue, in Cairo. I have to mention the work developed by Okwui Enwezor and Olu Oguibe, among others, which opened up a number of perspectives about art in Africa and its diaspora. Your platform in Lagos (Azu Nwagbogu) and the ones from Bisi Silva, Ngoné Fall, Koyo Kouoh and Paula Nascimento are some of the references that I take into account.

AN: As a curator, do you think it is important to collect work?

RM: I believe that the curator's activity goes beyond the work of collecting artistic objects. It is about posing questions about the world and the reality that we live in. The artist's work cannot function as an illustration of the curator's ideas, but as a compliment that is conveyed through the exhibition. And style is not a condition, but rather a consequence of this relationship.

AN: What is the role of the diaspora in contributing to the historiography of heritage and art in Africa?

RM: The history of Africa's emancipation and its diaspora stem from the same movement. We just need to look once more to the period before the struggles for independence, which arose in the 50s and later gained momentum through festivals such as The First World Festival of Black Art in Dakar 1966, the Algerian Pan-African Festival in 1969, Kinshasa in 1974, and Festac 77. It is urgent to identify more practical and effective mechanisms that can overcome the borders that insist on separation.

AN: Tell us about some exhibitions you worked on as a curator or any shows that you were involved in.

RM: I have been involved in small initiatives here, in Maputo. The most relevant was with Félix Mula,<sup>3</sup> not because of the value assigned, but because of the process it entailed and the visibility it brought to the debate about art in Mozambique.

AN: Which artists are you interested in? Who would you like to work with?

RM: I have been following several artists in Africa and the diaspora, particularly in Mozambique. Right now, I would be interested in working with Ângela Ferreira, Félix Mula and Simon Gush. A gathering of these three artists would open up a number of perspectives in Mozambique, South Africa, Portugal and, of course, Africa and the world.

AN: Do you consider your activities as pioneering in the art scene?

RM: I don't consider my work pioneering. My visibility involves many people who have been striving for the acknowledgement of art produced in Mozambique and its diaspora. The work of Berry Bickle during her stay

3 Winner of the 2016 Novo Banco Award



in Maputo; Ângela Ferreira who, since the early nineties, has included Mozambique in the discourse of her work; the art history documentation work performed by Alda Costa; and MUVART (Mozambican Contemporary Art Movement) are some notable examples that should be highlighted. But, also, artists who still find the strength to move forward within the confines of our artistic context and who are granting greater visibility to art produced in Mozambique.

AN: Do you think that being an artist and an activist are inextricable?

RM: As art history shows us, the artist plays an important role in sociocultural development, and even in the evolution of humankind. Like intellectuals and academics, artists should be responsible for identifying problems and phenomena that arise in society, and propose reflections, ideas and new perspectives, aiming not to present solutions, but to expand and maintain the debate.

AN: What do you think of art education? Should art be a mandatory requirement for every school child?

RM: Art education is an important component that contributes to the full development of individuals. In Mozambique, we can already see glimpses of this concern with the appearance of some institutions. And the art collection of Eduardo Mondlane University and Instituto Superior de Artes e Cultura, where I am involved, has that perspective, but there is a lot of work to be developed in that area.

AN: Are there non-profit art organisations in Mozambique?

RM: The concept of non-profit organisations devoted to the arts in Mozambique deserves a debate. There is the Art Centre in Maputo, which gathers most of the artists, but its actions lack a more adequate position on how to engage with art. In 2019, the philosopher Severino Ngoenha coordinated some discussions on the matter. There is also the Nkulungwana Association, which provides a diversified programme, uniting commercial works and art projects that call for a second look. With curatorial monitoring, this venue has already exhibited the works of artists such as Roger Ballen and Kudzunai Chiurai.

AN: What do you consider as the role of the internet and social networks for art practice?

RM: Access to wi-fi and social networks in Africa, particularly in Mozambique, is going through a process of adaptation and internalisation. Even though it favours the circulation of information, we see a significant propagation of generic content. On a more positive note, it allows the dissemination of content in various formats, as well as the exchange of knowledge and opinion-making. It enables us to introduce content that was considered rare, such as art production from other geographical areas and latitudes. And we are witnessing the incorporation of these new means within artistic proposals, integrating new media, with the internet's potential being expanded and explored. It is a tool to consider when we talk about the art today.

AN: What other ways can we grant opportunities to artists in Africa?

RM: I believe the main obstacles have already been identified, and proposals to fix these shortcomings are being prepared. Given the multiple channels available to share information, we need to resize and increase the existing structure and make it more horizontal. There is a need to redefine the role and relevance of the artistic and cultural mobility that operates in the African setting. It is necessary to transcend the framework of cultural policies, adopted for the development of this sector, but also to enable an understanding and knowledge of our realities within the continent and elsewhere.

# Photography from the shadows

Drew Thompson\*

The lives and works of photographers in Mozambique run parallel to the country's history as a Portuguese colony and as an independent nation. Colonial and independent governments alike have invested substantial manpower making and archiving photographs. At one level, racial segregation defined Portuguese colonial rule in Mozambique. At another level, commercial photography studios sharpened colour lines as they offered non-white populations new professional and creative opportunities to see within colonial spaces. The liberation movement *Frente da Libertação de Moçambique* (Frelimo) was perhaps the first and only independence effort in Africa to purposefully train some of its soldiers as photographers. Mozambique turned into an important regional and international hub for the exhibition of photography in southern Africa. As evidence, the nation was home to the first photographic training centre in the region, the *Centro de Documentação e Formação Fotográfica* (CDFF), which predates the more widely celebrated Market Photo Workshop in Johannesburg, South Africa. Despite this unprecedented and rich history, Mozambican photographers often go without lucrative gallery representation. Rarely do the works of Mozambican photographers, or the longer history of photography in Mozambique, feature in gallery and museum exhibitions outside of the continent.

As a technology, practice and mode of representation, photography in Mozambique developed and flourished in the shadows of its neighbour South Africa and the widely recognized studio-based practices of West Africa. No studio-based

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photographers in Mozambique have risen to the same global notoriety as Malian photographers Seydou Keita and Malik Sidibé, even as Mozambican photographers' practices show the artificiality and disingenuousness of concepts such as self-fashioning that have come to define West African commercial photography. In stark contrast to their West African counterparts, studio photographers in Mozambique determined the types of images people were able to take of themselves and the import of portraiture and photojournalism in Mozambique's anti-colonial struggle and postcolonial development. Mozambique's independence from Portugal came almost twenty years before the end of apartheid in South Africa, where anti-apartheid documentary photography has for a long time captured the world's imagination.

We might think of West African studio photography casting one shadow and South African documentary photography another. Colonial and independence-era photographers in Mozambique recall seeing images of and from South Africa but neither met the authors of these pictures nor photographed inside of South Africa. As war engulfed Mozambique, first with Portugal and then against apartheid Rhodesia (present-day Zimbabwe) and South Africa, news agencies viewed Mozambican photographers as extensions of a Communist state and ultimately favoured pictures of Mozambique by South African photographers. Mozambican photographers not only were in the shadows of these larger forces and continental visual practices, but also had to work with shadows. Mozambican press and commercial photographers, along with their sitters, grappled with the shadow of war and the literal shadows that repeatedly surfaced in their camera lenses, on negatives and in prints, due to poor film quality and crowds of patrons seeking headshots. The concept of photography from the shadows and the title of this essay, illuminates the contrasting photographic practices and modes of viewing, that continue to characterise photography in Mozambique.

For three quarters of the twentieth century, commercial photography studios dominated the photographic landscape of Mozambique. Settlers from Portugal, China, Goa and South Africa, ventured by sea and by land to Mozambique, where, alongside other populations native to Mozambique, they opened commercial studio businesses. None of the equipment either used or sold by photography studios was locally produced. Studios such as Foto Portuguesa, Foto Lusitania, Focus and Casa Spanos formed distribution agreements with leading photography companies and sold the latest Polaroid, Kodak, Ferrania, Fuji and Canon cameras and films. By the late 1940s and early 1950s, people no longer required photographers merely to take their portraits or to photograph birthdays, weddings, baptisms and other family celebrations, as was the common practice according to the acclaimed Mozambican writer Luís Bernardo Honwana.<sup>1</sup> The Mozambican studio photographer José António Manhiça initiated his career while working on the mines of South Africa. He used his earnings to purchase Yashica and Polaroid cameras, along with Kodak

1 Luís Bernardo Honwana, Interview by author, Maputo, Mozambique, July 2008.

films, and operated an informal studio outside of the mine gates.<sup>2</sup> Manhiça paid a local pharmacy to process his films. In the same way, Portuguese military soldiers stationed in Mozambique patronized local studios. The scenes photographed by these practitioners and patrons resonated differently with the experiences of the inhabitants of colonial Mozambique in part because of race relations and social configurations engendered by photography and the conditions of colonial rule. José Machado stayed in Mozambique after his mandatory service in the Portuguese army and worked as a studio photographer. From his perspective, whites generally never practiced street photography and blacks were rarely, if ever, clients of white photographers.<sup>3</sup> However, Ricardo Rangel's colonial-era press photographs challenge Machado's historical interpretation by presenting local non-white populations as the makers and consumers of their own photographs.

By the mid-to-late 1950s, studios transformed into film laboratories, and required additional staff. For example, Mozambique's most famous photographers, Ricardo Rangel and Kok Nam, entered into the photography profession by working in these laboratories. Under the cover of night, darkroom workers measured chemical solutions, washed and dried films and printed what Kok Nam called "the shit photos" of amateur, commercial and press, photographers.<sup>4</sup> Soon enough, darkrooms disrupted the colour lines enforced by colonial laws and transformed into transgressive spaces. Unusual and long working hours placed non-white darkroom workers at risk of violating the state curfew that required them to carry passbooks and leave the city limits after 9 p.m.<sup>5</sup> With the emergence and increased activities of film laboratories, having one's photograph taken or watching a photographer take pictures became integral to colonial and anticolonial experience. People carried images of themselves, sent images to loved ones working on the mines of South Africa, and hung pictures on the walls of their homes: activities that contributed to newspapers publishing photographs with increasing frequency.

The blurriness of colour lines disappeared in newsrooms as the press was responsible for producing an image that normalised Portuguese colonialism. In lieu of dedicated photography sections, colonial-era newspapers relied on commercial photography studios to generate photographs for publication. Newspaper editors lured Rangel and Nam from their commercial practices to their newsrooms as full-time photographers, though Rangel and Nam were by no means the only press photographers of this time. Soon thereafter, writing about photography accompanied the publication of photographs. Literary giants such as Luís Bernardo Honwana,

2 José António Mahiça, Interview by author, Maputo, Mozambique, September 2010.

3 José Machado, Interview by author, Maputo, Mozambique, Summer 2008 and February 2010.

4 Kok Nam, Interview by author, Maputo, Mozambique, July 2008. Also see, Drew Thompson, "Photographic Genres and Alternate Histories of Independence in Mozambique," in *Ambivalent: Photography and Visibility in African History*, edited by Patricia Hayes and Gary Minkley (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2019), 126-155.

5 Manuela Soeiro, Interview by author, Maputo, Mozambique, Mozambique 2010.

José Craveirinha and Calane da Silva captioned photographs by Rangel and other photographers while Rangel himself experimented with art criticism. Newspaper coverage included announcements of exhibitions, photography competitions and product demonstrations in addition to advertisements from commercial photography studios and standalone photographs. Visual coverage of events ran up against colonial practices of segregation and censorship. Photographer Carlos Alberto Vieira, who worked for the colonial daily *Notícias*, elected not to cover the Chamber of Commerce Christmas party because the host denied entry to the assigned writer, José Craveirinha.<sup>6</sup> The newspaper *Diário de Moçambique* faced frequent closures because editors elected to publish Rangel's photographs despite government censorship.<sup>7</sup> Ironically, newspaper coverage of art exhibitions showed Portuguese officials looking at the very photographs that colonial bureaucrats censored. By the early 1970s, the media landscape changed radically with the introduction of the weekly news magazine *Tempo*, where the editorial board included a dedicated photography section that published colour and black-and-white photographs. With *Tempo*, a space emerged for readers to comment on the photographs, or lack thereof, in their daily lives.

As a liberation movement, Frelimo's use of photography accompanied a larger diplomatic effort to achieve recognition of its war against Portugal and for Mozambique's independence. Frelimo trained the soldiers Carlos Djambo, Daniel Maquinasse, Simão Matias, José Soares and Artur Torohate as photographers. The Frelimo photographers pictured daily life in areas freed from Portuguese control, *zonas libertadas*, rather than producing individual headshots of populations that supported Frelimo. The acquisition of photography and printing supplies, alongside the hosting of foreign delegations, consisting of print and photojournalists, television crews and filmmakers, allowed the visitors to produce their own image of the liberation war for consumption by the outside world. When Frelimo came to power in 1975 it brought an extensive photographic archive and practicing philosophies, both shaped by the experience of guerrilla war in exile. Despite this history of photographic practice in the country, by 1975, the year of independence from Portugal, many populations in Mozambique had never seen an image of Frelimo let alone photographs printed in newspapers and magazines.<sup>8</sup> Technological constraints and political priorities limited portraiture and photographic display. Faced with the unprecedented need for government-issued identity cards, photography became associated with bureaucratic practice and people quickly came to understand post-independence historical developments in relation to their own abilities to obtain headshots. With the technical and aesthetic connection between commercial and press photography displaced, new ways of linking political discourse and visual representation emerged.

6 Joaquim Vieira, Interview by author, email correspondence, May 2011.

7 Beatrice Rangel, Interview by author, Maputo, Mozambique, April 2010.

8 Ahmed Ali, Interview by author, Maputo, Mozambique, July 2010.

As Mozambique's war against white settler rule shifted from Rhodesia to South Africa, new photography collectives and institutions opened. The *Associação Moçambicana de Fotografia* (AMF) offered classes, lectures, fieldtrips and competitions for photographers not affiliated with state-press units. Mozambique's president, Samora Machel and other members of his cabinet frequented exhibitions hosted at the AMF. Two years after becoming the first photographer to serve as the editor-in-chief of the Sunday-weekly *Domingo*, Rangel assumed the directorship of *Centro de Formação Fotográfica* (CFF), now called the *Centro de Documentação e Formação Fotográfica* (CDFF). With the aim of training civil servants as photographers and with input from Italian volunteers, the CDFF offered instructional courses that, as one Italian instructor Gin Angri explained, helped students "to learn how to tell the day-to-day reality."<sup>9</sup> Students, like Alfredo Paco who worked at the *Instituto de Comunicação Social* and enrolled in courses at the CDFF from 1983 to 1984, recall the significance of learning how to control the light that entered the camera's aperture and when to use flash to compensate for dark shadows.<sup>10</sup> While photographers like Paco learned to play with light and banish shadow, Rangel brought the shadows of the past to the present. Rather than continuing to photograph for the press, as many of his contemporaries and understudies did, Rangel returned to his colonial-era negatives and reprinted them for exhibitions and catalogues. In the process, certain historical figures and details came to the surface that colonial state censorship and news editing had cropped out of the picture frame. For a photographer like José Cabral, who the state banished from the press unit in the early 1980s partially because of some of his controversial photographs, the CDFF offered a space to reinvent his professional practice. The training of photographers required reversing not only the hierarchies of Portuguese colonialism, but of the press regulations that Frelimo introduced after independence. Italian involvement in the development and operation of the CDFF reduced the state's ability to control who practiced photography and the types of pictures that newspapers printed. Eventually, a space emerged to imagine the nation's past in relation to the art market and neoliberalism.<sup>11</sup> By the late 1980s, the CDFF had developed into a photographic archive and, through its various activities, produced a picture of urban daily life that had largely remained, if not undocumented, in the shadows of state practices.

In light of the ratification of a new constitution in 1992, which ended state control of the press and conferred certain freedoms to the media, press and commercial photography entered a period of transition. The early 1990s witnessed group and solo exhibitions of Mozambican press photographers in Mozambique, Italy and other nations associated with Frelimo's liberation and post-independence struggles.

9 Gin Angri, Interview by author, E-mail correspondence, 2011.

10 Alfredo Paco, Interview by author, Maputo, Mozambique, October 2010.

11 Grateful to Suren Pillay for bringing these observations to my attention. See, Discussant remarks by Suren Pillay, University of Western Cape Contemporary History Seminar, Cape Town, South Africa, July 2012.

This trend in photography exhibition culminated with *Iluminando Vidas: Ricardo Rangel e a Fotografia Moçambicana (Illuminating Lives: Ricardo Rangel and Mozambican Photography)*, an exhibition and catalogue that mapped the history of press photography and the various actors involved.<sup>12</sup> Alongside these activities, the genre of African photography received increasing global recognition because of a series of occurrences, including: 1 – Okwui Enwezor’s curation of *In/Sight: African Photographers, 1940 to the Present* (1996) and *The Short Century: Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa, 1945-1994* (2001); 2 – the publication by Revue Noire of *Anthology of African Photography, Indian Ocean, and Diaspora* (1999); and 3 – the biennale *Rencontres de Bamako*, which started in 1994.<sup>13</sup> The enhanced profile of Mozambican photography sparked two iterations of the short-lived Maputo photography biennale *Foto Festa* (2002 and 2004). Nevertheless, for reasons of language barriers combined with the artworld’s longstanding fascination with South Africa, few Mozambican press photographers have been able to establish themselves as internationally exhibiting commercial artists.<sup>14</sup>

Rangel unleashed a brutal critique of the state of political and economic affairs and the uncritical engagement with photography in his 2002 text, *Foto-jornalismo ou Foto-Confusionismo*.<sup>15</sup> This opened up space for photographic practice, if not for debate. The late 2000s and early 2010s saw the rise of artists who came of age during independence and the civil war that engulfed Mozambique. *Atlantica: Contemporary Art from Mozambique and its Diaspora* juxtaposes photographs with multi-media art and curatorial practices. On the one hand, Felipe Branquinho, Mário Macilau, Félix Mula and Mauro Pinto openly identify as photographers who appear uninterested in re-litigating the nuances of colonialism and preserving the historical narrative of liberation. On the other hand, artists like Ângela Ferreira, Camila Maissune and Eurídice Kala adopt multi-media artistic practices that interrogate the photographic medium and unearth unexplored aspects of the history of visual production and representation in Mozambique. The photographers and multi-media artists published here have achieved varying forms of international recognition

12 See Grant Lee Neuenburg and Bruno Z’Graggen, *Iluminando Vidas: Ricardo Rangel e a Fotografia Moçambicana* (Basel: Christoph Merian Verlag, 2002). Several monographs on Rangel followed. See Ricardo Rangel, *Pão Nosso de Cada Noite* (Maputo: Marimbique, 2004) and Ricardo Rangel, *Ricardo Rangel* (France: Les Éditions de L’Oeil, 2004).

13 See, Okwui Enwezor, eds. *The Short Century: Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa, 1945-1994* (Munich: Prestel, 2001); and Okwui Enwezor, ed., *In/Sight: African Photographers, 1940 to the Present* (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 1996).

14 Patricia Hayes documents this transformation of South African documentary photographers, including David Goldblatt, Santu Mofokeng, and Guy Tillim to name a few. See Patricia Hayes, “Power, Secrecy, Proximity: A Short History of South African Photography,” *Kronos* No. 33 (November 2007), 139-162; Patricia Hayes, “Santu Mofokeng, Photographs: ‘The violence is in the knowing,’” *History and Theory*, Vol. 48:4 (2009): 34-51.

15 See Ricardo Rangel, *Foto-jornalismo ou Foto-Confusionismo* (Maputo: Imprensa Universitária, UEM, 2002).



for their respective works, including exhibitions at *La Biennale di Venezia* and *Recontres do Bamako* in addition to awards such as BES Photo, a contemporary art prize awarded to artists from Portugal and Portuguese-speaking countries. Notwithstanding their specific media and notoriety, all the artists remain firmly committed to working and exhibiting in Mozambique.

Supply shortages, self-censorship and popular demands for headshots prevented Mozambicans from photographically documenting certain aspects of their daily lives. Familiar with the legends of Mozambican photography, Branquinho, Macilau, Mula and Pinto developed their individual practices outside of the traditional structures and norms of press photography. Concerns over the present moment take priority in their photographic explorations that do away with the highly-politicised aesthetic and technical restrictions associated with black-and-white analogue photography in Mozambique. Starting in 2011, Branquinho photographed buildings and other architectural landmarks that were central to Portuguese colonial occupation. Part of the series involved photographing the very spaces, including cinemas, archives and a radio station, where people either made or viewed audiovisual materials associated with Mozambique's history as a colony and independent nation. In parallel, he photographed the makeshift marketplaces that more recently have drawn the ire of the Frelimo government. Ambitions to cultivate a photographic aesthetic from the perspective of residents living in the outskirts of Maputo, the *suburbios*, animate the work of Pinto and Macilau. In the 2012 series *Dá Licença*, Pinto explores how residents of Mafalala make a home. In this series, one never sees the inhabitants of the spaces pictured and is left to imagine possible inhabitants through the items that occupy the photographed scenes. Macilau documents the lives of people who make their homes around and in between walls, rather than within them. Through a combination of photomontage and visual effects, he questions how we see conditions of homelessness and displacement. Reclaiming photographic portraiture through these collective explorations of home interiors, workplaces, funeral homes and mental health institutions result in a picture of Mozambicans, rather than of their leaders, and displays forms of looking that unfold within inhabited spaces. Photographing without flash or showing views from interiors to the outside world are now common practice.

Contemporary artists from Mozambique also engage with photography as a site of historical inquiry and recovery. Félix Mula vividly recalls learning photography from his father, who had studied the practice while working for Chinese settlers in Mozambique. In the series *Idas e Voltas* (2012-2015), Mula interlaces his and his father's personal histories using photography with the long-forgotten story of Chinese populations living in colonial Mozambique. He photographs the canteens and convenience stores, that Chinese populations operated and frequented. In a similar storytelling vein, Eurídice Kala photographs herself in her wedding dress in a variety of poses and settings. Her willingness to turn the camera on herself highlights aspects of erasure and 'whitening' that have long unfolded around brown bodies.

In *Sea-(Escapes)* (2016), she films from various angles Polaroid prints of scenes of water and coastlines in an attempt to “make visible... the ongoing re-routing of history and discourses that does not include certain spaces.”<sup>16</sup> Ângela Ferreira is not the author of specific photographs. Instead, she uses found stills of film screenings, government buildings and memorial sites, sometimes in juxtaposition with moving images, in order to expose the limited sight lines of cameras and the short-sightedness of image-making projects, sponsored by the Portuguese and Mozambican governments in the wake of colonization and independence.

Recent histories of contemporary art in Mozambique separate photography from other visual media such as painting, sculpture and conceptual art.<sup>17</sup> In Mozambique, photography has long remained culturally and institutionally outside the realm of visual arts and is arguably perceived as more significant than other modes of visual practice. Nevertheless, an element of masculinity continues to define the medium, practice and profession of photography in Mozambique. Many press photographers attached their own political liberation to sexual liberation, leading them to photograph women nude, giving birth or socialising.<sup>18</sup> Male photographers used women as subjects to disrupt the picture of colonialism orchestrated by colonial Portuguese administrators and the postcolonial order of things. Female photographers have sometimes questioned the objectification of the female subject. Maissune’s innovative series *3x4* (2011), which entailed working with female incarcerated populations, does not merely seek to tell the untold stories of women. Embracing moments of photographic refusal and opacity, she questions the very ways female bodies have been photographed and considers how photographs have trained audiences to look at female sitters less as the subjects of history, than as objects of the gaze. Missing from this history of photography from the shadows is the story of the female photojournalists Celeste MacArthur and the countless other women who not merely posed for the camera but also took photographs.<sup>19</sup> Irrespective of gender and artistic medium, there is a training and un-training of the gaze associated with photography from the shadows.

16 Eurídice Kala and Lucy Cotter, “Becoming the Archive: A Dialogue with Eurídice Kala,” *Journal of Fine Art Research*, Vol. 2:1 (2017): 1 (accessed 13 May 2020), <https://www.mahkuscript.com/articles/10.5334/mjfar.27/print/>.

17 One of the more widely read histories includes, Vanessa Díaz Rivas, “Contemporary Art in Mozambique: Reshaping Artistic National Canons,” *Critical Interventions*, Vol. 8:2 (2014): 160-175. See also Alda Costa, *Arte e Artistas em Moçambique: Diferente Gerações e Modernidades* (Maputo: Marimbique, 2014).

18 I am grateful to Patricia Hayes for highlighting this point during conversations about my work on Mozambican photography, which took place over the course of 2011 and 2012.

19 See Sandrine Collard (Guest Curator), *The Way She Looks: A History of Female Gazes in African Portraiture*, Toronto, Ryerson Image Center, Ryerson University, September 11-December 8, 2019.

Contemporary Mozambican artists continue to embrace shadows both as objects of study and as worthy photographic subjects. In so doing, they disrupt the highly politicised notions of truth and cultural relevancy that have long elevated photography over other forms of visual arts practice and offer a new historical lens on the postcolonial condition.

# A read-through of Mozambique's Liberation Script

Alvaro Luís Lima\*

Post-independence history is not a favourite topic of polite conversation in Mozambique. The episodes that shaped the country since the end of Portuguese colonialism in 1975 are fresh in many people's memories, but the invitation to speak about them with anyone beyond close relations is inevitably met with reservation. In the twenty years since independence, Mozambique witnessed sweeping transformations that included the exiting of most of the white population, the country's self-affirmation as Marxist-Leninist, a violent and long-lasting civil war, peace agreements, structural adjustment policies with the help of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and the establishment of a multi-party democracy. One would expect to hear a cacophony of voices bustling from these decisive turning points in the country's recent history. But when silence is broken, it tends to make room for the rehearsal of a national narrative that is well-known for its formulaic, if not propagandist quality. Writer and historian João Paulo Borges Coelho calls it the "Liberation Script" (Coelho 2013).

Coelho coined this term to describe an all-encompassing discourse framing his country's decolonisation as a continuous struggle led by Frelimo, the anticolonial front turned governing party after independence. The Liberation Script characterises Frelimo as the protagonist of the nation's drama, working through historical impasses as a way of securing national sovereignty and unity. Coelho builds on Giorgio Agamben to conceptualise the Script as an apparatus, a broad structure defined by "anything that has in some way the capacity to capture, orient, determine, intercept,

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model, control, or secure the gestures, behaviours, opinions, or discourses of living beings” (Agamben 2009a, 14). As a distinctly Mozambican apparatus, the Script captures the country’s national identity by functioning as what Coelho emphasises as a “*total historical explanation*,” and as such it is constructed as a tautology “with fixed steps and a fixed conclusion or end” (Coelho 2013, 21). It contextualises the present as continuation of the revolutionary process and legitimises the government as its righteous agent (Coelho 2013, 22). The conclusion is the complete liberation of the Mozambican spirit.

Despite the expanding gap between the policies enacted by the state and the Liberation Script, the latter persists as a simplistic response to the increasingly fragmented experience of being Mozambican. Its successful continuity after the country’s liberalisation indicates optimal functioning within late capitalism. Agamben argues that in our times apparatuses cover us “from top to toe” (Agamben 2009a, 16), operating as important tools in which “docile, yet free, bodies... assume their identity in their ‘freedom’ as subjects in the very process of desubjectivisation” (Agamben 2009a, 19 – 20). In minimising the exercise of one’s critical faculties, an apparatus creates a subject whose “own truth is no longer at stake” (Agamben 2009a, 21). This disturbing effect becomes clear when listening to the reproduction of the Liberation Script from the mouths of many people that otherwise are not part of the government leadership and possibly even critical of the administration. Echoing Coelho, their performance shows the Liberation Script as “the experience everybody should aim to have had and the one that should become the experience of all” (Coelho 2013, 23).

Most contemporary artists are not old enough to have vivid memories of the early years of independence, but the Liberation Script has made them, along with all Mozambicans, actors in its continuous re-staging. However, unlike the first generations working in independent Mozambique, younger artists are more resistant to letting their work become an extension of the state. Whereas the older generation prided itself on being self-taught – and, as a result, more adequate representatives of the People –, younger artists are more likely to have been formally trained in art schools from around the world, bringing new languages and perspectives to their role as Mozambican artists. The new generations emphasise their break from the past by creating works that are self-consciously contemporary: in 2002, many of them created an artistic movement focused specifically on expanding Mozambique’s discourse on contemporary art, known as MUVART (an acronym translated into English as “Movement of Contemporary Art”).<sup>1</sup> Interpreting this contemporary turn simply as an entryway into the global contemporary art scene risks falling into the traps of what art historian Kaira Cabañas calls the “monolinguisism of the global,” the tendency to homogenise diverse aesthetic phenomena by their pseudomorphism

1 For more on MUVART, see Vanessa Díaz Rivas’s article “Contemporary Art in Mozambique: Reshaping Artistic National Canons” (Rivas 2014).

(Cabañas 2018, 143-44). Contemporary art is an aesthetic category in *Mozambican art* (Rivas 2014, 160), emerging from a distinctively local discourse, even when appropriating influences from across the world. Removing these artists from the Mozambican historical context overlooks the aesthetic background that makes their work uniquely interesting.

The many visual languages that shape contemporary art allow for innovative read-throughs of the Liberation Script. Agamben writes that “contemporariness inscribes itself in the present by marking it above all as archaic” (Agamben 2009b, 50), and indeed the most evocative works of contemporary art from Mozambique show the past within the present. They refer to other times as a way of addressing what is hardest to capture in our proximity to the present-day experience. These works show that even the most contemporary languages, though they may be distant from the aesthetics of the previous generations, remain part of a familiar discourse, dating back many decades. The archaic within the most contemporary expressions of art creates new interpretations of the national narrative, by actively estranging what was considered Mozambican art, up to that point. This contemporary stance seems, on the surface, new.

### Utopia

The visual arts have their own set of aesthetic formulations that contribute to the Liberation Script that Coelho identifies. Utopia, the collective and women, are three particularly important themes in the visual expression of this Mozambican apparatus. Among the artists working through them, Ângela Ferreira draws on archival and historical research as a central tool of her practice. In *For Mozambique (Model No. 1 of Screen-Tribute-Kiosk Celebrating a Post-Independence Utopia)*, from 2008, the artist looks back at the climate of excitement and experimentation of the early years of Mozambican socialism which, as the title indicates, underscored the role of utopia in the construction of the national narrative. Ferreira searches for evidence of a Mozambican parallel to what Nadine Siegert refers to as a “utopian generation” of Angolan artists working in the first years of socialism (Siegert 2016, 109).<sup>2</sup> Through the extensive research needed for the development of her work, the artist seeks vestiges of Mozambique’s utopia in the images, sounds and documents increasingly effaced by historical distance.

Quoting Gustav Klucis’s model for an agitprop kiosk conceived for the IV Comintern Congress and the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the October Revolution in 1922, Ferreira’s monumental wooden structure leans on the ceiling, while projecting a video on each side of a rectangular platform at the top of the installation. Klucis originally developed the medium of agitprop to create an immersive experience

2 Siegert builds on Angolan writer Pepetela’s use of the expression in Portuguese for the title of her book *A Geração da Utopia* (Pepetela 1992).

between its audience and the revolutionary values of the newly established Soviet government. Those interacting with these structures would be immersed in a space shaped by photomontages, film screens, radio and written material, rather than holding a reserved distance typical of a museum display (Lodder and Hammer 1991, 70). Further highlighting the revolutionary theme, the 23.5-degree angle of Ferreira's installation coincides with the earth's axis of rotation, a quotation of Vladimir Tatlin's famous project for a monument commemorating the Third International (1919-20). By forging a juxtaposition between the movement of communism and the earth, Tatlin poetically underscores the global and unifying ambitions of the International, and the role of a new aesthetics in "creating a new world" (Tatlin 1920, 207). Based on these references to Russian Constructivism alone, it is clear that Ferreira's work seeks to reassemble pieces of a radical past, when an artist was not only a social critic, but also held the role of reinventing the very conditions of material production and lived experience (Gough 2005, 8).

Russian avant-gardism juxtaposes two projections capturing the momentum around Mozambique's own political ambitions in the early years of nation building. One is a video of Bob Dylan's 1976 performance of his song "Mozambique." The clip illustrates the international excitement for Mozambique's future, following its victory over one of the longest anticolonial wars in Africa, sparking the audience's imagination of what freedom may look like in the "beach of sunny Mozambique" (Pohlen 2008, 48). This atmosphere of solidarity is also captured in another projection in Ferreira's work, Jean Rouch's *Makwayela*. Shot in 1977, the short film was part of Rouch's first visit to Maputo that led to his partnership with Eduardo Mondlane University, in the hopes of fostering 8mm film production as means of diffusing a democratising and affordable national production (Gray 2020, 136). *Makwayela*, which is the only work Rouch made during his stay in Mozambique, reveals the experimental atmosphere of the time through its choice of media, theme and production. Focusing on a performance of the music genre that gives the film its name, Rouch shows the continuation of a tradition that precedes the revolution through a group of factory workers, a social organisation of renewed importance under socialism. The group's notable inclusion of a woman further signals the social changes affecting all areas of society, including a musical tradition that had been historically limited to men.<sup>3</sup> Ferreira's historical references allude to a time in which radical political and aesthetic experimentation appeared to be within arm's reach, sparking nostalgia for a utopian future that was left in the past.

Ana Balona de Oliveira notices that this work offers a multiplicity of "open-ended

3 Mozambique's attempt to radicalise the cultural production also brought Jean-Luc Godard and Anne-Marie Miéville to the country, to develop a proposal for the country's public broadcasting. Godard was invited by the Minister of Security, Jacinto Veloso, and the Mozambican government in 1978, but his ambitious proposal of a television made by non-professional people across the country was rejected for its high cost and impracticability. (Gray 2011, 149).

spaces for possible futurities” (Oliveira 2016, 88). A closer examination of Ferreira’s quotation on Russian Constructivism shows the multitude of possibilities in rethinking the role of utopia in the production of Mozambique’s national narrative. She quotes an agitprop that Klucis created to improve public opinion on the revolution but remained only on paper. Whereas this original media adds to the many attempts of the Russian avant-garde of politicising aesthetic experimentation, the lack of support for its own production expresses its limitations. Referencing another work that never saw completion, the installation’s angle further accentuates this point (Stanishev 2017, 149). Ferreira’s interest in Russian Constructivism, which dates from her time as an art student in Cape Town, offers an interesting juxtaposition to Mozambique’s own historical development: much like the experimentation of Russian avant-garde, which was followed by the literalism of Socialist Realism, Mozambique’s ambitious experimentations in politics and cinema would soon take a different turn. After all, Rouch’s project never developed into a widespread practice in Mozambican cinema, expressing the state’s limitations in pursuing a wide range of experimentation with moving image. The invitation for a comparison between otherwise quite different historical and aesthetic contexts confirms Elvira Dyangani Ose’s observation that Ferreira’s strategy provides viewers “with the possibility of reading between the lines” (Ose 2015, 17). Rather than correcting the historical record, the artist opens up room for ambiguity and reflection, loosening the tight knots of a rigidly compiled historical narrative.

The vanishing excitement of the early years of independence inevitably raises questions about Mozambique’s political present. Far from exuding creativity and free expression, the present relies on formulaic references to a linear path to progress that excludes experimentation, sometimes under the cover of immediate calls for “development.” The work implicitly discusses what did not come to fruition as the state became increasingly more conventional and conservative in its aesthetic and political projects. This is why Ferreira’s 2015 solo exhibition was titled *Monuments in Reverse*: works such as *For Mozambique* present a past that “insists on summoning the present to the unfulfillment of its futures” (Oliveira 2015). This work is not a celebration of the accomplishments of the past, but a tribute to the desire for what could have been. It follows Siegert’s call for a similar aesthetic response to Angola’s socialist past, with the German art historian arguing that “thinking and practice have to move away from a vision of positive future towards a critique of the unfulfilled utopia in the present” (Siegert 2018, 230). The archival material in Ferreira’s work shows the loss of creative potential in favour of protecting a particular vision of what the future should look like. Liberation through the radical reinvention of the relationship between art and life is presented by the installation as a ghost returning from a past long gone. *For Mozambique* is a work about a sequestered future, in



which the possibility of liberation is a residue emanating from the archive.<sup>4</sup>

Ferreira's work shows the role of utopia in enforcing confidence in the country's political direction, a tool that relies on distancing oneself from the challenges and failures of the present to focus on future possibilities. In exchange for contentment with the insufficiencies of the present, utopia promotes an idealised future achieved with great struggle but, seemingly, never too far from one's grasp. By highlighting the euphoria of working for a project, the installation shows how an era envisioned the future, an image that could not be farther from the circumstances in which present-day viewers find themselves. In the eyes of the twenty-first century, the aspirations of 1970s Mozambique are nothing like the immersive political experience intended by Klucis's kiosks. Instead, they are images evoking distant curiosity. Ferreira shows the investment of the first years of independence in the coming of a time that is not theirs, making *For Mozambique* an installation about the continuous national process of projecting into the future. In the hope of offering a challenge to the static past, advanced by the Liberation Script, Coelho reminds us that "it is not just the future that is open to a myriad of possibilities" (Coelho 2013, 30). The gaps and failures of an idealised Mozambican past are precisely the points of the nation's Script that allow for surprising read-throughs.

### The collective

Nothing can express more fragility than the continuous need for repetition. Repeating suggests a position of insecurity, in which a narrative must be reiterated in order to assure its significance. The irony of this operation is that the very act, meant to sustain the claim to power, opens up the possibility for disruption. The more a narrative is repeated, the less control one has maintaining its initial meaning, slowly wearing it off through recurrent use. This is precisely the argument of "Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through," an essay in which Freud argues that the possibility of resolving a conflict emerges through its repetition, which is slowly decentred by the analysis (Freud 1914, 155). As a form of repression, which acts out a memory without having to address it as a continuation of the past, repetition opens the door to new interpretations of the action, together with the past where it originates. Margaret-Anne Hutton makes this point succinctly by describing repetition as "a symptom of continued epistemic uncertainty" (Hutton 2018, 39). Read-throughs of the Liberation Script give contemporary artists from Mozambique the possibility of unsettling the apparatus that aims to engulf them.

The image of the collective is a favourite tool for such read-throughs. Conscious of how the previous generations featured the collective in their work, contemporary

4 The loss of utopia as political motor from Mozambique's socialism is also a theme in Filipe Branquinho's *Occupation* series, which I discuss in this volume's essay "In Search of Nothing: Filipe Branquinho and the Void of Modernity."

artists employ this motif as an important tool to engage with the political discourse of the past. In the first years following independence, artists pictured the collective as a favoured expression of the Mozambican People, a thematic choice that became particularly famous through Malangatana Ngwenya's paintings, dating back to the early 1960s. The collective came to be the visual embodiment of Mozambique's national identity and its tie to a socialist project. Implying a relationship between Frelimo's regime as a socialism emerging from the masses,<sup>5</sup> this motif came to occupy most of the visual compositions created until the late 1990s.<sup>6</sup> This image advanced an ideology of liberation through the new political system, as it was seen as visual evidence of the government's validity, by presenting the artist as spontaneously voicing its socialist values. The anonymous collective expressed an important ideological support of the state: hardly ever presented as an orderly group formation, it appeared as sustaining a self-contained logic within an otherwise chaotic and suffocating bond. The resurfacing of this image in contemporary art expresses the malleability of the Mozambican apparatus.

Jorge Dias, who was trained in his home country, as well as Brazil, emphasises the catastrophic aspects of the collective through its association with infestations, swarms, colonies, and plagues. His focus on the abominable edge of this social formation includes the various insects seen in *Habilitação ao Zero* (2004), the swarm of crickets in *Praga, Humilhação aos Deuses Responsáveis pela Abundante Colheita* (2016), or beetles in *Origem e Estrutura Arquitetônica* (2018). The collective power of these plagues takes on a more disturbing meaning if thought of as a social commentary on the political manipulations occurring in the present day. In *Praga*, an installation from 2007, life-size sculptures of rats, made from paper paste, occupy most of the exhibition space in an overwhelming experience of a plague that is underscored by piling several of the rodents onto each other. The work alludes to the European folk tale of Pied Piper of Hamelin (Cabrita 2010), in which an angered piper punishes a village for refusing to pay him in exchange for having played his magic flute to hypnotise all rats in town to drown into the sea. In revenge for the villagers' refusal to pay him, the piper does the same with the town's children. The story can be seen as a warning for collective mobilisation: the same tune that promises radical social benefits can also become the instrument of disturbing consequences. Through

5 This association can be traced back to the anticolonial war and the mobilisation of Makonde's *ujamaa*, carvings made from a single log depicting several interlacing bodies supporting one another. As much of the war took place in the north of the country, where most Makonde live, many people from the ethnic group were strongly involved in the anticolonial efforts. Makonde sculpture helped to support Frelimo financially, as the front sold these objects internationally, and ideologically, with the suggestions that the *ujamaa* were a material and thematic expression of Frelimo's liberation. For more on the role of Makonde art in Frelimo's vision of liberation, see Alexander Bortolot (Bortolot 2013).

6 The collective also became an exhibition model after independence, when group exhibitions were the standard and the first individual exhibition only happened in 1982 (Costa 2013, 290).

repetition of the exact same power re-enacted by the piper, the initially celebrated action of getting rid of the rats is transformed into an unspeakable tragedy.<sup>7</sup>

The use of cheap commodities to give shape to such plagues makes them even more disturbing. In *Praga, Humilhação aos Deuses Responsáveis pela Abundante Colheita*, for example, the crickets are plastic toys that one would likely find in a wholesale market, sold by the pound. Beyond their symbolism as hostile creatures, their role as unnecessary and cheap consumer goods bear evidence of the transformations of economic conditions shaping social ties. This choice of material questions the meaning of continuing to speak of the collective when the core of social relations has shifted from production to consumption, from the central role of the workers to that of the consumer. In his choice of material, Dias draws from an extensive history that dates to the historical European avant-garde, probing the fetishistic role of the commodity under capitalism. His work expands this practice to the particularities of Mozambique by colliding with the representation of the collective and raises a question that begs to be answered: could the collective be a new Mozambican commodity?

Beyond metaphorical re-readings of the collective, artists also work with metonymic reinterpretations of this social formation, by using objects that shape it in the present. Hilário Pompeu Gemuce and Félix Mula transform the collective of contemporary Mozambique into a multitude of drivers stuck in traffic. In an installation from 2013 called *Hora de Ponta*, Portuguese for “rush hour,” numerous toy cars chaotically occupy a large extension of the exhibition space. Gemuce, who had his art training in Ukraine, and Mula, who studied in Mozambique and Réunion, look back at the collective with an ironically contemporary twist: now a chaotic landscape of individuals that seem to be one of the same with their properties. In a dramatic departure from radical values, the “collective” is no longer depicted as a political force, but is constituted by a car-owning bourgeoisie that sees others as obstacles to move from one place to the next. Whereas earlier generations tended to represent the collective as an interlacing of bodies in intimate dependence for the harmony of the whole composition, the collective of *Hora de Ponta* is evoked by chaotic cars that shelter and alienate. The installation contrasts the current social realities of the country with the persistence of a political discourse repeated over many decades.

Participation is another way of evoking the collective in this installation, as the viewers were invited to contribute by bringing their own car toys to be added to the

7 Dias has been exploring the creative possibilities of using newspapers for years (Costa 2010) and its usage as the main material to build his rats further evokes *Praga's* power as political critique. During socialism, the periodical press was one of the most important vehicles for the diffusion of the state's discourse. As such, it is an ideal tool to engage with the Liberation Script that has occupied its pages throughout the decades. Just as the collective is repeated over and over again to a disturbing effect in its reimagination as a pack of rats, the words filling the newspapers, once supporting the Script, are now also part of Dias's plague.

piece. Gemuce explains that this method was meant to create a conversation about contemporary art with a public otherwise unfamiliar with its language (Gemuce 2018). But perhaps the most interesting element of this action is the re-enactment of a collective production of a work of art, which alludes to the historical making of murals in Mozambique, predominantly collective and often anonymous (Sachs 1983); *Hora de Ponta* momentarily nurtures a sense of collective purpose through the request for participation in a work that thematically addresses the shortcomings of collective relations in contemporary Mozambique. The role of participation in this work alludes to Nicolas Bourriaud's relational aesthetics, a practice with great international popularity since the 1990s (Bourriaud 1998). Yet, even if one accounts for relational aesthetics in this piece, the implications of creating the "micro-utopias" proposed by Bourriaud are muted by the antisocial theme of the work. Pairing the traffic jam with a modest invitation for viewer's participation, Gemuce and Mula's work emphasises the continuous shortcomings of aiming to build a utopic society through the idealisation of the collective.

*Portas Secretas*, a 2013 photograph made by Gemuce, further exemplifies the discrepancy between historical idealisations of the collective and the new relationships evoked by contemporary artists. As *Hora de Ponta*, the image presents the theme of the collective through the objects that shape social conditions. Gemuce captures several pieces of a computer keyboard of different colours and signs. Assembled in, seemingly, no particular order and covering the whole picture frame, they express a cacophony of elements that allude to earlier Mozambican artworks on the collective, often represented as an unruly formation through *horror vacui*. In Gemuce's image, the individual is implied by his or her former use of the objects assembled. Diversity is emphasised by the various types of buttons and signs, but this assortment of keys has solely an instrumental purpose. Showing the effects of time, these keys imply a diversity of bodies channelled into technical functions that are now discarded as useless.

In this image of disassembled keys, Gemuce points to the meaningless of letters, which have been displaced from their typical assemblage of signifiers. The compilation of letters does not hold any logic as a whole, as if a crude expression of the Real, or what remains unregistered by discourse (Lacan 2007, 413). The image captures the void within the very structure of language, offering a reminder that even the most evocative signifiers are made by several meaningless letters devoid of any referent. Playing on this epistemic instability, the image articulates the formal organisation of the collective as a signifier that does not have any fixed referent: the collective is estranged by the slipping taking place in each of its new representations. Fashioned as commodities, pests, or keys of a computer keyboard, the collective is represented by artists such as Dias, Mula, and Gemuce as a powerful instrument in making the national narrative unrecognisable and perhaps, like the keyboard keys, even out of order.

## Women

Samora Machel, Frelimo's leader and soon-to-become Mozambique's first president, declared in a 1973 speech that "the liberation of women is a fundamental necessity for the revolution, a guarantee of its continuity and a condition for its success" (Machel 1981). Part of an extensive rhetorical corpus emphasising the role of women in national liberation, this famous passage situates the defeat of patriarchy as a vital tool of Frelimo's political persuasion since its early years. Frelimo's vocal support of feminism placed the anticolonial front among the few in Africa to see gender equality as a core value of its political vision (Casimiro 2001, 96). Considering the importance of women's liberation in the national discourse, it should be no surprise that this theme is among the liveliest focuses of the youngest generation of artists. These artists are already doing a read-through of the Liberation Script by addressing the continuous sexism of the country's institutions. Of course, feminism is not an exclusively Mozambican concern, but contemporary artists from this country should be contextualised within the extensive national discourse on women, to avoid speaking of them as a monolingual phenomenon. The sexism embedded in contemporary Mozambique underscores the gap between the historical evocations of the Script and the lived experience of women in the country.

Camila Maissune is among the Mozambican artists resisting the reduction of women to a political slogan. She used her Brazilian training as an anthropologist to spend three months alongside inmates of two female detention centres in Maputo, Maputo's Civil Prison and the Centre of Female Detention of Ndlhavela. The photographs from this fieldwork led to *3x4*, a series whose title alludes to the standard dimensions of photo documentation in the country. The reference to images used as tools of control, classification and regulation signals the artist's interest in examining how representations of women participate in the state apparatus. But despite the title chosen, the face is the only part of the women's bodies that is actively concealed from the black and white images. In the anonymity of faceless photographs, women are identified by scars that mark the violence inflicted on their bodies, a violence that the state largely ignores. In Maissune's images, women are entrapped by the same state that claimed to protect them: most of the inmates were arrested for crimes that reflect the government's lack of protection against domestic violence and sexual abuse. Maissune describes women's rehabilitation process in the carceral system in Mozambique as centred around "criminological theories emphasising domesticity and the enforcement of femininity" (my translation, Sousa and Monteiro 2015, 246). The pervasive sexism shows the gap between state discourse and lived experience, an uncomfortable truth that has affected even the highest levels of the political elite.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> For example, Valentina Guebuza, daughter of former Mozambique president Armando Emilio Guebuza, was shot and killed by her husband over "domestic disagreements" in 2016 (A. S. Lima 2016).

The institutional enforcement of women's social marginalisation is made clear in the many images that juxtapose a scar from a woman's body with an architectural detail of the prison. 3x4 follows a tradition of feminist works of art that show the spatial constitution of patriarchy, of which Louise Bourgeois' *Femme Maison* series (1946-47) is a classic example. But Maissune moves away from the tendency to focus on women's historical designation to the private sphere. She examines the state's management of violence through the public institution of prisons, which adds a Mozambican emphasis to her work for its categorical concern of the role of the government as manager of individual freedom and shaper of subjectivity. For this reason, women portrayed in Maissune's work are particularly pertinent subjects to respond to the Liberation Script in contemporary art from Mozambique, as the series focuses not only on women's oppression broadly conceived, but on institutional violence and unfairness that is maintained, and even advanced, by the state. The detention centres no longer appear to be focused on punishment or reform, being portrayed as temples of women's marginalisation (Á. L. Lima 2013, 51).

This series is part of a growing interest in challenging the Script which, despite its ongoing inability to show substantial change in pervasive everyday sexism, continues to instrumentalise images of women as the verification of its success. 3x4 looks at the failure of the liberation proclaimed by the Script, pointing to the way in which the state fights against the very goal it claims to work towards. Because the concern of contemporary artists including Maissune is genuine, the nature of gender oppression in Mozambique twists the narratives that have shaped the country since independence and refuses formulaic prescriptions. This is why artworks focusing on gender are some of the most provocative in contemporary Mozambique. Unlike other read-throughs of the Liberation Script, whose reading further distances them from the values set in the 1960s and 1970s, the radicality of the feminist concerns of contemporary Mozambican artists is precisely that they are committed to the project of women's emancipation. For these artists, it won't suffice to leave the Script's concern with women's liberation to its formulaic tone. If the read-through offers a contemplative space for the reflection of the various elements shaping the Mozambican apparatus, recent works focused on gender are possibly providing the most direct form of political resistance. The fight for gender equality is a theme that seems to pose a special anxiety in the state and the preservation of its image.

The fact that the series emerges from an ethnographic praxis highlights its commitment in turning the Liberation Script on itself. By presenting a direct look into the lives of the women whose images she captures, Maissune participates in a Marxist tradition: she addresses practical social concerns through direct dialogue with the people who are victims of the problem. While Frelimo and its cultural apparatus have used images of women as a promotion of its own credibility, Maissune brings back the immediacy of women's experience. Her practice makes room for directed time spent with the women she photographed, even if the series still engages with the country's historical rhetoric of women's emancipation. This

mode of artistic production opens the possibility of women's negotiation of their own presentation *vis-à-vis* the gaze and the prevailing discourses framing the consumption of their image. On her dynamics with the inmates photographed, Maissune writes that "at times, I felt like I had been hired by these women to photograph them, given the importance that they gave to the images" (my translation, Sousa and Monteiro 2015, 250). The women had the chance to express their frustration against the narratives that surround them and imagine a new position *vis-à-vis* their assigned role in the Script. In the artist's view, this photographic practice resists the hierarchical dichotomies implied in the distant gaze by "looking closely" rather than "looking at" the women portrayed (Sousa and Monteiro 2015, 247). She let women speak as the agents of their own experience instead of objects in which "liberation" is ironically conferred upon. From body to body, this practice attempts to sustain something that is missing in a strictly discursive practice. It alludes to something that remains unspoken and unmarked by the body in the plethora of images of the liberated woman flooding the visual history of Mozambique.

By "going to prison", the artist is also addressing her own experience of entrapment as a Mozambican woman. Such an experience proved to be so visceral that the artist temporarily left the country as a way of distancing herself from the violence felt while working on 3x4.<sup>9</sup> A work that pushes someone out of the country also propels a read-through of the national narratives to a threatening edge. 3x4 is a powerful example among the diverse oeuvres of contemporary artists who are re-reading the Liberation Script to put up a different kind of production. They engage with this national apparatus as an object of artistic exploration rather than a set of narratives and conventions to be followed. In doing so, they show themselves to be skilled actors with intimate knowledge of this drama, memorising it by heart and presenting experimental and ambitious work transforming its canonical lines. In its most interesting form, this read-through is not an attempt to replace the Liberation Script with another totalising narrative, but to engage with the present as a possibility to live through the many readings of a contingent past.

9 The artist moved to Brazil to pursue doctoral work in 2011.

# The contemporary arts of Mozambique: Contesting Lusophone Genders

Sihle Motsa\*

In “Gender in the Lusophone World: History, Identity and Nation”, historians Marissa Moorman and Kathleen Sheldon<sup>1</sup> write that gender is not peripheral but rather central to the processes of colonisation, and to the tensions of empire. Mozambique is a nation typically referred to as Lusophone, a group of Portuguese-speaking nations, including Portugal. Portuguese enters the Mozambican cultural landscape through Portuguese colonialism, and marks the southern African nation as Lusophone. Bearing in mind Moorman’s and Sheldon’s bold assertion about the role gender has played in the making of empire, it is apt to infer that gendered iterations whose genesis lies in the metropole, mark the colonised subject in irrevocable ways.

Mozambique is a country whose constellation of artists boldly articulate the ties between Mozambique and Portugal, a country historically embedded in the quest for colonial territorialisation. The works of artists such as Eurídice Kala, Ângela Ferreira, Camila Maissune and others, excavate the tenuous history, bringing the forgotten narratives of slavery, armed struggle, exploitative anthropological practices and gendered exploitation to the fore. These artists contest the making of gender in Lusophone encounters. Instead, their works put forward an ethos embedded in localised iterations of gender, at times a personalised but always quite acute commentary on the silence that has enveloped the particularities of colonial expansion.

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1 See Marissa Moolman and Kathleen Sheldon, “Gender in the Lusophone World: History, Identity and Nation”, *Lusotopie* 1-2 (2005): 33-41.



The 'Lusophone' is restricted only in theoretical terms, its boundaries are not geographic denotations but are designated by historical ties to Portugal, as a metropole and then as a former colonial power. Lusophone is a linguistic and political category that binds the neocolonial landscapes of Angola, Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde, Mozambique, São Tomé and Príncipe, Brazil, East Timor, Equatorial Guinea and Macau. In real time, the Lusophone is elusive, it is a category whose designation has no real bearing on the everydayness experienced by the citizens of these countries. Moorman and Sheldon contest the importance of the Lusophone by asserting that it is sometimes a stretch to think of Lusophone as a coherent identity. They suggest that there are difficulties inherent to the idea of building community around the Lusophone and that, if such a community exists, it is fragile and based only on a shared language and disparate experiences of Portuguese colonialism.

It is my contention that the Lusophone is an important marker to consider, in so far, as it shapes the discourse of Mozambique and its contemporary art practices. The Lusophone offers an important lens from which to engage the engendered art practices from Mozambique and to question the construction of gender through colonial encounters and the emergence of Lusophone. It is important to measure the weight of the Lusophone frame against other geopolitical markers. Whilst Mozambique is tethered to Angola, Guinea Bissau, Cape Verde and São Tomé and Príncipe, by way of Lusophone, it similarly emerges as an exception. Firstly, the Lusophony of Mozambique is generated through the Indian Ocean, whereas that of the rest of these African countries encounter Portugal through the Black Atlantic. Encounters between Africa and the Western World rendered through the Atlantic are extensively documented. The emergence of the modern world through chattel slavery, even Portugal's imbrication in the slave trade and the founding of global capital are themes that feature in both Black contemporary culture and scholarship. Although the Indian Ocean has been theorised by scholars such as Isabel Hoffmeier, Dillip Menon, Pamila Gupta and others, it has not captured popular imagination to the extent the Atlantic has. Its implication in colonial expansion, its role in the establishment of global capital and its creolising potential are under-recognised in the face of the totalising space that is the Atlantic. It is because of its forgetfulness and status as a geopolitical and intellectual other, that the Indian Ocean fails to vindicate Mozambique. It fails to do so despite the fact that many may argue that it is the Indian Ocean that serves as a conduit for Portuguese migration that births Mozambique, its unique history riddled with colonial conquest, and the engendered subjectivities of its people.

Mozambique shares much with its neighbouring country, South Africa. It shares the Indian Ocean, settler colonialism and the armed struggle. This, however, does not make South Africa Mozambique's counterpart. Mozambique is a nowhere, not in the sense of the idealised futurity of utopian space, but as an uncontested no man's land. It has no historical or postcolonial kin. Mozambican artistry is best set to articulate the cultural specificities that abide within this neocolonial nation. Artists

such as Eurídice Kala explore Mozambique's entanglement in global capital through its relation with the Indian Ocean. The works of these artists, who are obsessed with the making of Mozambique, articulated through the gender subjectivities, rather than overtly depicting the subaltern position of women as antithetical to that of men, they re-affirm that gender (like race, class and sexuality) is enmeshed in a complex set of power relations, and that in the instance of Mozambique the making of gender is concomitant with the making of the nation itself.

Thus, I am interested in how artists such as Eurídice Kala, Ângela Ferreira and Camila Maissune make sense of fraught postcolonial space, how their artistic interests and practices lend themselves to the task of articulating a neocolonial subjectivity that is gendered and racialised to varying degrees.

If Moorman and Sheldon, who note that gender is not peripheral but is central to the process of colonisation and construction of empire, are to be believed, then it is apt to speak of Lusophone genders. It is just as apt to highlight the practices of artists such as Ângela Ferreira, Eurídice Kala and Camila Maissune as practices that are cognisant of the ways in which gender is at the heart of a nationhood born from a violent colonial encounter.

The works of the artists are an exercise in remembering; they utilise archival material to interrogate what remains and to juxtapose it against what should have been preserved. They provide commentary on the visual practices incumbent in Lusophone Mozambique, how gender is created through bureaucracy connected with colonial territorialisation and sustained in the wake of a failed colonial endeavour.

What contemporary art practices of women artists from Mozambique expose is that gendered tensions of empire spill over into the neocolonial era. These genders, however, are intangible genders, which is to say they are not made readily available physically. In certain instances, they appear as an absence which serves as an allusion to the power dynamics that complicate history. They appear in the work of Ângela Ferreira as hints, traces and would-be gendered subject positions. Ângela Ferreira is an artist who lives and works in Lisbon. Given that she was born in Mozambique and studied in South Africa, Ferreira brings together these three seemingly politically disparate places to create a dialogue. Ferreira works through various media but does so in a manner that deploys the visibility of colonial Mozambican architectures. Ferreira initiates a dialogue between postcolonial Mozambique and post-apartheid South Africa through critical engagement with Dutch and Portuguese colonial architecture. Through photographs, sculptures that resemble architectural models, installations and carefully explored archives, Ferreira calls into question the architectural legacy of Portuguese colonialism. Memory, history and civic education are evoked by Ferreira's practice. Ferreira's is a voyage through a failed colonial history. It is founded on the visibility of architecture as an enduring reference to the vagaries of Portuguese colonialism. Whilst exploring colonial archives, Ferreira interprets these archives, making them socio-politically legible for art audiences.

Ferreira contends that buildings can be read as texts, but linguistic theory argues that meaning is not inherent to the linguistic object, but rather that the object is imbued with meaning and then rendered to the reader through a pre-determined set of codes. Ferreira's codes are the colonial contexts in which these buildings were designed and the neocolonial relics they have become.

Eurídice Kala's art practice is one invested in the socio-historical legacy of colonialism. Using installation and photography, Kala circumvents migratory practices in Southern Africa and paints nation building enterprises as inherently patriarchal. South Africa and Mozambique have a shared history of migratory labour. Men from Mozambique were drafted to work in South African mines during the Apartheid. In an attempt to escape the oppressive cultural regimes and the barren economic landscapes in which women found themselves due to the departure of spouses, brothers, sons and fathers, women flooded the metropolitan areas, the capital cities and large towns in search of work, love and urbanity. These stories of women's agency are related to the annals of history, for they do not serve the patriarchal nation building. History proper, which is to say a history where men rule, requires a docile feminine subject. A subject that is not governed by feminist whims but one that endeavours in service of the nation.

Eurídice Kala also takes up the historic tensions that birthed Mozambique through the construction of what she has described as a heterotopic space. In *Of Other Spaces: Heterotopias and Dystopias*, Michel Foucault<sup>2</sup> differentiates the idealised space envisioned through utopia from existing cultural spaces that subsist as both sacrosanct and othered. Kala borrows from this Foucauldian formulation and creates, through the depiction of a porous, architectural form, a site that demands contemplation. In *We will see you at home*, the migratory labour practices of an apartheid regime that drafted Mozambican men in their prime to work in the South African mines, creates home as a heterotopic space. Going home becomes a ritual, a reprieve from exploitation and isolation suffered by men in the mines. Migratory labour is purposefully defined as a masculine occurrence, but Kala's loose but carefully curated, domestic space introduces gender and the forgotten role that women play in establishing the home as a space of refuge. In *Telling Time: From Compound to City*, Kala plays the silent observer. She is in a Johannesburg station, watching the infamous Metro rail hurry past where she is seated on the platform. Kala is recorded by Katja Gentric as indicating that part of what interested her in the public space of the train station was how ambiguous the space was.<sup>3</sup> Kala describes how the station had no signage, or any communication of schedules, or verbal

2 In *Of other spaces*, Foucault describes places that exist as counter sites to the real space of society in a manner that is unlike the unreal space which mirrors society. These spaces which Foucault terms heterotopias are completely different from the sites they reflect and converse with but are nonetheless representative of a society-based culture. See Foucault 1984.

3 See Gentric 2020.

communication as to where the various trains were headed. This oddity precipitated the intervention that saw Kala communicate various bits of information to commuters. Kala's presence cannot be taken for granted. Whether by default or by design, Kala's presence on the platform ruptures the equivocal space. Kala asserts herself as an authority in a space that previously had none. This exercise is reminiscent of the many ways women have taken up space historically. Kala is, eventually, removed from the platform by officials, signalling the ways in which women are considered undesirable in public spaces.

Camila Maissune is a visual anthropologist whose intimate photographs pose pertinent questions on gender, the state and the insertion of carceral logic into Mozambican terrain. Maissune's work brings their embodied experience of femininity to the fore. *3x4* connects with the works of Ângela Ferreira, in its allusion to black womanhood as an obscured subjectivity. Whereas Ferreira's and Kala's works forage into historical contexts where women are absent from popular records, Maissune centres the figure of black women, depicting raw flesh and drawing attention to the lives of captive women. Maissune's work captures the everyday existence of incarcerated women. Such work, that blurs the line between art and documentary, makes a pointed critique of carceral practices that are put in place to regulate and control women. Camila weaves the narratives of the women into the series, highlighting how these women have been unduly treated by the state.

The works of Maissune, Ferreira and Kala are connected with that of other artists whose own gendered subjectivity is used to destabilise the sanctity of masculinised histories. The works of these artists capture succinctly how contemporary expressions of gender are intimately tied to the experience of colonialism. By creating from a gendered particularity that is sensitive to cultural networks, forged through a collective struggle for liberation, these artists are creating an idiom that captures the essence of neocolonialism, and the far-reaching consequences of global capital and the quest for colonial expansion.

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*“Entwined” / “Entrelaçado”*,  
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Video still, 6’ 45”  
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*“Home” / “O Lar”*, 2010  
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*Gurué airport (from the series  
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Inkjet print on cotton rag  
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*Africa theater (from the series  
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*Africa theater, entrance  
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*Africa theater, console tables  
(from the series Interior  
Landscapes)*, 2013  
Inkjet print on cotton rag  
© Filipe Branquinho

p. 31

*Africa theater, audience  
(from the series Interior  
Landscapes)*, 2011  
Inkjet print on cotton rag  
© Filipe Branquinho

p. 32

*Historical Archive (from the  
series Interior Landscapes)*,  
2011  
Inkjet print on cotton rag  
© Filipe Branquinho

p. 33

*Historical Archive (from the  
series Interior Landscapes)*,  
2011  
Inkjet print on cotton rag  
© Filipe Branquinho

p. 34

*Red house (from the series  
Gurué)*, 2014  
Inkjet print on cotton rag  
© Filipe Branquinho

p. 34

*Horizons (from the series  
Gurué)*, 2014  
Inkjet print on cotton rag  
© Filipe Branquinho

**Jorge Dias**

p. 45–50

p. 45

*Habilitação ao zero*, 2004  
Straw sieve, wire insects &  
acrylic paint on platex  
84 x 84 x 13 cm  
© Fundação PLMJ

p. 46

*Thing*, 2017  
Handicraft in wood and fabric  
50 x 50 x 50 cm  
© Jorge Dias

p. 47

*Plague. Humiliation to the Gods  
responsible for the abundant  
harvest*, 2016  
Textile, thread, textile flowers,  
plastic flowers, dry leaves and  
beads  
81 x 61 cm  
© Jorge Dias

p. 48

*1324*, 2012  
Bread, TV, coins and glass  
Variable dimensions  
© Jorge Dias

p. 49

*Place and Reading – A silent  
approach*, 2016  
Structure of pine, glass,  
laminated books and lamps  
Installation view at exterior  
patio of Biblioteca IC-Centro  
Cultural Português, Maputo  
© Jorge Dias

p. 50

*Things between Lines*, 2016  
Cotton thread and resin  
Variable dimensions  
Detail of installation view  
outside the Fortress of Maputo  
monument  
© Jorge Dias

p. 50

*Things between Lines*, 2016  
Cotton thread and resin  
Variable dimensions  
Detail of installation view at  
exterior of the monument  
Fortaleza de Maputo  
© Jorge Dias

**Ângela Ferreira**

p. 59–64

p. 59

*For Mozambique (Model  
no. 1 of Screen-Tribune-  
Kiosk celebrating a post-  
independence Utopia)*, 2008  
Wood, steel cable, 2 DVD,  
2-channel video projections,  
60’ (loop)  
500 x 130 x 160 cm  
© Museu Berardo Collection,  
Lisbon

p. 60

*For Mozambique (Model  
no. 1 of Screen-Tribune-  
Kiosk celebrating a post-  
independence Utopia)*, 2008  
Wood, steel cable, 2 DVD,  
2-channel video projections,  
60’ (loop)  
500 x 130 x 160 cm  
© Museu Berardo Collection,  
Lisbon

p. 61

*For Mozambique (Model  
no. 3 for propaganda stand,  
screen and loudspeaker  
platform celebrating a post-  
independence Utopia)*, 2008  
Wood, vinyl, silkscreen  
printed on wood and video  
450 x 100 x 500 cm

© Fundação Calouste  
Gulbenkian Collection, Lisbon

p. 62  
*Study for monument to  
Jean Rouch's Super 8 film  
workshops in Mozambique  
no. 1, 2011-2012*  
Wood, PVC, torch light,  
photograph  
184 x 60 x 40 cm  
Private collection  
© Ângela Ferreira

p. 63  
*Study for monument to  
Jean Rouch's Super 8 film  
workshops in Mozambique  
no. 2, 2011-2012*  
Wood, PVC, torch lights,  
formica, mild steel and 2  
digital prints  
40 x 60 x 120 cm  
Private collection  
© Ângela Ferreira

p. 64  
*Study for monument to  
Jean Rouch's Super 8 film  
workshops in Mozambique  
no. 3, 2011-2012*  
Wood, PVC, torch light,  
photograph, aluminium  
40 x 178 x 80 cm  
Private collection  
© Ângela Ferreira

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## Gemuce

p. 69–74

p. 69  
*Vicious cycle, 2008*  
Digital photography  
Variable dimensions  
© Gemuce

p. 70  
*Vicious cycle, 2008*  
Digital photography  
Variable dimensions  
© Gemuce

p. 71  
*Vicious cycle, 2008*  
Digital photography  
Variable dimensions  
© Gemuce

p. 72  
*Deixa andar, 2005*  
Video still, Video installation:  
zinc plates, papier-mâché  
sculptures, capulanas  
Variable dimensions  
© Gemuce

p. 72  
*Deixa andar, 2005*  
Video still, Video installation:  
zinc plates, papier-mâché  
sculptures, capulanas  
Variable dimensions  
© Gemuce

p. 73  
*Deixa andar, 2005*  
Video still, Video installation:  
zinc plates, papier-mâché  
sculptures, capulanas  
Variable dimensions  
© Gemuce

p. 73  
*Deixa andar, 2005*  
Video still, Video installation:  
zinc plates, papier-mâché  
sculptures, capulanas  
Variable dimensions  
© Gemuce

p. 74  
*Hero, 2018*  
Chinese ink on paper  
82 x 63 cm  
© Gemuce

p. 74  
*Revolution, 2018*  
Chinese ink on paper  
82 x 63 cm  
© Gemuce

p. 74  
*Narrow Passage, 2018*  
Chinese ink on paper  
82 x 63 cm  
© Gemuce

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## Eurídice Kala

p. 79–84

p. 79  
*Telling Time: From Compound  
to City, 2014*  
Video still, Performance,  
PublicActs, Johannesburg  
© Akona Kenqu

p. 80  
*Telling Time: From Compound  
to City, 2014*  
Video still, Performance,  
PublicActs, Johannesburg  
© Akona Kenqu

p. 81  
*Will See you in December...  
Tomorrow (WSYDT), 2015*  
Mixed media installation:  
wood, mirror, capulana,  
drawings, texts, objects,  
photography, video,  
performance  
Variable dimensions. Musart,  
Maputo  
© Eurídice Kala

p. 81  
*Will See you in December...  
Tomorrow (WSYDT), 2015*  
Mixed media installation:  
wood, mirror, capulana,  
drawings, texts, objects,  
photography, video,  
performance  
Variable dimensions. Musart,  
Maputo  
© Eurídice Kala

p. 82  
*Unlike Other Santas, 2013*  
Video still, 7' 59  
© Eurídice Kala

p. 83  
*Unlike Other Santas, 2013*  
Video still, 7' 59  
© Eurídice Kala

p. 84  
*Entre-de-Lado*  
(A Conversation I) 2013. From

*the series Entre-de-Lado,*  
2012-2017.  
Print on canvas, variable  
dimensions  
© Eurídice Kala

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## Gonçalo Mabunda

p. 97–102

p. 97  
*The Captivating Throne, 2019*  
Mixed media  
132 x 95 x 66 cm  
© Jack Bell Gallery, London

p. 98  
*Loves with loneliness throne,*  
2013  
Decommissioned welded arms  
65 x 81 x 86 cm  
© Jack Bell Gallery, London

p. 99  
*The Investigator, 2016*  
Decommissioned arms  
49 x 19 x 65 cm  
© Jack Bell Gallery, London

p. 100  
*Untitled (throne), 2013*  
Decommissioned welded arms  
50 x 67 x 18 cm  
© Jack Bell Gallery, London

p. 101  
*Untitled (mask), 2017*  
Mixed media  
36 x 52 x 20 cm  
© Jack Bell Gallery, London

p. 102  
*Throne of the Intellectuals,*  
2019  
Mixed media  
91 x 142 x 66 cm  
© Jack Bell Gallery, London

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## Mário Macilau

p. 111–116

p. 111  
*Hotel Cardoso's Garden (from  
the series Circles of Memory),*



- 2019  
Archival pigment on cotton rag paper  
Variable dimensions  
© Mário Macilau
- p. 112  
*A family who lost their home, property and family members during cyclone Idai in Beira (from the series Circles of Memory)*, 2019  
Archival pigment on cotton rag paper  
Variable dimensions  
© Mário Macilau
- p. 113  
*Calisto Muazi, 52 years old. Landscape destroyed by cyclone Idai in Beira, 2019 (from the series Circles of Memory)*, 2019  
Archival pigment on cotton rag paper  
Variable dimensions  
© Mário Macilau
- p. 114  
*Two widowed women who both lost their husbands, victims of cyclone Idai, and who met after the cyclone while trying to rebuild their lives and seek a new home (from the series Circles of Memory)*, 2019  
Archival pigment on cotton rag paper  
Variable dimensions  
© Mário Macilau
- p. 115  
*A set of buildings between old and new (from the series Circles of Memory)*, 2019  
*Um conjunto de prédios entre antigos e novos (from the series Círculos de Memória)*, 2019  
Archival pigment on cotton rag paper  
Variable dimensions  
© Mário Macilau
- p. 116  
*Traditional house in Namaacha city (from the series Circles of Memory)*, 2019  
Archival pigment on cotton rag paper  
Variable dimensions  
© Mário Macilau
- 
- Celestino Mudaulane**  
p. 125–130
- p. 125  
*Our education*, 2010  
Indian ink on paper  
61 x 86.5 cm  
© Fundação PLMJ
- p. 126  
*Square system*, 2018  
Indian ink on paper  
61 x 86.5 cm  
© Fundação PLMJ
- p. 127  
*Empurre vai pegar*, 2017  
Indian ink on paper  
172 x 183 cm  
© Celestino Mudaulane
- p. 128  
*Despair or belief?*, 2019  
Chinese ink on paper  
280 x 200cm  
(C) Celestino
- p. 129  
*Rampant Greed*, 2017  
Indian ink on paper  
172 x 183 cm  
© Celestino Mudaulane
- p. 130  
The state of Mozambican culture, 2010  
Indian ink on paper  
99.5 x 69.5 cm  
© Fundação PLMJ
- 
- Eugénia Mussa**  
p. 135–140
- p. 135  
*Skull*, 2013  
Oil on paper  
42 x 29 cm  
© Eugénia Mussa
- p. 136  
*Man returning*, 2020  
Oil on cardboard prepared with enamel  
100 x 70 cm  
© Eugénia Mussa
- p. 137  
*Solo carrier*, 2020  
Oil on canvas  
95 x 75 cm  
© Eugénia Mussa
- p. 138  
*Girls Dancing*, 2020  
Oil on cardboard prepared with enamel  
100 x 70 cm  
© Eugénia Mussa
- p. 139  
*Trampolim*, 2020  
Oil on canvas  
95 x 75 cm  
© Eugénia Mussa
- p. 140  
*Untitled*, 2018  
Oil on paper  
21 x 29 cm  
© Eugénia Mussa
- 
- Félix Mula**  
p. 147–152
- p. 147  
*St*, 2012  
Inkjet print on smooth cotton paper  
74 x 94 cm  
© Félix Mula
- p. 148  
*St*, 2012  
Inkjet print on smooth cotton paper  
74 x 94 cm  
© Félix Mula
- p. 149  
*Gonçalves Mainguelane's Canteen*, 2015  
Inkjet print on smooth cotton paper  
74 x 94 cm  
© Félix Mula
- p. 150  
*Canteen used by Henrique Dias Estevão, built by Ximadjane (o "Branquinho")*, 2015  
Inkjet print on smooth cotton paper  
74 x 94 cm  
© Félix Mula
- p. 151  
*St*, 2012  
Inkjet print on smooth cotton paper  
74 x 94 cm  
© Félix Mula
- p. 152  
*St*, 2012  
Inkjet print on smooth cotton paper  
74 x 94 cm  
© Félix Mula

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**Marilú Námoda**

p. 163–168

p. 163

*Memories of a dog language*, 2019

Video still, Film installation (front and lateral view), Maputo  
© Bazílio

p. 164

*Memories of a dog language*, 2019

Video still, Film installation (front and lateral view), Maputo  
© Bazílio

p. 165

*Memories of a dog language*, 2019

Video still, Film installation (front and lateral view), Maputo  
© Bazílio

p. 165

*Memories of a dog language*, 2019

Video still, Film installation (front and lateral view), Maputo  
© Bazílio

p. 166

*Collective Suicide*, 2015  
Audiovisual installation, IODINE Produções/Arte d'Gema 2019, Maputo  
© Bazílio

p. 167

*Collective Suicide*, 2015  
Audiovisual installation, IODINE Produções/Arte d'Gema 2019, Maputo  
© Bazílio

p. 168

*Tattoo*, 2014  
Johannesburg  
© Chonga

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**Mauro Pinto**

p. 177–182

p. 177

*Untitled (from the series C'est pas facile)*, 2018

Inkjet print on cotton rag  
80 x 120 cm  
© Mauro Pinto

p. 178

*Untitled (from the series C'est pas facile)*, 2018

Inkjet print on cotton rag  
80 x 120 cm  
© Mauro Pinto

p. 179

*Untitled (from the series C'est pas facile)*, 2018

Inkjet print on cotton rag  
80 x 120 cm  
© Mauro Pinto

p. 180

*Untitled (from the series Dá Liçençã)*, 2012

Inkjet print on cotton rag  
80 x 120 cm  
© Mauro Pinto

p. 181

*Untitled (from the series Dá Liçençã)*, 2012

Inkjet print on cotton rag  
80 x 120 cm  
© Mauro Pinto

p. 182

*Untitled (from the series Dá Liçençã)*, 2012

Inkjet print on cotton rag  
80 x 120 cm  
© Mauro Pinto

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**Camila Maissune**

p. 187–192

pp. 187

*Untitled (from the series 3x4)*, 2011

Black and white print on Photo Rag  
42 x 54 cm  
© Camila de Sousa

p. 188

*Untitled (from the series 3x4)*, 2011

Diptych, black and white print on Photo Rag

107 x 40 cm  
© Camila de Sousa

p. 188

*Untitled (from the series 3x4)*, 2011

Diptych, black and white print on Photo Rag

107 x 40 cm  
© Camila de Sousa

p. 188

*Untitled (from the series 3x4)*, 2011

Diptych, black and white print on Photo Rag

107 x 40 cm  
© Camila de Sousa

p. 189

*Untitled (from the series 3x4)*, 2011

Black and white print on Photo Rag  
42 x 54 cm  
© Camila de Sousa

p. 190

*Untitled (from the series 3x4)*, 2011

Diptych, black and white print on Photo Rag

107 x 40 cm  
© Camila de Sousa

p. 190

*Untitled (from the series 3x4)*, 2011

Diptych, black and white print on Photo Rag

107 x 40 cm  
© Camila de Sousa

p. 190

*Untitled (from the series 3x4)*, 2011

Diptych, black and white print on Photo Rag

107 x 40 cm  
© Camila de Sousa

p. 191

*Untitled (from the series 3x4)*, 2011

Black and white print on Photo Rag

315gsm, 42 x 54 cm  
© Camila de Sousa

p. 192

*Untitled (from the series 3x4)*, 2011

Diptych, black and white print on Photo Rag

107 x 40 cm  
© Camila de Sousa

p. 192

*Untitled (from the series 3x4)*, 2011

Diptych, black and white print on Photo Rag

107 x 40 cm  
© Camila de Sousa

p. 192

*Untitled (from the series 3x4)*, 2011

Diptych, black and white print on Photo Rag

107 x 40 cm  
© Camila de Sousa

## Artists

## Maimuna Adam

*Maimuna Adam, or the aesthetics of diaspora*  
Raquel Schefer

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António Pinto Ribeiro
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- 
- Eurídice Kala**
- Circulating capulanas, wedding gowns and black dresses: Race and gender across time and space in the work of Eurídice*

**Kala AKA Zaituna Kala**  
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## Camila Maissune

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## Essays

### Photography from the shadows

Drew Thompson

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**The contemporary arts of Mozambique: Contesting Lusophone genders**  
Sihle Motsa

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**Maimuna Adam** (1984) was born in Maputo, Mozambique, and lives and splits her work days between Mozambique and the United Kingdom. She completed her Bachelor of Arts in Fine Art, at the University of Pretoria, South Africa in 2008. Her work focuses on personal and historical narratives related to the act of travelling, where materials such as coffee, ink, banana fibre paper, charcoal, acrylic paint, canvas and books are used to explore notions of identity and memory in relation to mixed origins and histories. The artist makes reference to fictional and historical narratives, questioning the role of images and objects in relation to memory and the act of re-remembering events that relate in a personal and universal way. Adam has held solo exhibitions at Instituto Cultural Moçambique-Alemanha (ICMA-Goethe Zentrum) (Mozambique: 2014) and Galeria “Sala de Espera”, Associação Kulungwana (Mozambique: 2013), among others. Her work has also been shown at group exhibitions such as SESC Pinheiros (Brazil: 2015); Pretoria Art Museum (South Africa: 2013); Chiado National Contemporary Art Museum (Portugal: 2013); Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (Portugal: 2013); PLMJ (Portugal: 2012) and Kulungwana (Mozambique: 2012).

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**Filipe Branquinho** (1977) was born in Maputo, Mozambique, where he currently lives and works. He studied architecture first in Mozambique and then in Brazil, where he began a self-taught process exploring photography and art. Branquinho’s work addresses social issues in the reality of Mozambique, in particular, the ways of life of people, the mythologies and urban dynamics. In his practice, he explores topics such as the difference of class, culture, politics, collective memory and labour conditions. In 2013, he was selected as

a finalist for the BES Photo award with his *Showtime* series, and with the series *Interior Landscapes* (2011-2014) he won the Popcap’15 – International Prize for Contemporary African Photography. Branquinho’s work is regularly showcased in galleries, museums, art fairs and festivals. Some of his solo exhibitions include: *Gurué* at Kulungwana Gallery (Mozambique: 2017); *Botânica* at FFLC (Mozambique: 2016-2017); *Interior Landscapes* at Galeria Av. da Índia (Portugal: 2017); *Showtime* at the Jack Bell Gallery (United Kingdom: 2013) and *Ocupações* at Galeria Bozart (Portugal: 2013). Some highlights of group exhibitions he has partaken in are *African Passions* at Palácio de Cadaval and (Portugal: 2018); *Trek.* at SMAC Gallery (South Africa: 2015); *PiB – Photography in Berlin* (Germany: 2015); *Image Afrique.* (Switzerland: 2015); *ICI L’AFRIQUE – L’Afrique contemporaine par le regard de ses artistes* at Musée des Suisses dans le Monde (Switzerland: 2014); *Regarde-moi.* at Photoquai in Musée du Quai Branly (France: 2013); *Present Tense* at Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (France: 2013); and, finally, *BES Photo* at Instituto Tomie Ohtake and at the Berardo Collection Museum (Brazil and Portugal: 2013). His work has also been shown at the Venice Biennale in the Mozambique Pavilion (Italy: 2019) and at the following art fairs: Paris Photo, Magnin-A (France: 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2018) and Joburg Art Fair, Kulungwana Gallery, Arte d’Gema (South Africa: 2013 and 2018).

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**Jorge Dias** (1972) was born in Maputo, Mozambique, where he currently lives and works. He completed Ceramics to the middle level at the Escola Nacional de Artes Visuais (ENAV) in 1992, and has a degree in Sculpture at the Escola de Belas Artes, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ). Dias works in sculpture, installation and painting, and is

one of the founding members of MUVART – Movimento de Arte Contemporânea, that promotes contemporary art in Mozambique. He is also an art teacher and mentor, and has been involved since 2003 in writing art theory on the production of art in Mozambique with his articles published in journals such as Notícias and Meinoite, as well as the MUVART blog and the e-journal Artecapital. His work has been showcased at Arte d’Gema (Mozambique: 2017); Sociedade Nacional de Belas Artes de Lisboa (Portugal: 2017); Oliva Creative Factory (Portugal: 2004) and Haus der Kulturen der Welt (Germany: 2013), among others. This is what Dias said of an installation work for the National Museum in Maputo, where viewers were invited to rearrange differently coloured boxes: “I have become interested in the relationships between human beings. I observe and absorb their behaviour, as individuals and in groups. I research the way they relate to each other, in their home, leisure and professional environments. I am interested in the way they treat the objects surrounding them, how they organise them in the context in which they are found, at the limits of their capacity and in the midst of great need”.

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Ângela Ferreira (1955) was born in Mozambique and lives and works in Lisbon. She produces research-based sculptures rooted in colonial and postcolonial narratives. In response to the story of the Mozambican journalist Carlos Cardoso, who was murdered while investigating corruption in the country’s banking and real estate sectors, Ferreira produced a series of sculptures that act as monuments to Cardoso and to freedom of speech. One piece, *Cena Aberta* (2011), takes the form of a radio tower with megaphones that transmits two radio pieces in which Cardoso participated. In her project *Maison Tropicale*

(2007), Ferreira addressed the French colonial effort to create affordable modernist housing in the country’s African colonies; she created a sculptural rendering of a housing prototype by architect Jean Prouvé, three of which were installed in Africa and remained there until independence, after which they were shipped back to the West and sold for substantial amounts.

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Gemuce (1963) was born in Quelimane, Mozambique, and currently lives and works in Maputo. In 1980 he obtained a Degree in Fine Arts at the Institute of Fine Arts in Kiev, Ukraine, and in 1993 completed a Master’s Degree in Painting of Murals at the Academy of Fine Arts in Kiev. He also holds a Master’s Degree in Design, Decision and Management of Cultural Projects at the FCP3 – Sorbonne Nouvelle University, France (2001). Gemuce has worked as a lecturer at the School of Visual Arts (ENAV) and at the Higher Institute of Arts and Culture (ISARC) in Maputo. His work is represented in several private and public collections, national and foreign. Currently, he works as an artist and directs the Arte d’Gema agency, in Maputo. He is co-founder, member and coordinator of MUVART – Movimento de Arte Contemporânea, that promotes contemporary art in Mozambique. His solo exhibitions include *PEDALANDO*, a moving exhibition that took place in Maputo, Beira, and Quelimane (Mozambique: 2015) and *Gemuce: Alignment of values at the Tiwani Contemporary* (United Kingdom: 2014). Regarding group exhibitions and participation in art fairs, some highlights are: *Arco Lisboa* at Galeria Arte d’Gema (Portugal: 2019); *FNB Joburg Art Fair* at Galeria Arte d’Gema (South Africa: 2018); *Kulungwana* (Mozambique: 2017); *Museu do Oriente* (Portugal: 2017); *A tale of one city* at Gallery IKM and Oslo Fine Art Society (Norway: 2009) and *Dak’Art – Biennale de l’Art Africain Contemporain* (Senegal: 2006)

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Zaituna aka Eurídice Kala (1987) was born in Maputo, Mozambique, and works and lives in Paris, France. She trained as a photographer at the Market Photo Workshop, Johannesburg, and works in a variety of mediums, from performance, video and sculptural-lyrics to installations and photography. Her recent performances and solo exhibitions include: *Stranger, Danger, Wait it's a Prayer Room* at Centre Pompidou (France: 2019); *Mackandal Turns into a Butterfly: A Love Potion* (France: 2018); *Le Pouvoir du Dedans* at La Galerie Cac de Noisy-le-Sec (France: 2018); *Eurídice Kala Shows and Doesn't Tell* at Galerie Saint-Severin (France: 2018); *Scores of Labor* (Untitled Composition i) at Instituto Camões (Mozambique: 2018); *Mistake! Mistake! Said the rooster...and stepped down from the duck* at Lumiar Cité (Portugal: 2017); *Infecting the City Festival* (South Africa: 2017) and *Co-habitar* at Casa da América Latina (Portugal: 2017). Kala won the ADAGP/Villa Vassilieff Fellowship (2019-2020), and was the finalist of the SAM art Prix (2018) and for the Prize for Contemporary Talent, François Schneider Foundation (2018). Kala's work will be included in the 5<sup>th</sup> Casablanca Biennial, Morocco, and she is an artist in residence at Urbane Künste Ruhr (Germany: 2019-2020). She is also the founder and co-organiser of e.a.s.t. (Ephemeral Archival Station), a lab and platform for long-term artistic research projects, established in 2017.

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Gonçalo Mabunda (1975) was born in Maputo, Mozambique, where he currently lives and works. He is interested in the collective memory of his country, which has only recently emerged from a long and costly civil war, and works with arms recovered in 1992 at the end of the sixteen-year conflict that divided the region.

In his sculptures, he gives anthropomorphic forms to AK47s, rocket launchers, pistols and other objects of destruction. While the masks could be said to draw on a local history of traditional African art, Mabunda's work takes on a striking Modernist edge akin to imagery by Braque and Picasso. The deactivated weapons of war carry strong political connotations, yet the beautiful objects he creates also convey a positive reflection on the transformative power of art and the resilience and creativity of African civilian societies. Mabunda is most well-known for his thrones: according to him, thrones function as attributes of power, tribal symbols and traditional pieces of ethnic African art – an ironic commentary on his childhood experience of violence, absurdity and the civil war. Mabunda's works have been exhibited at Museum Kunstpalast (Germany: 2004); Hayward Gallery (United Kingdom: 2005); Pompidou (France: 2005); Mori Art Museum (Japan: 2005); and *Making Africa* at the Vitra Design Museum (Germany: 2015), among others. His recent exhibitions include the Gangwon International Biennale (South Korea: 2018); *All the World's Futures* at Venice Biennale (Italy: 2015). He also represented his country at the Mozambique Pavilion at the Venice Biennale (Italy: 2019). His work has been acquired by the Minneapolis Institute of Art and the Brooklyn Museum.

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Mário Macilau (1984) was born in Maputo, Mozambique. He is a multidisciplinary artist and activist, best known for his photographic work. As many Maputo born children have, he grew up working hard to help support his family through the difficult circumstances of the 1980s and 1990s in Mozambique. By 2003, Macilau had taken up photography, learning and developing skills until 2007, when he launched himself as a professional photographer, covertly trading his



mother's mobile phone for an excellent Nikon FM2. His photographs highlight identity, political issues and environmental conditions, at times working with socially isolated groups to make his audience aware not only of the world's social injustices and inequalities, but also of scenes of humanity, brotherhood, victory, love and hope, often making portraiture his starting point. Macilau's work regularly features at art fairs and festivals, both in his home country and abroad, such as 1:54 Art Fair (United Kingdom: 2018); Art Madrid (Spain: 2018 and 2019); Third Beijing Photo Biennale (China: 2018); FNB Joburg Art Fair (South Africa: 2018); The High Museum of Art (USA, 2018); Krakow Photomonth Festival (Poland: 2017); Indian Photography Festival-IPF (India: 2017); Hyderabad (India: 2017); Berlin Art Week at Kehrer Gallery (Germany: 2017); Sicily Photobook (Italy: 2017); Porto Photo Fest (Portugal: 2017); Tbilisi Photo Festival (Georgia: 2017); AKA Art Fair, (France: 2016). Other notable solo shows include his participation at the 56th Venice Biennale (Italy: 2015); *The Road Not Taken* at The Auction Room (United Kingdom: 2015); *Nada Como O Tempo* at Kulungwana Gallery (Mozambique: 2015); *ENTRY PROHIBITED TO FOREIGNERS* at Havremagasinet – Boden Art Centre (Sweden: 2015) and *Pangaea: New Art from Africa and Latin America* at Saatchi Gallery (United Kingdom: 2014).

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**Celestino Mudaulane** (1972) was born in Mozambique, where he currently lives and works. He earned his Bachelor's Degree in History at the Universidade Eduardo Mondlane, and completed Ceramics to the middle level at the Escola de Artes Visuais, where he now teaches. He has held solo exhibitions such as *Artistas comprometidos? Talvez, Distâncias e Proximidades* and *Estado do Mundo* at Dorsky

Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian (Portugal: 2014, 2008 and 2007); *Contested territories* at Dorsky Gallery Curatorial Programs (DGCP) (USA: 2012); *Ocupações Temporárias* (Mozambique: 2010); *Mudaulane II and III*, as well as taken part in group exhibitions such as *Cata Ventos* at Galeria 111 (Portugal: 2017 and 2013). Moreover he has taken part in the following fairs and biennales: Latitudes Art Fair (South Africa: 2019); Expo 2015 (Milan, Italy); Venice Biennale (Italy: 2015); Arte Lisboa Contemporary Art Fair (Portugal: 2008 and 2007); 1ère Biennale Internationale d'arte matériel et immatériel de La Réunion (Réunion: 2006) and ARCO – International Contemporary Art Fair Madrid (Spain: 2005). He was awarded the first and second prizes of Ceramics at the Biennale TDM in 2003 and 2005, respectively, and in 2002 the Prémio consagração Alberto Chissano, FUNDAC.

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**Félix Mula** (1979) lives and works in Mozambique. He began learning photography aged thirteen with his father, a studio photographer, and thereafter attended the National School of Visual Arts (ENAV), as well as the Documentation and Photographic Training Centre (CDFF) in Maputo, before continuing his training at the Higher School of Arts of Réunion. Since 2012, he has been working as a visual artist and teacher at the Higher Institute of Arts and Culture (ISARC) in Maputo. Mula's work is found at the intersection of photography, installation and experience. He has participated in numerous exhibitions and artistic residencies, in Mozambique and abroad, including *D'un Territoire réel aux réalités d'un territoire* at La Halle (Réunion: 2005); *Le Boulanger*, Festival International des Films d'Afrique et des Îles at Le Port (Réunion: 2008); *Un quartier* at Mairie de Petite Île (Réunion:

2009); *MADGERMANS* at Kunstverein Gera e. V. (Germany: 2017); as well as *IDAS E VOLTAS*, both at Museu Berardo, for the Novo Banco Photo, and at Instituto Camões in Maputo (Portugal: 2016 and Mozambique: 2017). Some works from this exhibition were also showcased at Galeria CARRASCO (Spain: 2020). Mula has also participated in Biennale Muvart – Bienal de Arte Contemporânea em Moçambique (Mozambique: 2012) and in Biennale d’Arts Actuels – ADCN (Réunion: 2013). He won the Novo Banco Photo prize in 2016.

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**Eugénia Mussa (1978)** was born in Maputo, Mozambique, and began her studies in visual arts at City & Islington College, London, before training as a painter at Ar.Co in 2009. That same year she was one of the finalists for the Anteciparte Prize (2009). In 2010, she received an honourable mention in the exhibition held to commemorate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Banco de Moçambique. In 2013, she held a solo exhibition at the Espaço Arte Tranquilidade and showed her work at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and the Galeria João Esteves Oliveira, where she still exhibits regularly. Her artistic practice evinces an abiding concern with rethinking the history of artistic movements in painting. She currently lives in Lisbon and her works can be found in private and institutional collections. Currently, you can see her work at the Modern Collection of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

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**Marilú Mapengo Námoda (Quelimane, 1991)** (1991) was born in Quelimane, and currently lives and works in Maputo, Mozambique. Introspection is the pillar of her artistic interventions: reflecting on her place of existence as a black Echwabo woman, her approach

blends self-therapy practices and radical feminist political education. She explores visual languages navigating between performance art, photography, film and installation, utilising personal and family experiences across body, gender and sexuality research, colonialities and memory. Námoda’s most recent film, *Águas de Março* (2019), reflects on the violence of our time, especially in our relationship with nature, both in terms of body and in terms of territories. The film was showcased at the following international festivals: KUGOMA – Short Film Festival (Mozambique: 2019); MIMB – Mostra itinerante de Cinemas Negros Mahomed Bamba (Brazil: 2019); Chale Wote Street Art festival (Ghana: 2019) and Entretodos – International Festival of Short Films and Human Rights (Brazil: 2019) where she received the Honourable Mention Award from the Jury. Between August and September 2019, she took part in an artistic residency at Upcycles, a project that brings together artists from Lusophone African countries, where she created the film *Memórias de uma língua de cão*.

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**Mauro Pinto (1974)** was born in Maputo, Mozambique, where he lives and works. In the early 1990s, Pinto studied photography at the Monitor International School, in Johannesburg, South Africa, and interned with the photographer José Machato. Moving back to Maputo, he then continued to work with the pioneer of photojournalism in Mozambique, Ricardo Rangel. Capturing the essence of space thanks to a clever play of contrasts that can be seen as provocative, Pinto’s work interrogates visual creation, information and communication. Today, this work has made him one of the most renowned contemporary photographers in Mozambique. Pinto work has been showcased at spaces such as Espace 1789 (France: 2002) and El Ojo Salvaje

(Paraguay: 2010), and he has partaken in the following group exhibitions: *Present Tense* at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (Portugal and France: 2013); *Ocupações Temporárias* at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (Portugal: 2013); *Cata Ventos* at Galeria 111 (Portugal: 2014) and *Às Margens dos Mares* (São Paulo: 2015), among others. He has also shown his work at the 1:54 Contemporary African Art Fair (United Kingdom: 2014, 2016 and 2017); Evora Africa (Portugal: 2018); Paris Photo, Magnin-A (France: 2018) and at the Venice Biennale (Italy: 2019).

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**Camila Maissune** (1984) is a Mozambique-born visual artist, with a B.A. in Social Sciences with focus on Visual Anthropology, and an M.A. and a PhD in Visual Culture. Exploring themes concerning 'Image, Culture and Production of Meaning', she is member of the Interdisciplinary Studies of Images research group, held within the Art and Visual Culture programme at the Federal University of Goiânia (UFG, Brazil). Maissune's main research topics include arts and ethnography, landscapes, memory and identity, and her current research is focused on aesthetics and policies of the Indian Ocean in contemporary arts and photography. She has participated in group exhibitions in Mozambique, Portugal, Brazil and Cape Verde.



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**Rui Assubuji** is a freelance photographer from Mozambique, PhD student and a fellow of the Centre for Humanities Research at the University of the Western Cape (UWC). His interest in the audiovisual field is expanding from production to its usages in interactive spaces of knowledge creation. He is concerned with matters such as the storage, handling, management, and conservation of visual archives, and recognises the growing public awareness of the importance by making them accessible. In general, the rationale for his work is to discover how images can contribute to interpreting and constructing our past, present, and eventually, future.

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**Delinda Collier** teaches in the Art History, Theory and Criticism Department and is Interim Dean of Graduate Studies at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Her research interests are in Old/New Media Art in Africa, Luso-African Art, and Cold War Modernisms. She is the author of *Repainting the Walls of Lunda: Information Colonialism and Angolan Art*, and the newly-released *Media Primitivism: Technological Art in Africa*.

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**Alda Costa** was born in Pemba, Mozambique (1953). Her academic background is in History (MA), Museology and Art History (PhD) with a thesis on contemporary and modern art in Mozambique (c.1932-2004). Her professional experience includes teaching and curriculum programming (1977-1983), coordination and management of museum projects under the responsibility of the Ministry of Culture (1986-2001), participation in several education and cultural projects, including the Visual Arts School and the Arts and Culture Higher Institute/ISArC, participation in art competition

juries, the carrying out of research and writing on Museums, Museology and Art. Publications include educational textbooks, various articles in international journals, reports and conference and workshop papers, chapters in books, exhibition catalogues and authored books like *Arte em Moçambique (Babel/Verbo, Portugal, 2013)* and the bilingual *Arte e Artistas em Moçambique: Diferentes Gerações e Modernidades/ Art and Artists in Mozambique: Different Generations and Variants of Modernity (Kulungwana/ Marimbique, Moçambique, 2014)*. She is a member of Third Text Africa editorial board and is currently Director for Culture at Universidade Eduardo Mondlane/ UEM, Maputo (2010 --).

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**Maria do Mar Fazenda (1977)** is an independent curator and researcher based in Lisbon. She completed her BA (Hons.) in Fine Art in 2002, at the Slade School of Fine Art, University College London; and, in 2005, a Postgraduate degree in Curatorial Studies at Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation / Faculty of Fine Arts – Lisbon University. She is currently completing a PhD in Artistic Studies at the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences (FCSH) / NOVA University of Lisbon. Her research is integrated in the Contemporary Art Studies (CASt) cluster at the Institute of Art History (IHA)/FCSH-NOVA.

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**Storm Janse Van Rensburg (1972)** is a curator of contemporary art who has worked in an international context for the past 25 years and is currently the senior curator at Zeitz MOCAA. Janse began his career at the Market Theatre Galleries (South Africa: 1995-1999), serving as curator of the Kwazulu Natal Society of the Arts in Durban, for the following six years, and he is a founding member of the Visual Arts Network of South Africa (VANSA). Born in South Africa,

he lived and worked in Berlin (2012-2015) as an independent curator in collaboration with institutions such as Savvy Contemporary, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, der Neuer Berliner Kunstverein and Nolan Judin Gallery, as well as presenting projects at the Johannesburg Art Gallery and the National Arts Festival in South Africa, working closely with artists such as Abrie Fourie and Bridget Baker. He was a Fellow of the Academy for Advanced African Studies, at the University of Bayreuth, and co-curated projects at Iwalewahaus. He has edited and written for exhibition catalogues and contributed to *African Arts Journal*, *Art South Africa*, *Metropolis M*, *Canvas* and *Contemporary And* magazines, amongst others. As head curator of exhibitions at the Savannah College of Art and Design, Savannah, USA (2015-2019), Janse was responsible for group exhibitions that include *Jacob Lawrence: Lines of Influence* (2017); *In Passing: American Landscape Photography* (2015); *Built, World* (2016); *I See You* (2018); and *Frederick Douglass: Embers of Freedom* (2019), developed collectively with curatorial colleagues. He was responsible for new commissions by artists Hank Willis Thomas, Michael Joo, Robin Rhode, Roberto Behar, among others, and curated solo exhibitions with artists such as Carlos Cruz-Diez, Igshaan Adamas, Toyin Ojih Odutola, Janet Cardiff, George Bures Miller, Azikiwe Mohammed and Lorraine O'Grady. He is also the curator of *History, Labor, Life: The Prints of Jacob Lawrence* (2015-2020), a museum travelling exhibition throughout the United States.

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Álvaro Luís Lima (1988) is Assistant Professor of Art History at the University of Florida, with research interests in psychoanalysis, queer theory as well as modern and contemporary art from Africa. He completed his PhD in

Art History and Archaeology at Columbia University and is currently working on a book about art during Mozambique's transition from socialism to a multi-party democracy.

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Nkule Mabaso (1988) is based in Cape Town and is currently working as curator at the Michaelis Galleries, University of Cape Town, where she is responsible for co-ordinating the exhibitions programme. Mabaso graduated with a Fine Arts Degree from the University of Cape Town (2011) and received a Master's in Curating at the Postgraduate Programme in Curating ZHdK, Zürich (2014).

Mabaso's recent curatorial projects include curating the South African Pavilion at the 58<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale, in 2019, together with Dr. Nomusa Makhubu. In 2017, she collaborated with art historian Manon Braat towards the execution of the exhibition and publication of *Tell Freedom: 15 South African Artists*. She has authored articles and reviews in journals such as *OnCurating*, *Field Journal* and *Third Text*. She serves on the committee of the UCT Works of Art Collection and other cultural institutions. Mabaso works collaboratively and her research interests engage the South Africa and Afro-continental context. She has curated exhibitions and organised public talks in Switzerland, Malawi, Tanzania, South Africa and the Netherlands.

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Nomusa Makhubu (1984) (BFA, MA, PGDHE, PhD, Rhodes University) is an artist and Associate Professor of Art History at the University of Cape Town. Makhubu received the ABSA L'Atelier Gerard Sekoto Award (2006), the Prix du Studio National des Arts Contemporain, Le Fresnoy (2014), and was the First Runner-Up in the DST Women in Science Awards in

2017. She has served as Fellow of the American Council of Learned Societies, as Presidential Fellow of the African Studies Association (ASA), in 2016, and as Mandela-Mellon Fellow at Harvard University in 2017. She co-edited a *Third Text Special Issue*, 'The Art of Change' (2013) and co-curated the international exhibition *Fantastic*, in 2015. Makhubu is a member of the South African Young Academy of Science (SAYAS) and was the Chairperson of Africa South Art Initiative (ASAI), between 2016-18. She also co-curated the South African Pavilion at Venice Biennale, in 2019. She is currently the Lead Researcher in the project *Creative Knowledge Resources*. Her current research focuses on African popular culture, photography, interventionism, live art and socially-engaged art.

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Mónica de Miranda is an artist and researcher. Born in Porto (Portugal) she has an Angolan background. She holds a Visual Arts Degree from the Camberwell College of Arts, a Master's Degree in Art and Education from the Institute of Education London and a PhD in Visual Art from the University of Middlesex. She is currently a researcher at Centro Estudos Comparatistas developing her project *Post-archive*. Mónica is one of the founders of the artistic project of residences *Triangle Network* in Portugal and the founder of the *Project Hangar* (Center of artistic research in Lisbon, 2014). She was nominated for *Novo Banco Photo* prize and exhibited at *Museu Berardo* (Lisbon, 2016). Her selected exhibitions include: *African Cosmologies – Foto Fest* (Houston, USA: 2020); *South circularat* MAAT (Portugal: 2019); *Utopia and Dystopia* in *Contemporary Landscapes* at *Bienar du Sur*, MAAC (Guayaquil, Ecuador: 2020); *Taxidermy of the future* at *Biennale Lubumbashi* (Congo: 2019); *Atlantic. A Journey to the center of the*

*earth* (Galería Sabrina Amrani, Madrid, Spain, 2017); *Panorama* (Tyburn Gallery, London, UK, 2017); *Hotel Globo* (Museu Nacional de Arte Contemporânea do Chiado, Lisbon, 2015); *Doublethink: Doublevision* (Pera Museum, Istanbul, Turkey, 2017), *Daqui Pra Frente* (CAIXA Cultural, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil), *Le jour qui vient* (Galerie des Galeries, Paris, France, 2017); *Bienal de Fotografia Vila Franca de Xira* (Vila Franca de Xira, Portugal, 2017); *Contemporary African Art and Aesthetics of Translations* (Dakar biennial, Dakar, 2016); *Biennale Internationale de l'Art Contemporain de Casablanca* (Casablanca, Morocco, 2016), *Addis Foto Fest* (Addis Abeba, 2016), *Telling Time* (Rencontres de Bamako Biennale Africaine de la Photographie 10<sup>ème</sup> edition, Bamako, 2015); *Ilha de São Jorge* (14<sup>th</sup> Biennial of Architecture of Veneza, 2014); *Line Trap* (Bienal de São Tomé e Príncipe, 2013).

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Sihle Motsa (1985) has recently completed a Master's Degree in Art History at the University of the Witwatersrand. She is an independent researcher whose research interests include African modernities, representations of gender in contemporary visual culture, restitution of African art and cultural objects from western institutions, the articulation and representation of black female subjectivities in contemporary visual culture, architectural modernism, globalisation and feminist organising in the context of the global south as a specific geopolitical zone. As a writer Motsa believes that writing from the global south is a critical decolonial praxis and that African Literature (whether from Lusophone or Francophone regions) and vernacular materials, such as those written in her home language Siswati, are critical tools for articulating the postcolonial. She is invested in developing

new languages, systems and modes of operation as well as new sets of discourses and praxes, in an attempt to situate Africa globally and historically as well as to map trajectories for the future of political and cultural production on the continent. She is also a Wikipedia editor. Motsa focuses in archiving the work of black women artists and developing a methodology for digging deep into the absence of women from popular stories. More broadly, she wants to comment on today's vacillating gender dynamics and address sociocultural and political themes that resonate with her experiences as a black woman in post-apartheid South Africa.

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Rafael Bordalo Mouzinho (1979) was born in Maputo, Mozambique, and began his relationship with the arts by taking a Ceramics course (1999-2005) at the Escola Nacional de Artes Visuais. Thereafter, he completed a Degree in Visual Arts at the Instituto Superior de Artes e Cultura (ISArC), in Maputo (2009-2012), and has combined his practice as an artist with art curating, writing and teaching. Some of the highlights of his artistic experience are his participation in *Expo Arte Contemporânea (MUVART)*, at Museu Nacional de Arte (Mozambique: 2004 and 2006); *Hora 0*, at Centro Cultural Franco-Moçambicano (Mozambique: 2005); *Maputo: a tale of one city* (Norway, Zimbabwe and Maputo: 2009-2011); and *Processo: A obra desafiando o artista* at Galeria Kulungwana (Mozambique: 2014). He has contributed to the *Justaposição* project by choreographing the piece *Centauros*, showcased at the Festival Kinani (Mozambique: 2013), and *This Ain't Africa* at Dialogues Africa Festival (Germany: 2014). He has published renowned articles for *Atitudes e tendências estéticas*, for the exhibition catalogue of *Pedalando* (Gemuce's exhibition); *Arte como*

*compromisso ético*, the introduction for Félix Mula in the exhibition *Processos: Artista, Obra e público* na Galeria Kulungwana (Mozambique: 2014); and *Barriga de Dragão* in the book *One million, Forty years* (and sixty three days), SMAC Gallery, South Africa. He has also written *Nos escombros da memória* and conducted the following interviews: *Uma conversa entre Rafael Mouzinho e Félix Mula*; *Ângela Ferreira: Uma conversa entre Alda Costa e Rafael Mouzinho*; as well as the introductory catalogue for *South Facing, Johannesburg Art Gallery* (2017) and *Third Text*, Vol. 5, Mozambique (2018). Currently, he is an assistant curator at the Coleção de Arte/Galeria of the Universidade Eduardo Mondlane and teacher at a curating workshop at the Instituto Superior de Artes e Cultura (ISArC).

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Paula Nascimento (1981) was born in Luanda, Angola, and she is an architect and independent curator, holding degrees from the Architectural Association School of Architecture and London Southbank University. She is a founder of *Beyond Entropy Africa* – a research studio that focuses on the fields of architecture, urbanism, visual arts and geopolitics, and of the cultural collective *Colectivo Pés Descalços*. Nascimento was co-curator, together with Stefano Rabolli Pansera, of *Beyond Entropy Angola* at the 13<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale of Architecture (2012); *Luanda Encyclopedic City* at the 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Art Biennale (2013); and the permanent collection of the Zeitz MOCAA, Cape Town. As an independent curator, she has participated in various international projects, and her texts have been published in several magazines and newspapers. She is part of the jury of the New Photography Award, and lectures at several academic institutions. Nascimento is currently part of the project

**African Mobilities: This is not a Refugee Camp** (Wits University Jhb, Munich, 2018) Exhibition, as a regional collaborator. She was awarded the Golden Lion Award for Best National Participation, in 2013, at the Venice Biennale, the ArcVision Women for Expo Special Award (2015), the Angola 35<sup>th</sup> Arts and Culture Award (2013 and 2016) and the African Architecture Award in 2017.

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**Azu Nwagbogu** (1975) is the Founder and Director of African Artists' Foundation (AAF), a non-profit organisation based in Lagos, Nigeria. Nwagbogu was also elected as Interim Director/Head Curator of the Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art, in South Africa, from June 2018 to August 2019. He serves as Founder and Director of LagosPhoto Festival, an annual international arts festival of photography held in Lagos. Moreover, Nwagbogu is the creator of Art Base Africa, a virtual space to discover and learn about contemporary African Art. He served as a juror for the Dutch Doc, POPCAP Photography Awards, the World Press Photo, Prisma Photography Award (2015), Greenpeace Photo Award (2016), New York Times Portfolio Review (2017-18), W. Eugene Smith Award (2018), Photo España (2018), Foam Paul Huf Award (2019), Wellcome Photography Prize (2019), and he is a regular juror for organisations such as Lensculture and Magnum. For the past 20 years, he has curated private collections for various prominent individuals and corporate organisations in Africa. Nwagbogu obtained a Master's degree in Public Health from the University of Cambridge. He lives and works in Lagos, Nigeria.

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**Ana Balona de Oliveira** is FCT Researcher (CEEC 2017) at the Institute for Art History

of the New University of Lisbon (IHA-FCSH-NOVA), where she co-coordinates the cluster 'Transnational Perspectives on Contemporary Art: Identities and Representation'. She has lectured in several institutions in Portugal and the United Kingdom, where she received her PhD (*Fort/Da: Unhomely and Hybrid Displacements in the Work of Ângela Ferreira, c. 1980-2008*, Courtauld Institute of Art, 2012). Her research focuses on colonial, anti- and post-colonial narratives, migration and globalization in contemporary art from 'Lusophone' countries and beyond, in an intersectional and decolonial feminist perspective. She published articles in *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art*, *Third Text*, *African Arts*, etc.; co-edited the volumes *Atlantica: Contemporary Art from Angola and its Diaspora* (2018), *Diálogos com Ruy Duarte de Carvalho* (2019), etc.; contributed essays and interviews to the exhibition catalogues *Recent Histories: Contemporary African Photography and Video Art* (2017), *Novo Banco Photo 2015*, etc., and the volumes *Revolution 3.0: Iconographies of Radical Change* (2019), *(Re)Imagining African Independence: Film, Visual Arts and the Fall of the Portuguese Empire* (2017), *Red Africa: Affective Communities and the Cold War* (2016), *Edson Chagas: Found Not Taken* (2015), etc. She curated the solo exhibitions *Edson Chagas: Oikonomos* (CCP, Luanda, 2019), *Ângela Ferreira: Underground Cinemas & Towering Radios* (Galeria Av. da Índia, Lisbon, 2016), *Ângela Ferreira: Monuments in Reverse* (CAAA, Guimarães, 2015); co-curated the collective exhibition *Ruy Duarte de Carvalho: A Delicate Zone of Commitment* (Galeria Quadrum, Lisbon, 2015-2016), etc.; and organized the talk series *Artistic Migrations in and beyond Lisbon* (Hangar, Lisbon, 2015-2016) and *Thinking from the South: Comparing Post-Colonial Histories and Diasporic Identities*



through *Artistic Practices and Spaces* (Hangar, Lisbon, 2018).

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Afonso Dias Ramos (1987) is an Art History Fellow at Forum Transregionale Studien in Berlin, Germany. He received his PhD in History of Art from University College London with a thesis focusing on the vexed relationship between political violence and photography in contemporary art, exploring the recent artistic legacy of the liberation and civil wars in countries such as Angola (1961-2002), Cuba, Portugal, South Africa, and the US. He previously studied History of Art at NOVA University of Lisbon and Université Paris-Sorbonne (Paris IV). Recent publications include the articles *Rarely penetrated by camera or film – NBC's Angola: Journey to War (1961)* (2017), *Photography and Propaganda in the Late Portuguese Empire: Volkmar Wentzel's Assignments for National Geographic Magazine* (2017), *Kongo Reframed* (2017), and *How to Disappear Completely The Struggle for Angola* (2017).

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António Pinto Ribeiro (1956) graduated in Philosophy and has a special interest in philosophy of language and aesthetics, as well as a doctorate in Cultural Studies. Ribeiro has been a cultural coordinator and curator at various cultural institutes in Portugal and abroad, including at Culturgest where he was artistic director since its founding in 1993, until 2004, and at Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian (2004-2015). At Culturgest he initiated one of the first curatorial programmes dedicated to the artistic and cultural creation in African countries and diasporas. At FCG he furthered and directed the Programme of Contemporary Culture in the Near Future dedicated in particular to Africa

and Latin America. He was General Coordinator of the programme *Passado e Presente – Lisboa Capital Ibero-Americana da Cultura* in 2017. He collaborated with Instituto Camões, curating the exhibition *Réplica e Rebelião* (2006), dedicated to black African and Brazilian artists. His main research interests lie in the areas of cultural politics, African and South American contemporary art, and cultural studies. His most renowned publications are *África os quatro rios* (2007) and *Peut-on décoloniser les musées?* (2019). Currently, he works as curator and researcher at Centro de Estudos Sociais, at the University of Coimbra, in the ERC project MEMOIRS – *Filhos de Império e Pos-Memórias Europeias*.

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Raquel Schefer is a researcher, a filmmaker, a film curator, and a lecturer at Sorbonne Nouvelle – Paris 3 University. She holds a PhD. in Film and Audiovisual Studies from Sorbonne Nouvelle – Paris 3 University, a Master in Documentary Cinema from the University of Cinema of Buenos Aires, and a degree in Communication Sciences from the New University of Lisbon. She published the book *Self-Portrait in Documentary* in 2008, in Argentina, as well as several book chapters and articles in Portugal and abroad. She has taught at Grenoble Alpes University, Paris Est University, Rennes 2 University, the University of Cinema of Buenos Aires, and the University of Communication in Mexico City. She was a Visiting Scholar at the University of California, Los Angeles. She is currently a post-doctoral FCT fellow at the CEC/University of Lisbon, the IHC/Universidade NOVA de Lisboa and the University of the Western Cape, and a co-editor of the quarterly of theory and history of cinema *La Furia Umana*.

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João Silvério (1962) is an Associate Curator of the Contemporary Art Collection of Fundação PLMJ. He holds a Master Degree in Curatorial Studies from the faculty of Belas-Artes at the University of Lisbon. Silvério began his career as an independent curator in 2003. In October 2007 he created the independent non-commercial project EMPTY CUBE, which showcased projects by artists, designers and architects ([www.emptycube.org](http://www.emptycube.org)). Between March 2013 and December 2015, he was President of the Portuguese section of AICA – International Association of Art Critics. He writes regularly on artistic projects in catalogues, publications and websites, among which is [www.emptycube.org](http://www.emptycube.org).

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Drew Thompson is a writer and visual historian who works as Assistant Professor in Africana and Historical Studies and Director of Africana Studies at Bard College. He recently authored *Filtering Histories: The Photographic Bureaucracy in Mozambique, 1960 to Recent Times* (Forthcoming from the University of Michigan Press in 2021), and is at work on another monograph, provisionally titled *Coloring Black Suervveillance: The History of Polaroid in Africa and Contemporary Arts*. His writings on modern and contemporary art have appeared in leading popular art journals, including contemporary and photograph, *Foam*, *Mail and Guardian*, *source Paper-Journal*, and the blog *Africa is a Country*.



Centro de  
Investigação  
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**Printing and postproduction**

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**Proofreading and editing**

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**Translation (from Portuguese)**

Blue Dimension

**Production**

Hangar – Centro de Investigação  
Artística and Xerém Associação Cultural

**Partnerships**

Centro de Estudos Comparatistas,  
Faculdade de Letras,  
Universidade de Lisboa,  
Fundação PLMJ,  
Edições Orfeu Negro

**With the support of**

Dgartes – Direcção Geral das Artes;  
Centro de Estudos Comparatistas,  
Faculdade de Letras, Universidade  
de Lisboa; Fundação PLMJ,  
CIEBA – Centro de Investigação e de  
Estudos em Belas-Artes and Orfeu  
Negro

This project was produced with national  
funding from the FCT – Fundação para  
a Ciência e a Tecnologia, I.P., under the  
project UID/ELT/0509/2013

**Publisher**

Hangar Books  
<https://hangar.com.pt>  
hangar.xerem@gmail.com  
November 2020

**Legal deposit**

475 737/20

**ISBN**

978-989-331053

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1<sup>st</sup> Edition  
November 2020, Lisbon

**Acknowledgements**

Patrícia Dias Mendes, João Silvério,  
Marissa Moorman, Ana de Almeida,  
Bruno Leitão, Élia Gemuce, Marcela  
Canadas, Yara Milengo, Nicca Maissune



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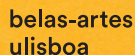
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978-989-33-1053-3

