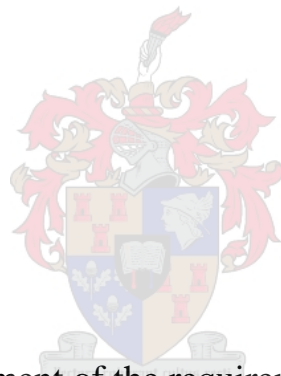


Political Fashioning: Aesthetics, art and activism in South Africa

2013-2018

Kylie Bolton



Thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at Stellenbosch University

Supervisor: Dr Bernard Dubbeld

March 2020

Declaration

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the sole author thereof (save to the extent explicitly otherwise stated), that reproduction and publication thereof by Stellenbosch University will not infringe any third party rights and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

March 2020

Abstract

The thesis offers a reading of four contemporary South African artists as forms of intervention in society. I consider aesthetic practices that include the mediums of sculpture, film and performance art not as a student of the fine arts, but rather as a particular kind of social analysis and mode of political practice, situated specifically two decades into democracy in the country. By using art that I found from the beginning of 2013 to 2018 in museums and galleries in Cape Town, at the Cape Town National Arts Festival and at the Design Indaba Conference, I show how the aesthetic appearance of an artwork affords its readers a cognitive experience that evokes past struggles, contemporary experiences and repressed memories that have been silenced in the narration of South Africa's history. Further, I argue that by providing a prism from which to evaluate the South African transition, art provides a different representation to the dominant social sciences, which I read alongside my rendering of the artworks. By engaging with various readings of the art and with the sartorial as a form of political rhetoric, following Walter Benjamin, I argue that the aesthetic experience of an artwork can teach us something new about our world which can jolt the public out of moral complacency and political acceptance. In addition, I show how the rapid circulation of images in the digital age has given student protestors and art activists the critical potential to mobilize in the public sphere, to claim and to rewrite history, aligning aesthetics with politics in a progressive way. Through juxtaposing art and social science literature I draw attention to artists as political actors and their aesthetic practice as a form of cultural labour that heralds an opposing, "negative" relationship to structures of power and domination. I finally, consider how the production of South African history results in the absence and silencing of various narratives that these artists illuminate by creating a critical space wherein to juxtapose past remnants with our present fears.

Opsomming

Hierdie studie bied 'n vertolking van vier eietydse Suid-Afrikaanse kunstenaars as intervensievorme in die samelewing. Ek het oorweging geskenk aan estetiese praktyke wat die mediums van beeldhoukuns, film en uitvoerende kunste insluit – nie as 'n student van die beeldende kunste nie, maar eerder as 'n spesifieke soort sosiale ontleding en selfs as 'n spesifieke modus van politieke praktyk, wat baie spesifiek gesitueer is ná twee dekades van demokrasiewording in die land. Deur die gebruik van kuns wat ek van die begin van 2013 tot 2018 in museums en galerye in Kaapstad, by die Kaapstad Nasionale Kunstefees en die Design Indaba-konferensie gevind het, toon ek hoe die estetiese voorkoms van 'n kunswerk aan die vertolker 'n kognitiewe ervaring bied wat huidige begrip versteur deur worstelinge van die verlede, hedendaagse ervarings en onderdrukte herinneringe wat in die vertelling van Suid-Afrika se geskiedenis stilgemaak is, op te roep. Ek voer voorts aan dat deur die verskaffing van 'n prisma waarvolgens die Suid-Afrikaanse oorgang geëvalueer kan word, kuns 'n ander voorstelling vir die oorheersende sosiale wetenskappe bied, wat ek naas my weergawe van die kunswerke vertolk. Deur verskillende vertolkings van die kuns te gebruik en aan die hand van die sartoriale as 'n vorm van politieke retoriek, gegrond op die werk van Walter Benjamin, voer ek aan dat die estetiese ervaring van 'n kunswerk ons iets nuuts kan leer van ons wêreld, wat die publiek uit morele selfvoldoening en politieke aanvaarding kan skud. Ek toon hierbenewens hoe die snelle sirkulasie van beelde in die digitale era studenteprotesteerders en kunsaktiviste die kritieke potensiaal bied om in die openbare sfeer te mobiliseer, om aanspraak op die geskiedenis te maak en dit te herskryf, waardeur estetika op 'n progressiewe manier met politiek belynd word. Deur naasmekaarstelling van kuns en literatuur in die sosiale wetenskappe vestig ek die aandag op kunstenaars as politieke akteurs en hul estetiese praktyk as 'n vorm van kulturele arbeid wat 'n teenstellende, 'negatiewe' verhouding met strukture van mag en

oorheersing inlui. Laastens ondersoek ek hoe die voortbring van Suid-Afrikaanse geskiedenis lei tot die afwesigheid en stilmaak van verskeie vertellings wat deur hierdie kunstenaars belig word deur 'n kritiese ruimte te skep waarin oorblyfsels van die verlede naas ons huidige vrese gestel kan word.

Acronyms

ANC- African National Congress

ARV- Antiretrovirals

UCT- University of Cape Town

HIV/AIDS- Human Immunodeficiency Virus/ Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

LGBTI- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex

TRC- Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Acknowledgements

I thank the Mellon Foundation for an Indexing Transformation MA Scholarship that assisted financially with completing the degree. A special thank you to my supervisor Bernard Dubbeld for his expert opinion and sense of humour throughout my writing. To my friends, thank you for staying up with me till the early hours of the morning. I will forever live by our new motto, -tough times never last. Only tough people last.

Table of Contents

Declaration	2
Abstract	3
Opsomming	4
Acronyms	5
Acknowledgements	6
List of figures and images	9
Introduction	10
Chapter 1 Sethembile Msezane: The black female body in memorialized public space	40
Contesting Public Memories: The Day Rhodes Fell and the Public Holiday Series	42
Gender and Clothing	50
Memory and the production of history	56
Chapter 2 Nandipha Mntambo: The female body and cows	62
Spectacle	64
Material and the body	70
The symbolic politics of clothing	72

The spectacle of ‘Africanicity’	76
Composing and decomposing difference	85
Chapter 3 Athi-Patra Ruga: Displacement and queer identities within public space	89
The Future White Woman of Azania and the Character of Beiruth	91
Reimagining the Kingdom of Azania	99
Camp style and queer identities	102
Counter Publics and Visibility in Ruga’s performance practice	106
Chapter 4 Mary Sibande: Domestic work and repressed memory	116
The sculptural figure of Sophie	119
Theatrical fantasy and hysterical representation at the site of the body	124
Hysteria and repressed trauma	128
Racial and gendered trauma in domestic servitude	132
Conclusion	139
References	143

List of Figures and Images

Figure 1: *Chapungu- The Day Rhodes Fell* (2015) Iziko South African National Gallery

Figure 2: *Untitled- Heritage Day* (2013) ARTTHROB Magazine

Figure 3: *Untitled-Women's Day* (2014) ARTTHROB Magazine

Figure 4: *Untitled- Youth Day* (2014) ARTTHROB Magazine

Figure 5: *Praca De Touros III* (2008) Zeitz MOCCA

Figure 6: *Indlovukati* (2007) *The Stevenson Art Gallery*

Figure 7: *The Rape of Europa* (2009) Zeitz MOCCA

Figure 8: *The White Woman and the Winged Figure of Peace* (2012) WHATIFTHEWORLD
Gallery

Figure 9: *After He Left* (2008) Stevenson Art Galley

Figure 10: *Beiruth climbing the wall outside the police station* (2008) Stevenson Art Gallery

Figure 11: *The Naivety of Beiruth* (2008) Stevenson Art Gallery

Figure 12: *I Put a Spell on Me* (2008) Somerset House

Figure 13: *Sophie Mercia* (2009) Somerset House

Figure 14: *A Terrible Beauty is Born* (2008) Somerset House

Figure 15: *The Prophecy* (2014) Griot Magazine

Introduction

Political Fashioning: Aesthetics, art and activism in South Africa explores how four contemporary South African performance artists engage and understand South Africa after apartheid, and how this engagement is a kind of social and political intervention. This work is an experiment in methods of visual communication that illustrate the power of the visual in depicting and also in understanding public and private “South African experiences” (Buck-Morss, 2002: xv). With dress and adornment as the primary aesthetic practice of all the artists presented in *Political Fashioning*, the sartorial becomes a form of political rhetoric, employed by these artists to scrutinize the social conditions of, and subjective positions within, the post-apartheid state. By challenging social conventions, historical commemoration, and national identity, the four artists featured in *Political Fashioning* offer alternative narratives, embodiments, and more specifically affords the reader a cognitive experience that challenges and disrupts present understandings by offering divergent ways of seeing the nation’s current political and social position. I argue that the aesthetic appearance of the artworks, photographs, sculptures, performances and textiles provide a prism from which to evaluate the South African transition, and by providing a different representation, intervenes politically.

Political Fashioning discusses the work of artists whose intervention lies within the very materiality, dialogical character and medium, specifically posing ways to articulate the complexities of South Africa post 1994. Together, these artworks suggest that apartheid remains a very prominent spectre in the post-apartheid moment; thus, they turn to the body and the sartorial to engage and reimagine South Africa’s present and future, insisting that the work of liberation is not finished. The artists discussed include Nandipha Mntambo’s cowhide sculptures that bring into question the politics and aesthetics of femininity as she challenges

representations of the female body and the bovine; Athi-Patra Ruga's Azanian avatars which speak to notions of displacement and the reception of intersectional identities, sexuality and HIV/AIDS in South Africa; Sthembile Msezane's public displays that challenge commemorative practice and the exclusion of the black female body from public space and Mary Sibande, who through her sculptural figure of Sophie engages with repressed trauma and the tropes of domestic work.

My thesis is an exploration of cultural objects, as well as a critical interpretation of particular artworks and their power to influence the movement of history and expose alternative narratives. With the chosen artworks, I aim to build on Buck-Morss' (2002: 63) position that the aesthetic experience of art has the ability to "teach us something new about our world" which can jolt us out of "moral complacency" and political acceptance and pushes us to address the lack of social imagination that has pervaded cultural forms. To further achieve this, I employ art that engages directly with the body as well as the sartorial. The body is the "common frontier of society, the psycho-biological individual, the social self", presenting a symbolic platform upon which the various forms of socialization are enacted (Turner, 2007: 83). The sartorial, in its many culturally diverse forms, from clothing to headgear, to hair and cosmetics, provides the language through which these socializations are expressed.

As opposed to distancing oneself from history's failures, Instead I argue that there is a need to look closely at the ruins to recover the utopian dreams that were evoked. Buck-Morss (2002: 68) claims that, "history breaks down into images, not into stories. Without the narration of continuous progress, the images of the past resemble night dreams, the first mark of which, Freud tells us, is their emancipation from the spatial and temporal order of events." Thus, images can be understood as multifaceted networks of memory and desire in which past experiences are salvaged and, possibly, reclaimed. Only a fractional interpretation of these

images is likely. Yet, this is precisely what is significant about them, it is my aim to convince readers that the artworks of Nandipha Mntambo, Mary Sibande, Athi-Patra Ruga, and Sethembile Msezane can be seen as medium specific ways of evoking or giving these particular dream images cognitive, material form. I argue that these artworks have a political effect by revealing “patches of the past” which the dominant narratives of social science cannot as easily connect to the present. The juxtaposition of past remnants with our present fears may have the power to intrude on the complacency of citizens in the current political moment who uncritically accept that, “history is said by its victors to have completed its course” (Buck-Morss, 2002: 69).

Reading Contemporary South Africa: Suggesting new lenses for understanding the present

By providing a social sciences contextualization of the contemporary South African reality – through readings by Deborah Posel and Fiona Ross, juxtaposed with Kelly Gillespie and Bernard Dubbeld’s call for more of a critical gaze in anthropology – I illustrate not only the pivotal grounding that social sciences has provided my research, but also its potential for engaging with the aesthetic and popular culture turn in everyday South Africa. While the context offered captures significant facets of the post-apartheid reality, in terms of the incidence of violence, everyday experiences of poverty, conspicuous consumption in association with race and the politicization of sexuality; social science discourse, I argue, can only take its readers that far. While the literature covered illustrates a focus on prevalent societal issues, it accepts “relevance” as its point of departure in its intellectual practice, which implicates opportunities for “social understanding”, and more importantly “political critique” (Gillespie & Dubbeld, 2007: 130). There tends to be a fixation with the social relevance of an

issue, its direct contributory factors and its relevant angles of intervention, which ultimately risks overlooking the fact that politics requires more than simple interventionist answers. I suggest that a more interpretative lens is required, pointing to the relevance of art in capturing that which social sciences discourse does not, and the novel ways of seeing politically by means of evoking its audiences cognitive, affective senses.

Deborah Posel (2005:126) has argued that the social engineering of apartheid would not be so easily undone, as its legacy was bound to be difficult to expunge in particular areas, while wholly obstinate in others. A typical expectation when conflicts arise, claims Posel, is that their manifestation are largely linked to issues of poverty, race, inequality, redistribution and service delivery. However, these have not been the most capricious climaxes of political contestation pervading post-apartheid South Africa. Rather, Posel (2005: 126) points to the increase in racial violence, the meagre political and social mobilization concerning issues around poverty, and the endurance of inadequate service delivery by communities. One of the most conspicuous features charactering the post-apartheid reality has been the “politicization of sexuality”, and the deepening controversy and propagation of public demonstrations tied to issues of HIV/AIDS and rape, particularly the rape of children and babies.

Sex has become increasingly uncensored in post-apartheid South Africa, with a visible decline in the policing of public sex-talk. A significant feature has been the extent to which sex and sexuality has become visible in the landscape, for example, in the display of male sexuality in the annual Johannesburg Gay and Lesbian Pride Parade in 1999, as well as through demonstrations of condom use as part of the national AIDS-education campaign. Posel (2005: 130) points to an increased circulation of movies, pornography, and magazines which were previously deemed taboo as well as the prevalence of strip clubs and sex shops that became operational during the typical workday. What is more, the circulation of photographs, platforms

for sex-talk and their representations display patterned, discursive nodes, each highly entrenched in and fashioned in a specific manner by what Posel (2005: 130) believes are, “current global economic positioning’s, national process of class and status formation, and the acceleration of the AIDS epidemic, as well as the strategies and powers of new social movements”. Sex has also become highly eroticized, it has grown to be an unequivocal vehicle for consumption, with many transacting sex for immediate or regular financial support in the form of a long-term relationship. With regards to AIDS and violence, extensive public health projects have been launched, prioritizing increased public awareness concerning the transmission of HIV (Posel, 2005: 133). The focus has however, been on the topics of sex and risk, with an underlying agenda that evades questions around predominant sexual norms, as opposed to speaking about impact and intricacies of the epidemic.

Media coverage around the current outrage in response to rising rape incidents has risen, while there has also been a novel effort to make rape “a matter of public concern” and site of “legitimate public knowledge”. The politicization of sex and sexuality through increased media coverage has however become animated, firstly, by the alterations in public profiling of sex and sexuality in the post-apartheid era. Sexuality has entered discourse through specific strategies and sites, while being tied to specific systems of regulation and power relations. It is then with the internalization of sexual regulations that there is an agenda to turn sex into a site where one can through a rational regulation of desire, become a modern sexual subject with responsible behaviour (Posel, 2005: 134).

As race became inextricably linked to educational opportunities and social improvement, further interventions aimed at “producing” modern citizens emerged, which Seekings and Natrass (2005: 308) pointed to as, the growth of a “black elite and black middle classes” which is linked to the demonstration of newly accumulated wealth. Posel (2010: 158) believes that it

is the forms of conspicuous consumption linked to this wealth and its articulation in the South African freedom struggle that require deconstruction. The fall of apartheid was followed by South Africa's reintegration into a global economy; the standard of conspicuous consumption. It should then not come as a surprise that similar trends started to emerge among the black population, who were previously politically curbed, while their white counterparts benefitted from consumerist forms of "the good life". While significant, Posel's (2010: 158) concerns focused on the extensive history of "racially politicized consumption" in the country. It is through this framework that we can learn how the construction of the racial order, to an extent regulated people's interests, desires and their power as consumers.

In the nineteenth century, the power and desire to consume became racialized, at the same time it became essential in the construction of racial categories as it restricted people of colour from specific spheres of life, from the most public to the most intimate domains. In other words, the formal classification of races began to deeply influence people's relationship to the "world of things". Racial practices were grounded on the racial politics of consumption linked with the "civilizing mission" that spread across the continent. The regulation of black consumption in the nineteenth century, could be seen as an effort to create "God fearing subjects." It was suggested that internal transformation fashioned by the achievement of "civilization" was considered inextricably linked to the exterior transformation of the body (Posel, 2010: 163). Clothing was therefore seen as the first site for the display of Christian selfhood, which entailed covering one's bare black body and a devotion to "civilizing manners".

With a period of economic decline pervading South Africa in the 1970s and 1980s, novel reformist policies became instigated, pointing to the regime recognizing the need to facilitate and profit from "greater degrees of affluence" emerging in black communities. Drum Magazine began publishing desires and aspirations of divergent features of the African middle class. By

the 1980s, just before the demise of the apartheid regime, numerous constraints implicating African accumulation were diminishing and the stratification of African communities on lines of class and status began taking precedence. Posel (2010: 172) turns to 2007, to the development of the first shopping mall in what was previously a designated African township. The Maponya Mall in Soweto was purposefully shaped as a symbol of freedom.

“The mall had become a site of racial politics because South Africa’s history linked it inextricably to the regulation of consumption. If consumption has long been saturated with racial meaning, there are strong and dense historical reasons why the performance of racial identity in the present could be so closely connected to practices of acquisition” (Posel, 2010: 172).

Central to this discussion are the “social modes of being” that continue to be reproduced in society and which delineate what acceptable and unacceptable behaviour is. While a new black middle class and black elite capitalize on opportunities for wealth and consumption through performing their racial identities, a similar social imaginary can be seen being reproduced among the impoverished communities in post-apartheid South Africa. Fiona Ross’s (2015: 97) anthropological assertions regarding the particularities of people living in an impoverished community in Cape Town, reveals the specific ways in which “modes of world making” are permitted and rendered in South African history. She points to two distinct forms of life, rawness¹ and decency, which not only fashioned social imaginaries but continue to aid framing in contemporary ideology and social triage; which relegates particular histories, human relationships and connections bare and outside what is recognized as ordinary patterns of care. Rawness and decency, therefore become “social modes of being”, that are fashioned by

¹ Raw or rawness stands in opposition to an ideal of developed, cultured and respectable. In a more general usage, rawness insinuates vulnerability to life’s pain and violence (Ross, 2015: 98).

divergent historical processes, cultural archetypes, political regimes, and daily social interactions. Her ethnographic contributions can be applied to a large majority of South Africans entrenched in the poverty cycle, as Ross (2010: 3) claims, “they hoped that new housing and job opportunities would enable them finally to live decent lives and to be recognised as respectable people”.

Ross (2015: 99) reveals how an attempt to live decent lives points to the hierarchical rules that evoke and uphold power relations of class, gender and age. This is due to decency prescribing conformation to particular normative gendered ideals wherein women are seen as submissive, while simultaneously masking their unequivocal role in household maintenance. It has been suggested that “paid domestic work for black South African women remains a migrant institution, in an intranational and social, rather than transnational and political sense, as workers continue to straddle the divides between urban and rural contexts” (Ross, 2015: 100). Ross attempts to evoke an image in readers minds as she describes how in the face of low wage income, women remained at the centre of the household. Violence, particularly domestic abuse, was not uncommon and the late 1990s and early 2000s saw the death of many young peoples, due to inaccessibility to antiretroviral treatments at during the initial institution of the antiretroviral treatment programme in 2003 (McNeil, 2012: 1). Despite context, there was still a desire to maintain a sense of community, therefore what emerged was a form of “differentiated citizenship”, that can be seen across Cape Town. In an attempt to achieve decent lives, and not only that, but to be recognized as decent, Ross describes how in,

“[s]triving to develop and remain in meaningful relationships in conditions of material want that militated against them, people, particularly women, generated widespread networks of care and dependence that crosscut conventional household or family units and linked residents into relationships that secured the basic means of survival, in

relation to a concept of community operationalized through the ideal of respectability set in distinction to raw life. One might characterize these as processes of conviviality” (Ross, 2015: 99).

Ross exposes how social relationships become complicated and fractured due to people’s prior relationship history, suggesting that people had to reformulate their needs in order to be recognized as eligible by the state, enabling them to pursue a desirable life. What is significant, is the fact that these processes determine formal property relations for example, and are often made complicated by socially excluded, histories and multifaceted social forms that are not acknowledged by the state as “moral”.

In considering this notion of rawness as a lens through which the above aimed to offer commentary on the conspicuous features charactering the post-apartheid reality, I argue that the inclusion of visual mediums could afford the reader an affective, cognitive sense of the everyday lives Ross refers to. This is a way in which to gain critical insight into experience, as it requires intervention that goes beyond surveys within impoverished communities and ethnographies that go beyond observers becoming active witnesses. I suggest, presenting different kinds of images and performances in an attempt to get at what this life is. In other words, art as a subcultural space wherein to interpret the different mediums through which people themselves speak.

I suggest that the visual could aid in the telling of socially excluded histories that are unrecognized by dominant modes of narration. What is more, an employment of different aesthetic modes speaks directly to Gillespie and Dubbeld’s (2007: 132) assertion that anthropologists should adopt forms of “negative work”. This refers to, “providing labour that works against hegemonic structures of power and privilege - and combating the “routinisation

of suffering” (Dubbeld & Gillespie, 2007: 131). The employment of images in *Political Fashioning*, are essentially an attempt at negative work, as they fashion a continuous recognition of the unacceptability of conditions of life in South Africa. The juxtaposition of images and text, therefore, can be considered a practice that is both intellectual and political, thereby upholding a critical intellectual practice that heralds an opposing, negative relationship to structures of power and domination. This approach holds as its point of departure, the belief that thought and intellectual activity are politically positioned. Through a critical engagement with the politicization of aesthetics, pivotal political challenges can be directed towards the existing order, as it asks how ways of thinking and social relations that aid specific interests become concealed and represented as “natural”.

What is not being captured, I suggest, are novel ways of seeing politically by means of evoking its audience’s cognitive, affective senses. While the literature I have utilized offers opportunities for gaining a glimpse into people’s experiences of the contemporary South African moment, the narrative structure that connects the past to the present often presents challenges. Typically, the parameters of this structure are policed by the humanities and social sciences, academic disciplines which cordon off specialized areas of the past in ways that produce blindness as to their connections with each other (Buck-Morss, 2002: 161). It is this frame, institutionalized in universities that so often obscures the present political significance of the cultural inheritance.

I am working with what social sciences texts do not capture, affectively and even cognitively, and to propose an engagement between politically motivated aesthetics and scholarly understanding of society. My reasoning for this, has largely been influenced by the current South African trajectory from which the artists presented, and I are working in. In recent years, there has been an upsurge in student protest action, with significance given to the 2015 advent

of students from the University of Cape Town protesting for the removal of the memorial of Cecil John Rhodes on their campus. While deeper analysis of the particular movement and the statues position in public commemoration will be discussed in more detail in chapter 3, I would like to place emphasis on the global attention this moment received, and the subsequent spread of wider movements that pervaded the following two years (SAHO, 2015: 1). The broader protests that sparked from this historic moment, began speaking to issues of race relations, funding, access to tertiary education as well as the overall “decolonization” of education across South Africa.

The public protests have however not ended there. Currently, the president, ministers, politicians and the South African Police force are being confronted with the rage of women in South Africa in 2019. After the rape, murder, butchering, and battering of UCT student Uyinene Mrwetyana, UWC student Jesse Hess, boxing champion Leighandre Jegels, fourteen-year-old Janika Mallo, Lynette Volschenk, and Meghan Cremer days apart, the South African government declared gender-based violence a national crisis in the country (Francke, 2019: 1). Within hours of news of Uyinene’s brutal murder, images of women who had been raped and murdered began circulating on numerous platforms. In response women have taken to Twitter, using the #AmINext, as they ask whether they will be the next rape and murder victim. Thousands of protesters have also taken to the streets of Johannesburg and Cape Town, wearing all-black and holding banners with images of the women’s faces as they demonstrate against what they are calling the “femicide” in South Africa.

I argue that in face of the current protest action pervading the country, this is the moment of the circulation of the image, as the visibility of movements are significantly propelled by images and other visual mediums circulating among the public. This “aesthetic turn” in the navigating of everyday life in South Africa has been a significant influence in my research into

performance art and the debates they evoke on social and political concerns (Buck-Morss, 2002: 276). Susan Buck-Morss' (2002) in *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West* is my theoretical point of departure, as I draw on her assertion that,

“[t]here is hope, but it may not come from the traditional realm of politics-or from academic intellectuals, for that matter, still tied economically and socially to the old structures of power that we have learned to criticize with such sophistication. Indeed, the whole idea of what constitutes critical cultural practice may need to be rethought”.

I argue that opportunities for producing a politically conscious public can be advocated, as Buck-Morss reveals by producers of culture that aim to fashion subcultural spaces, within cultural junctures, on the borders, or within electronic landscapes, that evade the standardized topology of globalization, while exploiting its electronic forms and technological structures. If these alternative spaces for intellectual debate develop successfully, it will partly be due to their ability to promote the political potential of the novel means of production, such as, computer information networks and handheld cameras, and employing them as cultural weapons against structural powers that aim to retain and inhibit them (Buck-Morss, 2002: 277).

In considering the protest action that arose in response to the haunting presence of the Cecil John Rhodes statue, and broader issues of race relations, funding, access to tertiary education as well as the decolonization of education, what emerges is a larger movement challenging the means and production of history. The statue can ultimately be read as a reflection of particular historical occurrences, which captures specific presences, while accepting others as absent (Trouillot, 1995: 48). However, there are more than mere presences and absences, various silences are also continuously being reproduced through this memorialization and its narration of history. My question in turn is, whether the circulation of images, and their politicization,

can undo the silencing of the past, as these subcultural groups and spaces I am referring to, are able to transform into a variety of publics, which can diffuse and multiply. The virtual global humanity for instance, points to a potential virtual world that watches, listens and speaks, able to critically evaluate both their own culture and the culture of others.

Framing the Politicization of Aesthetics as a Concept

In this section I shift my arguments concerning contemporary South Africa from those supported by the writings of the social sciences to critical theorists and theories posited by artists and the scholarly counter public in the contemporary avant-garde that have addressed social science inadequacies through creative work. My intention is to present artworks as theoretical explorations or a medium that provide a lens onto society that conventional social science does not capture (Garoian & Gaudelius, 2004: 306). By drawing on this literature I aim to justify the significance of art and the reading of art in my research. There is a growing body of literature that recognizes artistic practice as an instrument with which to disturb the continuity of perceptions and disillusion that which appears familiar. By evoking fantasy and pushing beyond the frame of literary influence, art affords the public novel sensory and cognitive knowledge.

The relationship between society and art has remained a pivotal question for artists, theorists and left-wing advocates. With the advent of the twentieth century, it was not an uncommon belief that art holds the power to transform the world, as it was during this time that art entered an intricate political battlefield. Lukacs was of the opinion that by exhibiting social reality along with all its paradoxical intricacy, art could advocate for the interests of class struggle (Moir, 2017: 1). In an attempt to explore the critical power that art holds today, I engage with

critical theories that manifest from The Frankfurt School and figures in South Africa. Whereas theorists such as Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno stressed that the conditions of technological industrialisation brought with it the corrosion of culture, Walter Benjamin, Ernst Bloch, Susan Buck-Morss and others alike indorse a more optimistic opinion on the utopian power of “art in the age of its technological reproducibility” (Benjamin, 2010: 17).

No other theorist pushed the argument of arts ability to unveil utopian potentials ingrained in society, as far as Bloch did. Despite arts ability to concurrently evoke repressive philosophies, Bloch advocated that art stimulates visibility in another lobe of our unconscious. He refers to this lobe as the not-yet-conscious which engages and interacts with that, which is imminent in history and globally. Bloch therefore believed that by producing and interpreting art and culture, people would become cognizant of what the world has long fantasised about possessing. Amongst contemporary theorists, Bloch and Benjamin recognized the Nazi’s facility to generate appeal by fusing the symbolism and ideals serving a pre-capitalist way of life with those manifesting in modern, technological society (Moir, 2017: 1). The idea of the “aestheticization of politics” coined by Benjamin, was applied to fascist regimes that turned to art as an apparatus with which to manipulate the forces of hatred, distrust and envy in society.

Later, I will illustrate the other side of Benjamin’s notion of the “aestheticization of politics” as “the politicization of aesthetics” (Benjamin, 2010: 21). However, here Benjamin’s notion can also be understood as an ideologically conflicting fusion which political philosopher, Susan Buck-Morss, deconstructs in *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West*. By way of example, her work draws on Benjamin when illustrating the social fantasies that were evoked by industrial technologies during the Bolshevik Revolution in October 1917. This marked the time of the artistic avant-garde where artists in particular, evoked a changed anthropology of modern life with perceptual apparatus that distanced their

oeuvre from the old world. These utopian compulsions were then assumed by the Bolshevik Revolution and channelled towards the political agenda (Buck-Morss, 2002: 45). This however, evidently led to the problematical conflation between cultural and political revolution.

In contrast to the artistic avant-garde that disrupted the persistence of perceptions and disillusioned the familiar, the vanguard party asserted their knowledge on the trajectory of history, projecting “a science of the future” which pushed revolutionary politics to prescribe the art of the time. Russian avant-garde art, as a movement preceded the Revolution, bestowing it with official recognition. Avant-garde in relation to art denotes a form of boundary pushing art and offers grounding for my argument for the social and political power of art. Buck-Morss (2002: 61) views avant-garde as, “being alienated from established bourgeois culture (as a bohemian) or on the cutting edge of cultural history (as a radical), but it did not seem necessary to conflate these positions with an endorsement of any particular political party”. The potential effect being to rupture the continuity of time, opening it up to new cognitive and sensory experiences (Buck-Morss, 2002: 49).

Pivotal artistic styles of the avant-garde include suprematism, rayonnism and constructivism². However, after a particular cosmology of history manifested in the publics’ imaginary, even artists visions were corrupted. Restrained by historical objectives, the artistic revolution came to be seen as purely symptomatic of political revolution. This was the result of art beginning to appeal to the desires of the masses, circulating conventional art forms so as to mobilize in conjunction with the political agenda. As the October Revolution brought with it a scheme of

² Suprematism wanted to present pure paintings by manipulating basic geometric shapes and primary colours, while rayonnism revealed a new take on light, time and space that did not rely on a specific subject. Constructivism on the other hand, was influenced by cubism engaged with “utilitarian abstraction” (owlcation, 2015: 1)

proletarian class rule, what constituted as progressive art became intellectually muddled and politically provocative. Any art that shifted from this agenda was marked as anti-revolutionary.

In considering the Soviet and German context, I build on Benjamin's assertion that critical artists and theorists could impede this tendency with the politicization of aesthetics. Put differently, artists can produce art that aims to reveal and oppose reactionary tendencies. My aim is to illustrate that while art can manipulate the masses it still has the capability to evoke an empirical effect, arousing the imaginary in ways that places reality under interrogation (Buck-Morss, 2002: 49).

As much as art is a result of social labour, Bloch also recognized the evocation of ideology in it. The twentieth century has been referred to as the "century of ideology" (Moir, 2017: 1). Bloch shifts away from the narrow assumption that art and other super structural elements of culture and ideology, merely mirror a particular form of social relations or mode of production. Instead, social reality itself along with its cultural products such as art, encompass more than subjugation, exploitation, violence and their expression. The fruits of art, philosophy and science signify more than the false consciousness that each society had of itself and utilized for its own adornment. The "more", here, refers to culture's "utopian surplus", which Bloch saw consistently reflected, as "an expression of the still unfulfilled desire for utopia, and the anticipatory consciousness of its possibility" (Moir, 2017: 1).

Buck-Morss holds a similar view concerning the ideologies of the century, which she like Bloch asserts set in motion a particularly significant historical spectacle: a mass utopian dreamworld (Gretz, 2002: 202). These dreamworlds or dream-like images according to Buck-Morss were constructed and established in response to the introduction of mass production based Fordist economies in all its variations. Moreover, Bloch locates this utopian daydream

in the everyday, as dreams of a better life assume symbolic form in fashion to children's books. He reminds us that even clothes and adornment have the power to hold a utopian promise. Buck-Morss (2002: 49), reiterates this in revealing dreamworlds as congruent with assemblages of economic and political power, such as machines of mass destruction and exploitive forms of labour extraction. However, it was not the democratic or utopian thinking that instigated these historical nightmares, but the structures of power themselves. Even with the dissipation of the old dreamworlds, the assemblages of power persist, but not without fashioning divergent forms of public protest from "downwardly mobile groups" who require the state's welfare most.

Theodor Adorno was largely a critic of mass culture; however, his scrutiny did not pervade the entire aesthetic realm. He advocated that artwork does in fact hold content of truth, which can be located in its ability to unveil the absent, contradictory, blemished character of social reality. Moreover, Adorno believes that the critical power of art becomes most evident against works that are not overtly political (Moir, 2017: 1). Despite various controversies among these critical theorists, what can be deduced from the above is the significance of the aesthetic education of society, and the value of cultural analysis as a method of political scrutiny.

Deconstructing how the reproduction of any work of art and the art of film infiltrate one another, is central to my argument concerning arts ability to produce shifts in perceptibility. Benjamin's essay "*The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*", argues that an original work of art is marked by ritual, heritage, permanence and distinctiveness, all contributing to its aura, which if reproduced, results in the artwork losing its claim of authenticity. For example, while a painting illuminates an aura due to its originality, a photograph does not because it is an image taken of an image. Benjamin argues firstly, that the technological reproduction of the photograph could reveal facets of the original that can only

be made discernible by the lens or employs specific apparatus that enlarges or slows down the images that escape human optics (Benjamin, 2010: 14). Secondly, technological reproduction spreads and circulates the copy to locations which the original would not have touched. Ultimately, as the aura of an artwork diminishes, its ritualistic value is replaced by exhibition value, where its value is depended on its display in public.

While it was a common opinion that mass media technologies brought with it a continuous corrosion of culture and communication, Benjamin did not necessarily view this as corrupt; by contrast this suggests that this distance from the aura opens up the potential for the politicization of art, allowing us to introduce political enquiries into the work. Benjamin and Buck-Morss alike, believed that not only could these technologies influence the masses, but they could advocate mass unity in a positive way. These theorists saw films potential to foster a critical approach to experience and cinema as a critical apparatus due to its ability to extend human communication to the boundaries of expressivity. This can be seen in Einstein's filmic images for example, where static flashes of violence in a crowd of people and zoomed in shots of speechless faces become the only forms of communication employed. Further, the particular aspects of the screen that generate cognitive experience afford audiences the opportunity to view materiality not only of the novel "collective protagonist", but of other idyllic dream images, which in the context of the Socialist Revolution brought into perspective the solidarity of the revolutionary crowd and the notion of international unity. It has even become a question of whether the Soviet experience would have been likely without cinema. Buck-Morss (2002: 147) maintains that, "the mass as a coherent visual phenomenon can only inhabit the stimulated, indefinite space of the cinema screen". This is because the cinema constructs an imagined space for a mass body to be existent.

In the 1930s, both Hollywood and Soviet cinema were a form of mass entertainment. Politically, both affirmed official culture and denied certain bleak realities of social development. The significance of cinema can also be found in the cinematic prosthesis which shaped political identifications (Buck-Morss, 2002:148). The potential power of the mass viewer was enormous, but so was the potential for its manipulation. With cinema, as with other media the means of social control was not organizational but mimetic. The movie King Kong opened in New York theatres on March 1933 and two months later the architectural design for the Palace of the Soviets was chosen. The images bared a stark resemblance to the widely distributed poster for King Kong. While the Palace of the Soviets was meant to be a symbol of proletarian architecture, King Kong on the other hand depicted a king, who fought against urban-industrial civilization and lost. What they have in common is that they are both symbols of the masses, displayed as spectacles for the masses. Like dream-images their meaning is ambivalent, moving between desire that is expressed and a fear that holds it in check. This is what gives them their power to thrill. It is through seduction and shock that they exert control.

Reading the Politicization of Aesthetics in South Africa

The writings of Premesh Lalu in *The Deaths of Hintsa: Post-apartheid South Africa and the Shape of Recurring Pasts* is one such example of the “scholarly counter public advocating for the recognition of alternative modes of evidence in the narration of history” (Lalu, 2009: 4). Two years after the advent of democratic rule, Nicholas Gcaleka, a divine healer from the Eastern Cape province of South Africa toppled onto the stage of history. Newspapers reported about his return to South Africa after recovering the skull of Hintsa, the Xhosa King, who had

been shot dead by British forces over a century and half ago, on the banks of the Nqabarha River. The relevance of the book comes as it takes into consideration the derision Gcaleka's mission received from academia, the press, and traditional Xhosa leadership due to his empirical evidence taking the form of a dream; calling to be conjured. Lalu (2009: 1) locates the source of this ridicule in modes of evidence prompted by colonial power which synchronously disregards the work of the imagination.

Deliberations surrounding the legitimacy of the skull, which encompassed forensic and scientific explanations pushing a relatively dated terminology of race when conferring evidence, affords the scholarly counter public the opportunity to consider the propagation of signs, that do not necessarily exclude people from participating in history, but define the difference between what can be said and what actually is said. An investigation into these modes of evidence offer deeper understandings of the relationship between history and power assigned to the archive. I draw on Lalu's (2009: 7) argument, which asks, "how could a form of evidence once used to cover up acts of violence be depended on to offer us an escape from the violence of the apartheid past?" and push forward his agenda concerning the need for novel approaches to writing histories proposing a reconceptualization of the colonial archive.

This controversy surrounding, what is deemed valuable evidence has filtered into the post-apartheid moment and is evidence of a history that needs to make conceptual shifts in post-apartheid South Africa, one that addresses the difference at the centre of the system of representation (Lalu, 2009: 30). This shift entails deconstructing historiography and clarifying conceptual ambiguities. South African history may be considered an intelligible research community directed towards and functioning in relation to regulatory environments that can be understood as "regimes of truth". Historiography continues to rely on the archive to defend its arguments and authorize its legitimacy by means of proof and evidence. It can therefore be said

that history operates in relation to regulatory systems, reproducing these regimes of truth. It is however, through this process that the role of the imaginary structure, which Lalu argues is unequivocally vital to the discourse of history, becomes overlooked.

The imaginary structure pointed to here, does not represent the unreal, instead it functions as an integral part of discourse taking the form of a set of interactions that, if left unbridled, would preclude inquiry into the reality effect of history, as a discipline. To critically engage with these interactions is to confront how disciplines that endeavour to create a reality effect, come to produce a subaltern effect that expose a fundamental persistence in history functioning as a statist discourse (Lalu, 2009: 32). Historians working with official manuscripts and archives are not wholly unaware of the archives' impartiality as a storage space, which submits to rules of arrangement constituting hierarchical classification, categories and labels. However, what many historians do not realize is that they are, deeply caught up in this discursive composition and the authorisation of normative statements.

While Gcaleka's pursuit of evidence insufficiently met the expectations of history, his conjuring of dreams and fantasy was considered equally recalcitrant in declaring for the reliable partaking in the narration of history. What this casting aside does, is discount the centrality of his journey to the work undertaken by the imaginary structure in the narration of history. Lalu (2009: 11) argues that in history, the imaginary structure plays a critical and complimentary role for discourse. Disqualification on grounds of evoking imaginary structures, disillusioned the more assiduous thinking on how the discourse of history subdues the functioning of the conditions of narrativity in its discourse. It is the aim of this work to build on the premise that historical narratives cannot be told without obscuring the division between history and historiography. Further, I link the modes of evidence propagated by the colonial archive with the imaginary structure which fortifies its narrative potentials (Lalu, 2009: 13).

Extending recognition of alternative modes of evidence in the narration of history, is advocated by art historian, Patricia Hayes, who promotes the uncovering of photography as an expose for many in the early 1980s in South Africa. The country's extensive legacies of apartheid and segregation, which saw the division of people into a hierarchical system of citizens and non-citizens, meant that people had little knowledge of the other. Hayes (2017: 306) asserts that, "in a rich decade of photography, what is notable is that photography produced views not only of the difficult worlds in which people lived, but that it produced views at all." Photography as narratives of the country, remained hidden in the confines of dark rooms but began surfacing with the founding of the photographic collective Afripix in 1982 by Omar Badsha and Paul Weinberg. Hayes (2017: 307) states that photography brought together an emerging generation of diverse upbringings, who shared an eagerness to establish novel publics with the "production, circulation and exhibition" of photographs. Efforts could be seen directed towards the establishment of a collective that channelled their photographs in the service of the anti-apartheid struggle.

As opposed to photojournalists that covered commercial news, members of Afripix identified themselves as documentary photographers, supplying images to various organizations that aided them in educating and mobilizing citizens and non-citizens alike (Hayes, 2017: 307). The discourse progressively became one that intended to dig "beneath the surface of things". It was even strongly advocated that ordinary citizens get cameras and take up the training workshops offered, as they would be able to reveal the vilest abuses by the state and police. Kylie Thomas (2012: 207) asserts that Afripix played an unequivocal role in the construction of what is today acknowledged as the "history of the struggle". This was largely due to documentary photography capturing/fashioning controversial representations of the subjugation and resistance that occurred near the collapse of apartheid. Moreover, some of those images have been significant in the "making of history post-apartheid". The power of visibility in this epoch

was directly tied to the discourse of documentary, and its underlying assertion of “truthfulness, accuracy and fidelity” (Hayes, 2017: 311). It was predominately a medium of exposure, which fashioned publics whose main aim was to advocate and circulate an undisputable archive that could not be refuted. Political turmoil and violence gained an epistemological grounding from these photographs that, “within the history of the struggle, photography has a crucial role to play, for photographs are able to ideologically frame moments in history” (Hayes, 2017: 311).

Hayes (2017: 174) asserts that in the post-apartheid moment, there has been, “a move away from documentary as part of the transition away from the apartheid and anti-apartheid movements”. This shift was propagated by artists and art historians that felt constrained by a principal commitment to the notion of genre and the restricted examples of documentary and photojournalism. Thomas (2012: 205) mentions the absence of documentary photography from the scene of post-apartheid violence, suggesting that previous understandings of the role of social documentary photography has been “re-aligned and re-directed” in contemporary South Africa. Thomas, whose oeuvre is concerned with the archive and public culture, asserts that violence, in both its spectacular and mundane forms remains a prevalent reality in South Africa. Her work presents a photographic series of “wounded apertures”, which she believes are difficult and imperative to interpret/engage with, precisely because of their “affective excess.” By drawing on Thomas’ notion of affective excess, my dissertation advocates that by critically engaging with the affective force of performance art and the images, and film stills thereof, we are provoked to engage with the “politics of the present” (Thomas, 2012: 207).

I do not deny that the politicization of aesthetics I am proposing, has two sides. The first can be revealed when looking to photography as an aesthetic technology of the 19th century in South Africa. Pinto De Almeida (2015: 461) who draws on Benjamin, pointed to photography as a medium specific way of fashioning visual motifs during the apartheid era, which helped

entrench and fix the appearance of race in novel ways, while delineating particular appearances to particular places. This visual interweaving of race and place, which “designated racially proper and improper places”, became pivotal to apartheid’s impediment of racial mixing and uncontrolled mobility (Pinto De Almeida, 2015: 461). My dissertation shows another possibility in Benjamin’s politicization of aesthetics; which is that contemporary art, sculpture, performance and photographs, can jolt people and encourage the public to acknowledge their critical potential to mobilize, claim and rewrite history. Aesthetics, therefore, aligns with politics in revolutionary or at least progressive ways.

A Method for Analysing the Politicization of Aesthetics

My work is an experiment in visual culture. I attempt to employ images as philosophy throughout my research, by exemplifying a way of seeing “contemporary South Africa” that challenges common conceptions of how much of the past continues to infiltrate the present, and deconstructing how art can be political in the current nexus. Because contemporary cultural life is always already engrossed in spectacle, I advocate the need for an extensive and comprehensive understanding of experiences in contemporary South Africa through a “plurality of scopic regimes”, of which I will be focusing on the critical and transgressive power of artmaking (Garoian & Gaudelius, 2004: 306). In my exploration of the various museums and galleries in the Cape Town – specifically the Iziko South African National Gallery, Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa MOCAA, Gallery Momo and the Cape Town Arts Festival – I became engrossed by sculptures, installations, images and performance art displays that appeared out of place, or that dislocated conventional understanding.

Rather than looking for particular artists whose work I could employ in my research, I selected the four artists discussed in *Political Fashioning*, based on coming across their artwork first. This was due to my criteria primarily being concerned with art that employed clothing, adornment or other forms of body modifications as part of their medium. I therefore followed a system of finding, classifying and interpreting images that draws on Benjamin's concepts of "wish-image," and "dialectical image."

Wish-images can be understood, at once, as a visual and corporeal as well as mental manifestation of individual and collective desires. Benjamin (1982: 4) asserts that wish-images are:

"[i]mages in the collective consciousness in which the old and the new interpenetrate...in them the collective seeks both to overcome and to transfigure the immaturity of the social product and the inadequacies in the social organization of production... what emerges in these wish-images is the resolute effort to distance oneself from all that is antiquated—which includes however the recent past."

Fashion is one such domain wherein wish-images become discernibly visible. Pusca (2009: 250), draws on Benjamin in describing fashion as "the tiger's leap into the past, and also the tiger's leap into the future." I engage with the various forms of clothing and adornment in the artworks presented in *Political Fashioning* pointing to fashion as a material mechanism, through which the clothing and adornment and its imitation of our bodies, offers a lens into our internal and mental desires, while simultaneously expressing them externally through "new fashion." I was therefore intently focused on finding art that employed clothing and adornment as a form of political rhetoric, and with which to scrutinize the social conditions of, and subjective positions within, post-apartheid South Africa. In other words, all the artworks

presented in my research, employ clothing or adornment in some or other way, to engage and reimagine South Africa's present and future.

Dialectical images, points to a second methodological contribution by Benjamin, which aided in the finding, classifying and interpreting of the artworks presented. Pusca (2009: 251) claims that,

“[i]mage is dialectics at a standstill. For while the relation of the present to the past is a purely temporal, continuous one, the relation of what-has-been to the now is dialectical: is not progression but image, suddenly emergent, they only arrive at readability at a particular point in time.”

My selection of dialectical images suggest that dialectical images only arise in particular instants, that are frequently the moment of destruction, devastation or “push into the marginal domain” (Pusca, 2009: 252), clearly speaking to the current moment of national crisis pervading South Africa. In order to address issues of the “marginalized living in society”, I attempt to present a relationship between images and social sciences texts, by employing unusual images and presenting them through interdisciplinary eyes. A large contributing factor to the aesthetic turn in my research, has been images ability to offer insight into lived South African experiences by relinquishing the need to translate that which cannot be translated into language.

I include ten images, of various forms of visual data – sculptures, performances, film stills, photographs and textiles – in this work. The images employed have prompted the writing of the text, as opposed to merely being illustrations of the text. If the visual objects had not been found, the text would not have been produced. The fact that the visual objects were selected before the text is central to my work as it has led to an engagement with not any one particular

discourse, but with art history, social science discourse, art reviews and blogs. The collocation of images and text is employed in an attempt to evoke an affective cognitive experience in its readers, allowing them to perceive a theoretical point in a different way, which jolts and illuminates. In so doing, both affect and reason are being mobilized.

After selecting the artworks, I considered how the diffusion of these images take place within a particular context. They gain meaning, firstly, through their medium specificity such as photographic, sculptural, textile, and filmic, and then by the socio-historical context in which they are displayed. While the former is fixed, the latter is constantly changing. Both are inevitably influenced by, “the truth of the image, not only just as it existed in the past, but also how it survives in the present” (Buck-Morss, 2002: 277). The image is however, influenced by a third frame, which is the narrative that ties the past to the present. It is this third frame which provides the text in this work; which included secondary analysis of art reviews, journals in fashion and English studies, art history, social sciences and blogs. Ultimately, I suggest that emphasis needs to be placed on the visual or more generally the materials with which one is engaging. My interest in engaging with the different artworks, sculptures, performances, textiles as well as discourse, was an attempt to not privilege any one particular discipline but present the findings as an interdisciplinary engagement that promotes the educational prospects of the relationship between images and text. This engagement also allows me to answer two central questions, firstly, what is the role of performance art in understanding contemporary experience in South Africa? And secondly, how has contemporary art in South Africa contributed to and/or shaped the construction of a collective memory about the post-apartheid reality?

Chapter outline

In aiming to reveal how contemporary South African artworks engage, understand, and offer perspective on South Africa after apartheid, I have written a layered series of politically motivated aesthetics and scholarly understandings of society. Chapter 1 discusses the film and performance artwork of Sthembile Msezane, as she provides social commentary and ultimately challenges processes of commemorative practice in South Africa. Through her embodiment of various black female figures, I show how Msezane understands and addresses the absence of the black female body in memorialized public spaces by using her own as a live, temporary sculpture in her performances of *Chapungu-The Day Rhodes Fell* (2015), *Woman's Day* (2014) and *Youth Day* (2014). Through an analysis of her art and the wave of radical protest action that pervaded the country at the time of her performances, I show how her employment of traditional Zulu dress, hair and school uniform play an influential role in the message of her display. Lastly, through her discussion of absences and presences along with the various silences that pervade the landscape, I show how historical narratives are deeply implicated by the “the means and production of history”. I ask whether the circulation of the image can address these silences.

Chapter 2 discusses the cowhide sculptures and film stills of Nandipha Mntambo, which presents hairy flesh cast onto a female silhouette as a medium of expression. The artworks discussed include, *Prac De Touros III* (2008) and *Indlovukati* (2007). I engage with numerous readings of her art and illustrate how the sculptures can be used to question and disrupt normative representations of the female body in South Africa. By deconstructing the relationship between cows and the female body, I show how Mntambo's sculptures evoke African practices and rituals and engage critically with the links between women and trade, women and indifference, as well as women as possessions deprived of agency. My analysis of

the art is divided into three sections: the spectacle of cowhide as a form of clothing in Nguni kinships; the spectacle of “Africinity”, which discusses cattle as a commodity and means of conversion, in an economy of symbols and practices that ultimately implicates women within this social structure. And lastly, the spectacle of difference which discusses how specific body parts are marked as a signifiers and predictors of gender.

Chapter 3 discusses the performance practice of Athi-Patra Ruga, drawing specifically on how the artist uses his performance to trigger and contest expectations within public space. I focus on his performances *The Future White Woman of Azania* (2010), *After She Left* (2008) and *The Naivety of Beirut* (2008). Themes that emerge through an engagement with various readings of Ruga’s performances include, intersectional queer identities, sexuality and HIV/AIDS in South Africa. However, I show how his work can offer insight into broader political issues, such as the contextual grounds on which these notions seem to be constructed. Through various readings of Ruga’s performances, I emphasize how the body is continually being contrasted with politics, belief systems and prevalent dogma. I draw attention to the significance Ruga’s profoundly camp style of clothing and embellishments, which are eccentric and improper, illuminating his defiant intentions. I then discuss Ruga’s art as a practice and intervention located within the “counter public”, which ultimately attempts to work on the edges of society, speak to subcultural groups and challenge visibility.

Chapter 4 engages with the sculptural displays of Mary Sibande. The artworks discussed include *I Put a Spell on Me* (2008) and *A Terrible Beauty is Born* (2008). I engage with various readings of Sibande’s oeuvre and offer insight into how she evokes repressed memories of colonial domination, and the historical context that reinforced the advent of domestic servitude in South Africa. I then deconstruct the centrality of clothing to the artistic message, drawing specifically on how she re-fashions the past in the present by parodying the uniform worn by

domestic workers with the clothing adorned by Victorian women. My analysis of the art reveals various forms of racial and gendered trauma tied to domestic servitude, while illustrating how Sibande's oeuvre challenges popular images of the domestic worker as powerless, uninspired and uncreative. The concluding chapter of *Political Fashioning* reveals the work of a fifth artist Fabrice Monteiro. While I have not included a social analysis of his dystopic photographs I close with his photographic series, *The Prophecy*, to emphasise the amenability of aesthetic practice and how his photographs taken in various locations in Senegal can speak to environmental issues in South Africa across time and space.

Chapter 1

Sethembile Msezane: The black female body in memorialized public spaces

In this chapter I examine Sethembile Msezane's photography, sculpture and performance artwork. I specifically draw on how she challenges processes of commemorative practice that inform constructions of history and mythmaking in South Africa, which essentially exclude the black female body from memorialized public spaces. In considering the many artworks that echo contemporary South African society, she asks us to consider how our cities speak to us. In particular, her work prompts us to ask what symbols are visible. She draws attention to which histories are celebrated and which are silenced. Public spaces are far from neutral. Across Cape Town, masculine figures such as Louis Botha, Cecil John Rhodes and Jan Smuts are memorialized, alongside imperialist styles of architecture, which confront the public, marking who and how people belong to the city.

This palpable presence of white colonial and Afrikaner nationalist men that continue to pervade the landscape reflects a racial, social and gender divide. This chapter reflects on more than mere presences and absences, as it considers the silencing of various historical narratives (Trouillot, 1995: 98). By silencing, Trouillot attempts to understand the process whereby the political work of presenting and representing the past has been submerged, to the extent that the past appears simply to be a collection of facts about previous events rather than exercises of legitimation. While Trouillot used writing as an attempt to reveal the silencing of the past, in this chapter I illustrate the attempt by Msezane, as political actor, to add new understandings and create novel significances by producing and embodying temporary statues. In so doing, Msezane contests the presentation of the past cemented in public statues and other monuments. By employing performance art as a mode of social commentary, I illustrate how Msezane

recognizes and contradicts the power engrained in prior understandings of the past, past struggles and heritage. Msezane questions how to deal with narratives that are silenced.

With the numerous layers of silences that accompanied South Africa's transition to a parliamentary democracy, the history of apartheid and the materiality of that history needs to be brought into focus. While I draw on Martin Murray's *Commemorating and Forgetting: Challenges in the New South Africa*, I argue that Msezane's performances; *Chapungu-The Day Rhodes Fell* (2015), *Women's Day* (2014) and *Youth Day* (2014) and the reading of those performances do something more. They offer viewers numerous vantage points from which to examine the process of historical production. Her performances therefore speak to broader issues of how it is through tangible reminders that the skewed power of historical production is further evoked, particularly through the power to see, feel and touch them (Trouillot, 1995: 44).

Contesting Public Memories: The Day Rhodes Fell and the Public Holiday Series

I first came across Msezane's performance artwork at the Iziko South African National Gallery, where a blown-up image of *Chapungu-The Day Rhodes Fell* (2015) was exhibited. Msezane also showcased artworks at the Cape Town Arts Festival.



Figure 1: *Chapungu- The Day Rhodes Fell* (2015) Iziko South African National Gallery

There are various meanings attached to a place, which depend to a large extent on the residual memory that is rooted there. The density of these memory traces motions to the diffusive presence of unsettled tensions and deferred dreams for the future. The term haunting lends itself as a particularly useful allegorical tool when looking to Msezane's performance of *Chapungu-The Day Rhodes Fell* (2015), as it allows one to question how it is that particular spaces imbue a sense of possession, loss, and truancy in urban spaces. The sense of the ghostly presence of those no longer physically there, is a prevalent facet of the phenomenology of place (Murray, 2013: 2). Urban landscapes, particularly, are imbued with haunted places that concurrently epitomize presences and truancy, voids and relics, intentional overlooking and painful recollection.

The University of Cape Town (UCT) where a memorial statue once honouring mining tycoon and British imperialist Cecil John Rhodes stood, is one such haunted place. The campaign “Rhodes Must Fall” which led to the removal of the Rhodes statue began with student demonstrations at UCT and quickly spread collective action to other university campuses across South Africa (Chaudhuri, 2016: 1). Beyond the movements determinations to have the statue become part of South Africa’s splintered past that is expunged and forgotten, students and Msezane aimed to reveal the institutional racism across universities in the country and push for the decolonization of education. As students began recognizing the links between issues on the university campus and issues in broader society, they became positioned as political actors. The wider implications of the student movement saw student activists claiming various universities as public spaces in which to confront and contest inequalities in tertiary education, such as the authority of academics to establish curriculum and set the syllabus. Further, in considering the student movement during the time of the circulation of the image, what emerged was an increase of student activists being seen as “intellectuals”, as knowledge became circulated differently in society, and authority became democratized as more people gained a stake in its authorship (Mpatlanyane, 2018: 90).

On the day of the statue’s removal, Msezane performed, *Chapungu-The Day Rhodes Fell* (2015), which she performed in response to the statue’s removal, joining public efforts to reimagine this particular public space. While her and the protestor’s project questions about the past, their performance reflects more profound, extensive endeavours for control over South Africa’s impending future (Murray, 2013: 2). Sethembile Msezane, who cautiously balanced her body on a pedestal for four hours, attempted to offer a counter narrative in the face of an ambiguous and indeterminate future. Msezane stands with her black skin exposed, her face veiled and her winged hair extensions outspread from her arms. She audaciously positions herself in the direction of the campus, facing the infrastructure, people and all the political,

socio-economic and ethical concerns that developed from the deep-rooted inequalities aggravated by apartheid capitalism (Murriss, 2016: 279). In this piece, Msezane illustrated the connection between South Africa and Zimbabwe, and how Rhodes became a historic figure in both. Chapungu, represents one of the eight stone-carved birds that were repossessed during the colonial era. All of which have since been returned except for Chapungu which still resides in Rhodes' estate. The mythological belief is that, "only once all eight birds have returned to Zimbabwe, will there be a waning of social unrest", Msezane channelled this mythology during the statues removal and had to carefully time the moment she raised her arms, by keeping track of the reflection of the statue descending in the sunglasses and cell phones of the spectators in front of her (Kros, 2015: 10). Msezane creates a synchronous narrative between the reflection of the actual happening and her artistic amplification of it, which would not have been possible without the copious amounts of cameras upstretched to record the amputation of the statue occurring behind her. Msezane's symbolic spreading of her wings, ultimately intended to give people hope that Africa will overcome its colonial past (Matoos, 2018: 1).

The performance became an opportunity to grapple with, what it means to be standing as a woman juxtaposed with a figure that symbolizes repressive ideology and the remnants thereof in the current African context. What Msezane illuminates in this performance is the existence of binaries in a society: white, black; male, female; young, old; which underpin hierarchical thinking. Her interaction with the statue along with their stark contrasts in terms of gender, race and age incites a reaction from the public, to take responsibility for the affects and effects of power constructing binaries and the markers they ingrain on the body (Murriss, 2016: 281).

The idea that the #RhodesMustFall movement was drafted to refute any particular history, is inaccurate (Kros, 2015: 3). Rather, the contrived historical narrative behind fashioning a statue that is informed by an unequivocal agenda; stands as a permanent feature of students and staffs'

everyday environment, exerting power over the present. If understood in this way, collective memory cannot be divorced from deliberations of power (Murray, 2013: 13). The power of these emblematic landscapes can be found in their preeminent grading as a “point of physical and ideological orientation” (Murray, 2013: 15). Analysed together, they establish a tangible compass of memory and storehouse of meaning. The space which this monument occupies is not merely a trivial or inadvertent backdrop, rather it ascribes further symbolic meaning to the statue.

In her *Public Holiday* series, Msezane performs her racialized body as being inextricably linked to her gendered body as she re-remembers and re-contextualizes the geopolitics of Cape Town and its monuments. Each performance contested the material representation of whiteness along with the legacy of black suppression that can be seen in the Cape Town architectural landscape (Maroga, 2017: 1). In addition, the series counterbalances this critique by employing a gendered lens.



Figure 2: *Untitled- Heritage Day* (2013) ARTTHROB Magazine

South Africa embraces twelve annual public holidays, but how many residents actually consider the purpose of these holidays? (Government Gazette, 1994: 7). Msezane began performing on various public holidays since *Untitled- Heritage Day* (2013), linking each performance to its historical context of that specific day. The *Public Holiday* series entails Msezane positioning herself on a white pedestal in a selected space, momentarily commemorating absent female bodies (Maroga, 2017: 1). With scattered permanent markers on the floor, spectators are encouraged to interact with her performance by writing on the pedestal. By embodying the black female statues that are omitted from the African scape and juxtaposing these figures with the perpetual remnants of our colonial history, Msezane recontextualizes South Africa's public holidays.

Untitled-Heritage Day (2013) was the first in the *Public Holiday* series and displays Msezane in traditional, ceremonial dress and adornments of uMemulo, a ceremony marking the coming of age of Zulu women. The inclusion of these signifiers in the performance functions at two levels, to provide a critique of September 24th white, rainbow-washing and to scrutinize the magnitude of masculine figures portrayed in history such as Shaka kaSenzangakhona, and as a result the implicit exclusion of female figures. This oppositional stance then becomes an intersection, the crossing of which is Msezane's body (Maroga, 2017: 1). The lens is not only racial, but cultural; not only cultural, but gendered; not only contemporary but a restatement of a history that has obscured black femininities.



Figure 3: *Untitled-Women's Day* (2014) ARTTHROB Magazine

Before her *Untitled-Women's Day* (2014) performance, Msezane came to understand the day as referencing the women's march in 1956 to the union buildings, calling for the abolition of the pass law system along with the hypocrisy with which women are treated, particularly in public spaces. Msezane, then came across a news article that read, "*Woman in miniskirt*

attacked at taxi rank”. In an attempt to provide commentary on these polar opposite occurrences, Msezane embodied the appearance of her great grandmother adorning a checkered blanket, as she performed bare breasted near the location of the taxi rank in Kwalanga, where the incident occurred (TedTalk, 2017:1). This location is also known as Freedom Square, where numerous women protested against the apartheid laws. Through her performance, Msezane rejected the view of women as merely being seen as victims in society and proclaims her womanhood by interrogating the tightly confined boundaries within which women are condemned. Her performance further displays women as no longer silenced, but as political actors, capable of addressing the question of how to deal with past and their current democracy.



Figure 4: *Untitled- Youth Day* (2014) ARTTHROB Magazine

Msezane's *Untitled-Youth Day* (2014), a particularly interesting performance warrants further discussion, as it signalled the shift in awareness among the South African youth of today. The performance took place at Walter Sisulu Square in Soweto, because despite Youth Day evoking memories of the Soweto student uprising in 1976, Walter Sisulu Square is the location where the Freedom Charter was introduced, which continues to be a visible pillar in our "sacred democracy" (Hewson, 2014: 1). Msezane's performance in this particular space, allows her to memorialize the values that the youth fought for in 1976; that as a result feature in the Freedom Charter of 1955. The artist positioned herself on her pedestal, adorning herself with a school blazer, a beaded veil and a skirt and tie fashioned out of hair, while balancing numerous books on her head. The image of this performance evokes the unresolved, enduring educational concerns pervading South Africa. Further, the performance also makes reference to the pressure placed on youth to learn quickly and our government's pressure to instruct and equip the next generations (Hewson, 2014: 1).

Gender and Clothing

Msezane's interest in reimagining commemorative practices and monuments by employing the black female body in *Chupungu – The Day Rhodes Fell* and *Youth Day*, parallels with concerns of gender and national representation in public monuments and statuary studies (Marschall, 2010: 262). Though, women in various societies have served as custodians of memory, the field of authorized commemoration with public monuments has conventionally been a male commission. Women and persons of ethnic minorities have frequently been drawn on as emblems of a vanished past, perceived nostalgically and fashioned amorously, it is however their real lives that become overlooked. Allegorical representations have also been seen to draw

on the female body, particularly in ardent national monuments, nevertheless, women are seldom presented in the form of cultural or political leaders in public sculptures (Marschall, 2010: 263). Msezane on her *Public Holiday* series:

“I started speaking about this ‘erasure’ and how it can be damaging for a nation in healing. I also began to make visible the histories, and contribution, of black women’s work in our country through performance art, performing as a living sculpture.” Equating erasure to an oppressive tool, Msezane said, “It has the capacity to damage a people of a nation. We cannot have young women believing that they do not matter because they cannot see representations of themselves within the societies they contribute to.” “Too many women anchor our societies (and) go unacknowledged. The struggle against apartheid would have never been won if it wasn’t for the work of women. “I’m not necessarily only talking about your prominent Struggle heroines such as the late Mama Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, I’m also speaking about ordinary women who wake every day and make plans happen with limited resources”, she said.” (Van Niekerk, 2019: 1)

When looking to the conventional monuments that have been indebted to women in South Africa, they are often dedicated to a collective rather than an individualized form of commemoration, and such acknowledgements gravitate towards stereotypical gendered depictions in a process that is closely tied to the construction of a nation. Msezane’s live, impermanent sculptures, while depicting an individualized embodiment, embodies empowered female figures illustrating a move away from recollections of women as symbols of sacrifice and mourning – a historic female role (Marschall, 2010: 266). The latter can be seen in the classic example of the 1913 National Women’s Monument, a tribute to the Boer women and children that died in British concentration camps amid the South African War. This public art

set the mood for the post-apartheid translation of the notion of sacrifice associated with political activism found in resistance stories.

Marschall (2010: 267) suggests that monuments and public statues devoted to women across the world embrace common characteristics of design and reveal affinities, that may comprise an appearance of minimalism or modesty; components positioned low on the ground, an antithesis to the conventional imperious structures and objects; integrating elements of nature; and a proclivity for colour, particularly in the form of mosaic, which possibly alludes to traditional crafts assumed by women, for example, sewing, embroidery, quilting and other hand-made objects. Similar to fine arts produced by women, monuments fashioned according to these recognisable features are intended to acknowledge previously invisible, traditional female abilities and skills. Whether artists should serve or renounce such criteria or consider the scope for modification is a dilemma that bears a resemblance to the early period of feminist artworks universally.

Msezane renounces these criteria much in the same way that she rejects the idea of a singular narrative. In addition to embodying a living, temporary sculpture, she does not evoke any figure in particular, yet to the audience she could be anyone. She employs particular forms of dress and traditional crafts such as her beaded veil as opposed to objects alluding to adornment, while hair also features as a symbolic form of adornment. Msezane's role in her work, is that of a messenger. She is not the subject of the performance, but rather her subjects visit her in her dreams, calling to be conjured and touching her spirit. It is through her art that she replies by means of dress and performance, embodying the symbols or the women that came to her (Matroos, 2018: 1). The veil has been a facet throughout Msezane's oeuvre, serving multiple functions. Because she identifies this as a spiritual embodiment, wearing the beaded veil is meant to take the audience's attention off her particular identity. In her live sculptural works

specifically, Msezane asserts that “the veil also allowed for the black female spectator to identify with the spirit of these women that I embodied—as if they were reading select elements of their own story or ancestry within these figures” (Olaniyan, 2019: 1).

The employment of a school blazer in *Untitled-Youth Day* (2015) tugs at the social and historical meanings tied to school uniform in South Africa. The blazer is appropriated from the June 16, 1976 revolt³ against apartheid educational policies in Soweto (Murray, 2010: 94). Hector Pieterse was the first youth to caught in the line of fire, a moment that will always be memorialized in the black-and-white photographic records of Sam Nzima, who captured Hector Pieterse’s final moments, as he was being hauled from the scene in the arms of his cousin. This photographic record promptly became the most widespread image to express the grievous event, due to its raw portrayal of death and grief which stimulates powerful emotions in its audience. This collective memory formed part of the now haunted landscape, on which a memorial and the Hector Pieterse Museum has been built. When considering Msezane’s incorporation of uniform in her Youth Day performance, it signals the idea that South Africa has long overlooked the significance of its heritage, as many school children participated in the movement. Murray (2010: 49) asserts that there is a delicate tension between recollecting and forgetting, that lies at the centre of nation-building. The course of recollecting and forgetting are not innocuous processes, but mission orientated endeavours that establishes the past in a manner that adheres to the present while exuding an affirmative image into the future. The use of uniform, then can be read as drawing attention to the idea that “often, anecdotes about uniforms involve formative moments of self-hood, particularly associated with rejecting or renouncing normative codes, rebellion or subversion, about individual interpretation or

³ On that day, police forces opened fire on high school students from Morris Isaacson High School and Orlando High School after they instigated a peaceful demonstration against the introduction of Afrikaans as the primary language of instruction (Murray, 2010: 94).

difference in sameness (Tulloch, 2010: 295).” Msezane, like the students on June 16, can be seen expressing her subjectivity and agency in an attempt to defend her identity and future as a black South African, and in so doing confronts the official gaze.

Msezane identifies her performance in the series as quite ephemeral, an attempt to shift away from the notion of permanent effigies in an ever-changing landscape (Matroos, 2018: 1). The processes that steered her work into public space, came about as Msezane considered the oppositional ways in which women and men are revered (Intense Art Magazine, 2017: 1). While men are often honoured through the erection of monumental statues placed in the public realm, women are often celebrated within the confines of the domestic dwelling. By displaying herself as a live sculpture in this space and the public arena in general, Msezane confronts the gendered positions of man/street and woman/home, which alludes to the disempowerment of black women as reliable subjects within political dialogues. Msezane challenges this “othering” in which black females are either deemed invisible due to the former or diminished to a figure of helplessness, through visual representations of the black women as the despairing mother or hysterical partner, wife, sister.

Hair can be seen featuring throughout Msezane’s artwork and has an integral role to play. When researching hair within the traditional Zulu cultural context, Msezane discovered that hair was not always as gendered as it appears today. On the contrary, both men and women adorned their bodies with hair; men wearing it on their legs and arms, and women decorating their hats or skirts. Hair essentially became an object in and of itself; something that is today heralded as very feminine into an object of commemoration. Hair is made more significant when thinking about its connection with identity, as it becomes suggestive of both racial politics and beauty politics. Nyamnjoh (2014: 53) claims that for African women, hair has played an increasingly symbolic function, particularly as a vehicle or channel to embody divergent subjectivities and

position themselves along divergent hierarchies. It is to this day, considered a motif when marking gender difference and positionality, when defining class, generational and other social changes, as well as expressing spirituality.

Because apartheid firmly outlined “being” in everyday life, hair became a tool with which to fix racial categorization. Under the 1950 Population Registration Act, South Africans were segregated along four racial groups: whites, coloureds and natives, Asians/Indians or blacks. Under ambiguous circumstances, a pencil test would be conducted to fix a persons’ race based on the texture of their hair. If the pencil fell out of the place it had been inserted, the person would be considered white, if it remained, then the person would be classified coloured. Oyedemi (2016: 2) identifies the processes black women have undergone to achieve beautiful hair, as a manifestation of structural violence, where the social constructions of class, gender, hierarchy and race function with violence that produces a legacy of symbolic and structural violence.

When looking to the consumption of hair, various factors illustrate the extent to which African identities as perpetual works in progress, renounce being disadvantaged by dichotomies that overtly simplify and fix the intricacies and gradations of their natural, social or nurtured identities. Nyamnjoh (2014: 54) asserts that Africans have adopted a collective gaze that recognizes appearances outside of everyday understanding and articulation of reality. If this is the case, then Africans recognize beautiful hair as natural and cultivated; cultivated nature, and naturalized cultivation. Adorning and transforming the thrills and accoutrements of birth and birthmarks has and continues to be an African allure (Nyamnjoh, 2014: 55). Present in simultaneous diversities, Africans display a collective freedom to consume hair, whether it be natural, artificial or improved, raw and cooked or tame, pure and mix, and authentic and altered.

Memory and the production of history

Across South Africa, there are both material and immaterial remnants of the past that harbour tenaciously to the social fabric, refusing to fade into the shadows. The abolition of apartheid brought the transition to parliamentary democracy; however, it also saw the revival of an array of deep-rooted tensions that were no longer stifled under white rule (Murray, 2013: 1). The predicament compounding the shaping of the “new South Africa” is fraught with questions regarding how much of the splintered past should be conserved and remembered, and how much should be expunged and forgotten. The convoluted layers of composite histories of colonization, settler colonialism, racial exclusion, and apartheid amalgamated as time went on to fashion an intricate and often perplexing heritage of diverse identities that are all connected to divergent recollections of the past and all contending for a say in the construction of the “new South Africa”. Msezane points to memorialized public spaces in South Africa as profoundly invested in the fashioning of national and political identities, while the refurbishing of novel memory-markers offers insight into the social cohesion in the “new South Africa” and the ways in which the guardians of memory envisage its future.

These guardians of memory are, however, faced with various presences and absences that are evoked firstly in sources, such as objects and bodies that translate an occurrence into fact, and secondly archives, which assemble, thematise, and process facts as manuscripts and monuments (Trouillot, 1995: 48). Sources and archives are therefore far from impartial, rather they are fashioned and do not capture the full extent of the significance of the occurrences to which they attest. This brings one to question more than the presences and absences, but the mentions and silences of numerous types and extents.

Msezane's *Untitled-Women's Day* performance draws on and intervenes into the selective silencing by sources and archives that have rendered women wholly invisible from public markers of South African history. In addition to Msezane, the historical significance of the women's march has been revered by numerous activists and scholars, such as Cheryl Walker and Julia Wells. Msezane's performance can be read, I argue, as an attempt to evoke memories of the women's march as well as the role that women played in the formation of the democratic nation under which all South Africans have equal civil rights (Miller, 2011: 297). Whether this is the lived experience, is another debate. In addition, what Msezane evoked as she stood bare-breasted, embodying the appearance of her grandmother is how women's participation in the fight for democracy has been represented and recollected, but also forgotten.

When considering the liberation struggle, women were neither silent nor invisible within visual culture or as political actors, as women's efforts were made visible on t-shirts, banners and photographs which subsequently aided the expansion of their cultural and political power (Miller, 2011: 297). The fact that Msezane chose the public space of Kwalanga to embody a live, temporary sculpture speaks to the fact that the rich visual rhetoric that once facilitated the visibility of women in public space has largely disappeared. As Msezane addresses this disappearance and invisibility of women in the post-apartheid moment, her performance also speaks to the construction and closure of the Monument to the Women of South Africa. The monument was designed by Wilma Cruise and Marcus Holmes and unveiled in the year 2000. It included a range of aesthetic mediums such as sculpture, lighting, written text as well as spoken words, with the primary medium being *imbokodo*. This is a large grinding-stone employed mainly by rural women when working with maize. Positioned at the centre of one of the Union Buildings, the monument held an aesthetic force, evoking both political and historical significance. Despite the controversy surrounding the use of *imbokodo* as the symbol of choice, due to its ties to domestic labour of women, it is the statues removal after a year that

resonates with Msezane's intervention. It began with the sound of the monument being turned off, which suggests an erasure of memories linked to the use of silence during the 1956 march, followed by their subsequent rupture into freedom songs. Not only has the emotive power of the monument been removed, but it signals the silencing of women's voices and what the monument represents (Miller, 2011:309). Not only was the monument removed soon after its silencing, but sculptures that replaced also followed the same trajectory, leaving no visual marking behind.

Msezane's performance intervenes by evoking repressed memories of the women's march and women's active role in the formation and disruption of the "new South Africa". Her performance addresses the various forms of silencing that has occurred at this site following the women's march and offers insight into a form of public commemoration that does not need to be permanent to be effective. Msezane illuminates that collective memory is embodied and shaped in a multitude of ways, including through, "memorials and monuments, ceremonial events and ritual practices, public holidays and anniversaries, commemorative proceedings, cultural heritage sites, and social activism". The commonality among these vectors of collective memory is their steadfast interest in exhuming faded places and hidden times, as well as "reviving" them in ritualized, symbolic, and figurative ways (Murray, 2013:6). However, the absence of the black, female body in memorialized public spaces, reveals how this absence is integral to the process of historical production and the various forms of silencing it has undergone

Trouillot (1995: 48) points to silencing as, "an active and transitive process: one silences a fact or an individual as a silencer silences a gun. One engages in the practice of silencing". Mentions and silences can be seen as dynamic, dialectical correlatives while history becomes the amalgamation of the two. When considering sources as a means in the production of history,

they constitute cases of inclusion as well as exclusion. The assembly work that occurs within the archives, constitutes a process of production, where facts are prepared for historical comprehensibility. Archives, therefore, act as the established site of intervention between the “sociohistorical process and the narrative about that process” (Trouillot, 1995: 48). As a result of their authority to constrain the rules of credibility and linkages archives, therefore, arrange the formal and applicable foundations of the narrative; selecting the stories that matter. In brief, the construction of archives entails various selective processes, such as, the selection of producers, procedures, themes, and evidence, ultimately resulting in somewhat disparate rankings, or in other cases the exclusion of some producers, procedures, themes, evidence.

Power enters here both visibly and clandestinely (Trouillot, 1995: 53). The contention between mentions and silences manifest at a third moment, which is when occurrences that have been deemed as facts are called on. Some facts are retrieved more regularly than others, while particular facets of facts holding more empirical rigour are recollected more than others. It is necessary to recognize that historical narratives are built around prior understandings, which are in turn premised on the distribution of archival power. In considering existing forms of public commemoration in South Africa, previous understandings have largely been shaped by Western conventions and procedures (Trouillot, 1995: 55). It can thus be said, that in order to add novel understandings and novel significances, the narrator must recognize and contradict the power engrained in prior understandings.

Msezane’s live, temporary sculptures evoke further questions concerning whether historical narratives can communicate “narratives” that are inconceivable within the location in which they occur. Further, her art addresses questions of how a history of the inconceivable can be written. These questions raise important concerns regarding how historians have silenced various occurrences. Trouillot (1995: 96) points to “two families of tropes” that manifest, in

written history; firstly, formulas of erasure – which point to the tropes formulated by generalists and the popularisers. The second family of tropes are those written by specialists. Similarly, another form of silencing manifests when narratives sugar-coat the dismay or drain a situation of its uniqueness by fixating on particulars. This silence is then duplicated in primary sources on world history, such as popular writings and textbooks. What I am attempting to illustrate, is the range of archival power, seen in its power to define what is and what is not a significant object of enquiry and of mention. What is consistently at risk is the interplay between “what happened and that which is said to have happened” (Trouillot, 1995: 97).

Msezane’s performances exhibits a form of counter-archive, which engages with the interplay between “what happened and that which is said to have happened.” She does this by engaging with the power and agency of the visual record – during the moment Rhodes was removed from his plinth and Msezane raised her wings. With digitisation and extensive developments in camera technology, the world has increasingly become pervaded with visual imagery (Kros, 2015: 4). A torrent of cell phones and other photographic devices could be seen elevating from advocates and spectators of the movement, who were likely drawing on the extensive archive of iconoclasm and forming their own. The photographic record continues to circulate along the infinite artery of social media, as well as through the vectors of mainstream media that post photographic representations on digital platforms. Significantly, this animated, and possibly immeasurable archive or counter-archive (on the basis that it makes previously voiceless individuals heard) is wholly averse to conventional standards of cataloguing in serene and bounded physical spaces. This brings into question, whether attaching broader understandings of the archive to the visual representations of the Rhodes Must Fall movement and to interpretations of South Africa’s memorial landscape in general, enhances understandings of the event?

Without the widespread coverage in social and then mainstream media, the movement advocating the statues removal would not have made the momentous impact it did. If there were no visual records of Rhodes levitating off his pedestal while overlooking the landscapes ahead of him, of the crane carrying him off into the unknown, of a student defacing the statue, of Msezane on her opposing plinth, the event would have disappeared from view. As Susan Sontag (as cited in Kros, 2015: 9) remarked, “photographs alter and enlarge our notions of what is worth looking at”.

Msezane exhibits the potential behind performance art and how the image thereof is able to circulate political rhetoric. The image of this moment deviated from the particular framing of student-led protests seen up until that point, as unity rather than destruction spread through the media (Matroos, 2018: 1). Msezane’s curiosity in the image became evident in her *Public Holiday* series through which she posits that:

“[t]he imagination has become an organized field of social practices, a form of work (in the sense of both labour and culturally organized practice), and a form of negotiation between sites of agency (individuals) and globally defined fields of possibility” (as cited in Matroos, 2018: 1)

Coda

This chapter has discussed Sthembile Msezane's temporary, live sculptures as an intervention and form of political disruption of the various overt white Afrikaner colonial nationalist presences pervading the South African landscape in the form of public memorials. By engaging with these spectral presences, I have shown how Msezane's performances contest the presentation of the past cemented in public statues and other monuments, and how through performance practice and the embodiment of various black female figures, Msezane was able to offer new understandings and created novel significances. I illustrated the significance of the clothing and adornment, from hair, to school uniforms to traditional Zulu adornment and its active role in the artists message. Secondly, I showed that the rise in student protest action, which surfaced in response to the spectral presence of Cecil John Rhodes at UCT, has led to the production of students as not only intellectuals, but political actors that have recognized their ability to contest and address social injustices on and off university campuses. Lastly, this chapter framed the context within which the artist and students have been working in, which is the time of the circulation of the image. I show how the circulation of knowledge has changed as a result of this aesthetic turn and promote performance art and "the image" as tools with which to uncover various silences of the past. This suggests understanding contemporary artwork as being an active labour operating at various levels to accomplish divergent functions (Maroga, 2017: 3). In the process of constructing images, a particular imagined world is being denoted. If one considers 'the imagined' to be as tangible as 'the observable' then ultimately, that which goes unimagined and is unobservable cannot be born. Msezane's work is an effort to exhibit images of the observable as well as imagined worlds of a restatement of blackness.

Chapter 2

Nandipha Mntambo: The female body and cows

In this chapter I examine the cowhide sculptures and performance artwork of South African artist, Nandipha Mntambo. I consider the artist's attempt to draw attention to social value, African tradition, and body politics through her use of aesthetic medium. In particular her medium is hairy flesh cast onto a female silhouette that creates a hybrid of human and animal forms. More specifically, the cowhide sculptures are used to question and disrupt "normative" representations of the female body in South Africa, and to challenge and subvert preconceptions linked to femininity, vulnerability and sexuality (Design Indaba, 2014: 1). In addition, by deconstructing the relationship between cows and the female body, Mntambo's sculptures evoke African practices and rituals, while also being the subject of critique, as she engages with the links between women and trade, women and indifference as well as woman as possessions and deprived of agency (Buikema, 2012: 288). Much in the same way that the cowhide covers "invisible" bodies, various literatures have become wrapped up in Mntambo's oeuvre. I argue that the artist makes an intervention in the literature tied to these representations, not by quoting in a scholarly manner, but by making political claims regarding the cultural significance of cows. Lastly, I engage various spectacles elicited in Mntambo's oeuvre, such as the spectacle of clothing, the spectacle of 'Africanicity' and the spectacle of difference, in an attempt to disrupt various dominant narratives by providing a form of experience that the aesthetic allows, and which is not the same as writing.

The multifaceted performance of the past and the future by deploying recycled material is pivotal for Mntambo, who works in sculpture, painting, performance, video, printmaking and photography. I first came across Mntambo's cowhide costumes at Zeitz Museum of

Contemporary Art Africa MOCCA in Cape Town, where her private exhibition *Emabutfo* took over an entire room. The choice of material for her sculptural costumes is cowhide, not necessarily deemed waste material, but significant partly because they are found materials that have already served elsewhere, already wrought with a history (Buikema, 2012: 288). Her aesthetic is further distinctive, as she tans and sculpts the cowhide onto casts of a female body, often her own (Stevenson Gallery, 2009: 1). Mntambo also spoke at the 2014 Design Indaba Conference and claimed that much of her work can be seen as a mythological extension, illustrating civilizations interest in alternate realities such as hybrid creatures. The symbolism associated with cowhide along with its historical importance is largely what intrigued Mntambo about the material (Design Indaba, 2014: 1).

Spectacle

For Simbao (2011: 9), Mntambo's performance as both a bull and bullfighter in *Ukungenisa* enabled her to imitate silent personal moments of perplexity and moments of discomfort that are seldom spoken about out loud. Mntambo's reflexivity in her work has revealed the essence of various spectacles: the spectacle of the sartorial, the spectacle of 'Africanicity' and the spectacle behind bullfighting. John MacAloon (1984: 270), in *Rite, Drama, Festival, Spectacle*, has inferred the following regarding spectacle,

“In its every aspect – from the etymology of the word, to the metamessage of the frame, to the sensory and symbolic codes it activates, to the behaviours it prescribes – the spectacle is about seeing, sight and oversight”.

So often one recognizes the visual, discernible element of spectacle, and neglects oversight, such as the exclusion of intricacies or realities that would deprive spectacle of its grandeur. For a spectacle to be seen, particular things need to remain veiled (Simbao, 2011: 9). Performance theorist Peggy Phelan (1993: 14-15) offers further insight, claiming that the visible is largely determined by that which is invisible, for “sight [...] is both imagistic and discursive,” and “the gaze guarantees the failure of seeing.” This begs the question, what is it that we are overlooking? What are the silences?



Figure 5: *Praca De Touros III* (2008) Zeitz MOCCA

The video *Ukungenisa*, the artist’s first incursion into performance practice, explores the art of bullfighting. The performance was shot in the abandoned Praca de Touros III in Maputo, a bullfighting arena where black Mozambicans battled as entertainment for the colonial Portuguese (Stevenson Gallery, 2009: 1). The works start by depicting the matador entering a meditative state as Mntambo engages in a ritual of dressing before the fight commences. In delving into bullfighting, the Mntambo (2011:1) saw the fighter’s preparation for a bullfight as

an overtly private moment, thereafter this very private act becomes the centre of a public spectacle. The uniform called *traje de luces*, translated into “suit of lights” is typically worn by men, as there are very few female bullfighters in the world, largely prompted by bullfighting being heralded as the definitive expression of masculine vigour (Simbao, 2011: 10). However, Mntambo addresses this rigidity and intentionally merges male and female characteristics here, by adapting the costume,

“[t]he bullfighters costume is based on the typical male costume, and I try to work with the cowhide so that it becomes more like a fabric...building in folds, making layers, trying to reflect the sequins and adornment and everything that is on a bullfighters outfit. I use the cowhide to reference elements that are not there” (Simbao, 2011: 11)

The artist also performs a dance associated with the bullfighting spectacle. Conventionally, the male dancer depicts the matador while his female partner is either depicting the matador’s shadow, the cape he wears or the actual bull (Simbao, 2011: 11). Mntambo’s concern with the shadows of the dancers, pushed her to converge both the male and female dances. *In Praca de Touros II and III*, the isolated figure is positioned in the centre of the stadium waving a red cape, creating various shadows on the ground. Here, a solo dancer can be seen performing the cape and the shadow, achieving several “forms of doubling”, as male folds into female, and matador, and bull and spectators dance together (Mntambo, 2011). Through this performance, Mntambo draws attention to the silent and forgotten aspects of spectacle. At the same time, instead of there being a discernible distance between actor and audience, Mntambo fuses together the actor, acted upon and spectator.



Figure 6: *Indlovukati* (2007) The Stevenson Art Gallery

A second installation, *Indlovukati* (2007), “Mother of the King”, depicts a styled figure attempting to rise above the grips of culture and history and draws on two ideas: the “carapace” of a majestic figure hovering in the air and the draped Victorian gown; a style that has been represented as traditional African dress (Elliott, 2011: 29). A tension is created between the alluring and the unappealing, the attractive and the repulsive, as Mntambo manipulates how audiences negotiate the two sides of the hide. *Indlovukati*, can therefore be seen refusing the inspection of its unsightly base, deduced from the positioning of its underside towards the wall (McIntosh, 2008: 1). Despite the intractability of the material, the relationship between the figure and the drapery plays with the Hellenistic aesthetic. By engaging with the divergent contexts that are evoked by the costumes, Mntambo offers a juxtaposition between spectacle and the private self, emphasizing ideas around confrontation, armour, protection, refuge and how these play out in relation to vulnerability and personal battles (Elliot, 2011: 28).

I read Mntambo's artwork as symbolic inferences to memory, digging, overlooking, agency and prey, thematically places Mntambo's artwork in the social and political context of South Africa. Buikema (2012: 288) points to *Indlovukati*, as a reframing of the old in the context of South Africa's post Truth and Reconciliation Commission intervention. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) is an overall recollection of human rights abuses under apartheid. Mntambo's *Indlovukati* can be read as echoing the story of Phila Ndwandwe. The skin of the hide is pale, sensuously outlining the backside and buttocks of an absent woman, while the form of the ghost-like, absent body is in a kneeling position. From the TRC report, Ndwandwe was said to be kneeling or crouching when she was killed (Buikema, 2012: 289). *Indlovukati*, which refers to the dress in the artwork can be read as covering Ndwandwe's falling, humiliated body in that moment. This is particularly significant as the precise shape that the cowhide adopts here resides in the space between the living and the dead. In addition, the word *Indlovukati* is Nguni, which translates into "mother of the king", who together with her son stood at the apex of the political hierarchy. Further analysis into the title has revealed that the name Ndwandwe in fact refers to a Swazi clan that incorporated a renowned *Indlovukati* named Nukase Ndwandwe, who played an instrumental role in the sacred and social conflict in Swaziland.

The connotations that are evoked by the floating attire, honour another part of Ndwandwe's narrative. Another facet of her story is that not only was she a freedom fighter presumed to be cooperating with the police force, she was also a lover and a mother. Her parents reported her missing to the TRC in 1990, and it was only after following the Amnesty hearings that they learnt about her whereabouts and learnt of their grandson Thabang. When it came time for the reburial of Ndwandwe's remains, the African National Congress (ANC) subsequently bestowed her with an honouree medal of bravery, which was given to her son. In the context of these historical events, *Indlovukati* – "the mother of the king" – evokes ideas not only about

the absent body, but the body that is to come (Buikema, 2012: 289). When considering the medium of the cowhide dress, it has worked through the intricacies of matter as well as layers of history in order to display a performance of both absence and presence.

A third artwork I engage with is *The Rape of Europa* (2009), a large photographic work that provides a visual interpretation of a myth, which tells the story of how,

“Zeus, head of the Greek pantheon, transformed himself into a white bull to abduct Europa, a beautiful Phoenician princess and descendent of Io, the mythical nymph whom Zeus had previously seduced and then turned into a heifer to escape the wrath of Hera, his wife” (Elliot, 2011: 28).

In Mntambo’s mystified version, she occupies the roles of both Europa laying on the ground and Zeus, seen by her horned head and hairy body, suggesting that artist and bull are no longer separate entities (Stevenson, 2009: 1). In considering the human gaze, the photograph speaks to the power that a person evokes within a particular moment. Even with the eyes of the Minotaur facing down, Mntambo asserts that there still exists a real and intense recognition and awareness of the gaze. The artist suggests that this confrontational gaze, “draws you in and as such I really enjoy the power that the work has to make you look a little bit closer” (Simboa, 2011: 18). The visual embodies both the artist’s own personal battle with herself, as well as “the failure of dialectical thought to capture a truthful expression of either emotion or reality.” (Simboa, 2011: 18). Therefore, whether the photograph evokes weakness or power is for its viewers to decipher. This is where the notion of spectacle comes into play, as the gaze or the non-gaze depicted above, is as much about seeing, as about what we do not see. Normative understandings of the female body are tied to questions of attraction and repulsion, which

Mntambo blurs in *The Rape of Europa*. Furthermore, by presenting the human-animal hybrid along with blurred sexualities, Mntambo subsequently exposes the borders of normativity.



Figure 7: *The Rape of Europa* (2009) Zeitz MOCCA

Material and the body

The central object of Mntambo's art is produced through the practice of crafting material, into the cast, for example, that forms part of the body. Steven von Wolputte (2004: 260) suggests that the body symbolizes a junction of hegemonic and counterhegemonic processes, defiance and power, rebellion and authority. Beyond the meanings and ideals heralded in the process,

the body can also be considered a site depicting internal and external insights. Mntambo's artwork engages with the tactile and fleshly properties of cowhide but is also confronted with aspects of control that inhibit her exact manipulation of the organic material (Stevenson Gallery, 2009: 1).

The wrapping, grinding, hooking and cleaning that goes into making these moulded costumes offers insight into the "dualism of memory" (Stevenson Gallery, 2009:1). Mntambo's medium of cowhide does not easily take on new shapes and therefore, Mntambo has to let the material guide her process and the eventual end product. In other words, beyond evoking cultural and historical memory associated with cows as currency, divinity and sustenance, there exists the material memory of the cowhide. Mntambo engages with the materials memory through its accompanying odour and texture which provokes a consciousness of the cowhide as a body, therefore provoking revulsion. She utilizes the semantic layering found in her material to elaborate on, embellish and devalue normative representations of the female body, which have reserved people in subordinate states of embodiment. The ghostly presence that Mntambo creates with her sculptures therefore reveal, what McIntosh (2008: 1) refers to as the semantic legacies of sexism and racism that continue to linger in society.

The semantic movement that resonates from Mntambo's art suggests that there are two "heuristic devices" present in her work, namely the attention given to the material and the logic fashioned around it. Makhubu (2012: 2) draws a linkage between what Mntambo describes as the "memory of material" and memory more generally, pointing to how the hide recollects the shape of the former object around which it is moulded. When the material is exposed to water, the explicit form of the mould is lost, though some intricacies of the object on which it was first placed remains. In addition to the way in which it stimulates and embroils the body,

Mntambo asserts that the actual material is deemed to have subjectivity or agency (Makhubu: 2012: 1).

The hide presents more than a juncture between the invisible body and the viewer for Mntambo, and signals the notion that the material remembers, but also “thinks”. This points to the negotiation of human agency in the appraisal of objects that fall within a grid of socio-political structures. It is therefore no coincidence that in thinking through the assemblage of meanings produced by the form of dress, Mntambo’s work inadvertently elicits various forms of traditions connected to the female or male body and to cattle. Cows have historically been a sign of prosperity and wealth in agrarian societies in Sub-Saharan Africa (Buikema, 2012: 288). In some cases, families bury their dead in wrapped cowhide, while in others, cows continue to be the recognized currency that a potential groom must propose to his bride’s family in the revered practice of *lobolo* or “bride-price”.

The symbolic politics of clothing

My analysis of the politics of Mntambo’s aesthetic intervention begins from the point of the sartorial. By means of deploying cowhide as a form of dress, as it is by means of cowhide as a form of dress, fashioned around absent figures that questions can be raised about representations of the female body, the bovine and visibility. In an attempt to delve into what Terence Turner has termed, the ‘social skin’, this section will reveal the spectacle created by clothing in the form of dress, body modifications and adornments.

Turner (2007: 83) suggests that the human body can be seen as a text, which when read divulges cultural knowledge. The dimension of the body which he refers to as the ‘social skin,’ points

to the body's surface as "the common frontier of society, the social self, and the psychological individual". This comes to be the symbolic stage upon which socialization is performed, while adornment in all its culturally diverse forms – from clothing to piercings and from headgear to cosmetic surgery – comes to be the language through which it is communicated.

I will be focusing on the symbolic medium of dress and bodily adornment, which Turner suggests is not unique to any particular society, but rather adopted in every society in the forms of media or languages, the most significant among them being language itself (Turner, 2007: 101). The idiosyncratic place of bodily adornment among these forms is that it is the medium most directly and tangibly harnessed towards the construction of the individual as "social actor or cultural subject".

It is in essence, a question of the fusion of specific types of social ideas and groupings, some of which include categories of space and time, methods of activity (individual or collective, secular or sacred), types of social status (sex, age, family roles, political positions), personal capital (level of socialization, relative passivity or activity as a social actor, etc) and methods of social value, for example, dominance or beauty (Turner, 2007: 101). Across societies, these principal categories are merged in distinctive ways to establish the symbolic medium of bodily adornment, and these artificial patterns divulge information about the basic notions of value, social acts, and personhood of the culture under investigation. These categories have also instigated the construction of certain dress codes, which many African people in Southern Africa have used as markers of status or position in families or the community. Further, these codes do not purely expose the visible rationalizations present, but also that which is invisible – the overlooked. The visible being gender, and age for instance, and the invisible being stage in puberty, courtship, marriage status, kinship group and religion.

The Nguni kinships⁴ of South Africa are made up of Zulu, Ndebele, Swazi and Xhosa speaking people. Broad constructed clusters of meanings and values emerge from an analysis of their bodily adornment and modifications, one of them focused on processes of socialization of the Nguni, which entails the conversion of “natural” powers and features into social forms (Turner, 2007: 101). Bodily adornment among the Nguni were primarily produced from animal skins, mainly cowhide. In considering Nguni modes of bodily adornment from infancy, apart from a string of beads, sporadic necklace or charms, the bodies of babies were barely covered, as it was only in approaching adulthood that bodies become increasingly veiled (Nxumalo, 2008: 34). In addition to the beads being fashioned by traditional healers using medicinal beads and being adorned as a form of protection, they aided babies in their teething process, while also measuring the baby’s growth. This has also led to specific meanings being associated with the notion of speaking, such as “passive knowledge” and the active manifestation of judgements and actions.

The contrast between the naked body during infancy and the dressed body during adulthood, came to be used as a marker of the successive stages of development and social extension of the individual’s “libidinous” and generative powers (Turner, 2007: 102). In other words, young African people, boys and girls alike, were adorned with more revealing forms of dress presenting them as available for courtship after puberty. There was also a clear shift when people became married adults. Women especially, could be seen wholly covered representing their marriage or “mothering” status (Nxumalo, 2008: 37). The second pivotal complex arises

⁴ Kinship is the formulation of social engagement, managed through particular political, economic and ceremonial forms, as well as sexual practice. Obligations, rights and responsibilities are all defined in accordance with shared kinship or lack thereof. Within this organizational system, the exchange of goods and services, production and supply, antagonism and unity, ceremonies and rituals all take place (Nxumalo, 2008: 37).

here, concerning the difference and relationship between the active and passive forms of social agency.

Young boys would become herders in their communities, starting with sheep and goats and ending with the herding of cattle which signified adulthood. The dress worn by these young herders consisted of black skin aprons, known as *ibeshu*, which was adorned by Zulu boys, while Sotho boys were deemed recognizable by their loin cloth and wrapped blanket. Because young girls worked at home their decorative embellishments bore a resemblance to that of the adult woman and mothers, for whom they toiled. A young Ndebele girl was therefore decorated with a colourful hoop, expressing her cultural identity, likewise Sotho girls expressed their identity with their wrapped blankets (Nxumalo, 2008: 35).

The penis sheath also served to delineate the critical point in the social adoption of reproductive powers in males and, more importantly, the shared nature of this appropriation (Turner, 2007: 100). Young men would undergo a process of circumcision accompanied by puberty rites, which is a ritual that can still be seen among the Xhosa, Ndebele, Pedi, Sotho and Venda. Other initiation and ritual ceremonies were differentiated according to gender. Xhosa boys, for instance, attended initiation schools *abakhwetha* with their dress symbolically signalling the various phases they must undergo (Nxumalo, 2008: 36). On the other hand, the initiation ceremonies for women entailed an initial exclusion from the community followed by a reintroduction and celebration of return. This symbolized the birth into adulthood and was also undertaken by the Zulu, with the inclusion of men as well. Arm bangles was another form of decoration, called *ngushe*. Initially ornamented for Zulu warriors, the bangle soon formed part of traditional Zulu dress for men and woman alike in celebration of one's youth. The embellishments on the *ngushe* came to delineate the wearer's kinship area and/or one's religious affiliations, for instance the Shembe worshipers.

Traditional African women's dress has been distinguished as more vibrant and expressive than that of men (Nxumalo, 2008: 34). Married Zulu women could be seen wearing knee length skirts called *isidwaba* made from cowhide, as well as capes called *ibhayi* covering their shoulders. Further, the embellishments of the dress as well as the cape are indicative of divergent places of origin, primarily by means of their colour. The Ndebele dress has particularly been renowned for its bright colourful facets, while Swazi men have been seen to embellish their dresses and heads with necklaces and feathers, symbolic of their identity.

The gendered timing of revealing and veiling themselves discloses a primary difference in Nguni ideas of their respective social roles. These transformations in social relations are themselves tied to pivotal points in the process of growth and sexual advancement. Thus, the structure of communal groups can be said to establish a type of sociological arrangement for replicating itself as well as the structure of the extended family household (Turner, 2007: 87). I have suggested that bodily adornment can be seen as the translation/encoding of various values and categories and can therefore be said to delineate an individual's total social identity, which includes their subjective identity as a social actor and objective identity defined in terms of social categories. Further, in anchoring Mntambo's disruption of distinctly male and female characteristics within Turner's theory, I suggest that symbolic negotiation prompted by the codes of bodily adornment are used by Mntambo to blur the systematic and concrete categories that are tied femininity and masculinity (Turner, 2007: 100).

The spectacle of 'Africanicity'

Mntambo (2013: 1) has stated that her choice in material stems from the notion that everyone in every civilization has at some point in their life come into contact with cows. Similarly, the

Comaroffs (1990: 195) suggest that no other non-human species exists, that is more pervasive in the collective imaginary than cattle. My main motif in this section is to deconstruct further the relationship between men, women and the bovine among the Tshidi Barolong, a Tswana people and Zulu households in Kwazulu-Natal. I will draw on Gayle Rubin, Hylton White and Jean and John Comaroff, in an attempt to illustrate the relationship between material conditions and collective meaning, between pragmatic activity and its cultural construction in these two cases. I am most concerned with are the divergent structures of kinship and personhood that are fashioned by this assemblage and how cattle, through their proximity to humans have established differences in social ties. I am also concerned with the markers of differentiation that emerge in this investigation, namely through sex and gender.

Cattle has been seen as a commodity – as the means of conversion – in an economy of symbols and practices, “between a material economy of objects and a moral economy of persons” (Comaroffs, 1990: 196). Looking at the case of the Tshidi Barolong, a Tswana people, cattle emerge as a binary character, as icons of a traditional status quo and as munition in the battle to proclaim control over modern life. Further, the wealth of a man in precolonial African societies was largely determined by his wealth in livestock.

Cattle has also been central to what a “properly Zulu household” is known to be, while being capable of handling cattle extricated strength and ability in rural character (White, 2011: 110). When observing the case of Zulu households in northern Kwazulu-Natal, there tended to be a domestic ordering of things, by distinguishing between cows of Zuluness and cows of

Whiteness. Domestic life in this regard was seen as bipolar, where there were beings, methods and objects of Zuluness, and the same can be said for whiteness⁵ (White, 2011: 106).

In Gayle Rubin's reading, Claude Levi-Strauss and Sigmund Freud have both respectively offered insight into kinship systems in the twentieth century, pointing to the exchange of women between men as a primary system of relations. While they directed their efforts towards unpacking the domestication of women at length and reveal the methodical social apparatus that establishes females as raw materials with the end product being a domesticated woman, neither Freud nor Levi-Strauss attend to the implications of their analysis, nor the implicit scrutiny generated by what they are saying. However, the conceptual tools provided by their work can be used to offer descriptions of the aspect of social life, which is the site of the subjugation of women, sexual minorities, and particular aspects of human character within individuals. Gayle Rubin (1975: 159) has termed this aspect of social life, the "sex/gender system". An initial definition of this system is an assemblage of arrangements under which the biological raw material of human sex and reproduction is fashioned by social engagements and fulfilled in a conventional way, regardless of how inexplicable the convention may appear.

For some scholars, it is necessary to return to Marx on *Capital* and more specifically, on commodities in order to explore the construction and representation of value across societies. This lays important grounds for understanding commodities in non-capitalist, non-European societies (Comaroff, 1990: 195). However, the limitation in this theory arises from the lack of conceptualization of sex oppression, a failure which ultimately arose from an indifference to

⁵ Zuluness and Whiteness are social imaginaries, in other words, sociological types, delineating two divergent structures of kinship and separateness that materialized in the 20th century as Zulu households arranged themselves around the contradictory potentials in the South African society. Consuming cattle of Zuluness produces signs differentiating people according to gender, marriage and generation. In doing so, it categorizes types of considerable differences among persons tied by kinship. On the other hand, consuming cattle that are deemed of Whiteness results in an arrangement where people are seen as separate individuals but markedly similar subjects (White, 2011: 106).

sex. Marx's exploration of the reproduction of labour, for instance, illustrated that the requirements to reproduce the worker is built partly by the human organism's biological needs, partly by the physical conditions of the environment in which it resides, and partly by their cultural background.

“The number and extent of his (the worker's) so-called necessary wants, as also the modes of satisfying them, are themselves the product of historical development, and depends therefore to a great extent on the degree of civilization in a country, more particularly on the conditions under which, and consequently on the habits and degree of comfort in which, the class of free labourers has been formed. In contradistinction therefore to the case of other commodities, there enters into determination of the value of labour-power a historical and moral element” (Marx, 1972: 171)

It is essentially this “historical and moral moment” which designates that a wife forms part of the necessities of a worker, that housework is the job of women rather than men, and that capitalism is the successor of an extensive tradition under which women do not lead, nor inherit (Rubin, 1975: 164). In addition, it is this historical and moral element which circulated capitalism with a cultural heritage of arrangements of femininity and masculinity. Herein lies the realm of sexuality, sex and sex oppression.

In every society there exists a system to manage gender, sex and offspring – whether the system is sexually egalitarian, in theory or stratified according to gender. In either system it is necessary to uphold a distinction between human necessity and capacity to produce a sexual world, and the empirical repressive ways in which sexual spheres have been ordered (Rubin, 1975: 168). It is necessary to note that patriarchy integrates both meanings into a single term and is a particular form of male dominance. On the other hand, a “sex/gender” system refers to

the domain and designates that oppression is not inescapable, but rather the result of certain social relations which shape it. Lastly, there exists 'gender-stratified' systems that cannot sufficiently be explained as patriarchal, and which can be associated with kinship systems. Kinship systems are not made up of a list of biological relations, but rather a system of categories and statuses often contradicting concrete genetic relations. Further, they shape and reproduce actual forms of socially organized sexuality and are observable forms of sex/gender.

In considering the relationship that is established through making a gift of a woman, this exchange allows one to deconstruct further the sex/gender system and the broader implications within the kinship structure, as all other stages, direction and quantities of exchange become implicated by this structure of exchange. When thinking about kinship as an organization, one which assigns power, it becomes a question of who is organized. One can deduce that if women are the gifts, then it is men who are the partners of exchange. Further, it is these partners for whom reciprocal exchange becomes their "quasi-mystical power" of social relation. The "exchange of women" therefore, becomes a way of articulating the social ties under a system of kinship, which stipulates that men have particular rights to their female kin, while women do not experience the same rights to their male kin or themselves (Rubin, 1975: 177).

Marcel Mauss asserted that the value of gift giving emerges from its expression, affirmation or creation of social ties between allies of an exchange (Rubin, 1975: 172). As a result, gift giving encourages a relationship of trust, unity and reciprocal aid to emerge. Mauss has suggested, that gifts act as the links of social discourse, preserving societies that are bereft of any specialized government organizations. With regards to cows, the primary significance of these animals, came from the fact that they were in a sense not a private, but social possession, a term which Marcel Mauss (1954:1) explains as, "things that contained all the threads of which the social fabric is woven." Adam Kuper has also proposed that the chief communal transaction

among Southern Bantu-speaking peoples revolved around the exchange of women for cattle. He claims,

“[r]elated to both the more general set of exchanges between the male domain of pastoral production and the female domain of agriculture, and to the series of exchanges of goods and services (basically the gift of fertility and the return of part of the product) between superiors and inferiors” (Kuper, 1982: 11).

The Comaroffs (1990: 197) have summarized the position of cattle, as firstly, the facilitating link between production and exchange, and secondly as a means of creating socio-political relations. All this suggests that these opportunities for exchange would be harnessed towards creating and recreating the current social order.

If Levi-Strauss and Kuper are accurate in observing the exchange of women as a pivotal principle of kinship, then the oppression of women can be deduced as the result of the relationships through which sex and gender are produced and arranged. What is needed is a political economy of sexual systems (Rubin, 1975: 179). As the division of labour in the cases of the Tshidi and Zulu will show, this division can also be understood as a taboo, which is against the equality of men and women. This has led to sexes separating into mutually exclusive categories and the intensification of biological differences between the sexes ultimately producing gender constructions. It can be said that the social arrangement of sex is built around gender, duty, heterosexuality, as well as the constriction of female sexuality.

Rubin (1975: 183) claims that kinship systems have been reliant on marriage, thereby transforming women into females and men into males; incomplete halves that when united form a whole. These mutually exclusive categories have to materialize from more than a “natural” opposition. This brings me to my next point, that exclusive gender identities results

in the “suppression of natural similarities”. This requires forms of repression. For men it is the absence of “feminine” characteristics, while for women it is the absence of “masculine” characteristics. However, gender does not only entail identifying with one sex, but also that sexual desire be fixed towards the opposite sex. Gender division and compulsory heterosexuality are rules present across kinships and similarly constrain male and female behaviour and character.

The specific character of difference that emerges in the case of the Tshidi arose from their cultural construction of gender as well as its usefulness. Women’s bodies became the most valued prize, “the bearer of life,” consequently subjecting their bodies to confinement, due to the heat generated by their fertility exuding forces that threatened rainmaking, deliberations and land – all essentially male concerns (Comaroff, 1990:201). The subordination of women also manifested in the marital process, whereby men married and were married, while women were always acted upon. The wealth of a man in precolonial African societies was determined by his wealth in livestock. While the social division of labour ensured that women dedicated themselves to the continuous material reproduction of their home dwelling, cultivation and gathering; men stood ardently in herding, hunting and tanning (Comaroff, 1990: 196). Despite being excluded from contact with cattle and being spoken for by men in the public domain, mothers and wives were not wholly powerless in society. Evidence suggests that they influenced various decisions behind the scenes of court and their domestic compound. These contrasts suggest that men and women were not merely complementary and conflicting social beings, instead it is that despite being producers, the “works” of women were incessantly appropriated by males in one capacity or another.

In considering the proximity of men and women to cows within Zulu households, the ability of men to manage them marked robust manliness, while it was vital that the majority of women

evaded these animals. The contrast drawn here, considers the presence and absence of difference itself, in this specific case, the difference of gender. A more accurate delineation of the contrast between Whiteness and Zuluness might be that it reveals the difference between the presence and absence of “markings” of gendered difference. In actual fact, both gender and generation act as the main axes around which a specific system of normative ideas of human procreation and relatedness are organized (White, 2011: 107). The visible form and behaviour of cows of Whiteness comprise being huge and confused, full of aggression and fear after their rearing on a largescale farm; while cows of Zuluness, are usually unafraid and substantially smaller due to grazing on bare hillsides. This suggests that the cattle of Whiteness threaten to provoke discord in the habitus of rural men, making them indistinguishable from women or urban persons. On the other hand, women have been discouraged from consuming cows of Zuluness as this would give them appetites that evoke infidelity.

It is less important how the cattle are acquired, than how they are given up; and when considering their process into becoming food, it becomes a question of why, where and how they will be slaughtered. When there is a sacrificial slaughter senior man holding spears head into the kraal, while women retreat to their home dwelling. With regards to the butchering, the meat is stabbed intricately, revealing particular portion boundaries, which is then cut by the young boys. The delicacy with the portions comes in as each piece must be killed uniquely with “respect” for their respective diners (White, 2011: 110). The four main commensal kinds include fathers, mothers, sons and daughters; and this dividing is undertaken by householders, their neighbours and guests when arranging themselves for a feast. Other portions are representative of other variations through clanship, residence or affinity. What is revealed here is that when considering the labour that goes into making a feast, antagonistic productions of difference are displayed. Those involved are discerned into kinds which corresponding to their categorical statuses they may occupy in the kinship structure of households based on

reproduction through marriage. This practice of differentiation is most apparent in the separateness between fathers and sons, as the processes and produce of the feast depicts how the paternal life course is formed by means of relations with women and children.

In considering the appropriation of the fruits of female labour among the Tshidi, they were directly geared towards the creation and recreation of the “polity” as well as the chiefship. In addition, this provided material grounds with which to sustain interhousehold connections by promoting male socio-political involvement. The connection between female reproductive activity and the creation and recreation of the polity directly hinges on the centralized power exercised over the farming cycle. The chief, therefore, controls the cycle by permitting it begin when he gives out “the seed time”. This level of control affords the chief the authority to extricate tributary labour, giving him a “surplus for later redistribution” (Comaroff, 1990: 202). Essentially, these two centrally regulated forms of female labour (the renewal of the polity and creation of redistributive surplus) are symbiotic, together transforming human activity into a vivacious political economy.

Once there exists a defined polity and its central structures have been revived annually, agnatic politics must continue. However, for a man to partake he must hold the capacity to feed himself and his “retainers”, which in turn makes access to female labour a minimum requirement in order to enter the political sphere a free man. In Zulu households, a similar case emerged as men were not able to become patriarchs or ancestors until they were tied by marriage to women's houses. Further, the joining of such houses could not occur unless they were subjects of persons that owned cattle. Men ultimately advanced through their life course through interactions of maternity and dominion (White, 2011: 109).

The above discussion has offered themes that can assist in understanding the significance of cattle and their social ties to the male and female body. Mntambo has highlighted the cultural importance of cattle in South Africa, while her choice in medium has made a spectacle of the fact that cattle have a ten-thousand-year history with social beings, bearing meaning for nearly any audience (Tedford, 2013: 1). In relation to Rubin and the Comaroffs, Mntambo's performance practice has worked to disrupt and critique the established sex/gender system to which they speak, and which establishes women as the possession of men, who through marriage enter and reproduce the social system. Mntambo challenges this construction of women as the social ladder for men and as lacking any agency of their own. She, therefore, as a black woman addresses the literature by working with the cowhide herself, rejecting the gendered social roles that this classification system facilitates. She presents figures, that are devoid of any specific sex or gendered markers of distinction and presents hybrid figures that neither purely feminine, masculine nor vulnerable.

Composing and decomposing difference

In considering the notion of difference within the aesthetic practice of Nandipha Mntambo's cowhide sculptures, I suggest that her oeuvre can further be read as a political intervention advocating for blurred, collapsed and subverted difference, instances of secondary ambiguity and third genders. When looking at Mntambo's cowhide figures, the absence of any definitive gender markers, despite being moulded from her own body, suggests ambiguous and/or third genders. Firstly, because they resist being collapsed into the metonymic system of representation promoted in the modern West, where specific body parts are marked as a

signifier and predictor of gender. Secondly, because following Rosalind Morris (1995: 579), these “forms serve a metaphoric function”.

When gender performativity theorists propose that all gender is a form of drag, what they are suggesting is that, similar to drag, the obligatory Western system of heterosexuality is a “set of imitations”. What is essentially being imitated is a model of binary difference, a difference that assigns social roles, while also determining sexual preference. When considering erotic acts, the notion of gender regularly conflates itself with mere body parts or ceases to exist entirely. However, if erotic acts require more than genital interaction, as it clearly does, and if it is pivotal in the make-up of gendered subjects, which it is, we need to analyse how it envelops in other “gendered relations and in the general economy of desire” such as persons that have acquired a specific identity through everyday habits and that then became third or transgendered only in relation to a former expectation or process of socialization (Morris, 1995: 580).

Dressing the cowhide is pivotal to Mntambo’s process, with the end product being a hairy life-sized woman who is not unequivocally repulsive and embodies a performance that shadows various boundaries (Buikema, 2012: 289). The significance of the animal skin comes in the morphing of figures that are part animal and part human, part alive and part lifeless, part grotesque and part beguiling. The skin of cows has also been seen utilized in the veiling of human bodies, therefore the sculptures, bereft of cow filling, moves between arousing the garments that can be “shod at will” and the bodies that formerly contained active, breathing, chomping beings with four stomachs. With regards to the “fragments” of the female form, it provokes repugnance from its viewer, not only on the basis of its hairy exterior, but partly due to the palpable odour and texture thereof. The repulsion intended here is meant to invoke the

“residue of reality” and the physical presence of the corporeal rather than lay the female body bare to prey, abjection and abuse.

Mntambo’s artwork brings into question and blurs the idea of gendered identity and ideal expectations, such as women not having too much body hair, exuding an odour that is identified as feminine and having a bodily form that ascribes to particular characteristics. The uneven display of gender here can be read much in the same way as the terms butch and femme. For instance, Rubin (1975: 126) has suggested that these notions are not amplifications of femininity and masculinity, but rather rigid relations between manifold layers of gender that are taken on at different times. Further, while they are not a denial of more “normal” identifications, they are unstable and humorous commentaries on them.

In considering how this “thirdness” is circulated and fashioned, one ought to consider that in various places, the distinction, pollution and/or influence that accumulates to people so delineated, materializes from the rigidity between diverse levels of gendered identity which are taken on in particular instances (Morris, 1995: 581). Sometimes, that thirdness obtains the aura of the irreversible and the natural, while other times it is only a transient state that will later be abandoned or surpassed at other moments or a later part in life. However, sometimes it is self-consciously wrought, the point at which it could become a form of empowerment. Given these various likelihoods, thirdness and “transgendering” may be seen as forms of identity that are rooted within other sets of gendered interactions in a multitude of ways and range of temporalities.

Work on performativity, as is shown in Mntambo’s practice and the artists to follow, focuses largely on the politics of parody and with the seditious influence of satire, both closely associated with drag and camp aesthetics. In a discussion by Morris (1995: 68) a compelling

case was put forward for the incorporation of bodybuilding under the designation of drag, as a technique of defeminising the body. This form of performance directs one's attention to that space, which Butler has discussed, between the "lived body and the morphological ideal-type". Similar to this particular scenario, Mntambo's bullfighting performance advocates further ways of defeminizing the body, by creating a spectacle through merging both male and female characteristics and moulding the performance of the matador, bull and audience onto a single figure. By fashioning gender as something so artificial Mntambo essentially reveals the pretence of gender.

This begs the question, are the acts of self-conscious, self-constitution in drag indeed interrelated and not simply equivalent to normative styles of gender. When habitual, repeated acts become conscious and objectified, they are altered; practice turns into representation, and everyday activities become manoeuvres that assume an enduring and all-encompassing vision. Is parodic gender as Rubin (1975: 163) suggests, a novel form of relational gender, wherein distinction is deflected along a temporal line and is indeed not accepted (Morris, 1995: 583)?

These concerns with consciousness and satirical dissent in transgendering have also been highlighted in arguments regarding spirit possession. Possession ceremonies have been understood as forms of cross-dressing, where the idea of costume and novel corporeal postures effects and signifies the conversion from one gendered state of being to another. In various cases, possession rituals have been seen to sanction women to adopt the clothing, gestures and privileges that they are deprived of on a day to day basis. By drawing on Morris' theory in my engagement with Mntambo's performance of thirdness, on the exterior level, this appears to involve the conversion or amalgamation of female and male identities. In other words, a fantasy of unconstrained, purely mutable gender can be seen underlying Mntambo's performativity. Further, her quest for freedom from primary categories entails the satirical effacement of

gender itself by her using cowhide, a rugged, revulsive material to create ghostly presences that blur the boundaries of what a distinctly feminine body looks, feels and smells like (Morris, 1995: 585).

Coda

Nandipha Mntambo's hairy cowhide sculptures have posed critical questions regarding "normative" representations of the female body, as she attempts to disrupt gendered constructions of sex and sexuality in South Africa. With her aesthetic medium, she has brought attention to various forms of body politics and has made an intervention in literature tied to representations of femininity, vulnerability and agency. The cultural importance of cattle in South Africa has been central to Mntambo's oeuvre. Drawing on Mntambo's motifs, I have illustrated how cowhide as a form of dress can be seen as what Turner termed the "social skin", which idealizes the body as the symbolic platform upon which dramas of socialization are revealed. In addition, I have offered insight into the significance of cattle and their social relations with the male and female body, revealing how divergent structures of kinship and personhood are constructed by this assemblage. Lastly, I have suggested that humans, through their proximity to cows have established differences in the kinds of social ties as well as the markers of differentiation that emerge in this investigation, primarily through constructions of sex and gender. Mntambo decomposed the notion of difference by presenting sculptures that were devoid of any specific sex or gendered markers of differentiation. Her figures embodied both male, female and animal characteristics, thereby forcing viewers to reflect on the ways that sex and gender are continually tied to representations of the body.

Chapter 3

Athi-Patra Ruga: Displacement and queer identities within public space

In this chapter, I discuss the performance practice of South African artist Athi-Patra Ruga, interested in the boundaries between contemporary art, performance and fashion. By constructing the utopian world of Azania and performing as gender ambiguous beings, Ruga affords his viewers a window into a world where one's geographic origin, biological deficiency or heritage does not delineate one's identity but rather takes the form of a hybrid construct. By drawing specifically on how he plays with notions of displacement and subversion, I illustrate how Ruga uses his aesthetic practice to trigger and contest normative expectations within public space (Libsekal, 2014: 145). Furthermore, by putting several of his works together I provide a visual reading of the current South African reality, illustrating, firstly, how Ruga's performances, photographic images and film stills can be seen as a political intervention to disrupt the rigidity of perceptions concerning intersectional queer identities, sexuality and HIV/AIDS within post-apartheid South Africa (Donnelly, 2008: 1).

I argue that Ruga engages with public space to not only disrupt prevalent belief systems and de-naturalise ordinary, everyday life, but also to offer a lens into the unrealizable and provide future reimagining's of democracy. I engage with Ruga's performance practice as a form of cultural labour, as it draws on the invisibility of black queer citizens and counter discourses (performance art) to bring about freedom. I therefore suggest that Ruga's performances illuminates' a counter public (Fraser, 1990), by firstly, using public performance art as a space for subordinated groups to express and defend their interests and secondly, by offering glimpses into the unrealizable and the future iterations of democracy.

I will focus on particular performances, namely, *The Future White Woman of Azania* (2012), *After She Left* (2008) and *The Naivety of Beirut* (2008). I first came across the artists characters when he was in conversation with Nandipha Mntambo at the 2014 Design Indaba Conference, but he also performed as part of Imaginary Fact at the 55th Venice Biennale in 2013, and his works form part of public, private and museum collections, including the Iziko South African National Gallery, Zeits Museum of Contemporary Art Africa MOCAA and art galleries in Cape Town.

The Future White Woman of Azania and the Character of Beirut



Figure 8: *The Future White Woman of Azania* approaching Grahamstown (2012)

WHATIFTHEWORLD Gallery

In this particular performance, the *Future White Woman of Azania* (2012), makes her way down the streets of Grahamstown unsure of her footing, her unexpected turns disturbing the specific colonial layout of the space. She staggers from the township bordering this relatively small town to the central plaza where she encounters *The Winged Figure of Peace* (1906), an effigy commemorating British soldiers who gave their lives during the Anglo-Boer War (Babb, 1906: 1). *The Future White Woman of Azania* adorned in her stilettos, mounts herself onto the pedestal, stroking it with her balloons playfully, vulnerably and mordantly. Until eventually the balloons burst from the persistent friction, discharging variegated liquid onto the memorial, the ground as well as the black body of the performer that starts to appear out from around the punctured latex (Brown, 2017: 68). The dalliance suddenly intensifies as *The Future White Woman of Azania* starts battering herself against the effigy, popping balloons as she goes and bashing her body until Ruga's face and limbs are made visible through the costume and *The Future White Woman of Azania* has been embowelled. When majority of the balloons have punctured or burst Ruga exits visible and breathless, while multicolour blood of the rainbow nation blotches the scene.



Figure 8: *The White Woman and the Winged Figure of Peace* (2012) WHATIFTHEWORLD Gallery

The Winged Figure of Peace exposes Ruga not only to the history of colonialism, but to the sinister proxies of neoliberal democracy and capitalism (Corrigal, 2014: 93). This encounter with the statue is however not partisan, pointing to the discordant freedom and artificial amity that pervades South Africa's postcolonial democracy. Ruga places emphasis on this notion of an unfulfilled sense of place by imposing a stylised lens of this imminent imaginary utopia or skewed dystopian past. An embellished and excessive fiction is presented with its lack of identifying markers forming part of its character. Perforating or tearing down the façade of the dream deferred is a particularly significant moment in performances of *The Future White*

Woman of Azania. Ruga's performance depicts the equally cardinal desire and pain, freedom and ferocity entangled in experiences of racialized queerness in post-apartheid South Africa.

This ending brings with it a form of purification that initially appears sudden; however, it is freeing oneself of this artificial costume and its attendant links to Azania that has become the conclusion the audience forecasts and thus desires. Partly driven by a yearning to get a visual of the performers' identity, the audience awaits to see what lurks beyond this plastic barrier of colour. When the balloons have eventually all burst viewers are met by the sweaty performer who hastily makes his or her exit (Corrigan, 2014: 93). It is here that one is deprived of or experiences deferred access to what subsists on the other side. This suggests that beyond this reverie is a distressing and possibly intricate reality that cannot be determined.

The show entitled *Bugchasers and Watussi Faghags* (2008), was Ruga's first solo exhibition held in Johannesburg, informed and influenced by images, audience's responses to them and his pursuit to disrupt them (Donnelly, 2008: 1). This particular collection therefore forms part of an investigation into the history of image-making and the displacement of images and people. The show comprises a series of performative stills and photographs revolving around the main character, Beiruth, the 'bugchaser', and her "anecdotes of counter-penetration" in marginal, transitional spaces (Ruga, 2019: 1).



Figure 9: *After He Left* (2008) Stevenson Art Galley

In *After He Left* (2008), Beiruth ventures on an intricate journey to Atlantis, a township in Cape Town. Roaming around in a leotard with fishnet stockings and red stilettos, Beiruth's apparel becomes linked to that of a prostitute (Corrigal, 2008: 1). While deemed sexually provocative on a woman, when adorned by a man an unsettling scenario ensues. Ruga reveals how this disjuncture is not only generated through the act of dressing, but also by the divergent contexts he engages in. With a lampshade over her head, Beiruth gets into a taxi at the taxi rank, making herself prone to the biases of other passengers due to her presence of visible resistance (Buys, 2010: 482).

There have been incidences at taxi ranks in Johannesburg and elsewhere in the country where young women have been harassed and assaulted for their choice in clothing, such as miniskirts (TimesLive, 2012: 1). These attacks have fuelled the idea that taxi ranks are overseen by a conformist patriarchal authority and thus becoming a site where moral codes are imposed or in this case, challenged. Ruga (2019: 1) exclaims that Beiruth is a hyperactive feminine creature

which is perhaps what people found menacing about that girl in the skirt openly divulging her promiscuity. Ruga's (2019: 1) narrative is a direct effort to place peoples and progress to the test by "mirroring it and reflecting it".

Ruga (2019: 1) explains that the name Beiruth derives from the Lebanese capital, Beirut. Apart from the reference to prostitution, Beiruth's gender is difficult to decipher, making her an equivocal persona with no recognizable patterns of behaviour (Corrigal, 2008: 1). In *the Naivety of Beiruth* (2008), this is partly achieved by Beiruth adorning herself with a black headpiece, an unusual convergence between a military helmet and a burqa. In so doing, Beiruth does not visibly represent any particular societal faction, but rather a facet of the human state. This interplay of veiling and unveiling oneself, and the masculine and feminine characteristics embodied in Beiruth's conflicting attire reveals a battle between the individual and society, and within the individual's innermost self as well.



Figure 10: *Beiruth climbing the wall outside the police station* (2008) Stevenson Art Gallery



Figure 11: *The Naivety of Beiruth* (2008) Stevenson Art Gallery

Beruith was photographed at the Johannesburg Central Police Station, formerly John Voster Square- notorious for numerous deaths of detainees during the apartheid regime (Ruga, 2019: 1). She then slinks from out of a dark shelter enclosed with rusty corrugated iron and crouches on the plain grey pavement. These scenarios illustrate the sense of displacement experienced by Beruith, as there is no place for her, while her eccentricity and alteration in the city space are reverberated in the titles given to the work. Ruga is drawing on displacement in a literal sense, but there is also a larger process of displacement perpetuating in Ruga's art. In considering Susan Sontag's (1966: 280) notion of camp, camp disrupts the original with its replica, and in this procedure constructs images which are in turn, displaced as well. Ruga's two branches of interest in displacement merge, in the camp embodiment one sees the displacement of people while the displacement of images is a constant process.

The two-edged title of the show makes reference to the sexual activity of 'bug-chasing,' defined as the intentional act of contracting the HIV virus-with its seemingly selfless impetus. Ruga (2008: 1) points to bugchasing as a practice viewed in some homosexual crowds as compassionate and thus, principled. As a bugchaser she exhibits compassion, valour and ethics; however, her morals are in conflict with that of the society she resides in, where HIV/AIDS is assumed to be feared by the good, rational and knowledgeable inhabitants (Buys, 2010: 483). Beruith's contravened act of bugchasing given the stigma surrounding AIDS, exposes what is exalted in a society in which she is unable to partake, not simply because her behaviour excludes her, but because she has surpassed the logic-limit of that system.

Reimagining the Kingdom of Azania

With his art and a kaleidoscope of colours, Ruga escapes the strident reality of South Africa by constructing his own utopian world, a mythical metaverse called Azania. After he constructed his imaginary world, Ruga turned to sculpture, photography, film and performance art and reflexively engaged his own cultural context as a black queer artist (Skujins, 2018: 1). I show how Ruga disrupts the rigidity of perceptions concerning cultural identity, social as well as state structures by embodying *The Future White Woman of Azania* and parodying the construction of the nation-state through his performances in the post-apartheid moment (Donnelly, 2018: 1). Further in an attempt to evoke the place of queerness in society, his avatars can be seen in a constant state of change.

The Future White Woman of Azania is a continuing series of performances that is constantly developing, drawing on new meanings of nationhood in association with the independent body (Ruga, 2014: 1). *The Future White Woman of Azania* is fashioned around the main character of the Future White Woman, a mythical figure from Azania. The central organization governing the Versatile Kingdom of Azania is difficult to classify under traditional definitions. It can best be described as a semi-absolute monarchy wherein the majority authority is bequeathed to the ruling monarch.

Since the rule of the Versatile Queen Ivy, the throne has solely been sat on by a “non-dynastic line of versatile queens” (Ruga, 2014: ix). Each successive queen is selected by the preceding monarch from the covenant called the Abohdade, women who have dedicated their lives as *The Mother of the First Elder*. A requirement at the time was that *the Sacred Versatile Queen* should not be a virgin and that this be upheld as the reigning queen was meant to mirror the once prevailing, *Mother of the First Elder*. The current *Sacred Versatile Queen Ivy* stands as the sole

authority in Azania with a privy council seated by several noble houses of the country (Ruga, 2014: xi). Currently, the authority of the monarch is absolute, with the crown serving as both executive and legislative body of Azania. The chief force determining the course of the kingdom is the sacred queen, who stands at the Head of State and the Head of Government. *The Sacred Queen* governs and organizes both the foreign and domestic policy of Azania, mitigates difficulties that surface at all government levels, declares laws and grants acquittals.

Benedict Anderson (2006: 49) proposed that “communities are to be distinguished not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the, style in which they are imagined”. As is the case with most nations, Azania is at once fictional and tangibly real. Real for the archaeologists of the 1930s, Azania was the name given to the remnants of an ancient, precolonial civilization forgotten in the soil of Mapungubwe, Limpopo (Corrigall, 2014: 89). On the contrary, this imagined precolonial society was revitalized and adapted in South Africa in the 1960s, to form a pivotal part of liberation rhetoric after the Pan Africanist Congress renamed the country Azania in an attempt to rally African nationalist advocacy and reject the name “South Africa” as colonial. From a political standpoint, Azania transformed from a merely imagined ancient society into an archetype for a future society, under which notions of unity, equality and liberation became one and the same with Azania. This idea was further flagged in the slogan of the Black Consciousness Movement, “One Azania, One Nation.”

Despite the utopian dream that Azania exhibited with hopes for a better future, the unattainability of this vision has circulated a sense of dispossession as South Africans feel at a loss for this place that is at variance with their reality (Corrigall, 2014: 90). South Africa is still referred to by some as Azania; however, Azania operates as a kind of counterpoint to the real nation, a way to illustrate the gap between what was hoped for and what has been achieved, twenty-five years into democracy. According to Anderson (2006: 50), it may never be a

realization, nor has it got to be one to exist, as nationalism does not entail a nation's awakening to self-consciousness, rather it creates nations where they do not exist.

Ruga offers several interpretations of Azania, firstly, as a utopian state surfacing from the past, by acknowledging the colonial or apartheid era, and secondly, as an imminent place bolstered by black consciousness and queer ideology (Corrigall, 2014: 91). Ruga has suggested that displaced communities utilize Azania in an attempt to fix their identity in this ever-changing fantasy that has been constructed to alleviate feelings of alienation one may face in reality. Azania emerges as this virtual new beginning which is where the ideas and determinations of writers, historians, politicians and artists forecast the future or its absence. This paradox provokes the artists reimagining of Azania as seen in his performances of *The Future White Woman of Azania*. Performances of women of Azania since 2010, have had a distinct costume that make the body appear unreal and cartoon-like.

Ruga's unrestrained fusion of postmodern vocabulary is enticed by fashion editorials that depict hyper-stylized and quintessential representations of African style as well as by Black Panther Marvel comic books, that portray Azania as a state governed by the supremacists who subjugate the black majority awaiting liberation by the Black Panther. Ruga, therefore, roots his exposition in forms of fantasy and popular culture. This facet of Ruga's oeuvre is strongly linked to that of Afrofuturism, an interdisciplinary movement that employs historical fiction, fantasy, science fiction and Afrocentricity as a way of reimagining black identity and rethinking the past and future. An objective of Afrofuturism is to disrupt the white-dominated sci-fi genre and its "lock on that unreal estate" (Corrigall, 2014: 93). The significance of fantasy genres is that they unlock a visionary space, something that its creators are deprived of in reality, permitting them to revise the past and future. Ruga's work draws on these various notions in order to scrutinize the linkage between art and context, a linkage that is essentially

political as it reproduces systemic principles that are often unintentionally implemented when art is interpreted against its micro-political contexts.

Camp style and queer identities

In engaging Ruga's performances there is a convergence of two kinds of political intervention. The first can be interpreted at the level of micro-politics and draws attention to the politics of the day; such as AIDS, sexuality and post-colonial identity. While the second, points to a wide politics that challenges the contextual grounds on which the former notions are constructed. I will illustrate how Ruga's art can be read as embodying both, forms of camp style as well as cross-dressing as a mode of gender non-conformity.

Readings of Ruga's work by curators and art critics have tended to interpret the numerous contextual analyses underpinning his oeuvre. Themes resonating in Ruga's work include African urbanity, sexuality, the position of queer identities in the postcolonial and post-apartheid era, and HIV/AIDS. Buys (2010: 480) suggests engaging with these themes and their relevance to the artist by recognizing, firstly, that Ruga's work is implicated with the politics of context, as opposed to the context of politics. Mainstream art reviews in contemporary South Africa have been engrossed with the semantic conversation, directing efforts towards checking and balancing artists and their works against a diagram of political burdens in other spheres of South African society, but influential when applied as canons to artists and their oeuvre. This closed-off view can defuse art and confiscate its actual political force, which is its ability to modify the coordinates of a social system in which everyday politics materializes. Buys (2010: 481) suggests, that Ruga's art resists the reduction of art to context as it scans the political issues of the day in order to unveil a more profound political matter in jeopardy which is - our

sense of physical, psychological, historical, and sexual place. Geographical arrangement and displacement are drawn on in many of artists work as metaphors for contextual disruptions and estrangements. Ruga's performances are largely a reflection on displacement, but as an active erasure or renouncement of place, versus purely helpless loss.

Susan Sontag's (1966: 280) *Notes on Camp* is particularly relevant in this regard as Sontag defines camp as "a paradoxical sensibility or affinity for tastefully bad taste, for extravagance, for the banal, for provocation and for moral digression". Despite the age of Sontag's comments regarding the notion of camp, her notes continue to hold value as they portray camp as a procedure of displacement and de-familiarization. Ruga's oeuvre can be positioned within the tradition of camp, a neglected frame of reference in South African visual and performance art. Ruga's performances all feature extravagant forms of dress, defiance of sexuality, conventional sexual morality and incantation of excesses (aesthetic, material and conceptual) that amalgamate to position him as a performer who assumes the tropes of camp (Buys, 2010: 481).

Ruga already to a degree experiences "double marginality", as numerous cultures of black masculinity in South Africa would not openly tolerate breaches of conventionally interpreted femaleness and maleness (Buys, 2010: 482). He is not merely camp, but black and camp. Regardless of the particular circumstances of any gesture of camp, it is projected in the domain of burlesque. This is due to how camp reveals that imposed ideas of the essence of beauty, or identity, or truth, belong now to the past: it reveals them as constructions of power. What persists now is the proxy of everything it echoes. In other words, to assume the tropes of camp is to actualize campness itself. Camp can therefore be seen as a genre predominately preoccupied with the dislocation of states of being.

In drawing on Buy's assertion that in assuming the tropes of camp, Ruga engages in forms of active displacement, I argue that a similar form of dislocation occurs through the artists' evocation of queerness. Ruga's embodied performances emphasize that as a result of his identity as a sexual and gender non-conforming or queer person falling outside of heteronormative categories, he has been alienated in society. However, I suggest that in Ruga's construction of Azania and his characters being "stripped of their belonging and their connectedness", an active reclaiming of existence and being is being advocated (Matebeni & Pereira, 2014: 7). The movement of *The Future White Woman of Azania* and *Beiruth* therefore, embodies subversive ways of being through modes of queer identity. In so doing, they are able to question the present, by means of a political intervention that bulldozes the boundaries of normative behaviour.

In employing the term queer, I am cognizant of its polemics. Matebeni and Pereira (2014: 8) asserted that the notion of queer within the context of South Africa has become synonymous with the questionable term, LGBTI. The problem manifests where the circulation of these notions heighten the invisibility experienced by other gender non-conforming people, such as gender transgressive Africans. I suggest that this invisibility of individual difference becomes Ruga's entry point as his performances address the lack of imagery of gender non-forming persons outside the term LGBTI. In so doing, Ruga lifts various restrictions on our own thinking and language of what we recognize as gender non-conforming. In the next section, will discuss how this negotiation of genders and sexualities implicates the invisibility of various queer identities. However, for the moment, I point to Ruga's embodiment of queer modes of being, manipulates his audience into engaging with the manner in which they look at the world. By positioning his body as at once the viewed and the viewer, those observing his performance are pushed into a confrontational space of "seeing themselves as the viewer", and in so doing, the ways in which we see can be disrupted (Matebeni & Pereira, 2014: 8).

This comes alive in Ruga's video series of the above performances as his intervention can be read as engaging with micro-politics or with what Ouma and Mutloane (2014: 37) termed, the "politics of the event". This points to the political ways in which events are encountered, along with the hierarchy of mentions and silences that manifest. The particular contexts revered in Ruga's performances include African urbanity, sexuality, HIV/AIDS and the position of queer identities in post-apartheid South Africa. This results in the construction of explicit spatio-temporal contexts wherein publics are "constructed or construct themselves" to engage the aforementioned issues (Ouma & Mutloane, 2014: 37). In addition to the politics of the event, Ruga draws his viewers' attention to the very materiality – the human. The reason being the fact that it is frequently violence, aggression or human rights violations that trigger forms of political intervention such as Ruga's. Therefore, Ruga can be seen directing attention to the body.

I argue that Ruga's performance which employs modes of cross-dressing seen by his multi-colored balloon dress, pink stockings and heels in *The Future White Woman of Azania* as well as by his fishnet stockings and long hair extensions in *The Naivety of Beirut*, can be read as drawing attention and connections between the body, sexual and gender identity and clothing.

Ruga's dizzying display of costume in his embodied performances offer a platform on which to import this notion of clothing against an acute sense of time and place, as he asserts, "one has to be a mirage to tackle history and put it in another context to get to the point...The costume plays that role in performance" (Ruga, 2014). Further, Ruga's cross-dressing performance within mediated city and rural spaces, exemplify the fluid boundaries of sexual difference (Ouma & Mutloane, 2014: 40). By concurrently constructing and rejecting fixed categories, Ruga undermines the tropes of power tied to masculine and feminine constructions and facilitates this pivotal breakdown of distinctiveness through cross-dressing. In addition, by

providing a soundless performance Ruga forces his viewers to read his performance through his body, obliging them to reflect on what they consider to be markedly female or male. Essentially, it is through his modes of dress that these questions were raised. Lastly, while Ruga's performance reflected back to the audience their own precarious assumptions concerning gender and sexuality, such as navigating feminine, masculine, queer and acrogenous identities, the camera, person behind it and the audience provide additional "ways of seeing" the performance (Ouma & Mutloane, 2014: 41)

Counter Publics and Visibility in Ruga's performance practice

The body has been a pivotal component of Ruga's performance practice, allowing him to negotiate the integrally politically rousing forum of public space. He engages with public space to not only disrupt prevalent belief systems and dislocate the quotidian, but also to offer a lens into the unrealizable and offer future reimagining's of democracy. I will provide additional analysis on how Ruga's work can be seen as what Xavier Livermon (2012: 300) termed cultural labour, as it draws on the invisibility of black queer citizens and counter discourses to bring about freedom. Ruga's cultural labour of visibility materializes when he displays gender nonconformity and dissident sexualities in the public arena to dislocate how black subjectivity is imagined and performed as heteronormative (Bystrom & Nuttall, 2013: 308). Essentially, visibility entails recognition, as it is only through being recognized that any one of us becomes deemed a socially viable being. How that recognition is obtained differs however, incorporating various sensory perceptions.

The invisibility of subordinated groups and their attempts to gain visibility are established in public or for a public. Typically, the public has been defined as that which is open and visible to everyone and exists in contrast to the private, which is hidden, protected and restricted. Andrea Brighenti (2010: 120) proposes that architecture is a dominant way of managing visibilities, suggesting that public space is invisible structures within a visible architecture. I draw on Brighenti's view that public space is a space of intervisibility of subjects, however with that said public interaction is not harmonious but always fragmented. Visibility, according to Brighenti (2010: 38) is linked to the notions of "social territory, rhythm and multiplicity". It is not merely a sociological category, but rather needs to be explained according to the diversity of affects that are produced between the viewer and the viewed, including their particular rhythms and the subsequent territorial thresholds that are demarcated, inscribed and projected.

Establishing thresholds, demarcating boundaries and defining relational territories are developments steered towards directing attention, sustaining hierarchies, establishing mutual respect, synchronizing action, circulating resistance and so forth (Brighenti, 2010: 39). It is by means of these diverse configurations of visibility that social relationships are sustained, and power is dispersed (Brighenti, 2010: 41). However, as configurations become normalized struggles and disputes over visibility tend to arise. Due to the determinacy of struggles and disputes to restructure pre-existing visibilities or even interrogate the prevailing regime of visibility, the nature of visibility should be conceptualized as at once socio-technical and bio-political.

The socio-technical realm is the space where thought becomes projected and inscribed onto materials, resulting in these materials becoming progressively trendy. Visibility is simultaneously bio-political because it is employed within a multiplicity where subject positionality is informed based on the paths one is permitted to follow within public space and

the prospective events that are envisioned (Brighenti, 2010: 41). Subsequently, the essential incongruities of visibility can be seen as: bio-politically, visibility wavers between recognition and control and socio-technically, it wavers between the conjunction and divergence of various processes of embodiment, embodiment that are the performances of inscription and projection into the visible realm. The harmonizing acts of boundary delineating, choosing a flow and territory creation are acts of inscription in the visible. It is within the visible (as an element) that thresholds are inscribed, and wherein the division between the visible and invisible can be evocatively put in place (Brighenti, 2010: 42).

Asen (2000: 425) who draws on Foucault among others, asserts that norms that are already established in discursive encounters impact relations of power. Therefore, the often-inherent norms guiding discourse in any particular sphere at any particular time are likely to benefit some subjects to the detriment of others. For example, opposition to black queer visibilities is rooted in representations of the queer body being racialized as white and the black body being sexualized as straight. Livermon (2012: 302) asserts that a result of such implicit norms guiding discourse, the white queer body becomes representative of human rights protections that is used to situate South Africa as an open-minded queer-friendly nation, while the black queer body continues to be marked as the hazard to “African culture”. I suggest that *The Naivety of Beirut*, can be read as a response to these thresholds inscribed in public space. Beirut's infraction was not chastised with marginalization and displacement, rather this was the manifestation of her externality to the system and her recognition of its borders. Beirut, therefore, disrupted the frame of reference in which she acted, and unable to act from within it any longer, she moved her acts to the disreputable sides. It is essentially this acting from without that grounds Ruga's oeuvre in camp style (Buys, 2010: 483).

This begs the question, what is this invisible realm and how does it enter the field of politics of recognition? As Brighenti (2010: 47) put forth, within all political units constituted by plural and heterogenous elements, numerous struggles for recognition emerge. A lack of recognition or misrecognition are formations of social visibility that directly influence the type of relationship that arises between minority groups, including ethnic, cultural, religious, political, sexual or moral, and the social majority. The link between visibility and recognition, is however, not quite direct nor linear, as the role performed by thresholds of visibility intercedes. This can be understood as there being a minimum and a maximum to what is deemed correct visibility. Siengenthaler (2013: 165) offers a similar perspective, claiming that the invisible can be seen as the realm where people have a tendency to assign meaning to processes and actions that fall outside correct visibility, that is they elude common-sense or rational explanation. This is particularly evident where there is a discordance between legal structures and social practice, where populations are vulnerable to the unpredictability of governments or global economics, as well as where rapid and erratic economic, political, cultural and social changes transpire.

In Ruga's performances of *After He Left* (2008) and *The Naivety of Beirut* (2008), a similar mapping of the city can be seen, with the sartorial as a body architecture and indication of the social subjectivities present within public space. The clothing, mannerisms, and spaces within which Ruga performed established a subjective publicness, one that clashed with individual and legal freedoms and social schemes. The figure measured out the visible structures as she moved over drains and manholes, sensing the height of the wall around the police station, ready to adapt and swiftly move from the most private of spaces into the highly public arena (Siengenthaler, 2013: 167). Ruga gained hypervisibility when performing in the public space as he has moved or been pushed over the upper threshold of correct visibility and passed into a zone of super-visibility wherein, he became too visible. The figure then stimulated interaction and confrontation with the audience, exploring how one can act and how one will be

interpreted. Additionally, Ruga tested the parameters of gender, dress, gestures, movements, ethnicity and race, routes, and encounters pursued or evaded to reveal how they culminate divergent reactions and ways of seeing.

There is of course a multiplicity of standards of correct visibility, but an overall outcome that is seen is that being below the lower threshold, one would be socially excluded. But despite being socially invisible, one would also become overly visible and actually symbolically vital for determining boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. From a bio-political standpoint, the borders that exist between visibility and invisibility of the social others is imperative. Within the element of visibility social organizing of people is undertaken, demoting some social groups into invisibility (Brighenti, 2010: 51). Essentially, all exploited classes and minority groups face the effects of invisibility as being deprived of recognition. In addition to the invisibility of minority groups, a similar effect takes places with unresolved social problems.

When looking to cities in the Global South with large social inequalities, where various cultures and belief systems merge, there is a discrepancy between what people see from the visible and what they know from the invisible realm (Siengenthaler, 2013: 165). Specifically, in South Africa, apartheid segregated the population along racial lines in a way that deemed the needs and interests of the black population invisible and despite a decline in racial segregation, such inequalities persist. Ultimately, this is due to the disparity between what people know by means of experience and what they presume.

This can be seen when looking to deliberations in 1996, when South Africa became the first nation in Africa to decriminalize same-sex marriage and the first country in the world to offer protection by outlawing discrimination against the LGBTQ community. However, what emerged was a discordance between constitutional rights at the level of state and cultural rights

within public space. Less attention to paid to the precarious social footing of black queers, evidenced through their identity being cast as ‘un-African’ and untraditional (Livermon, 2012: 302). This has been demonstrated by incidents such as, political figure Lulu Xingwana pronouncing that black lesbian photographer Zanele Muholi’s oeuvre is pornographic and could jeopardise nation building efforts. Another incident involved the council for traditional leaders who deemed homosexuality an un-African practice, denouncing same-sex marriage in South Africa and identifying the discordance of same-sex marriage practices with “African culture” (Livermon, 2012: 301). Proclamations like these by elected and unelected political figures fuel an environment wherein black queer bodies are prone to policing and violence as their invisibility in public space, results in their hypervisibility and control.

Under Apartheid, the laws instated against homosexuality was almost wholly directed towards white people, due to homosexuality being recognized as a white phenomenon. Additionally, after a gay rights movement in the 1970s which was divided along racial lines, gay resistance and the movement became depicted as a primarily white struggle, due to the lack of access black queers experienced in queer spaces and to cultural and political representation. This accompanied by the country’s shift to post-apartheid politics has rendered the black queer population invisible and with little recognition in their communities (Livermon, 2012: 301). Cases of assault, murder and the rape of black lesbians along with forms of homophobic ferocity experienced by black queers in townships in post-apartheid South Africa, works to deepen the high level of opposition to black queer visibilities in particularly black cultural and political contexts. This suggests that queer visibility is not only an attempt to gain recognition within black communities and the public sphere, but also about a resistance and subversion of blackness in potentially transformative ways.

I suggest that the cultural work undertaken by Ruga to expose the mechanisms regulating the public sphere has entered what Fraser and Warner (2002) termed the “counter public”. In response to an increasing shift in conceptual models of public sphere towards the notion of multiplicity, “counter publics” surfaced as a term advocating that not all publics merely develop as one among an assemblage of discursive units, but that some emerge as unequivocally articulated substitutes to wider publics that disregard the interests of prospective participants. Appeals to difference institute a partial or counter public. Further, partiality facilitates the construction of a shared identity among participants in the counter public, an identity that consolidates them outside of their individual differences (Asen, 2000: 429).

Participation is not dependent upon recognition of a clearly delineated framework, but rather on a more overall sense of unity in the experience of oppression. Undergoing discrimination, cultural displacement and oppression affords one the stimulus to form a self-consciously opposing identity. This, however, does not indicate separatism, as counter publics uphold their public character by steering their communicative efforts outward to society overall. The counter public is a notion that disputes the singularity of Jurgen Habermas’ account of the bourgeois public sphere as well as challenging the idea of a coherent institutional apparatuses that allows the public sphere all encompassing. This bourgeois public sphere is proposed as an arena in which political participation is accomplished through the medium of communication and which, through its accessibility and openness, would result in public opinion being formed and optimally a general agreement about the common good. Robert Asen (2000: 425) scrutinized this normative assumption asserting that a singular, overarching public sphere overpowers sociocultural diversity by establishing an arena that is averse to difference. Fraser (1990: 66) also addressed this fragmentation, claiming that the formal public sphere was founded upon significant exclusions and a dream deferred, when she argued that “full parity of participation in public debate and deliberation is not within the reach of possibility”.

This liberal conceptualization of public sphere, Fraser claims, is an instrument in the development of a hegemony that interprets forms of political domination. This political domination which comes in the form of consensus to an established common good, is derived specifically from the propagation of discourses that naturalize and standardize the existing order Fraser (1990: 66). In addition, this process of deliberation requires that social inequalities be bracketed in order to benefit an abstract political equality, however, where social inequality subsists, processes of deliberation in the public sphere work to the advantage dominant groups, while disadvantaging subordinates. In this case, subordinated groups are left to establish a counter public to express and defend their interests.

Counter publics can be understood as a kind of public within a public sphere that then draws attention to the differential power relations that arise among diverse publics of a multiple public sphere. Ruga's performances thus illuminate counter public theory, by firstly, using public performance art as a space for subordinated groups to express and defend their interests and secondly, by offering glimpses into the unrealizable, and the future iterations of democracy. Ruga appeals to public dissident sexuality in an attempt to subvert constructed nationalist conceptions of African masculinity (Livermon, 2012: 300). In so doing, he unveils relations of power that implicitly enlighten public discourse, while simultaneously illustrating that subjects in the public sphere should engross themselves in possibly emancipatory performances in hopes that power will be reconfigured.

During Ruga's performance of *The Future White Woman of Azania* and his travels through the township and into the urban centre of Grahamstown, he was followed by a small crowd that would stop to see the figure that despite being extremely colourful, couldn't be reduced to a single signifier, while the "whiteness" referred to in her name submitted to a more ideological or abstract definition as opposed to one reliant on skin-tone. The performance invited a

multitude of public reactions: animated, hostility desire, support and flippant. The eccentrically fashioned *Future White Woman of Azania* revealed the public skepticism and discomfort through a visualization of an alternate sexuality that was both unwelcome and vulnerable. The particular public reactions were informed by Ruga's invocation of identifiable queer gestures and demeanor, which led to the figure being characterized based on its gender nonconforming, colourful body.

The stiletto stride and sensual conduct are commonly held in South Africa to be overstatements of desire and thus undignified. However, concurrently, these gestures and actions became a powerful tool that pointed to a queer past and present that has largely been met with confrontation and attempted abrogation by the normative public sphere. Embodying these mannerisms reinforces new identities marked as fluid, flamboyant, and extended potential. The public disgrace towards queer mannerisms became physically evident, while the modes of oppression afflicting queers in South Africa has also been unveiled by an unrecognizable eccentric figure and its disruption of public life.

In *After He Left* (2008) Ruga is at the taxi rank, a crucial central station where all commuters without vehicles and those who prefer a minibus as opposed to the train come together. The performance occurred at Cape Town taxi rank, which constitutes the core of urban life and economy, thus an extremely public space. The figure also makes its way to the township of Atlantis marked by isolation, unemployment and poverty, a place invisible and deemed dangerous by the upper middle class (Siengenthaler, 2013: 168). As for Beruith's appearance, she struts around in a sensuous feminine way, with a belted waist that mimics a female silhouette and wristbands indicating campness. The public response is from a random, unintentional audience, that bears witness to Beruith's hypervisibility.

Their response is provoked by homophobic and misogynistic discourses that generate either support or hostility towards the performer. It is through Ruga's performance and later displays thereof in museums and galleries, that he exposes the mechanisms at play within public space (Siengenthaler, 2013: 168). For instance, Ruga's appearance is seen as appealing to homosexual culture which don't align with heteronormative attitudes, while his clothing and mannerisms become the visual codes used to identify his association with gay culture. In addition, Beruith appears to be oblivious to the normative social imaginaries of assault evident in the performance.

Such approaches point to the usefulness of counter public as a critical notion. Fraser (1990: 67) expands on this view, asserting that the propagation of counter publics results in a broadening of discursive assertions and contestation, a constructive thing in stratified societies. Ruga's performances point to counter publics as equivalent discursive spaces where proponents of subordinated groups can create and disseminate counter discourses to voice opposing interpretations of their identities, desires and interests (Asen, 2000: 428). The purpose of Ruga's performances is to address the exclusions experienced from mainstream public and in so doing, contribute to growing discursive spaces.

Through his adoption of a publicist orientation, he seeks broader circulation of counter discourses seen through his performances not being confined to urban centres, but also moving through rural townships. The broader movement here is Ruga's critical opposing social forces that pronounce distinctiveness against the homogenizing, stripping proclivity of the universal mega-culture of contemporary mass communication as a decadent pseudo public sphere. With that said, counter publics do not merge into establish a single, corresponding revolutionary movement or aspire to a model of universality, instead the emancipatory undertakings of counter publics advance assertions of specificity in relation to race, sexuality, gender, ethnicity,

and other forms of difference. (Asen, 2000: 429). By mobilizing counter-discourses in public arenas as thus creating counter publics, works like Ruga contribute to the possibility of transformation outside of official state modes of transformation.

Coda

This chapter has discussed Athi-Patra Ruga's performance practice where the artist can be seen as a narrator, whose products although not word-based, are persistently in a process of change, as he refashions Azania, adding novel characters and inserting plot twists, always expanding the story. These plot twists are somewhat extreme, similar to soap operas and essentially become a symbol for South Africa's past and future that has collapsed or merged into each other fabricating this form of bizarre fiction. In addition to the artist using Azania to draw on historical associations, it is his own metaphysical motherland, which has afforded him the ability to return to our past and refashion our future using his own nationhood and identity for his representation (Corrigal, 2014: 94). I have argued that Ruga's performances can be read on two levels, firstly, on the level of micro-politics or the politics of the event, as particular contexts have been revered in Ruga's performances including African urbanity, sexuality, HIV/AIDS and the position of queer identities in post-apartheid South Africa. The second level on which Ruga's performances can be read, is through the body, the human and the eccentric clothing he adorns, which embodies tropes of camp style and modes of cross-dressing. Lastly, I have argued that Ruga's art can be read as an intervention for a public and by a public, as he displays gender non-conforming people that have been alienated from society and how through their invisibility within South African public space, they are forced to construct counter publics and push the boundaries by becoming hypervisible beings.

Chapter 4

Mary Sibande: Domestic work and repressed memory

In this chapter I examine the sculptural installations of South African artist, Mary Sibande. I draw specifically on how she refashions the past in the present by parodying the uniform worn by domestic workers with the clothing adorned by Victorian women in the 19th century (Scheffer, Du Preez & Stevens, 2017: 4). While Domestic work in South Africa has received significant scholarly attention (eg. Cock 1980, Ally 2010), in this chapter I will once again suggest how an aesthetic engagement with domestic work may alter our understanding, experientially and politically. Firstly, I aim to illustrate how Sibande turns to the aesthetic and employs her own body as an instrument for embodied recollections and to revisit haunted absences, such as repressed memories of colonial domination, the mistress in the house and the historical context that reinforced the advent of domestic servitude. Secondly, I will reveal how forms of hysterical representation are evoked by the sculptural figure of Sophie, as she conjures her traumatic memories through her body, presenting a drama of subjugation and making reference to the visual tropes that have accompanied domestic workers in South African popular culture and literature. Lastly, I show how Sibande's sculptural displays, while occupying various public spaces, draws on the charged history of the private home dwelling to reveal the ongoing reality of exploitation and poverty as well as the intimacy that transpires with domestic workers. In so doing, I interrogate the 'private' domain of bodies and home spaces.

Sibande's sculptural installations offer a form of "counter-monument" or "counter-archive", referring to a process of recollecting that which has been concealed or silenced and disrupting the popular history of the state (Dodd, 2010: 473). Sibande's role as archivist here, entails

extracting a fragment of the Victorian past to re-fashion our judgements and feelings regarding a section of the South African society that continues to be exploited, silenced and hidden in public discourse. Moving away from dejected understandings of a post-traumatic culture, Sibande appeals to alternative narratives or counter-memory production, presenting the prospect of an unanticipated utopian dimension. By disrupting inherited binaries that haunt our interpretations of difference in South Africa, Sibande offers novel reimagining's of this nations shared future.

In her performances, the artist challenges popular images of the domestic worker as powerless, uninspired and uncreative. I will be focusing on, *I Put a Spell on Me* (2008), *Sophie Mercia* (2009) and *A Terrible Beauty is Born* (2008). The artist's sculptural displays can be viewed within various galleries and museums in Cape Town, including Sasol Art Museum, as well as Zeitz Museum for Contemporary Art Africa MOCAA and Iziko South African National Gallery where her displays extended across entire rooms and towered above its audience.



Figure 12: *I Put a Spell on Me* (2008) Somerset House

The sculptural figure of Sophie

In *I Put a Spell on Me*, Sibande takes advantage of the “cathartic” capacity of dress. By clothing Sophie in an aquamarine dress, she makes reference to the Zionist Church and couples this with a brown leather staff marked with the fashion brand logo, Louis Vuitton. The inclusion of Zionist symbols which welcome the “conciliation” of ancestors, depicts Sophie as a church leader, capable of summoning ancestors to offer prophecies of what’s to come (Hennlich, 2017: 23). The irony of the high fashion brand eludes to dress being able to perform a corresponding

prophetic role, with the Louis Vuitton symbol making an appearance on the gear of township youths, representing the potential for glitzy opulence. Sophie is therefore able to see the future, however, while clutching her commodity leather she is also skeptical of the undeniable nature of these predictions.

Dodd (2010: 468) points to the dress adorned by Sophie in *I Put A Spell On Me* (2008), as an amalgamation of the South African domestic workers uniform, which includes past and contemporary adaptations, both of which encompass a button down overall, white pinafore and prim collar with broderie anglaise edging. Its likely predecessor is the Victorian maid servant's attire, comprising of a long-sleeved black tunic adorned with a white pinafore that stays in place when tied at the back in a bow, paired with a small white headscarf (Dodd, 2010: 468). Moreover, the inflated sleeves, formfitting corset and extravagant skirt, also points to the clothing worn by Victorian middle-class women.

Various indicators point to Sophie as more than a submissive maid seen by the voluminous bow pulling her attire together and her body in a prophetic stance wielding a fashionable staff (Farber, 2017: 433). Gaining a glimpse of Sophie in this frozen moment, it's almost as if she is trapped in a spell of hysterical conjuring or sublime worship, and it is seemingly through this act of sorcery or spell that the real (her physical body and presence) appears so severely affected (Dodd, 2010: 467). There is an expressive power found in the imagination, one where if Sophie were to open her eyes, she would have to resume her work of wiping this and cleaning that. In the aftermath of situations which crush one's individuality, explorations of subjectivity, affect and new interiority become essential, often as an act of pronouncing one's consciousness and expressing identity through the body itself. This is especially the case in the aftermath of torture or physical violation, whether as victims, perpetrators or witnesses.



Figure 13: *Sophie Mercia* (2009) Somerset House

When looking to the bell-shape of Sophie's skirt in *Sophie Mercia* (2009), the fabric is swathed and gathered on the sides like a voluminous drape pointing to a transition from a simplistic combination of domestic workers uniform and middle-class Victorian women's dress, to a more theatrically overstated version of upper-class Victorian women's fashion (Farber, 2017: 433). Despite still being adorned with the white apron and headscarf, Sophie's clothing is adapted to an ever more lavish reiteration of the Victorian women's ball gown with a formfitting bodice, flowing skirt, layered underskirt, frilled collar, ruffles and bell sleeves. This movement is predominantly evident in the width and fullness of Sophie's typically Victorian, multi-tiered skirt, which progressively becomes more extensive.

The notions of excess and theatrical reverie became intentionally more distinct in Sibande's work as time went on, as she aimed to see how far she could take the character of Sophie, not only conceptually but with regards to the scale and size of the sartorial (Farber, 2017: 436). Significant here, is how as the pleats of Sophie's dresses began to extend further and further,

with the material enveloping larger areas of space, enabling Sophie to occupy a consistently expanding space of agency and individual power.

In spite of this consistently expanding material and bodily pronouncement of individual power, it can be said that Sophie, so long as she is adorned in the blue uniform-dress, conforms to and operates under, Victorian, colonial and apartheid systems of gendered and racial coercion. Sophie, as shown above appears ostensibly anchored within a dual power system, where her identity vacillates between the hierarchical polarizations of, and the dialectical power relations between, maid and madam, master and slave, self and other, colonized and colonizer. Additionally, the artists rendezvous with Sophie's blue dress afforded her the opportunity to transmute herself into the Victorian era and embody the role of the colonial and modern white European mistress.

As fantasy, it appears Sophie has surpassed her lowly circumstances, however Farber (2017: 436) suggests that she remains locked in the same archetype that congeals her as a domestic worker. Despite Sophie using her imagination to break free from and surpass her submissive position within these dual power systems, allowing her a degree of agency, her liberation is a false one. Sibande (2009:1) claims that her intention is not for Sophie to change from her character as a maid, as not only is she progressively moving forward, she is also taking steps backwards. The Sophie shown, will continue to be a maid, unable to rise above her current station, and the racial and gendered dichotomies that reinforce them. She who wears the blue uniform-dress could be regarded as imitating the hysteric, but not surpassing reference and replication.



Figure 14: *A Terrible Beauty is Born* (2008) Somerset House

A transition is theatrically performed in Sibande’s *A Terrible Beauty is Born* (2008), depicting Sophie and the ground on which she stands drenched in purple (Art Africa, 2014: 1). She has been stripped of her recognizable white pinafore and bonnet representing her domestic servitude, by the “non-winged ceiling beings” that stem from her figure and garment and to which she appears to be giving birth to. It is only fitting that Sophie appears to be in a daze and a space of hesitation, while the purple figure offers up an altered relation of the character to her audience Farber (2017: 436). It is a moment of admiration, where the ‘new’ Sophie appears more empowered with creatures surrounding her in awe, competing for her attention and exulting her liberation.

In considering the shifts in the colour palette of the sartorial, the limited and monotonous tones suggest symbolic hues. Sophie is first exhibited wearing the traditional blue uniform of a domestic servant, as she envisages the prospects to which she is deprived on account of her race and gender. After a theatrical transition, Sophie becomes enveloped in purple (Mabandu,

2013: 1). Sophie's now purple garment is reflective of that of a pastor's robe but more specifically references the public demonstration that ensued in Cape Town in 1989, where police forces sprayed demonstrators with purple dye to expedite their arrest thereafter. One demonstrator responded by climbing onto a police van and scattering dye on the office buildings in the surrounding area. After the protest, graffiti started appearing amidst the city walls, declaring, "The Purple Shall Govern", which was appropriated by the artist for her 2013 exhibition. Sibande also claimed that purple manifests in her work as a colour of privilege – which she has obtained by others who have advocated for it. White on the other hand, symbolizes servitude and only appears on the sartorial associated with domestic work, such as the headscarf and apron (Scheffer, Du Preez & Stevens, 2017: 11).

Theatrical fantasy and hysterical representation at the site of the body

The shift presented in *A Terrible Beauty Is Born*, can be analyzed through an exploration of the artist's strategy of hysterical representation (Scheffer, Du Preez & Stevens, 2017: 5). Sibande's Sophie can be situated within the realm of theatrical fantasy based on the exaggerated stances, histrionic gestures and excessive dress employed (Farber, 2017: 430). The theatrical strategies presented in Sibande's oeuvre alludes to photographic images of hysteria in the late nineteenth century, which were embodied performances defined by theatrical reverie and affective excess. Freud believed that the hysteric assembled imaginary narratives, employing fantasy as a means to evoke desire, although in a compromising manner. Performance lends itself as a mode of expression here, encouraging the hysteric to make her fantasies apparent. Freud points to these performances as the hysterical outburst, stating that, "these attacks are nothing else, but phantasies translated into the motor sphere, projected onto

mobility and portrayed in pantomime” (Freud, 2015: 817). It is during this hysterical outburst that fantasies are performed, pointing to fantasy as an “external stage” to reality. In *A Terrible Beauty Is Born*, Sibande draws on these approaches, however, she moves into the domain of parody, which Linda Hutcheon (1986:185) has defined as replication, but with analytical distance that satirically stimulates markers of difference at the centre of similarity. Hysterical representation, therefore, can be seen in *A Terrible Beauty Is Born*, where Sophie makes her fantasies observable through embodied performance, evoking numerous “phantasmatic roles”, such as a Victorian lady, a prophet and a housewife (Scheffer, Du Preez & Stevens, 2017: 9).

Hutcheon’s (1986: 185) assertion regarding parody can be seen in *A Terrible Beauty Is Born*, through the magnified and extreme utilization of theatrical approaches as well as the abundance of excess. Significantly, the marking of difference can primarily be found in the “rupture of the body-dress’s boundaries” (Farber, 2017: 438). Once considered as a manifestation of hysteria, this rupture and its subsequent psychological and bodily manifestations, is rebellious.

The beauty in this hysterical performance can be said to be terrifying, as it is an indicator of Sophie’s shift into another realm, one where her identity vacillates on the borderline between the semiotic and the symbolic. Interestingly, this borderline or rupture point evolves into a space where self and psychoanalytic other undergo continuous negotiation (Farber, 2017: 438). Similar to hysteria, the disruptive forces manifested by Sophie have the potential to contravene the limiting boundaries of the symbolic by means of releasing “excess” in the form of emotions, such as anger and desire, and energies such as creativity. Therefore, without linguistically speaking a word, Sophie engages in a kind of transgressive speech empowering her to perform, produce and express her narrative. Sophie remains in a continuous state of becoming as she moves between the boundaries, and through this negotiation and transformation a space of in-

betweenness is then created, disrupting distinct entities, which in its indistinctness, is able to interrupt the colonial dichotomy of self and other.

A second facet linking Sophie to forms of hysterical representation can be found in the way that Sophie conjures her traumatic memories through her body. Scheffer, Du Preez and Stevens (2017: 16) suggest that hysterical symptoms which are made evident through the body are moulded through fantasy, where the hysteric constructs elaborate fantasies concerning the silhouette and function of their own body. It is these fantasies that manifest in the form of, for example, vomiting as an alternative to physical revulsion, which in Sophie's case evoked her to give birth to a multitude of organic material in *A Terrible Beauty Is Born*.

In *A Terrible Beauty Is Born*, one is confronted with the Sophie who leads and asserts herself with a profound sense of bodily materiality. Sophie displays liberation from the metaphoric and physical limitations of the progressively excessive, yet still confining, blue dress and the exploitive, binary, hierarchical arrangements it exemplifies (Farber, 2017: 437). The sartorial depicted in *A Terrible Beauty is Born*, functions like a second skin that obscures the margins between external skin, internal body, and material to the extent that it may be identified as a "body-dress". A multitude of organic material, encompassing cotton and polyester fabric, that resemble that of organs, intestines and internal bodily material, dispenses uncontrollably, out from Sophie's womb. These, then conjoin with others at the hem of Sophie's dress, forming an entwined mass that spreads onto the floor, the walls and ceiling of the exhibition space. Facets of the domestic workers uniform, such as the pinafore and headscarf, hang waveringly from the body-dress; as though about to be discarded by the cumulative purple forms, which could suggest Sophie's as well as the artist's break with the "genealogy of servitude".

The extent of this disruption can be seen in the rupture of the sartorial itself, pointing to a breaking down of bodily limits. Paradoxically, this rupture in the artist's work could also be interpreted as introducing the idea of Sophie's resurgence, or her giving birth to novel identity construction (Farber, 2017: 437). Sophie's hysteria is revealed in *A Terrible Beauty Is Born* through the depiction of physical release, which is a release that entails a physical and allegorical rupture from the control and confinement of the blue dress. Lastly, a womb-like resonating space surrounds her, as viscera-like shapes that point to forms of affective and material excess begin to burgeon and colonize the space around the figure.

This interplay between inside and outside, ultimately leads to the room and body both becoming internalized and interiorized spaces. Sophie begins to inhabit a type of "private theatre", an interiorized space that audiences are made aware of, but cannot enter (Farber, 2017: 438). This interaction between interior and exterior, psychoanalytic self and other, semiotic and symbolic, then becomes a way for Sibande to disrupt, firstly, the physical imprisonment and lack of voice experienced by black women, and secondly, the denial regarding black women's visibilities and subjectivities as domestic workers during colonialism and apartheid. In contrast to Sophie as a domestic worker whose presence is meant to be unnoticed and unheeded; confined to the shadows of domestic life, *A Terrible Beauty is Born* displays Sophie as strikingly prominent. Her posture is rebellious, and with her head raised, she self-assuredly pronounces her dominant, grand figure and presses for centre-stage. The scale of her dress suggests a continuing process of reproducing itself, which largely underpins the sense of presence she creates.

Hysteria and repressed trauma

In considering feminist interpretations of hysteria in Sibande's, *A Terrible Beauty Is Born*, Showalter (1993: 286) asserts that hysteria lent itself as a "feminine protolanguage" for Victorian women to communicate messages through the body, which could not be spoken verbally. I juxtaposed this with the invisibility experienced by black domestic workers in the South African home dwelling (Showalter, 1993: 286).

It is necessary to first and foremost recognize that hysteria embodied by Victorian women and Sophie's parody of hysteria can both be read as falling into the realm of "the private". Bystrom and Nuttall (2013: 309) have suggested that the private is associated with the individual, intimacy, subjective experiences and the unspeakable, and therefore also pertains to forms of selfhood and affective ties between oneself and those one socializes with. Moreover, the private also alludes to notions of desire which applies to both people, objects and things. Thirdly, the body along with its bodily functions have also come to occupy the space of the private, which I will extend by drawing on the racialized and gendered body.

Sibande's oeuvre questions the manner in which the black, female body has been disregarded as a result of repressive political projects marking South Africa's past. Bystrom and Nuttall (2013: 313) put forward that, if bodies with this assemblage of identities have predominantly been vulnerable to repression in contemporary South Africa, then those holding distinct markers of gender, race and sexuality continue to endure differential treatment, while also experiencing unequal access to resources due to their positionality. These forms of repression are continually reproduced within South African context as,

“[r]ace remains the most salient marker in a society composed on the ruins of a regime built on racial discrimination, where the body was perceived through a grid of politics

and aesthetics obsessed with whiteness; discussion of skin, hair and clothing [...] inevitably bear the traces of these historical racial coordinates even as these coordinates are reconfigured” (Bystrom & Nuttall, 2013: 313).

Significant correlations emerge between Sophie as a domestic worker parodying the hysteric, to give herself the impetus to transcend her position as the disempowered, invisible and an unheeded victim of white privilege and power, and feminist interpretations of hysteria as a means of communication for Victorian women that were both physically and psychologically constrained by patriarchal society. Much in the same way that hysterics are denied a public voice to express their economic and sexual subjugation; black female domestic workers experience a similar form of suppression; thus, both their frenzied symptoms can appear as bodily allegories of their silence. Hysteria can thus be read here, as a mode of non-vocal, bodily communication that stimulates an involuntary type of feminist protest under the particular framework of the nineteenth century (Farber, 2017: 432). Secondly, it is characterized as a distressed form of communication adopted by the powerless. In the process of utilizing bodily modes of communication, which essentially exist outside the masculine classification of language; the hysteric can prompt an alternative perspective that may deconstruct the privileged masculine construction of meaning and systems.

Feminist interpretations offer a counter narrative to the history of the disorder, which has been represented as a “women’s disease” or a disruption of femininity. Women have until recently been the topic of hysterical literature told solely by men. Some physicians believed hysteria to be a temperament before becoming an illness; a temperament which constitutes rudimentary hysteria. The hysterical seizure was then recognized as an “acting out of female sexual experience, a spasm of hyper-femininity, mimicking both childbirth and the female orgasm” (Showalter, 1993: 287). Sigmund Freud and Joseph Breuer held the view that symptoms of

hysteria derived from repressed sexual experiences that took place during childhood and re-emerged in adulthood (Farber, 2017: 431). In other words, hysteria arises in moments where traumatic knowledge has been subdued and desire inhibited. Unable to clearly vocalize the grievance, suppressed “psychical material” then becomes converted and expressed, whereby symptoms then materialize at the site of the body.

Feminist re-readings of hysteria offer it as a form of bodily communication, which implies scepticism towards traditional linguistic styles. Hysteria can therefore be seen as a mode of representation for women and functions as a substitute for linguistic expression, whereby the “non-verbal becomes the most truthful site by way of the hysterical symptoms written on and spoken through the body” (Dane, 2001: 234). South African artist, Penny Siopis, has previously engaged with the notion of hysteria within her display of patriarchy and racial marginalization in *Dora and the Other Woman* (1988), which offers narratives on two divergent women connected by a similar backdrop.

It tells the story of Dora, a young Viennese bourgeoisie woman treated by Sigmund Freud for “hysterical unsociability”, after her father found her suicide letter. Her psychological difficulties were, however, closely tied to her social situation, in which her prospects for independent activity were highly suppressed. Both Freud and Dora were of the opinion that “she was being used as a pawn in a game between her father and the husband of her father’s mistress – give me your wife, you can have my daughter”. Siopis claimed that she was interested in “the way certain feminist re-readings of Dora’s case, see Dora (in particular) and hysteria (in general) as a sign of women’s resistance to patriarchal domination or as a protest against the colonization of her body” (Williamson, 2010: 22).

Repressed trauma has a significant role to play in Sophie's theatrical display, as her repressed memories are expressed through her various performances.

“Repression operated as a sentence to disappear, but also as an injunction to silence, an affirmation of nonexistence, and, by implication, an admission that there was nothing to say about such things, nothing to see, and nothing to know. Such was the hypocrisy of our bourgeois societies with its halting logic” (Foucault, 1978: 4).

Hysteria as identified in Sibande's, *A Terrible Beauty Is Born*, could be read as a form of representation that stimulates the subject's articulation of that which she cannot express through linguistic means. Farber (2017: 432) recognizes hysteria playing out in Sibande's work, as both a pathology of helplessness and as a means by which Sophie gains a sense of recognition and empowerment. By parodying nineteenth century portrayals of hysteria from an analytical distance, Sophie obtains a means of expression in the face of tangible and psychological constraints, which are imposed on her twofold, through her marginalization as a black woman positioned under colonialism and apartheid, as well as subject to a legacy of racial and gender based suppression.

Racial and gendered trauma in domestic servitude

The legacy left behind by the Victorians is stained with the violence of colonialism, the enforcement of social hierarchies and power structures, the subjugation of people, colonial constructions of the “other” grounded in the racial sciences and their positionality in the knowledge production process. When considering the post-colonial setting, the exploitations of the colonial era continued to haunt popular imagination, and rigorously extended to the post-

apartheid reality. The prescribed madam and maid binary which became laden with additional inherited overtones, such as black and white, oppressor and oppressed, colonizer and colonized, European and indigenous, are reminiscent of the amplification of colonialism in the 19th century. However, these constructions continue to shape contemporary interpretations of servitude, centring discourse around this theme into an eerie polarized space (Dodd, 2010: 471).

Sibande's oeuvre speaks largely to the influences of patriarchy, colonialism and apartheid, while her costumes are employed to denote these intricate systems. Fashion often produces hybrids, which can be seen in Sophie's case where she employs Victorian style gowns to symbolize the role of the mistress in the home dwelling, to bring the colonial power of the master and slave relationship into question. It is for this reason, that Sibande's sartorial can be seen as a tool with which to conjure the historical background of domestic bondage in South Africa. Racial hierarchy is one piece of the puzzle that requires further elaboration, which can be seen where Sibande evokes racial trauma with her sartorial; exposing the roots of racial oppression in the colonial era and its persistence in the post-apartheid context.

Jacklyn Cock (1980: 173), claims that domestic servitude has been largely disregarded and ignored when it comes to its historical significance and accompanying social unrest. By tracing the history of domestic servitude, I will illustrate how it has been converted into a chiefly black, female institution. Shireen Ally (2010: 24) suggests that domestic service began as an initiative of colonial servitude, where it was slaves who worked as domestics in the "settler colony of the mid to late eighteenth century". At the end of the eighteenth-century slavery increasingly became politically unjustifiable, leading to the conversion of domestic service to a form of wage labour underpinned by feudal relations.

The advent of white English colonial settlements in the Cape at the start of the nineteenth century, saw the arrival and prevalence of white women immigrants in domestic service, while others brought with them their own European domestic workers, already schooled on their cultural acuties. The 1880's, however, saw a shift in demographic to black women, as the number of white servants became capricious and could not keep up with the demand for domestic labour in the Cape (Ally, 2010: 28). The primary reasons for their departure included immigrant servants becoming espoused not long after arrival and contractual complications drawn up in Britain. The demand for black African women was largely tied to systems of capitalist expansion, employee and employer predilections, as well as the fact that it was hardened by the state, which had a hand in overseeing the racial and gendered appeal of domestic servitude during this period.

What followed was an influx of African women in the “urban waged labour market”, whose urbanization had been restricted for the purpose of sustaining a rural economy in the native reserves, which were in fact subsidizing the expenses of the “social reproduction of the worker” (Ally, 2010: 29). In order to interpret the urbanization of African women and their access to paid domestic labour, one can look to the concealed performance of the state and formal efforts to fuel and regulate the supply of domestic labour. Cock (1980: 173) has suggested that the shift from majority whites to majority African domestic workers can be explained as involving a degree of exploitation that due to low wages and inadequate working environments, saw the coercion of black people and withdrawal of white people. Ultimately, low wage labour can be seen as a significant form of coercion that impelled black African women into the sector and as a pivotal locus of control for the colonial and apartheid government. While coercion of this nature became facilitated through state mechanisms, racialized and capitalist demands manifested through state decrees which regulated the sector by means of extensive legislature (Ally, 2010: 30).

When considering the transition to modern servitude in apartheid, Ally (2010: 38) asserts that, accompanying the mobility of a “labouring class of black female domestics”; the apartheid state controlled the sector industriously through a series of modernized systems of labour control. Domestic workers fell victim to schemes of urban control that underpinned apartheid. Another form of coercion manifests here in the form of economic compulsion, where black African women entered the domestic sector involuntary due to the state racial policy offering no alternate legal options. In other words, the apartheid state unequivocally coupled urban dwelling for African women to conditions of employment, while simultaneously curbing their access to other forms of “independent economic activity”. The advent of the work permit system for Africans to gain access to employment in white urban areas was one form of influx control that by the late 1970s saw employers legalizing their workers access (Ally, 2010: 41). It can thus be deduced that the colonial and apartheid systems, in conjunction with employers and capital, fashioned the domestic labour sector by outlining its demographic and moulding servitude through modern mechanisms of labour regulation. Managing domestic workers as a capitalist labouring class and regulating their “supply” as workers suggests that the apartheid state acknowledged domestic workers as workers to some extent, pointing to the need for a deeper “understanding of the post-apartheid shift in the regulatory regime for domestic workers”. The transition to democracy saw the emancipation of domestic workers as a narrative by the state on their unequivocal efforts.

South Africa, since its transition to democracy, has been prone to increased transnational migration. In the post-apartheid context, African female domestic workers have profited from a series of legal apparatuses, such as, “a national minimum wage, mandatory contracts of employment, and the extension of unemployment insurance”. However, these extensions have been futile in their transformation of domestic labour. It has been suggested that “paid domestic work for black South African women remains a migrant institution, in an intranational and

social, rather than transnational and political sense, as workers continue to straddle the divides between urban and rural contexts” (Jansen, 2019: 80).

In considering the intimate exposures that occur between the domestic worker and their employers, one gains a glimpse into the private home dwelling. The experiences and the relationship between employers and domestic workers are rather significant as it is deeply paternalistic. Consequently, this relegates the domestic worker to a powerless and reliant position, while transferring a sense of authority and power to the employer. The impact of these hierarchical positions manifest in this relationship, as domestic workers are not seen as members of the domestic dwelling in which they work, but as reliant on their employers for whom they accept “differing degrees of responsibility”. Cock’s (1980: 100) investigation into the exploitation of maids and madams in the Eastern Cape, reveals how many relationships display forms of social detachment and some degree of depersonalization. With that said, “payment in kind” or Marcel Mauss’s notion of “the gift” is a central mechanism with which to endorse personal loyalty and obligation to employers. This often involves the employer offering clothes, paying clinic fees, giving additional money or Christmas food to domestic workers. This gift exchange, while often a sincere gesture simultaneously augments the social hierarchy in the relationship as giving “is to show one’s superiority, to show that one is something more and higher, that one is magister. To accept without returning or repaying more is to face subordination, to become a client and subservient, to become minister” (Mauss, 1966: 72).

The home dwelling therefore became a place of juncture, highly surveillanced yet also feeble and overdetermined. Interesting, are the moments of overlap between the public and private, where the domestic labour of black women in white homes generate hinge experiences. White families and children were conscripted into codes of race and gender through the labour

relations of the domestic dwelling, wherein black women undertook the everyday, intimate tasks of housecleaning, cooking as well as childcare (Baderoon, 2014: 178). This suggests that privacy is not purely the counterpart to the visibly regulated and divided public space under apartheid, instead, privacy is also built on profoundly structured space, demarcated by ritualized practices, unequivocal boundaries, deep-rooted disparity, and the construction of opposed subjectivities and relations.

On top of racialized and gendered connotations in South Africa, domesticity also manifests through language, geography and architecture. When looking to advertisements in property magazines, South African middle-class homes are commonly constructed with a separate maids' quarters to the house, pointing to the built environment as mirrors into labour relations in the intimate space of the home dwelling. Further, the proximity of the domestic workers location exposes them to high levels of surveillance and access by employers (Baderoon, 2014: 179). The home dwelling can therefore be seen as a haunted place with ghosts, silences and secrets and with various rooms manifesting as a site of disconcerting and unclear intimacies.

Baderoon (2014: 178), asserts that domestic work has been the most sustained ingress in terms of women's involvement in the economy, and continues to be one of the prime avenues of employment for black women. It could very well be the most inhibiting, stained by deferred labour protections by the state and enduring exploitation. While the social sciences have laid a pivotal foundation on which to understand the reality of exploitation experienced by domestic workers in South Africa, I argue, that Sibande's political intervention does something more than the social sciences depiction of domestic labour as troubled. By theatrically displaying a transition from the constraints of domestic servitude to the empowered and liberated imagery in *A Terrible Beauty is Born*, Sibande's aesthetic force asks viewers to reflect on the way history has made black women not look at themselves, but be looked at" (Matebeni, 2013:

404). Beyond the trauma and hysteria that Sophie evoked, she also became a focal point of liberation, recoding the way black domestic women have been revered in literature. Further, through an engagement with Sophie's body like a map, viewers are left to navigate the body against a backdrop of colonial constructions of race, gender, desire and eroticism.

Coda

This chapter has discussed how Mary Sibande uses the sculptural figure of Sophie to parody the uniform worn by domestic workers with the clothing adorned by Victorian women in the nineteenth century. Excess and theatrical reverie became intentionally more distinct in Sibande's work as Sophie transitioned into the purple figure in *A Terrible Beauty is Born*. By employing her body and elaborate forms of clothing, I illustrated how the artist employed strategies of hysterical representation, which could be seen in the way that Sophie conjured her traumatic memories. I then revealed forms of racial and gendered trauma that are associated with the black domestic worker in South Africa, by engaging with the historical context that reinforced the advent of domestic servitude. Lastly, I engaged with the charged history of the private home dwelling in order to reveal the ongoing reality of exploitation and poverty as well as the intimacy that transpires with domestic workers in South Africa.

Sibande's artworks have not solely been displayed within the confines of the private domain. In addition to filling entire rooms in museums, Sophie can be seen depicted in large-scale images on the sides of city buildings during the 2010 Soccer World Cup. By making that which is invisible, visible, particularly in museums, and through public art on billboards and buildings, Sibande engages with oppositions of inside and outside and rejects the marginalization of domestic workers in public space. Heralded on billboards, these images play

a significant role in public space, by giving recognition to people that are constantly behind the scenes and invisible. It is through this envisioning of Sophie's fantasy life, where her interiority is suppressed, that the opposition of inside and outside is revealed. Sibande's installation therefore challenges the stereotypes attached to South African domestic workers, by moving beyond a purely restorative image towards an entirely reinvented one. She does this by producing art that does not fit within the confines of the home and opts for large-scale public art, in that way the copious amounts of materials employed in her uniform (lace, frills) draws the audience's attention repeatedly to the act of making, crafting and processing. In so doing, the materials emphasize the behind the scenes labour and ongoing struggles faced by domestic workers in post-apartheid South Africa (Baderoon, 2014: 190). In other words, Sibande, has fashioned an interior space outside the confines of remembrance.

Conclusion



Figure 15: *The Prophecy* (2014) Griot Magazine

The above series of photographs titled *The Prophecy* summons an apocalyptic world, which Senegalese photographer Fabrice Monteiro says, “is reality” (Design Indaba, 2018:1). While I have not included Monteiro’s dystopic photographs in my thesis, I conclude with these images, to show the way that certain kinds of art continue to become media through which social understanding and political activism is made possible.

His photographs bring into focus environmental degradation in West Africa by using African spirits to stress the crises. He claims

“I’m not so much interested in the future because I think the reality right now, the present, we have enough to deal with. If you take the characters out, you can take your camera and find these places in Senegal” (Design Indaba: 2018: 1).

In light of the increased public attention to environmental concerns that require urgent political action. These concerns are manifested in South Africa by reports of air pollution affecting, on occasion fatally, the health of thousands of South Africans. While Coal-fired power stations are marked as the primary contributor to pollution, it is clear that vehicle exhausts and the hazardous living conditions of some of the poor, contribute to this (Kings, 2019: 1).

What is evident in Monteiro’s photographs is a direct link being drawn between environmental issues and not only those affected by the aftermath but those responsible for them – humans. I suggest that Monteiro’s dystopic images and aesthetic mediums in general, could be a way to offer different representations of environmental issues in South Africa. Depicting humans as trees burning with the forest, or as emerging from the sea drenched in oil, or standing amidst a cloud of fumes on the road, or navigating their way through a waste dump dressed in plastic bags, are a few ways in which a direct link can be drawn between humans, the body, art and political activism. This is the methodology that *Political Fashioning* adopted.

Political Fashioning is a collection of artworks, performances, film, textile and photographs by four contemporary South African artists that have used their artistic practice to engage and offer social commentary on the current South African trajectory. I have read artists Sethembile Msezane, Nandipha Mntambo, Athi-Patra Ruga and Mary Sibande as political actors and their artistic interventions as a form of cultural labour that illuminated counter public theory, alternative narratives, counter archives and which more specifically afforded their viewer a

cognitive experience. I have argued that the affective excess and cognitive experience of the art discussed has offered a lens into past struggles, contemporary experiences and repressed memories that have been absent or silenced in the narration of South Africa's history. In addition, all the artworks engaged in some way or another with what Terence Turner calls the social skin (dress and adornment), which led to the critical role of the sartorial as a form of political rhetoric, employed by these specific artists to scrutinize the current social and political position of South Africa.

My thesis considered how the artists various aesthetic practices offered imagery of what the social sciences could only take so far. I, therefore, juxtaposed the artworks with literatures by art historians, the social sciences, political theorists and activists. Through a particular engagement with dominant narratives of the social sciences that have "had force, shaping people as subjects and forming the contours of what is sensible, legible and visible", *Political Fashioning* advocated for the analytical and interventionist role of artistic practice. The politicization of aesthetics required an investigation into the disembodied image that circulated under the notion of art, as well as a consideration of the political context that gained expression through the aesthetic form. In addition, the artworks, photographs, film, textile and sculptures that have been discussed emanated a sense of immediacy and application and constructed a critical space wherein to question how political and social messages are understood.

The unequal distribution of power to the means and production of South African history has resulted in the silencing of various historical narratives in the post-apartheid era. Chapter 1 emphasized a core argument that recurred throughout my thesis, which points to the significance of the image and its ability to shock its viewers out of moral complacency and stimulate political consciousness due to the rapid speed at which it circulates. I engaged with Sethembile Msezane's performance practice during the time of the student movements in South Africa, highlighting the power of performance art and the circulation of images thereof to

address the silencing of the black female body within memorialized public spaces. In so doing, Msezane as well as student activists rose as political actors that held the power to create novel understandings and significances during a time of uncertainty. Chapter 2, through an engagement with the cowhide sculptures of Nandipha Mntambo and her androgynous performance as a bullfighter, I illustrated how her aesthetic practice draws attention to the social skin - the body and the symbolic medium of dress, adornment and body modifications, all of which reveal information about a person/culture's basic notions of value, social acts, and personhood. Mntambo made a political intervention into literatures tied to representations of the female body by displaying difference and providing her audience with a fantasy of blurred and mutable gendered figures and in so doing, satirically effaced gender through her performativity. The cultural significance of cows and their social relations with the male and female body emerged in this chapter, as an entry point for Mntambo to blur gendered constructions and disrupt dominant narratives through a politicization of sex, gender and sameness.

Chapter 3 discussed the performances of Athi-Patra Ruga's gender ambiguous avatars that embodied modes of queer identity and the topos of camp style, to move through public space in post-apartheid South Africa. His performances did not solely draw attention to social and political concerns, such as HIV/AIDS and sexuality, but became a form of cultural labor as his characters hypervisibility within public space forced their viewers to reflect on the ways in which their thinking and language is restricted by dominant modes of discourse. It is through this politicization of his art that connections between the body, gender and sexual identity and clothing are revealed. Chapter 4 engaged the historical context that reinforced domestic work as the chief form of employment for black South African women. By creating the sculptural figure of Sophie and adorning her in Victorian women's attire, Mary Sibande subverted visual tropes that have surfaced in both literature and public media regarding domestic workers. Through

her sculptural displays, Sibande conjured the silenced and repressed memories of domestic servitude, displaying a transition in her sculptures as Sophie evokes these memories and voices that which goes unspoken through performativity. This chapter draws on the private space of the domestic dwelling, revealing the invisibility of racialized and gendered exploitation by providing an affective experience. *Political Fashioning* has worked to blur the division that exists between aesthetics and the political and asks activists and scholars alike to consider the political power of art in understanding contemporary South African experiences. My thesis, therefore, highlights certain art's capacity to encourage the public to acknowledge their critical potential to mobilize, claim and rewrite history.

Political Fashioning has acknowledged the extent to which the contemporary social sciences has, as a dominant mode of narration and producer of knowledge, circulated information of the public by a public. It was my intention to push for a "more publicly relevant anthropology in South Africa", one where dominant modes of narration are coupled with artworks, photographs, sculptures, performances and textiles to strengthen its civic action, whether that be through life size mannequins displayed in public space, genderless avatars moving through town, temporary statues bringing life to untold histories or cowhide ghost shells mirroring a multitude of memories. In so doing, the artistic interventions I have presented illuminate a relationship between critical thought and action that when coupled with the social sciences offered opportunity for political engagement.

It is this engagement between artists as political actors and social scientists that has been afforded such an interventionist project a degree of reflexivity, which recognized but moved beyond what the social science discipline regards as relevant. What is produced, I have argued, is a type of counter public and practice that is both intellectual and political and that aims to provide commentary and intervene in South African society. In addition, what this practice

exudes are intellectual and artistic outcomes that push for a negative relationship to power structures.

By adopting this negative relationship to structures of power and privilege and focusing on the relationship between thought and action, efforts are directed towards political activity that works to change as opposed to replicate the current South African reality. Not only has my thesis offered social commentary on the social science discipline, but it stands as an example of radical politics which searches for veiled, constructed or overlooked South African experiences.

When it came to the construction and nature of the public or counter public which this thesis addressed and advocated for, the strategy of style became a methodological point of departure. As opposed to adopting the plain style of the social sciences, *Political Fashioning* has emphasized that aesthetic effects can be produced by manipulating modes of publicness in unexpected ways and in so doing, open and expand “conditions of circulation” (Warner, 2005:14). The analysis of publics in my thesis has relied on various conditions ranging from the general organization of visual aids, ideologies to embrace, spaces of circulation to the specific rhetoric of texts. I suggest that the method has been consistent, in that it has advocated for an understanding of various publics by accounting for their historical orientation and through an awareness of the dynamics of textuality. *Political Fashioning* has therefore proceeded by moving away from the social sciences acceptance of the public as something that already exists, for empirical analysis to viewing the public as a phenomenon that is less definitive and more interpretive, calling for attention to be paid to the means by which the idea of the public has been made real.

The artistic counter public along with the racial, sexual and gendered cultures to which they speak, and my thesis draws on, has enabled the creation of opinions and exchanges that are separate from authority and stand in opposition to power. Not only has *Political Fashioning* shed light on the ability of the artistic counter public to represent the experiences of subordinate groups. Coupled with the social sciences, it has worked to “interpret new worlds of culture and social relations”, revealing new forms of gendered, racial and sexual citizenship. The artistic counter public presented in *Political Fashioning* has therefore worked to construct transformative scenes, rather than replicate others.

References

- Ally, S. 2010. *From servants to workers: South African domestic workers and the democratic state*. South Africa: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press
- Anderson, B. 2006. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. New York: Verso
- Art Africa 2014. *The Purple Shall Govern: Mary Sibande*. [Online]. Available: <https://artafricamagazine.org/the-purple-shall-govern-mary-sibande/> [2 July 2018].
- Asen, R. 2000. Seeking the “Counter,” in Counterpublics [Online]. Available: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1468-2885.2000.tb00201.x> [9 November 2019].
- Babb, S. N. 1906. The Winged Figure of Peace [Online]. Available: <https://www.artefacts.co.za/main/Buildings/bldgframes.php?bldgid=10571> [13 August 2019]
- Baderoon, G. 2014. The ghost in the house: women, race, and domesticity in South Africa. *Journal of Postcolonial Literature Inquiry*, 1(2): 173-188.
- Benjamin, W. 1999. *The Arcades Project*. United States of America: Harvard University Press
- Benjamin, W. 2010. The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction. *Grey Room*, 39(1): 11-37.
- Berdet, M. 2013. Eight Thesis on Phantasmagoria. *Anthropology & Materialism*, 1(1): 1-7.
- Boroughs, D. 2015. NPR: Why South African students say the statue of Rhodes must fall [Online]. Available: <https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2015/03/28/395608605/why-south-african-students-say-the-statue-of-rhodes-must-fall> [5 November 2019]

Brighenti, A. M. 2010. *Visibility in Social Theory and Social Research*. London: Palgrave/Macmillan.

Brown, A. J. 2017. Performing Blackness in the “Rainbow Nation”: Athi-Patra Ruga’s The Future White Women of Azania. *Journal of Feminist Theory*, 27(1): 67-80.

Buck-Morss, S. *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West*. Massachusetts: The MIT Press

Buikema, R. 2012. Performing dialogical truth and transitional justice: the role of art in the becoming post-apartheid of South Africa. *Memory Studies*, 5(3): 282-292.

Buys, A. 2010. Athi-Patra Ruga and the politics of context. *Critical Arts: A Journal of South-North Cultural Studies*, 24(3): 480-485.

Bystrom, K & Nuttall, S. 2013. Introduction. *Cultural Studies*, 27(3): 307-332.

Cock, J. 1988. *Maids & Madams: A Study in the Politics of Exploitation*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press.

Comaroff, J & Comaroff, J.L, 1990. Goodly Beasts, Beastly Goods: Cattle and Commodities in a South African Context. *American Ethnologist*, 17(2): 195-216.

Connelly, L. 2018. *Creative Boom: Athi-Patra Ruga: Of Gods, Rainbows and Omissions, a major solo show at Somerset House* [Online]. Available: <https://www.creativeboom.com/inspiration/athi-patra-ruga-of-gods-rainbows-and-omissions-a-major-solo-show-at-somerset-house/> [18 September 2018].

Corrigal, M. 2008. Athi-Patra Ruga: of Bugchasers and Watussi Faghags and What-What [Online]. Available: <http://corrigall.blogspot.com/2008/11/athi-patra-ruga-of-bugchasers-and-what.html> [4 September 2019].

Corrigal, M. 2014. Unpicking the Azanian Seam, in Ruga, A (ed.). *The Future White Woman of Azania*. South Africa: WHATIFTHEWORLD [Online]: Available: https://issuu.com/athi-patra/docs/athi_finalllores [7 January 2019].

Dane, G. 1994. Hysteria as Feminist Protest: Dora, Cixous, Acker. *Women's Studies*, 23(1): 231-256.

Design Indaba. 2014. State of the Art ft. Athi-Patra Ruga, Nandipha Mntambo and Zenele

Design Indaba. 2018. "We already live in a dystopian world" – Fabrice Monteiro [Online].

Available: <http://www.designindaba.com/articles/creative-work/we-already-live-dystopian-world-%E2%80%93-fabrice-monteiro> [11 January 2018]

Muholi [Online]. Available: <https://www.designindaba.com/videos/conference-talks/state-art-ft-athi-patra-ruga-nandipha-mntambo-and-zanele-muholi>.

Donnelly, L 2008. *Mail & Guardian: Subverted Bodies* [Online]. Available: <https://mg.co.za/article/2008-08-31-subverted-bodies> [2 July 2019].

Chaudhuri, A. 2016. *The Guardian, the real meaning of Rhodes Must Fall* [Online] Available: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/mar/16/the-real-meaning-of-rhodes-must-fall> [10 November]

Dodd, A. 2010. Dressed to thrill: the Victorian postmodern and counter-archival imaginings in the work of Mary Sibande. *Critical Arts: A Journal of South-North Cultural Studies*, 24(3): 467-474.

Elliot, D. 2011. The silence that no one talks about, in Simboa, R & Elliot, D (eds.). Nandipha Mntambo: Standard Bank Young Artists Award 2011 [Online]. Available: https://issuu.com/stevensonctandjhb/docs/nandi_sbya_2011_issuu

Farber, L. 2017. Parodying the hysteric as a form of empowerment in Mary Sibande's exhibition *The Purple Shall Govern*. *Textile*, 15(4): 428-441.

Foucault, M. 1978. *The History of Sexuality Volume 1: An introduction*. New York: Pantheon Books

Francke, R. 2019. *The Guardian: Thousands protest in South Africa over rising violence against women* [Online]. Available: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/sep/05/thousands-protest-in-south-africa-over-rising-violence-against-women> [4 February 2019]

Fraser, N. 1990. Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy. *Social Text*, 25/26(1): 56-80.

Freud, A & Breuer, J. 1955 "Studies on Hysteria," in Strachley, J (ed.). *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, 1–335. London: The Hogarth Press

Garoian, C. R & Gaudelius, Y. M. 2004. The Spectacle of Visual Culture. *Studies in Art Education*, 45(4): 298-312.

Gillespie, K & Dubbeld, B. 2007. The possibility of a critical anthropology after apartheid: relevance, intervention, politics. *Anthropology Southern Africa*, 30(3-4): 129-134.

Government Gazette of the Republic of South Africa. 1994. *Public Holidays Act 354(16136)* [Online]. Available: <https://www.gov.za/about-sa/public-holidays> [22 September 2019]

Griot. 2018. *The Prophecy | Fabrice Monteiro's new apocalyptic work urges the world to wake up* [Online]. Available: <https://griotmag.com/en/the-prophecy-fabrice-monteiro-pollution-climate-change/> [10 November 2019]

Gretz, M. F. 2002. Review of *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in the East and West*, by S. Buck-Morss, 62(2): 201-203.

Harrison, M. 2013. *Visiting Artist Profiles: Nandipha Mntambo*. [Online]. Available: <https://www.artpractical.com/column/nandipha-mntambo/> [11 February 2019].

Hayes, P. 2017. Photographic Publics and Photographic Desires in 1980s South Africa. *Photographies* 2017, 10(3): 303-327.

Hennlich, A. J. 2017. After the Thrill is Gone: Fashion, Politics, and Culture in Contemporary South Africa, in *Richmond Centre for Visual Arts*. Michigan: Western Michigan University

Hewson, D. 2014. ART AFRICA: Sethembile Msezane [Online]. Available: <https://artafricamagazine.org/december-2014-sethembile-msezane/> [8 December 2018].

Hutcheon, L. 1986. The Politics of Postmodernism: Parody and History. *Cultural Critique*, 5(1): 179-207.

Intense Art Magazine. 2017. *Sethembile Msezane: Kwasuka Sukela: re-imagined bodies of a (South Africa) 90s born woman* [Online]. Available: <http://www.iam-africa.com/sethembile-msezane-kwasuka-sukela/> [30 June 2019]

Jansen, E. 2019. *Like Family: Domestic workers in South African history and literature*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press

Kings, S. 2019. *Mail & Guardian: Pollution kills nine million a year* [Online]. Available: <https://mg.co.za/article/2019-03-15-00-pollution-kills-nine-million-a-year> [6 November 2019].

Kros, C. 2015. Rhodes Must Fall: archives and counter-archives. *South-North Cultural and Media Studies*, 29(1): 150-165.

Lalu, P. 2009. *The Deaths of Hintsa: Post-apartheid South Africa and the shape of recurring pasts*. South Africa: HSRC Press

Livermon, X. 2012. Queer(y)ing Freedom Black Queer Visibilities in Postapartheid South Africa. *Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 18(2): 297-323.

Libsekal, M. 2014. When Shoes Appear, in Ruga, A (ed.). *The Future White Woman of Azania*. South Africa: WHATIFTHEWORLD [Online]: Available: https://issuu.com/athi-patra/docs/athi_finallores [10 January 2019].

MacAloon, J.J, 'Olympic Games and the Thoery of Spectacle in Modern societies,' in *Rite. Drama, Festival, Spectacle: Rehersals Toward a Theory of Cultural Performance*. Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues.

Mabandu, P. The interview-Mary Sibande: Purple Shall Govern [Online]. Available: <https://www.news24.com/Archives/City-Press/The-Interview-Mary-Sibande-Purple-shall-govern-20150430>

Makhubu, N. 2012. *The Peculiar Language of Material* [Online]. Available: http://archive.stevenson.info/artists/mntambo/articles/2012_nomusa_makhubu_art_south_afri_ca_2012.pdf [19 August 2019].

Marx, K. 1967. *Capital: A critique of Political Economy*. New York: International Publishers

Marschall, S. 2010a. How to honour a woman: Gendered memorialization in post-apartheid South Africa. *Critical Arts: A Journal of South-North Cultural Studies*, 24(2): 260-283.

Marschall, S. 2010b. Articulating cultural pluralism through public art as heritage in South Africa. *Visual Anthropology*, 23(2): 77-97.

Maroga K. 2017. *ARTTHROB: The Poetics of remembrance as resistance: the work of Sethembile Msezane* [Online]. Available: <https://arthrob.co.za/2017/02/27/the-poetics-of-remembrance-as-resistance-the-work-of-sethembile-msezane/> [26 February 2018]

Matebeni, Z. 2013. Intimacy, Queerness, Race. *Cultural Studies*, 27(3): 404-417

McNeil, J. 2019. SAHO: *A History of Official Government HIV/AIDS Policy in South Africa* [Online]. Available: <https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/history-official-government-hiv-aids-policy-south-africa> [9 November 2019]

Matroos, J. 2018. *Design Indaba: Sethembile Msezane on why she uses her art as resistance* [Online]. Available: <https://www.designindaba.com/articles/creative-work/sethembile-msezane-why-she-uses-her-art-resistance> [11 November 2019]

McIntosh, T. 2008. *ARTTHROB archive: Nandipha Mntambo. Archive*, 1(133) [Online]. Available: <https://arthrob.co.za/08sept/artbio.html> [5 June 2018].

Miller, K. 2011. Selective Silence and the Shaping of Memory in Post-Apartheid Visual Culture: The Case of the Monument to the Women of South Africa. *South African Historical Journal*, 63(2): 295-317.

Moir, C. 2017. *Marxism, Art and Utopia: Critical Theory and Political Aesthetics*. Red Wedge, [Online] Available: <http://www.redwedgemagazine.com/online-issue/marxism-art-and-utopia-critical-theory-and-political-aesthetics-1>

Mpatlanyane, V. L. 2018. *New Student Activism after Apartheid: the case of Open Unpublished masters thesis*. Stellenbosch. Stellenbosch: Stellenbosch University [Online]. Available: <http://scholar.sun.ac.za/handle/10019.1/103757> [11 November 2019]

Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press

Mntambo, 2011. Nandipha Mntambo: *Standard Bank Young artist 2011 Special Edition* [Online]. Morris, R. 1995. ALL MADE UP: Performance Theory and the New Anthropology of Sex and Gender. *Annual Review Anthropology*, 24(1): 67-92.

Available: https://issuu.com/athi-patra/docs/athi_finalllores [7 January 2019].

Murris, K. 2016. #Rhodes Must Fall: A posthumanist orientation to decolonising higher education institutions. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 30(3): 274-294.

Murray, M. J. 2013. *Commemorating and Forgetting: Challenges for the New South Africa*.

Mokoena, H. 2010. "Anyone Can Be a Maid." *Africa Is a Country* (blog) [Online]. Available:

Mauss, M. 1966. *The Gift: Forms and functions of exchange in archaic societies*. London: Cohen & West Ltd

Nyamnjoh, F &Fuh, D. 2014. Africans consuming hair, Africans consumed by hair. *Africa Insight*, 44(1): 52-68.

Olaniyan, S. 2019. *Omenka: Sethembile Msezane: Spirituality, Commemoration and History* [Online]. Available: <https://www.omenkaonline.com/sethembile-msezane-spirituality-commemoration-and-history/> [9 September 2019]

Ouma, K & Mutloane, M. 2014. Performing Queer "in time and space": A politics of the event", in Matebeni, Z (ed.). *Reclaiming Afrikan: Queer perspectives on sexual and gender identities*. Athlone: Modjaji Pty Ltd.

Owlcation. 2015. *Russian Avant-garde Art: Rayonnism, Suprematism, and Constructivism* [Online]. Available: <https://owlcation.com/humanities/Russian-Avant-garde-Art-Rayonnism-Suprematism-and-Constructivism> [10 November 2019].

Oyedemi, T. 2016. Beauty as violence: 'beautiful' hair and the cultural violence of identity erasure. *Social Identities*, 22(5): 537-553

Pinto De Almeida, F. P. 2015. Framing interior: race, mobility and the image of home in South African modernity. *Social Dynamics*, 41(3): 461-481.

Phelan, P. 1993. *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*. London: Routledge

Posel, D. 2005. Sex, Death and the Fate of the Nation: Reflections on the Politicization of Sexuality in Post-Apartheid South Africa. *Journal of the International African Institute*, 75(2): 125-153.

Posel, D. 2010. Races to consume: revisiting South Africa's history of race, consumption and the struggle for freedom. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 33(2): 157-175.

Pusca, A. 2009. Walter Benjamin, a methodological contribution. *International Political Sociology*, 3(1): 238-254
Petersen, C. 2015. IOL News: SRC walks out of Rhodes statue talks [Online]. Available: <https://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/western-cape/src-walks-out-of-rhodes-statue-talks-1832940> [3 March 2019]

Ross, F. C. 2015. Raw Life and Respectability: Poverty and Everything Life in a Post-apartheid Community. *Current Anthropology*, 56(1): 97-107.

Ross, F. C. 2010. Raw Life: Decency, housing and everyday life in a post-apartheid community. Claremont: UCT Press.

Ruga, A. 2013. The Future White Woman of Azania: The founding myth [Online]. available: <http://athipatraruga.blogspot.com/2013/05/> [8 April 2019].

Ruga, A. 2014. Athi-Patra Ruga: SBYAA for Performance Art Award [Online]. Available: <https://mg.co.za/article/2014-11-04-pushing-the-boundaries-athi-patra-ruga-takes-the-2015-sbyaa-for-performance-art-award> [28 October 2018]

SAHO. 2015. *Student Protests in Democratic South Africa*. [Online] Available: <https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/student-protests-democratic-south-africa> [7 April 2019]

Seekings, J & Nattrass, N. 2005. *Class, Race, and Inequality in South Africa*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press

Scheffer, A., Du Preez, A & Stevens, I. 2017. Hysterical representation in the art of Mary Sibande. *52(2-3)*: 4-28.

Showalter, E. Hysteria, Feminism, and Gender, in S.L Gilman., H. King., R, Porter., G.S Rousseau (eds.). *Hysteria Beyond Freud*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Siengenthaler, F. 2013. Visualizing the Mental City: The Exploration of Cultural and Subjective Topographies by Contemporary Performance Artists in Johannesburg. *Research in African Literatures*, 44(2): 164-176.

Simbao, R & Elliot, D. 2011. Nandipha Mntambo: Standard Bank Young Artists Award 2011.

[Online]. Available: https://issuu.com/stevenonctandjhb/docs/nandi_sbaya_2011_issuu

<https://player.fm/series/new-books-in-gender-studies-2421498/anne-cheng-second-skin-josephine-baker-and-the-modern-surface-oxford-up-2017>

Skujins, A. 2018. *Dazed: The artist creating utopian visions out of glitter and balloons*

[Online]. Available: <https://www.dazeddigital.com/art-photography/article/42635/1/south-african-lgbtq-artist-athi-patra-ruga-uses-glitter-to-create-utopias> [9 November 2019].

Sontag. 1966. *Notes on "Camp"* [Online]. Available:

https://monoskop.org/images/5/59/Sontag_Susan_1964_Notes_on_Camp.pdf [9 July 2018].

Stevens Gallery. 2009. *Nandipha Mntambo: The Encounter* [Online]. Available:

<http://archive.stevenson.info/exhibitions/mntambo/index2009.htm>[6 October 2018].

Tedford, M. H. 2013. *Nandipha Mntambo* [Online]. Available:

<http://www.mhtedford.com/nandipha-mntambo> [6 July 2019]

Tedtalk. 2017. *Sethembile Msezane* [Online]. Available:

https://www.ted.com/speakers/sethembile_msezane [6 February 2019].

Tulloch, C. 2010. Style-Fashion- Dress: From Black to Post-Black. *Fashion Theory*, 14(3): 273-304.

Thomas, K. Wounding Apertures: Violence, Affect and Photography during and after Apartheid. *Kronos, special issue: documentary photography in South Africa*, 38(1): 204-218.

Times Live. 2012. *Gauteng premier condemns taxi rank miniskirt assault* [Online]. Available: <https://www.timeslive.co.za/politics/2012-01-03-gauteng-premier-condemns-taxi-rank-miniskirt-assault/> [17 June 2019].

Trouillot, M. 1995. *Silencing the past: power and production of history*. United States: Beacon Press Books

Turner, T. S. 2007. The Social Skin, in Lock, M & Farquhar, J(eds.). *Beyond the body proper: Reading the Anthropology of Material Life*. Durham and London: Duke University Press

Van Niekerk, S. 2019. *IOL: Artist Sthembile Msezane a living sculpture to tell the stories of woman silenced* [Online]. Available: <https://www.iol.co.za/capetimes/arts-portal/artist-msezane-a-living-sculpture-to-tell-the-stories-of-women-silenced-19321403> [9 September 2019]

Van Wolputte, S. 2004. Hang on to Your Self: Of Bodies, Embodiment, and Selves. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 33(1): 251-269

Warner, M. 2005. *Publics and Counterpublics*. United States: MIT Press

Williamson, S. 2010. *South African art now*. New York: Harper Collins

