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CONCEPTUAL, TEMPORAL, AND TANGIBLE: DISCURSIVE SPACES OF CONTEMPORARY ART IN MAPUTO

Amy Schwartzott

Novel forms of engagement with the arts, in Mozambique and particularly in the capital Maputo, are on the rise. Given the considerable changes in the nation's governance and the role of art in the larger region over the past two decades, Maputo's art scene is growing, partly in response to the absence of government support. These new initiatives have garnered support from the public, and from private and corporate support in Mozambique. This paper contextualizes the development and dissemination of contemporary art by exploring the conceptual and operational dynamics of exhibition spaces in Mozambique.

These diverse spaces range from a Mozambican artists' association that evolved out of a Portuguese artists' cooperative begun during the colonial era (*Associação Núcleo de Arte*) to a twenty-first-century theoretically based arts movement focused on the didactic exhibition of conceptual art (MUVART, *Movimento de Arte Contemporânea de Moçambique*). These initiatives involve a range of formats, sponsorship, and venues. For example, the largest privately owned telephone and cable corporation hosts a juried biennial exhibition (*TDM Bienal*), while *Kulungwana Association/Associação Kulungwana*, an arts venue funded by its diverse membership, uses thematic exhibitions to promote Mozambican art.

Physical presence determines the framework of classification used in this analysis of the arts spaces in Maputo. The spaces under investigation will be defined as conceptual, temporal

and tangible. Conceptual spaces refer to movements that exist in a liminal space, and are quantified by adherents, exhibitions and the art created as a result of the conceptual influences of the movement. Temporal spaces refer to ephemeral events that exist for a specified amount of time, such as recurring exhibitions. Finally, tangible spaces occupy concrete physical locations and exist continually as permanent exhibition venues.

A blunt appraisal by Pompilio Hilário (Gemuce), founder of the Contemporary Art Movement of Mozambique (MUVART), reveals the underdeveloped state of the arts in Mozambique:

In Mozambique there are no critics of art. There is only one historian of art. There is only one curator of art. So you see the level of this country.¹

Gilberto Cossa, Chief of Visual Arts (Ministry of Arts and Culture), supplements these claims, "culture accounts for less than one percent of the national budget."² To put this into global perspective, the arts comprise 7 percent of the overall US budget at US\$7146 million. Mozambique remains among the world's poorest countries while the USA is one of the richest.³ Arts Administrator Otilia Aquino, who is Executive Director of the Mozambique Association for the Development of Democracy (*Moçambique Associação para o Desenvolvimento da Democracia*), further substantiates a deficiency in governmental

support for the arts in Mozambique: “there is a lack of time and money to do what we need (to promote the arts).” Aquino additionally stressed the necessity of reaching people at the community level to ensure that culture becomes a part of Mozambicans’ lives.⁴

A subtext interwoven throughout this analysis of arts spaces underscores a widespread use of mixed media, including recycled materials by artists to create distinctive Mozambican contemporary art. Maputo, the location of Mozambique’s major exhibition spaces, provides a compelling site for this analysis because its strong network of arts organizations draws artists, varied in their approach, technique and media. Whereas the artworks featured within these spaces are distinct, specific trends link artists’ works. Contemporary Mozambican artists who scavenge, select and recycle diverse pre-used objects are creating mixed media artworks that illuminate important environmental, political, social and economic issues.

Mozambique’s protracted history of war cannot be overlooked when seeking a fuller understanding of its contemporary art. Olu Oguibe’s acknowledgment of individual identities in contemporary African art underpins this connection as it relates to contemporary Mozambican artists and their history specifically:

There is a clearly defined individuality – hardly any contemporary African artist of note would be correctly described as belonging to a particular stylistic trend – yet there is a strong sense of place, of the self moving in space, moving through geography and history, seeking for not only that which is inside but that which resonates with the present and the past as well (Oguibe, 2001).

This innate individuality Oguibe refers to is exemplified in the geo-political histories that frame the development and identity of contemporary Mozambican artists, inextricably linking them to their country’s changing political environments and extensive history of war. This article elucidates Maputo’s artistic culture by overviewing the different exhibition spaces and specific examples of artists whose artworks are framed by these spaces.

CONCEPTUAL: MUVART

The artistic movement MUVART evolved to fill a wide chasm in the cultural landscape of Mozambique, which its founders perceived as lacking a contemporary art aesthetic. MUVART curator and current Director of National School of Visual Arts (ENAV, *Escola Nacional de Artes Visuais*), Jorge Dias, articulated how the post-independent state’s suppression of the arts and its widespread impact on the development of the arts in Mozambique resulted in the development of MUVART. He stated:

Until the late 1980s, the structure formed for the arts in Mozambique supported and encouraged a great number of artists who produced the so-called ‘easel painting,’ ‘chipping sculpture,’ drawing, printmaking and photography. These productions were marked by nationalist, social, cultural narratives . . . the criticism and censorship of the arts came to anticipate the production (of art), adopting a strategy of repression and forcing the direction, which ended up dictating determined aesthetics and concepts for the arts in Mozambique. (MUVART, 2006, p. 13)

Although there is currently a lack of governmental patronage, both in its use and financial support of the arts in Mozambique, this was not always the case. As Dias remarked above, both within and following Mozambique's wars, the government adopted art as a tool to further its ideals. A direct result of the current widespread apathy in the general public regarding art is based on how the state used the arts as a medium through which it articulated its power.

Generally speaking, the Mozambican population is largely unfamiliar with art outside its use in revolutionary service. This includes individuals who are 25 years and older, and comprises those who lived through one or both of Mozambique's past wars. Mozambicans who are younger than 20 years old were not yet born when the most recent war was fought. Based on this reality, young Mozambicans do not have memories that link art with propaganda and war. Younger generations of Mozambicans are undoubtedly aware of the many social realist-style murals, and perhaps even the posters employed to garner governmental support as part of their country's violent history, but it is not their lived history. This is an important reason why arts spaces direct a majority of their outreach toward youth, providing civic education to potential new audiences of art.⁵

Beginning during the colonial war (1962–1974), FRELIMO's use of art intensified after assuming control of newly independent Mozambique as its governing party. Recent scholarship by Alexander Bortolot addresses FRELIMO's political interest in Makonde blackwood sculpture workshops based on beliefs that their collective and cooperative structures aligned with FRELIMO socialist ideals (Bortolot, 2013). Bortolot argues: "as it (FRELIMO) developed its political philosophy and sought support from international allies, FRELIMO realigned the

medium (blackwood carving) for distinctly different purposes, conceptualizing blackwood carving as a primary symbol of its socialist project in Mozambique" (Bortolot, 2013, p. 253). I would extend Bortolot's contention beyond Makonde carving to include the visual arts in general. In this way, the trajectory of how art historically functioned in Mozambique becomes clearer. Simply put, the visual arts are not well received today because of their past use by the government in a socialist revolutionary context, which dictated patronage and exhibition venues. As a result, contemporary art and its development face tremendous challenges in undoing and recreating these past functions.⁶

In 2002 Pompilio Hilário (Gemuce) founded MUVART in the role of facilitator, with Jorge Dias as curator, comprising 11 original members.⁷ Gemuce explained that an overarching aim of MUVART was to "include all people who are intellectual and who want to interact with culture, because the idea of the movement is producing art – but art that will be participating in society."⁸ Further remarking on the rationale for the MUVART's foundation, Gemuce referred to the reality that "the gap between traditional and contemporary art is wide in Maputo, and contemporary art is marginalized."⁹

MUVART strives to advance the development and proliferation of contemporary art in Mozambique. MUVART's Manifesto of 2002 implicitly states the group's intention to expand the arts as a major goal:

Art in Mozambique needs to assert itself as an essential tool and intervener in society. It is urgent to expand the number of viewers interested in the arts, open new horizons in relation to new forms of artistic practice and extend this effort beyond the capital city.¹⁰

MUVART's primary strategy for advancing contemporary art in Mozambique is through civic education, and, to those ends, the organization's objectives use exhibitions, lectures, debates, and works to provoke discussions on the production, dissemination, and politics of art.¹¹

Ironically, MUVART creates a broad foundation for the intellectual development and advancement of contemporary art in Mozambique, and yet the organization does not occupy any permanent physical spaces of its own. Despite its intangibility, MUVART's theoretical presence has shifted the paradigm of art-making and its theoretical foundations within Maputo. MUVART's biennial exhibitions comprise a central platform for facilitating its artistic discourse, and they have mounted five biennials since it first inaugurated these exhibitions in 2004. Ongoing MUVART goals within these exhibits include addressing current issues using new media (including recycled materials, video, and installations), collaborations with international artists, and the employment of global curatorial strategies involving invited guest curators.

MUVART's first biennial exhibition, *Exposition of Mozambican Contemporary Art (Expo Arte Contemporânea Moçambique)*, was held in 2004 and exhibited at Mozambique's National Museum of Art (*Museu Nacional de Arte*).¹² Thirty-seven artists participated, including 23 artists from Mozambique as well as artists from Portugal, Brazil, France, Spain, South Africa, and the Czech Republic. This exhibition addressed goals initially set forth by MUVART in its Manifesto, such as opening "creative possibilities and fields of art that are not (currently) present in the production of new arts . . . and . . . changing and disrupting the pre-established aesthetic in Mozambique" (MUVART, 2004, p. 9).

A specific artwork from this exhibition, an installation by Faizal Omar (Matequenha),

Acoustic Study of Conventional/Traditional (Estudo Acústico do Convencional/Tradicional), provides an excellent example of the conceptual boundary crossing implicit in MUVART's artistic philosophies and the ways exhibited artworks challenge viewers' conceptions about experiencing arts of work. Matequenha's complex artwork addresses divisions between music and art, performance and object, and invented traditions (Figure 1). In *Acoustic Study of Conventional/Traditional*, Matequenha combines diverse natural and recycled materials including clay, animal skins, and fur to create innovative forms. The percussive forms he recreates reinvent musical instruments as he alters traditional instruments based on familiar prototypes. Describing his inspiration to create this artwork, Matequenha explains:

I had a dream to play the drums. My father had just passed away. Even if I look to buy one I will not accept it. I wanted to play, and at the same time I was working with clay. That's how I started to make the drums — to show people that it is not necessary to cut down trees to make drums. We can use clay to make what we want.¹³

To realize these goals through his installation, Matequenha embarked on research in the different provinces and districts of Mozambique where these percussive instruments were historically used. Ultimately four styles emerged from varied geographical settings that were used to create innovative drum types: Chigubu, Tofo, Mapeko, and Maputo.¹⁴ Most noticeably, Matequenha altered the materiality of these forms by replacing the wooden support of the drums with clay. By replacing the materials comprising the drums' bodies, Matequenha alters viewers' conception of these "acoustic forms."



Figure 1. Omar Faizal (Matequenha), *Estudo Acústico do Convencional/Tradicional* (Acoustic Study of Conventional/Traditional), mixed media, 2004. Photograph by Amy Schwartzott.

These percussive forms are not original or traditional, except for the fact that they are based on models of recognizable instruments. Matequenha has transformed these instruments by substituting new materials — essentially refashioning the old designs and reconstructing them to create new forms and liminal identities, provoking discourse on multiple themes. Matequenha displays these newly made instruments in an ethnographic style, thereby creating an archivist framework that challenges notions of authenticity and originality.¹⁵

Acoustic Study of Conventional/Traditional is a kinetic work in progress, a constantly changing artwork, the form of which evolves based on audience participation. Matequenha invites viewers to engage in an interactive dialogue with his installation, encouraging touching and playing these acoustic forms in order to understand

Mozambican musical traditions. He is focused on conceptions of art in context, and how art is viewed and/or experienced by audiences. Matequenha addresses this goal: “When we go to gallery the pieces around are untouchable — for me I want to break that mind, (by creating) things you can touch. I allow people to play.”¹⁶ By allowing viewers to touch the instruments (perceived here as art in the gallery context), the contemporary is linked to the traditional. Matequenha commented:

It is a blend of materials, colors, shapes and culture in order to produce percussive sounds, varied and innovative, but not only that — it is intended to observe a direct interactivity with the drums, participating in the production of sounds, focused on the tentative disregard of any

preconceptions about music as an art form. The object – drum, is in a way, decontextualized. Constructed of a different material and exposed within a gallery, . . . the drum automatically assumes another meaning; beyond mere musical instrument . . . these simple objects subvert the idea that it is just an exhibition of traditional tools . . . Despite its slight metamorphosis, these musical instruments produce faithfully the role of his mother – music. (MUVART, 2004, pp. 31–32; see also Samuels, 2008)

As he decontextualizes historical forms by refashioning them, Matequenha's seemingly simple and straightforward installation is actually a multivalent didactic encouraging new ways of looking and experiencing art. Installations such as Matequenha's explore boundary crossing between artworks and their meanings, as well as between artists and audiences of their art. In his alteration and re-creation of traditional musical instruments, Matequenha challenges ideas about materiality, past and present, recycling, as well as art and audience. Clearly, *Acoustic Study of Conventional/Traditional* illustrates MUVART's effective use of its biennial exhibitions as a potent didactic tool to introduce and/or educate Mozambican audiences to artistic forms.

Whereas MUVART lacks a concrete presence in the physical landscape of Maputo, individual members highlight its theoretical focus through artworks exhibited both individually and in the Movement's biennial exhibitions. MUVART exhibitions have widely embraced various arts spaces in Maputo in addition to global expansion made through the participation of international exhibitors and guest curators from varied countries. Artistic projects by MUVART Curator Jorge Dias and its founder,

Gemuce, illustrate further developments of themes rooted in the Movement's ideologies, particularly focused on conceptual art and greater explorations of creative processes. In their personal projects, Dias and Gemuce continue to revisit and further develop subjects they previously displayed in earlier MUVART biennial exhibitions, such as conceptualism, materiality, globalization, and democracy.

Dias and Gemuce expand MUVART ideals both locally and globally, in arts spaces of Mozambique, and abroad. Dias presented *Transparency: Creative Processes and Daydreams* (*Transparência: Processos criativos e devaneios*) at the Camoes Institute in Maputo in 2010 (Figure 2). In this exhibition Dias highlights the complex processes of art-making through an exploration of its inherent materiality. Urging viewers to contemplate how and why artists create art, Dias incorporates materials that he has stripped to their material essence. By revealing what is often concealed within narratives, Dias underscores a link to basic environmental systems of production, destruction, and transformation.

As the exhibition title suggests, Dias presents a daydream about the process of creation, vividly exploring manifestations of its fantastical possibilities. Working primarily with recycled materials (largely newspapers), Dias creates an environment peopled with the everyday and uncommon based on his (day) dreams of creativity. Speaking about these forms and their underlying materiality, Dias explained, "Newspaper is the material I like to use the most . . . sometimes I change newspaper into a wholly different form. I use newspapers because most people use it every day."¹⁷

Dias illustrates the dynamics of life through daily activity, focusing on the relationship of construction and reconstruction visualized here (MUVART, 2008, p. 17). These themes are



Figure 2. Jorg Dias. Installation view, *Transparencia processos criativos e devaneios*, Instituto Camões, Maputo, 2010. Photograph courtesy of Jorge Dias.

recurrent in Dias' artistic explorations, in which he frequently relies upon recycled materials as media. He relays a deep interest in "investigating relationships with materials and transformation . . . to be born and to die – to show life and death, transformation. It does not end – I work with the idea that pieces of art are not finished pieces. It becomes, it grows."¹⁸

Among his individual ventures, Gemuce's participation in an artists' residency in Huntly, Scotland (2009–2010) illustrates his continued exploration of globalization and politics, themes he previously developed in past MUVART biennials. In MUVART's third biennial exhibition, *Perspectives and Experiences: Other Territories* (Perspectivas e Experiências: outros territórios) (2008), Gemuce presented *Game/Democracy* (*Jogo/Democracia*). This conceptual work shows his ironic interpretation of the democratic form of government as he reduces it to a simple board

game. Gemuce presents a circular wooden board game patterned on the model of chess, and thus presents democracy as a game to be played by the viewer. Inspired by the notion of the democratic system as a game of chance, strategy, and opponents who may win or lose, Gemuce defines this piece in the following terms:

Every intellectual dispute expended in the game illustrates the evil manipulative capacity of men in the struggle for power in the democratic system. But at the same time, is my appeal to tolerance, as a civilized attitude, because whomever plays, expect to lose . . . after all we are simply dealing with a game. (MUVART, 2008, p. 14)

With this elemental yet highly politicized work, Gemuce underscores MUVART practices by

raising thematic discussions and simultaneously inserting his association and contemporary art praxis into Mozambican society.

In his more recent project, *Money Crunch*, Gemuce moves beyond his conceptual exploration of democracy to investigate themes of capitalism, economics, and differences between these ideals in both Western and non-Western contexts. *Money Crunch* took place in Huntly, Scotland in December 2009. A site-specific, multimedia performance piece, it was based in a Western, capitalist context. In this work, Gemuce tackled the reality that most of the global economy is teetering on over-extended credit. Addressing political and social concerns, Gemuce made an ironic statement in his appraisal of Western society and the gross materialism of its ubiquitous gift-giving traditions of the Christmas season.¹⁹

The opening segment of *Money Crunch* took place in Huntly Square on an early December evening, intended to coincide with the commencement of holiday shopping in the village center. Booths set up by local merchants provided various items for purchase, ostensibly to facilitate and stimulate holiday gift shopping. In the midst of this space of commerce, Gemuce presented *Calabash Bank*. Gemuce's selection of a calabash to brand his bank underscores this gourd's significance in Africa.²⁰ Making a wry statement on value, Gemuce alludes to the multiple uses of the calabash in Africa versus the multiplicity of consumer items offered for sale in Western cultures that appear to provide only one, very specific use.

Unique from all of the other booths, *Calabash Bank* interrogated global monetary and credit systems by challenging often interwoven notions including value, ideas, money and credit. Dressed as Father Christmas, Gemuce handed out credit cards for his *Calabash Bank*. Encouraging

contemplation of Western and specifically African contexts, Gemuce contrasted and linked Western ideals of Christmas and the ubiquitous African calabash. By linking Christmas and calabashes, Gemuce created a conceptual artwork devoted to these themes examining globalization and currency.

The *Calabash Bank* credit cards Gemuce created were exchanged for ideas offered as an alternative to currency. Ideas were collected from shoppers who were given a credit card issued from the *Calabash Bank*, which they were permitted to withdraw ideas from. Playing on the common Western practice of using credit cards, here ideas replaced the money that is typically extracted from the automatic teller machines of a bank. Instead of issuing money, ideas were delivered as the currency obtained from the *Calabash Bank*.

Evidence of MUVART's influence on Mozambique's developing contemporary art scene and its engagement with international sites and thematics can be seen in the specific examples described above. In its efforts to expand the exhibition of contemporary art in Mozambique, MUVART has built upon its explorations in previous exhibits. MUVART's didactic strategy of exhibitions, workshops, lectures and artistic events, as well as highlighting elements of Mozambique's histories in its artworks (Matequenha's acoustic forms discussed here is one such example), has led to the promulgation and perpetuation of an intrinsically Mozambican contemporary art that transcends the previous governmental control of art. Through its instructive advancement of the arts, MUVART presents a trajectory of evaluation and re-evaluation of artistic trends in order to move the dissemination of contemporary art in Mozambique forward artistically and intellectually, as well as locally and globally.



Figure 3. View in gallery 1, TDM *Bienal*, Museu Nacional de Arte, 2011. Photograph by Amy Schwartzott.

TEMPORAL — TDM *BIENAL*

The TDM *Bienal* is an art exhibition sponsored and organized by *Telecomunicações de Moçambique* (Telecommunications of Mozambique/TDM) (Figure 3). This group of companies known as TDM was created in 1981 following the termination of the government agency handling telecommunication services. The *Bienal* is a partnership with the National Museum of Mozambique, where it is typically displayed for

two months. Despite its temporality, the TDM *Bienal* is definitively the largest single exhibition of art in the country, and represents a tremendous cultural highlight in Mozambique. Furthermore, determination of the artworks included within this exhibition represents the greatest competition of any type throughout Mozambique. Finally, and perhaps most directly linked to this event's extreme popularity, is the fact that considerable cash prizes are awarded to winners.²¹ The

TDM *Bienal* is widely acknowledged as representing and defining not simply art, but contemporary art within Mozambique.

The TDM *Bienal* wields great power within the artistic and cultural landscape of Mozambique. The first exhibition, TDM *Exposição*, was held in 1991 to celebrate the 10-year anniversary of TDM's establishment. This exhibition laid the foundation for the development of its *Bienal* as well as establishing a standard for TDM to amass and develop its own art collection. Then TDM Director General, Rui Fernandes, presented TDM's artistic commitment in the accompanying exhibition catalog:

We believe that this initiative is also in the first edition of what we intend to become the TDM Arts Biennial. This time, [we present] only the works of our collection, but in its other editions [it will be] open to all who want to participate in it. We believe this opens a new perspective in the field of artistic Mozambique and thus gives more focus to this 'show' in commemoration of our birthday. (TDM, 1991)

Interesting to note here is the explanation that, although this first edition presented existing works in the TDM collection, subsequent editions would be "open to all who want to participate." This subtle point challenges the democratic aims of its organizers. Future TDM *Bienal* exhibitions would be open to all in terms of allowing anyone to *submit* a work of art for consideration, whereas actually having one's artwork included in the exhibition was not. Acceptance to the *Bienal* was contingent upon TDM's jury selection.

Throughout the history of the *Bienal*, two types of juries facilitate the selection of artworks.

The first jury accepts artists into the exhibition, and the second selects prizewinners from among the accepted artworks.²² Jurors are individuals with different art-related knowledge bases, incorporating technical, curatorial, art historical and artistic elements, and are modified with each *Bienal*.²³ The first *Bienal* set a precedent linking TDM to the promotion of the arts in Mozambique. Sixty-one artworks, representing 24 artists were included in this exhibit, including painting and sculptural works. Representing previous acquisitions to TDM's developing art collection, the exhibition showcased such luminaries as Alberto Chissano, Eugénio Lemos, Bertina Lopes, Malangatana Ngwenya, Estêvão Mucavele, and Vítor Sousa.

This first exhibition became both an inspiration and a template for TDM, presenting specific goals that would be replicated in its future biennial exhibitions. Objectives included ensuring that works of art by Mozambican artists remain in the country, providing broad and widespread support and encouragement of the plastic arts, and building both cultural heritage and financial assets for TDM.²⁴ The TDM *Bienal* serves as a means to build its corporate art collection. Artworks are acquired by TDM through prize winning (an artwork submitted by an artist who wins first prize in the *Bienal* automatically becomes part of the art collection of the TDM corporation) or being optionally purchased directly from the artists represented in the *Bienal*.

An additional point made regarding this initial exhibition is significant. In the exhibition catalog, TDM Director General Fernandes referred to how this exhibition will "give the public the opportunity to appreciate a set of works that *we* consider of value."²⁵ Imposing value on artworks and artists whose works are selected to be shown in the TDM *Bienal* is an important detail.

Audiences of the visual arts in Mozambique revere many of the artists exhibited in the first *Bienal*, and the success of these artists has determined the context for understanding individual artistic styles.

The implicit connection of value imposed upon the artworks presented in 1991 set a very high standard for all future artworks and artists that would be accepted into the *Bienal*. For example, juried editions of the *Bienal* allowed a limit of two artworks per artist submitted for selection. Furthermore, by impressing the notion of value upon these works, younger generations of artists inspired to submit artworks to future exhibitions would view artworks shown in this exhibition, as well as future biennials, as representative examples of value, and more importantly, of the arts of Mozambique. As a result of this, TDM *Bienals* have become implicitly linked with selecting and displaying artworks of value. Based upon high expectations set within the framework of the first *Bienal*, future incarnations are inherently charged with a tremendous amount of power. This self-appointed power of TDM exerts tremendous influence in determining valuable works within the visual culture of Mozambique.

The Dak'Art Biennial is arguably the most important major recurring exhibition held in Africa. Scholarship regarding the far-reaching role this exhibition plays sheds light on the widespread impact of the TDM *Bienal* in Mozambique:

By way of both political rhetoric and the exhibited works, Dak'Art forms a site for the construction of a Pan-African discursive platform. Its singular focus on exhibiting the work of African and Diaspora artists relates to both the event's history and ideological foundation. From its inception, Dak'Art intended to rectify

the marginalization of African artists from international art venues by creating an international platform for showcasing their work in Africa. Dak'Art's ideological *raison d'être* is thus undergirded by an "expression of political will." Pan-African in focus, the event's force resides in the premise of geopolitical collectivity. In this, it is as much an artistic event as an illustration of collective power. Its discursive construction relies heavily on the political rhetoric associated with Senegal's first president, Leopold Sedar Senghor, in his writings on Négritude and subsequent cultural policies. In fact, the tenets of Senghorian ideology provide the ideological capital for the Biennale. (Grabski, 2008)

Here Joanna Grabski captures the essences of Dak'Art's power in both global (International) and local (Senegal and Africa) arenas. Current TDM administrator Adolfo Boane puts a positive spin on this reality in Maputo, "contextually, TDM tells a history of Mozambique. (It) provides a platform to talk about art, painting, how to teach painting."²⁶

Biannually, TDM publicizes a call for submissions to its *Bienal*. Most years since the inception of the competitive exhibition in 1993, this format has been followed. An exception occurred in 2007 when artists from the first *Bienal* were included in addition to previous prizewinners (1993–2007). In 2011, 20 years after the first *Exposição* TDM, its president Dr Teodato Hunguana²⁷ commented on the how the *Bienal* had developed since its beginnings, including "increasingly new and more diverse media such as video and photography, following the trends that are expressed in a more internationalized pace" (TDM, 2011, p. 3). This reflective

statement on the development of the *Bienal* essentially presents a progress report on the forward movement through the use of more advanced technology and innovative media adopted by artists since the 1991 exhibition.

Remarkable similarities exist between this statement and the ideals of MUVART. Based on similar goals of advancement of contemporary art, development of new media, use of biennial exhibitions as platforms, and a desire to fit within an international framework, the TDM *Bienal* and MUVART share fundamental links between common goals focused on the development of contemporary art in Mozambique. An analysis of an artwork exhibited in the 2011 *Bienal* provides an interesting case study within the framework of TDM's *Bienal* exhibitions.

Vandals of Fiber Optic wire and the Masks of the Vigilant (*Vandalizadores de cabos de fibra óptica e a máscara do vigilante*) is a 2011 mixed media painting by Domingos W. Comiche Mabongo (Domingos). Domingos incorporates common, everyday materials as media to create art that is both accessible to, and intended for a specific audience — Mozambicans who are not typically exposed to art. Domingos uses recognizable recycled materials within the didactic commentary his art presents. Metal objects such as nails, staples, and scraps that appear in his artworks become transformed, as symbols for motor vehicles, technology, and household goods.

His work, *Vandals of Fiber Optic wire and the Masks of the Vigilant*, was created for, and accepted into the 2011 TDM *Bienal*. Thickly painted gestural strokes create abstract shapes within a framework of faceted, interlocking cubist forms that suggest three-dimensional space. Sections of ovoid and oblong curvilinear shapes invade the picture plane's geometry, creating a large skewed mask form diagonally oriented from the left top corner to the center of the bottom of

the canvas. This mask creates an optical illusion, alternating its appearance and disappearance within the dimensionality of the changing surfaces of the canvas. Once this mask is observed, others begin to appear, connecting with the larger mask and alternating in different directions as fragmented images.

The imagery within this artwork is kinetic, its movement created in arcs and planes that move erratically around the canvas. The movement is amplified by the dissonance of the framing device of the smaller rectangular section on the left side of the canvas. The metallic silver impasto treatment in this area becomes heightened with the addition of applied staples. The three-dimensional effect of the added staples creates a chaotic complement to the dissonance within the central square. As the title indicates, this painting deals with vandals destroying the fiber optic lines that facilitate telephone access throughout Mozambique.

In his discussion of this artwork, Domingos foregrounds the widespread effect that this type of vandalism has on the population, "this is a real situation we are living in . . . but now nothing is usable . . . at the same time (there is a) problem with people break(ing) wires of TDM (which is) report(ed) to the newspaper."²⁸ In this work, Domingos has utilized staples as a three-dimensional addition to his canvas. Domingos has used the staples symbolically here, in this case to broadly represent the complex infrastructure of TDM.²⁹

In his synopsis of *Vandals*, Domingos explains the vigilantes against the technological vandals who are equipped with arcs (portable weapons and arrows).³⁰ Domingos envisions a link between contemporary society and the past in this work by conjuring up figures such as a legendary Mozambican warrior and folk hero who according to legend could not be killed despite

being hit with arrows several times. Domingo inserts the mythology of this figure into his work, as he will use traditional weapons in his role as a vigilante who will defend against the vandals of contemporary technology (of TDM, who sponsored the *Bienal* exhibition this work was created for).

This work, accepted into the 2011 TDM *Bienal*, was not a prizewinner. Domingos did win first prize in the 2009 *Bienal*, however. His winning artwork was also a mixed media painting. The earlier work incorporated natural recycled materials, wood, sand, and dried leaves. Forming part of a series including Domingos's 2011 entry, these works are based on the artist's explorations of destruction by both men and nature and serve as examples of the types of artworks that artists in Mozambique are currently creating. Since its inception, an increase in artworks submitted and accepted to the *Bienal* that comprise mixed media and/or recycled materials has been seen. In the exhibition of 2011, 11 of the 44 selected artworks were created from recycled materials.

Whether the TDM biennial exhibition represents an accurate portrayal of Mozambican art today is a subject of debate among Mozambican cultural circles and a difficult question to address. This and additional criticisms of the TDM *Bienal* currently under investigation by the author, include jury bias toward younger, trained artists; disapproval of a single prize award instead of one representing each discipline; bias toward artists working in Maputo; and finally, corruption. As a result of these criticisms widely circulated among artistic circles in Mozambique, the TDM *Bienal* has become problematic, a target of critique within these circles. TDM has previously acknowledged that the majority of artists represented in its *Bienal* are concentrated in Maputo, and thereby not providing an overall view of Mozambican art (TDM, 1991).

The desire to achieve a truer representation of art throughout Mozambique, and by extension contemporary art, has been a point of contention for the entire history of the TDM *Bienal*. This is not a new problem yet continues to be the source of consternation among audiences and organizers of the influential exhibition. Victor Sala, Commissioner of the Jury of the 2011 TDM *Bienal*, commented:

Normally for people [artists] out[side] of Maputo, it is difficult to access information, send work. This is another element. If [we] could do a bit more and think about other artists outside Maputo . . . then we would see variety. Almost everyone is from here [Maputo].³¹

Sala's candor indicates awareness among organizers that the *Bienal* does not represent all of Mozambique in its exhibition because of the lack of entries from the artistic population living outside the capital. Sala has suggested as a solution that the organizing committee target communication with artists outside of Maputo, through the Minister of Culture.³² For the first time, a debate was planned in 2011 to address critiques of the *Bienal*. Regarding the upcoming debate and specific issues to be tackled, Sala stated:

Some of the elements we will discuss include required criteria for giving awards, issues like reproducing someone else's work using a different technique — art or something else, artist involvement in how to display pieces . . . understanding. Many art students will be there. Transparency is good.³³

The TDM *Bienal* occupies a fascinating position within the framework perpetuating and

advancing visual arts within Mozambique: A countrywide exhibition dedicated to promoting art in a country whose population is generally disinterested and unknowledgeable about art is a tremendous boon to cultivating a culture of art. Despite its criticisms, the presence of the TDM *Bienal* has largely benefitted and advanced the arts within Mozambique, and Maputo specifically.

TANGIBLE – ASSOCIAÇÃO NÚCLEO DE ARTE

The Association of the Nucleus of Art (*Associação Núcleo de Arte*), founded in the 1920s/1930s,³⁴ is dedicated to the development of the culture of fine arts in Mozambique. *Núcleo de Arte* is rooted in the colonial era and originally reflected the cultural sensibilities of its Portuguese founders. Early divisions of *Núcleo de Arte* included architecture, fine and decorative arts, music and choreography, theater, literature and history of art, indigenous art and ethnography, and propaganda and publicity (Costa, 2010, p. 29). Throughout its history, this institution has undergone ideological transformations, allowing it to withstand the political, social and cultural vicissitudes of the colonial and post-independence periods.

Mozambican art historian Alda Costa has stated, “The creation of the *Núcleo de Arte* was clearly the embodiment of imperial thinking and of the attempt to build closer relations between Portugal and its colonies . . . spreading aesthetic education and promoting the progress of art in the colony” (Costa, 2010, p. 31). Costa further states that the original statutes of *Núcleo de Arte* included aims to:

organize art courses, put on art exhibitions, create an art museum (with an indigenous art section), and organize

visits by artists from Portugal, who could create works of art in the colony inspired by local subjects. It was also its job to organize art exhibitions dealing with Mozambican subjects in Portugal and contribute, in every possible way, to the artistic exchange between Mozambique and the *metrópole*. (Costa, 2010, p. 31)

Clearly, in its earliest days, integration between *assimilados* and *indigenas* did not exist in this cultural space, as was widespread practice in African colonial societies. As a result of this, it was not until the 1950s/1960s that indigenous Mozambicans began to take more active roles in the cultural center of *Núcleo de Arte*. An often-repeated mythologizing story tells how a young Mozambican, Malangatana Valente Ngwenya, broke through the racial barriers and became involved in this arts organization and first exhibited paintings in an exhibition there in 1959. Other well-known Mozambican artists who became active members of *Núcleo de Arte* early on include Bertina Lopes and Alberto Chissano. These artists set the precedent for *Núcleo de Arte* to develop into the inclusive Mozambican artists’ collective association that exists today and promotes the development of a broad, yet distinctly Mozambican style of art.

A third generation of artists began to reinvent the artists’ association in the 1990s, following the gradual acceptance of Mozambicans preceding independence.³⁵ The administrative infrastructure of *Núcleo de Arte* consists of a President, elected by general vote, who holds office for two years with the possibility of holding two consecutive terms; a Vice President; a Council Fiscal, which comprises a group responsible for the Association’s buildings (three individuals selected by vote); and the Assembly, which represents the general population of artists, currently

comprising over 300 members. Financial support for *Núcleo de Arte* relies upon membership dues, contributions, grants, and governmental funding. Recent renovation work described below was achieved through corporate sponsorship of a Mozambican bank, Millenium Bim.

The physical space of *Núcleo de Arte* is anchored by a large colonial-era Portuguese home on the corner of the residential neighborhood it occupies in the Polana District of Maputo. The focal point and creative center of *Núcleo de Arte*, however, is the large open-air covered workshop in the center of the artistic complex. The workshop, as well as its surrounding outdoor courtyard, provides collaborative working studio space for members. In these shared areas, artists create, contemplate and engage collectively in intensive discussions related to the making of their artworks. It is not uncommon to see close to 10 artists communally working within these areas at *Núcleo de Arte* on a daily basis.

Although today a majority of artists at *Núcleo de Arte* engage in painting, many artists work with varied media and techniques, including wooden sculptures, ceramics and mixed media artworks of diverse recycled materials. The highly interactive social environment at *Núcleo de Arte* is consistent with Sidney Littlefield Kasfir and Till Förster's emphasis on the social aspect in their analysis of African workshops:

A workshop is a social setting . . . it is a social space in which individuals cooperate . . . It is a sphere in which interpretive processes unfold . . . a social institution that fosters particular modes of reciprocal interpretation and in general, social interaction. Artists in the workshop learn *through* others, not from them. (Kasfir & Förster, 2013, p. 13)

The cohesive social environment of *Núcleo de Arte* fosters creativity and the development of ideas through camaraderie — much like Kasfir and Förster's workshop analyses. Artists working collectively immerse themselves within the production of art, while relying upon a constant source of feedback and support — literally a nucleus of art.

Under renovation for over two years, the large home that previously served as the main exhibition space of *Núcleo de Arte* reopened with an inaugural members' exhibition in late February 2013. Prior to renovations, this space maintained a permanent exhibition of artworks by members, with occasional interruptions of themed exhibitions occurring for brief intervals. Recent construction on this building has impacted and facilitated the development of major goals for *Núcleo de Arte* that affect not only the physical infrastructure of the historical Mozambican Artists' Association, but its goals for the presentation of the arts as well.

The impact of this construction affects *Núcleo de Arte* theoretically as it will devote greater focus on presenting an ongoing tangible educational space designed for students, visitors, and tourists. The house, now that its construction has been completed, will resume its role as the Association's primary exhibition space.³⁶ Current Association President, Artur Vincente, elaborated on goals of *Núcleo de Arte*, stating that a desired outcome is “to change the methodology — it will be different from before, where a permanent, continuing exhibition was previously displayed, now each artist will make a solo exhibition for fifteen days — to show the potential of art is our big goal.”³⁷ Long-range plans for *Núcleo de Arte* include opening additional locations in the provinces of Mozambique to reach out to represent artists beyond the capital city of Maputo.

Vincente projected broader ideas surrounding *Núcleo de Arte* as a cultural resource in Mozambique:

Núcleo is an association for people in the community — a public space where everyone can see the art . . . so if you see what's happening here is contemporary art — new, innovative art is happening at *Núcleo*. *Núcleo* is a space to do research for artists. They come here from home, see different types of art — come from ateliers at home to open their minds, get new ideas.³⁸

Núcleo de Arte promotes art through its focus on community projects. In October 2010, students and artists collaborated to create artworks from pre-used materials. This multiweek workshop culminated in an exhibition of student and artists' work at *Núcleo de Arte*. Vincente, responsible for developing the workshop, explained that he was inspired “because they (students) don't know about art created from recycled materials, as well as to reduce garbage, because when we are reducing we can make something — an art piece.”³⁹

Ana Vilankulos (Matswa) is one of the artists who participated in the recycling workshop. Ana twisted and tied cloth scraps, creating webs to teach students how to use recycled materials to make art. Ana's webs accommodated spiders made by Zeferino, an artist who instructed students how to work with scavenged metal objects. Ana indicated her artistic preference for using *capulanas*, brightly colored machine-produced fabrics, primarily worn as wraps by Mozambican women and to secure babies to their mother's back. Ana described the specific appeal *capulanas* held for her:

I am interested in showing the different things they (*capulanas*) are used for, we can do more things (with them), not just

to carry babies and cover our bodies — (these are) gender connections. It is traditional woman's wear. As you know, *capulanas* are used for different purposes — to use them for an art piece is to use (them) in a different form.

The *capulana* is a symbol of an African lady — a Mozambican lady. It reminds me of my mother because she wears *capulanas*. It is an African lady symbol. From when I was young our mothers used to carry us in *capulanas*, cover us. When you reach five years old, your first present is a *capulana*. We grew up giving *capulanas* as presents to our mothers. If you get married it is a symbol. The *capulana* is a symbol of the progression of life in Africa. The story of the *capulana* means so many things: lady of today, yesterday, and future lady.⁴⁰

Ana continued, defining her role in utilizing *capulanas*, “(I am) someone explaining to them the story of *capulanas*. I remind them of the story if they don't know how to see *capulanas*. I don't know if they know the meaning — it is my story.”⁴¹ Ana's statements demonstrate her use of *capulanas* as both a symbolic and didactic tool in her art. By incorporating *capulanas*, she expands the diversity of their uses, while focusing on implicit gender connections within the cloth to instruct viewers about their meaning.

Another exhibition held by *Núcleo de Arte* also aimed at community outreach and focused on recycling. Intended to demonstrate the potency of art, this exhibition was created in collaboration with the Christian Council of Mozambique's (*Conselho Cristão de Moçambique*) Transforming Arms into Plowshares (TAE, *Transformação de Armas em Enxadas*) Project.⁴²



Figure 4. *Núcleo de Arte* President Artur Vicente and Bishop Dom Dinis Sengulane at TAE exhibition, *Fale, Não Temas, Deus tem muito gen nesta cidade, Fale de Paz* (Speak, Don't Fear, God is in this City, Speak the Peace), Associação *Núcleo de Arte*. Photograph by Amy Schwartzott.

The TAE project, created in 1995 by Bishop Dom Dinis Sengulane within the Christian Council of Mozambique, is a countrywide project responsible for eradicating the millions of weapons believed to remain in the country after its wars (Figure 4).

TAE collects decommissioned weapons from Mozambican wars, renders them inoperable, and transforms them into art. TAE artists who create art from collected weapons use recycled both literally and conceptually, creating evocative art while deconstructing Mozambican history.⁴³ TAE's purposeful destruction and transformation of

recycled weapons of Mozambique's wars enables these arms to make visible the invisible concept of peace – through the symbolism of powerful artworks composed of former tools of killing.

The exhibition held at *Núcleo de Arte*, entitled *Speak, Don't Fear, God is in this City, Speak the Peace* (*Fale, Não Temas, Deus tem muita gente nesta cidade, Fale de Paz*), commemorated the date (October 4, 1992), when the General Peace Agreement was reached in Rome, ending Mozambique's extended conflict between RENAMO and FRELIMO. This exhibition's convergence of many sculptures created from weapons of war evoked the power of the TAE artworks, engaging viewers to remember the violence and destruction of Mozambique's protracted history of war.

An artwork created by Jorge José Mungambe (Makolwa) from *Núcleo de Arte* is particularly resonant of his personal connections to his country and its last war. His piece, *Looking Forward Towards Peace by Remembering the Past* (*Olhando para a frente em direção à paz, lembrando o passado*), represents a family devastated by war but moving ahead to survive. A mother and her young son struggle to move forward, while the baby on the mother's back looks at Mozambique's past. Makolwa explained his intentions with this powerful artwork:

With this work I hope to show people the guns that were used during the war to remind them of the destruction of Mozambique's struggle for independence and the civil war. By remembering the past, I hope to show Mozambicans and the world the power of peace through memories of what will never happen again.⁴⁴

The visible gun parts are clearly shown in the sculpture. A closer view reveals that the head of the young boy is composed of the pistol grip of a

destroyed weapon. Other parts of the artwork soon become identifiable, such as the trigger and trigger guard, and recoil spring from an AK-47. Closely examining the different pieces of destroyed arms in sculptures such as this one underscores the materiality of these weapons' original form and function. The clarity of the recognizable gun parts underpins their innate association with violence and death.

A further innovation of TAE's destruction and re-presentation of weapons is the visual language based on the materiality of the weapons used in their promotion of peace. TAE's narrative through the sublime imagery of weapons transformed presents an alternative identity for contemporary Mozambique. TAE's visual narrative moves beyond Mozambique's past reliance upon socialist revolutionary imagery wherein the pristine, iconic form of the AK-47 is employed.⁴⁵ TAE artists present contemporary Mozambican society glorifying peace instead of war – symbolized through instruments of war that have been destroyed and transformed.

TAE sculptures are not recognized with regard to standards of beauty traditionally associated with works of art. TAE artworks are complex and difficult to visually and emotionally process, as they are fraught with inherent memories of war-torn lives within Mozambique. In a historical context, generally Mozambicans are reticent in discussions involving the past wars. As an expected result of these artworks of powerfully embedded emotional messages, individuals are often hesitant to commit to purchasing these artworks. Many commissions for TAE artworks for public institutions such as museums continue to support this project financially.⁴⁶ Diverse in media and techniques, artists affiliated with *Núcleo de Arte* embrace artistic traditions and display a strong desire to promote the development and expression of new ideals related to contemporary art.

TANGIBLE – *KULUNGWANA*

The *Kulungwana* Association (*Associação Kulungwana*; originally *Kulungwana* – Association for Cultural Development) originated in 2005. *Kulungwana* is a Shangaan⁴⁷ word that refers to a sound people (mostly women) utter in ceremonies (weddings or parties) to show joy that all is progressing well. Executive Director Henny Matos describes the non-profit Association's goal as "the development of culture in broad terms,"⁴⁸ conveying that its main activity is a music festival held each year in May. In 2008, *Kulungwana* began operating its art venue, *Sala de Espera* (Waiting Room), in the *Baixa* area of Maputo. The gallery occupies a renovated former waiting room in the Central Railroad Station (*Estação Central dos Caminhos de Ferro*) on the train platform of this distinguished building that recently celebrated its one-hundredth anniversary (Figure 5).

Kulungwana's gallery is augmented by the imposing architecture of the green and white Victorian-style railroad station surrounding it, designed in the style of the late nineteenth-century Eiffel School of French architecture. During the colonial era, this grand, domed station served as the terminus of the most important railway line connecting the city of Lourenço Marques with mines located in South Africa and Zimbabwe. *Kulungwana's* Executive Director Matos explained that this space was specifically chosen for its striking architectural presence in order to effectively showcase Mozambican culture.⁴⁹

The site of *Kulungwana's* gallery readily illustrates an eye for attracting both a local and international audience based on its high visibility location. The Central Railway Station is one of Maputo's top destinations, underscored by its prominent appearance in several Mozambican travel guides. Additionally, the station continues to operate with limited services, and directly



Figure 5. *Kulungwana* Associação. CFM Railroad Station, Maputo. Photograph by Amy Schwartzott.

outside its walls is a stop for many of Maputo's local buses. One large room holds the art exhibitions, although much of the gallery activity takes place outside, on the platform of the railroad tracks.

Kulungwana's formal association and administrative infrastructure consists of a five-member directive board, headed by an Executive Director and four additional individuals, who meet regularly to discuss the Association's plans; an Artistic Commission of five members sets the program for yearly exhibitions based on proposals, while

the General Assembly, including the entire membership, is responsible for developing a yearly financial plan. *Kulungwana* began with funds totaling just over US\$330,000 from donations, grants, bequests, legacies, and concessions. Yearly revenues include proceeds, annual membership dues, contributions, subsidies, and bequests.⁵⁰

Multiple yearly exhibitions are carefully planned to balance different media and artists, and are generally characterized by five exhibitions per year. One exhibition that underscores specific themes *Kulungwana* asserts to promote culture

through the arts has evolved into a yearly exhibition. Growing Collection (*Colecção Crescent*), initially launched by *Kulungwana* in 2011, was inspired by a South African project, *The Creative Block*. According to Matos, *Growing Collection* has two specific goals, one intended to stimulate artistic creativity among the artists, and the second to promote local patronage through affordable prices for these miniature artworks.⁵¹ Focused on attracting both a local and international audience, most of *Kulungwana's* local patronage comes from middle and upper class Mozambicans interested in art, expats who travel in cultural circles, and artists who are more likely to attend exhibition openings than purchase works of art. Tourists comprise a healthy percentage of its audience as well.

Kulungwana selects both established and emerging artists who are invited to create an artwork specifically for this event. Each of the artists is provided with three individual small MDF (medium-density fiberboard) blocks (18 × 18 cm.) These blocks challenge artists to create on a relatively small scale, with the flexibility to use any style or additional media they choose. This exhibition, *Growing Collection*, parallels *Kulungwana's* overall strategy in allowing artists the freedom to submit diverse works for display in themed exhibitions.

Kulungwana's broader goals are realized through a grassroots technique that creates an ongoing dialogue between viewers and artists. On one level, *Kulungwana* focuses on promoting artists and their art, pushing artists to expand their creative vision, as Matos stated, “by using local means we can do things.”⁵² *Parnasianos* (October 2011), a *Kulungwana* exhibition featuring Cuban artist Ulisses Gomes Oviedo and artist and MUVART founder Gemuce, illustrates an exhibition in which both the goals of *Kulungwana* are achieved. Furthermore, this exhibition

demonstrates MUVART's favored platform of art exhibitions for presenting conceptually based art as a didactic tool to promote contemporary art.

Based on positivist ideals, Gemuce and Ulisses utilized the *Parnassian* Movement as a foundation to explore artistic representations of realism without romanticism.⁵³ *Parnassianism*, a French literary style that emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century, provided the inspiration for their exhibition.⁵⁴ Intended to “evoke art service to society or ‘art for art’s sake, (by) countering romanticism, excessive sentiment, and subjectivity,”⁵⁵ Gemuce defined how this exhibition strove to replicate the *Parnassianism*. The artists focused on achieving artistic standards of exactitude and impeccable workmanship, including classical subjects, rigidity of form, and emotional detachment (*Kulungwana. Parnasianos*, 2011).

With *Parnasianos*, Gemuce and Ulisses reopened an agenda of artistic debate surrounding romanticism, by focusing on a presentation of realism. Speaking of revisiting the mid-nineteenth-century *Paranassian* Movement, Gemuce refers to how the “[*Paranassian*] debate fits perfectly in the artistic practices of our day, [it is] intrinsically connected to artistic practices, born of an academic debate about academic concepts and between academic art” (*Kulungwana. Parnasianos*, 2011). In a literal denouncement of romanticism, *Parnasianos* presented two divergent views (the artists’ interpretations) of realism explored through art. Gemuce’s stark black and white pen and ink drawings presented graphic, realistic portrayals of unlikely dreamlike situations. His interpretation of realism consisted of “black and white dashes in china ink, a rescue of human figures in their confrontation with states of consciousness, composing messages familiar to our collective unconscious” (*Kulungwana.*

Parnasianos, 2011). Defining his artworks, Gemuce commented, “I’m memorializing this period (*Parnassianism*) right now. I am deconstructing art also, by only using black and white. I am creating a moment of provocation – let’s forget colors.”⁵⁶

As a counterpoint to Gemuce’s stark imagery, Ulisses presented a much more literal interpretation of realism with colorful painterly landscape scenes framed by roughly hewn wooden recyelia. *Parnasianos*’s two dramatically different interpretations of realism vary in approach, technique, media and representation, inspired by intense contemplation on realism. The intensity of the exhibition emerged from how these two views, presented by Ulisses and Gemuce, represent an opposition to romanticism and to each other as if squared off in an artistic duel. The juxtaposition of Ulisse’s painterly mixed media landscapes and Gemuce’s stark black and white pen and ink drawings created a palpable tension in the gallery. An addition to this lively artistic debate included a symbolic figure: a moving and speaking artist’s model (Figure 6). Wholly painted white, he wore only white, tight-fitting shorts and a white knitted tam to cover his hair. The figure evoked a spirit, or perhaps *the* spirit of realism. He alternated between assuming classical sculptural poses of Michelangelo and Rodin, to melodramatic outbursts where he enthusiastically recited traditional poetry. This spiritual figure served as a conduit to the stark reality of Gemuce’s graphic works, while creating an abstract foil to the lush, variegated mixed media paintings of Ulisse’s interpreted reality.

The *Parnassian* figure underscored a literal and conceptual representation of realism – as he immersed himself into the art, but then quickly rebounded back into real life. Through their conceptual and spirited exploration of realism,



Figure 6. *Parnasianos* exhibition featuring artists Pompilio Hilário (Gemuce) and Ulisse Gomes Oviedo at *Kulungwana*. Photograph by Amy Schwartzott.

Gemuce and Ulisses presented a striking commentary on the multilayered conceptualization between art and life. Speaking about *Parnasianos* and its aims, Gemuce commented,

In general, this exhibition talks about realism. The theme was talking about how artists imitate real life. But it is imitating in a graphic way. Sculpture and painting imitate. This man [white spirit figure] does the inverse – he goes back into art – but then he comes back to life. My pieces and Ulisses’ are about confronting – about black and white and the gray in the middle.⁵⁷

Like the *Parnasianos* exhibition, *Kulungwana* strives to present the exploration of contemporary Mozambican art in its varied multimedia exhibitions. By challenging artistic expression through diverse thematic exhibits, *Kulungwana* and its affiliated artists promote the expression and ideals of contemporary art in Mozambique.

**CONCEPTUAL, TEMPORAL, AND TANGIBLE:
MUVART, TDM BIENAL, ASSOCIAÇÃO
NÚCLEO DE ARTE, AND ASSOCIAÇÃO
KULUNGWANA**

Contemporary art's discursive spaces (MUVART, TDM *Bienal*, *Associação Núcleo de Arte*, and *Associação Kulungwana*) in Mozambique are conceptual, tangible, and temporal. At the same time, these spaces are also porous, permeable, and fluid. In this paper I have striven to illustrate the lack of boundaries between contemporary arts spaces and between artists in Maputo, Mozambique. Members of MUVART frequently exhibit their art at *Kulungwana's* gallery; artists associated with *Núcleo de Arte* create artworks that are both accepted into and awarded prizes in the TDM *Bienal*; and members of MUVART are also members of *Núcleo de Arte*, where they frequently utilize workshop areas there in the creation of their art.

Similarly, there is a great deal of overlap in the goals set by these varied organizations, arts spaces, and movements in their quest to seek the development and proliferation of contemporary art in Mozambique. Each of these spaces, whether conceptual, temporal, or tangible, is focused on promoting and circulating contemporary art. This artistic advancement has been realized through the mounting of workshops (*Núcleo de Arte*, MUVART), exhibitions (MUVART, *Kulungwana*, *Núcleo de Arte*, TDM *Bienal*) and cultural outreach projects (*Núcleo de Arte*,

MUVART, *Kulungwana*, TDM *Bienal*). The artists and artworks that create these varied exhibition spaces draw from individual identities, build from the past, and develop new media and techniques. Deficiencies in governmental support and its lack of patronage tremendously contributed to Mozambique's currently underdeveloped arts scene. Despite this, diverse yet cohesive organizations have assumed leadership roles in promoting and supporting the expansion of the contemporary arts in Mozambique. Contemporary art and its practitioners in Mozambique find Maputo's burgeoning arts community fertile ground for experimentation with new forms of expression and venues for collaboration in the further development and continuation of a contemporary art aesthetic and diverse platforms for its display.

NOTES

Amy Schwartzott (zott@ufl.edu) recently defended her dissertation titled *Weapons and Refuse as Media – The Potent Politics of Recycling in Contemporary Mozambican Urban Arts*, and she received her PhD from the University of Florida in May 2014. Her dissertation research on contemporary Mozambican artists has resulted in a Centre for Conflict Studies Fellowship (2011–2012) and two Fulbright awards. She has also published several articles focused on Mozambique's *Transformação de Armas em Enxadas* (Transforming Weapons into Plowshares) project.

- 1 Pompilio Hilário (Gemuce), interview, Maputo, Mozambique, August 17, 2009.
- 2 Gilberto Cossa, interview, Maputo, Mozambique, August 18, 2009.
- 3 IMF World Economic Outlook (WEO) April 2013, (www.imf.org/external/pubst/), first accessed June 3, 2013.
- 4 Otilia Aquino, interview, Maputo, Mozambique, November 14, 2010.

- 5 Most recently, in 2009 Mozambique's first institution of higher education devoted to the arts was established, Institution of Higher Learning of Arts and Culture (*Instituto Superior de Artes e Cultura*), in Matola. ENAV, devoted to the arts education of young Mozambicans in middle school and higher education, began in 1978.
- 6 China and the republics that comprised the USSR illustrate additional examples of how governmental uses of art to promote its ideals have led to similar struggles in the development of contemporary art.
- 7 Additional early MUVART members included Marcos Bonifácio (Muthewuye), Celestino Mondlane (Mudaulane), Luis Muiéngua (Muiéngua), Quentin Lambert, Anésia Manjate, Carmen Muianga, Titos Mabota, Ivan Serra, and Vânia Lemos.
- 8 Gemuce, interview, Maputo, Mozambique, August 17, 2009.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 "Do Manifesto" (www.muvar.t.blogspot.com) first accessed November 10, 2010.
- 11 Gemuce, interview, Maputo, Mozambique, July 24, 2008.
- 12 In 2003 MUVART held its first exhibition, with participation by its founding artist-members and two new artists during the *Festival D'Agosto* at *Centro Cultural Franco-Moçambicano* in Maputo.
- 13 Matequenha, interview, Maputo, Mozambique, July 27, 2011.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 In doing so, Matequenha draws upon invented traditions, as he presents Hobsbawm and Ranger's definition of *traditions*, "which appear to be old (but) are actually quite recent in origin and sometimes largely invented" (Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983, p. 1).
- 16 Matequenha, interview, Maputo, Mozambique, July 27, 2011.
- 17 Jorge Dias, Interview, Maputo, Mozambique, August 17, 2009.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Gemuce, interview, Maputo, Mozambique, February 24, 2011.
- 20 Selected uses of calabashes in African contexts include as regalia and royal prestige items (Cameroon Grasslands); as Hausa and Fulani adornment and status objects (Niger); as household embellishment (Nigeria); as well as water and other storage containers throughout Africa.
- 21 Prize winnings are considerable. In the last TDM Bienal of 2011 the prize winnings were allocated as follows: first prize, 150,000.00 meticaís (US\$5,000); second prize, 100,000.00 meticaís (US\$3350.00); and third prize, 50,000 meticaís (US\$1695.00).
- 22 In 2011 *Bienal* budget reductions resulted in only one jury that was responsible for both selection into the exhibition and its prizewinners.
- 23 Since 1993, too many individuals to mention here have served on both initial selection and prize winning selection juries for the TDM *Bienal*.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 TDM 1991. *Exposição TDM*, Maputo: TDM.
- 26 Adolfo Boane, interview, Maputo, Mozambique, March 23, 2011.
- 27 I must thank Drew Thompson for pointing out the fact that Hunguana held important governmental positions before transitioning into the private world. These included National Director of Labor (1975) and subsequent appointments by former President Samora Machel: Minister of Justice (1978), Deputy Minister of the Interior (1983) and Minister of Information (1986).
- 28 Domingos, interview, Mozambique, October 6, 2011.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 Domingos, Synopsis, *Vandalizadores de cabos de fibra óptica e a máscara do vigilante*.
- 31 Victor Sala, interview, Maputo, Mozambique, November 4, 2011.
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Alda Costa cites 1938 as the date *Associação Núcleo de Arte* was founded. Unverified

documents I have viewed at *Associação Núcleo de Arte* suggest an earlier date.

No Author, *Associação Núcleo de Arte*, n.p.

Artur Vincente (Nongwhenye), interview, Maputo, Mozambique, January 3, 2013.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Artur Vincente (Nongwhenye), interview, Maputo, Mozambique, March 15, 2011.

Matswa Vilankulos (Ana), Maputo, Mozambique, May 8, 2011.

Matswa Vilankulos (Ana) Maputo, Mozambique, May 21, 2011.

This exhibition took place on October 6, 2010, directly following Mozambique's *Dia do Paz* Day of Peace, celebrated annually on October 4.

I have written elsewhere on how the past lives of recycled materials (weapons) inscribe meaning as these objects are transformed into art: in Schwartzott (2013, in press).

Jorge José Munguambe (Makolwa), interview, August 1, 2011, Maputo, Mozambique.

The current Mozambican flag, adopted in 1983, clearly portrays the image of an AK-47 assault rifle fitted with a bayonet, crossed with a hoe to create the shape of an X. The Mozambican flag has included an AK-47 since 1975. Following attainment of independence in 1975 the FRELIMO flag was adopted, to which the cog, hoe, book and AK-47 have subsequently been added.

The British Museum, owner of nine TAE artworks, is a great patron of TAE art. All of these works were commissioned by British Museum African Art Curator Chris Spring.

Shangaan/Shangana is an indigenous Mozambican language from the Bantu family with Tsonga roots. Shangana is predominantly spoken in southern Mozambique, encompassing the capital of Maputo, in the Maputo region.

Henny Matos, interview, Maputo, Mozambique, March 1, 2011.

Ibid.

Kulungwana — associação para o Deenvolvimento Cultural (www.cais-do-mundo.com; accessed June 1, 2013).

Henny Matos, interview, Maputo, Mozambique, March 1, 2011.

Ibid.

Gemuce, interview, Maputo, Mozambique, October 15, 2011.

Theophile Gautier and Leconte de Lisle founded the *Parnassianism* movement. The emergent literary style represented a reaction against the overtly sentimental style of romanticism, a popular theme of the era.

Gemuce, interview, Maputo, Mozambique, October 15, 2011.

Ibid.

Ibid.

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