

Sokunge: Shadows of Resistance

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Abstract

My thesis work and research explores various forms of cultural resistance and the use of symbolism and meaning making to modify power and contest domination. The work is situated at the intersections of sculpture, the body, and sound. The research explores liminal spaces in postcolonial contexts and how these spaces are breeding grounds for hybridity, tensions and harmony. In these spaces, the body, through dance and gesture, interacts with sculpture and sound in ways that create a euphemistic and nuanced lexicon of resistance and negotiation with power.

Keywords

Cultural resistance, hybridity, Postcolonial, sound, negotiation, dance, sculpture, abrogation, appropriation

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INTRODUCTION

My thesis explores cultural resistance as both a language and research material. Cultural resistance is non-confrontational and negotiative as defined by Matthew Arnold in his book, *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) . According to Stephen Duncombe, “cultural resistance is the practice of using¹ meanings and symbols, that is, culture, to contest and

1 Honan, Park. *New Blackfriars* 52, no. 617 (1971): 476-77. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43245338>.

combat a dominant power, often constructing a different vision of the world in the process". My sculptures and performance² originate from this place of agency that constructs a 'different vision of the world'. This vision merges objects from different cultural backgrounds into assemblages and constellations. These forms serve as a type of resistance to, and a negotiation with, the static colonially imposed socio-cultural systems. In physics and electronics, resistance is defined as the degree to which a substance prevents the flow of an electric current. My artwork embraces a similar notion of resistance in that it seeks to disrupt the normalized colonial power structures and the flow of ideas that support them. I use sculpture, dance, sound, assemblage and found objects to explore everyday forms of resistance in the (African) postcolonial context.

2 Duncombe, Stephen. *Cultural Resistance Reader*. London: Verso, 2002. page 3



CONTEXTUAL

From confrontational to cultural resistance

“This is what allows us to assert that, by dancing publicly for the benefit of power, the ‘postcolonised subject’ is providing his or her loyalty and by compromising with the corrupting control that state power tends to exercise at all levels of everyday life (over benefits, services, pleasures . . .) the subject is reaffirming that it is incontestable-precisely in order the better to play with it and modify it whenever



possible.” - Achille Mbembe³

My art works and research are grounded in the idea of cultural resistance as opposed to the conventional, obvious, confrontational style of resistance. These two categories of resistance are not mutually exclusive, but describe two different socio-political contexts in which power and subjects can exist. In my research I have discovered that one

3 Mbembe, Joseph-Achille. *On the Postcolony*. University of California Press, 2001.

may or may not precede the other. For the purposes of this thesis I will approach these two types as interdependent. Oftentimes in the history of Pan African political struggles, one form would lead to the other but they need not exist in successive order or hierarchy. My focus here is on cultural resistance and its complexities.

It is important to understand that the idea and meaning of resistance has transformed through the years in the context of pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial Africa. In tracing the transformation of the meaning of resistance, one has to look at the two categories of resistance movements that a number of independent African nations experienced. The first is the armed struggle and confrontational phase; the second, the cultural resistance phase that encompasses several areas from the search of a new cultural identity to economic freedom. In this second phase, the subaltern groups seeks to rebuild new identities in trying to grapple with their new position as a 'Free nations'.

Most Sub-Saharan nations including Zimbabwe, Kenya and South Africa had their first phase of resistance movements and liberation struggles thwarted by the colonizers and only gained independence in second attempts through armed resistance. Cultural resistance was a common strategy used in between the first and second liberation attempts when the subaltern resisters were attempting to regroup and negotiate their positions. This first phase of resistance taking the form of guerilla warfare is well documented in postcolonial African literature and theory. The matrix of this category of resistance is located within revolutionary political parties like The *Mau Mau* of Kenya led by Field Marshal Dedan Kimathi, *Chama Chama Mapinduzi* of Tanzania led by Julius Nyerere, the United Gold Coast convention of Ghana, the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU PF) of Zimbabwe and the African National Congress (ANC) of South Africa. These revolutionary parties created and shared common structures and ideologies for armed resistance and guerilla warfare.

For the purposes of this paper, and in order to understand the

transformation from armed conflict to cultural negotiation in the postcolonial African context, I focus on the period from January 1, 1956 (which marks the official independence of Sudan), followed by that of the Gold Coast (otherwise known as Ghana) on March 6, 1957, all the way to April 27, 1994 (the day that marks the official fall of apartheid and the steps towards an independent South Africa). This is the period during which most sub-Saharan African countries achieved their independence from former colonial powers. In this period we see an overt picture of resistance— one of armed struggle built on political and military engagement through guerilla-style warfare. In Southern Africa this kind of resistance was supported and funded by communist China and communist Russia who provided military resources and ideology for these African nations involved in armed struggle.

Linked to this tide of national black consciousness is “Negritude”,⁴ a cultural theory that also influenced my thinking and work. The Negritude Movement is a framework of critique and literary theory, developed mainly by francophone intellectuals, writers, and politicians of the African diaspora during the 1930s, it began as a political response to the experience of French colonialism. At the forefront of this theory are people like Leopold Senghor, Amilcar Cabral and Léon-Gontran Damas. This theory influenced armed and cultural resistance in most parts of Africa. The poetry of Leopold Senghor provided the earliest form for these ideas, followed by the radical writings of Amilcar Cabral. Cabral, in a collection of speeches entitled “Back to the Source”, effectively and eloquently outlined these ideas making him

4 Négritude is a cultural movement launched in 1930s Paris by French-speaking black graduate students from France’s colonies in Africa and the Caribbean territories. These black intellectuals converged around issues of race identity and black internationalist initiatives to combat French imperialism. They found solidarity in their common ideal of affirming pride in their shared black identity and African heritage, and reclaiming African self-determination, self-reliance, and self-respect. *Négritude*. <http://exhibitions.nypl.org/africanaage/essay-negritude.html#leopold>.



Fig.1 Hardcore Detroit dancers in Mbende /Jerusarema Techno 2008. Photo credit: @ Rowan Renee

one of the leading theorist in Francophone and Anglophone African resistance movements. One of Amilcar Cabral's famous statements is "Struggle is daily action against ourselves and against the enemy."⁵

The intellectual architects of this movement converged around issues of race, identity and black internationalist initiatives to combat French imperialism. They found solidarity in their common

5 Cabral Amilcar. 1973. *Return to the Source: Selected Speeches by Amilcar Cabral*. Monthly Review Press with Africa Information Service.

ideal of affirming pride in their shared African identity and heritage, and in reclaiming African self-determination, self-reliance, and self-respect. The Négritude movement signaled an awakening of race consciousness for Africans on the mainland and in the African Diaspora. What attracts me to this theory is its collaborative thrust in considering the African diaspora as an equal stakeholder in cultural resistance initiatives and community. This interconnection and exchange of ideas between the African diaspora and the mainland inspired my approach to the performance piece, *Mbende/Jerusalem Tehkno*, see fig 1. In this project I created a hybrid dance integrating Detroit *Jit and Mbende /Jerusalem*, two dance forms from different parts of the world that used subtle tactics of resistance to “speak truth to power” . I engaged dance in Zora Neale Hurston’s terms as a form of contained violence and warfare. I also explored dance as an “everyday form of cultural resistance”.⁶

“From the perspectives of postcolonial theory and fiction, resistance is an act of re-historicizing and rewriting aimed at demystifying presentist approaches to African contexts”.⁷ My creative work and research investigate non-confrontational and negotiative forms of engaging with and challenging domination. I’m interested in exploring what resistance looks, sounds or feels like when people are not afforded the luxury of open confrontation to repressive authority. Concepts such as hybridity⁸ as defined by have for centuries been

6 Scott, James C. *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. Yale University Press, 2008.

7 Mzali, Ines. *Postcolonial Readings of Resistance and Negotiation in Selected Contemporary African Writing*. Library and Archives Canada = Bibliothèque et Archives Canada, 2013.

8 The flow of information and the movement of people in this ever evolving, interconnected and interactive world have been a profound reason in the creation of new cultures in the form of mixing of local and foreign ideas and values. This kind of mixing is a tiny part of the loose and slippery meaning of hybridity. The term hybridity is used in many areas such as hybrid economy (the mixture of private enterprises and government active participation in global economy) (Koizumi,

used culturally by subordinate groups as forms of resistance, subtly subverting messages and actions that the dominant groups understood merely at face value.

Cultural resistance is not a new phenomenon. It's a historically universal stance to repression by most subaltern groups in response to domination. In the late 1800s in South Eastern Africa, tribes repressed by the ferocious military might of Shaka Zulu, found ways of expressing their discontent through everyday forms of resistance such as flight, dissention, tributary/tax evasion. Dance forms were developed as stratagem against this repressive system. This lexicon of resistance is not necessarily overt and confrontational, but constitutes what Scott calls "everyday forms of resistance", he says "This is the most common form of opposition to oppression. It consists of foot dragging, non-compliance, pilfering, desertion, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage, flight etc".⁹

Resorting to cultural and other subtle ways of engaging with the antagonist is a common stance among 'weak' or subaltern groups. The conventional definition of resistance is usually hardcore, confrontational and abrasive. My work explores some of these more subtle negotiative forms of resistance within violent colonial histories.

In Zimbabwe, resistance against colonial domination was performed and demonstrated through daily gestural actions such as naming, nick-naming and dancing. The colonizers had several names ascribed to them but these names were only used in closed circuits; the colonizers were not aware of them. Scott observes that certain critical

2010); hybrid cars, hybrid language (creole and patois), and most importantly in relation to this study is in the arena of hybrid cultures. *UKEssays.com*.<https://www.ukessays.com/essays/cultural-studies/hybridity-concept-in-postcolonial-studies-cultural-studies-essay.php>.(November 2018)

9 Scott, James C. *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985.



Fig.2 ZANU forces fighting the guerilla war in Rhodesia 1965. Photo credit: Zimbabwe Defence forces

conversations occur only in the circles of the subordinates, away from the public sphere. Scott refers to these as “hidden transcripts”.¹⁰ These “hidden transcripts” complement and contrast conversations and gestures performed in public by the subordinate. Names such as *Madhunamutuna* (translated as filthy, stinking trouble makers) were used as derogatory nicknames in obscene mimicking dances describing and making fun of the colonizers in a style that recalls Mikhail

10 Scott, James C.. *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. Yale Univ. Press, 2009. p.27

Bakhtin's ideas of vulgarity and the body grotesque: undermining the language and etiquette of officialdom as resistance. In his book, *Rabelais and His World*¹¹, Bakhtin talks about the use of the carnival, grotesque realism and the grotesque body among other things as codes of resistance that undermine the officialdom of oppressive systems in the Soviet society in during the 1800's.

Bakhtin theorized that people did not trust seriousness, which they saw as the language of power, hypocrisy, and violence. Instead people connected through laughter and the use of uncouth language. One of Zimbabwe's war time music composers, Comrade Chinx (1955-2017) is known for some of his crude lyrics in songs such as "Maruza imi" (translated :You have lost the battle), These lyrics would insult the colonizer by way of crude mocking and jest. In the lyrics of the song Maruza imi Comrade Chinx has a verse that says:

*"Mukaona muvengi odai ave pedo kudzokera kwake,
kumusha ka kunonhuwa nhamo kune masango asura zai,
mazitama anonyepa, mazimhino akabhenda*

Mazimhanza anokuya dovi

Kune vakadzi vaneusimbe

*Vanoita basa rekurodza nzara dzekuno kwenya
veZimbabwe"*¹²

Loose Translation

*"When you see the enemy acting as such, it means he is
about to go back to his land that stinks of poverty with
forest that fart a smell like boiled eggs*

*A land surrounded by people with big flat foreheads that
resemble peanut butter grinding stones,*

11 Bakhtin, M. M. *Rabelais and His World*. Cambridge, Mass: M.I.T. Press, 1968.

12 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CEfKne2rwm0>

*a land where lazy gluttonous white women spend the day
sharpening nails to scratch Zimbabwean people's itch".*

Songs like this were common war chants and morale boosters that meant to undermine and trivialize the colonizer's assumed cultural superiority. In looking for ways to register discontent towards an oppressive system that one lives in, one has to negotiate for space in creative ways.

The history of resistance in the postcolonial context is directly linked to the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885¹³ otherwise known as the 'scramble for Africa'. This event ushered in a permanent chapter of genocide and cultural epistemicide so severe that the continent still grapples with it to this day. It is also pertinent to reference the early Arab slave trade in East Africa before the 14th century in realizing that there were several forms of cultural resistance against this kind of domination as well.

In his book *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*,¹⁴ James C. Scott argues that the more absolute the repressive power, the more

13 The Berlin Conference of 1884–1885 marked the climax of the European competition for territory in Africa, a process commonly known as the “Scramble for Africa”. During the 1870s and early 1880s European nations such as Great Britain, France, and Germany began looking to Africa for natural resources for their growing industrial sectors as well as a potential market for the goods these factories produced. As a result, these governments sought to safeguard their commercial interests in Africa and began sending scouts to the continent to secure treaties from indigenous peoples or their supposed representatives. Similarly, Belgium’s King Leopold II, who aspired to increase his personal wealth by acquiring African territory, hired agents to lay claim to vast tracts of land in central Africa. To protect Germany’s commercial interests, German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck, who was otherwise uninterested in Africa, felt compelled to stake claims to African land. “Berlin Conference of 1884–1885.” 2015. *Oxford Reference*. January 13. <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780195337709.001.0001/acref-9780195337709-e-0467>. 15

14 Scott, James C. 2009. *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. Yale Univ. Press.

euphemistic the resistance against it. By this, Scott is alluding to cultural resistance as the most sustainable and practical option when subaltern groups do not have the privilege of open confrontation. The period of Arab enslavement and colonization was characterized by hybridization, assimilation and exogamy in a period of 'Arabization'.¹⁵ There have been several forms of cultural resistance engaging with this kind of repression. Most, however, have taken the form of hybridity and negotiation. One example is, the *Chewa* Muslims, commonly known as *Machawa* in Zimbabwe, found a way to negotiate their own cultural space by creating a subculture combining Arab/Muslim culture and their traditional *Chewa* ideologies to create a syncretic faith and governance system as a survival mechanism.¹⁶ To fully explore the idea of resistance in the African postcolonial context, one needs to understand the teleological nature of resistance in relationship to the complex history of colonization in Africa.

15 Is the conquest of a non-Arab area and a cultivation of Arabic and Islamic cultural influence on non-Arab populations, the result is a language and cultural shift by gradual adoption. "Arabization and Its Discontents: The Rise of the Amazigh Movement in North Africa." n.d. *Taylor & Francis*.

16 Islam was introduced in Malawi in the 15th century by Swahili Muslims from Tanzania who also brought in the slave trade. One of the slave trade routes was Nkhosakota where one of the notable Swahili-Arab slave traders, Salim-bin Abdullah, also known as Jumbe, a Zanzibar trader of mixed Arab and African descent, set up his headquarters on the shore of Lake Malawi in the 1840s. From here he organized his expeditions to obtain slaves and ship them across the lake to East African markets. Salim-bin Abdullah's influence in Malawi gave way to syncretic beliefs combining Swahili-Islamic beliefs and the traditional beliefs of several ethnic groups in Malawi. Unknown. 1970. "A Dark and Bloodstained Past, Slavery in Malawi." *Malawian Explorer*. January 1. <http://exploremalawi.blogspot.com/2012/07/a-dark-and-bloodstained-past-slavery-in.html>.

Dance as both a literal and metaphoric form of resisting and negotiating power

In his book, *Can't Stop Won't Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation*, Jeff Chang quotes Zora Neale Hurston on her assessment of African American dance as contained violence and warfare. She wrote, "No matter how violent it seems, African American dances seem to suggest that they can do more"¹⁷. Here she was referring to the disciplined, concealed anger and possible violence that defines Afro-American dance. The "suggestion to do more" is not only a boundary marking message, but the packaging of militant ideas in dance form. Jeff Chang refers to this discipline as "restrained violence" when he speaks about the Hip Hop Battle dances in the streets of the Bronx in the 1970's.

My thesis video/performance work titled *Mbende/Jerusalem Tehkno*, combines two dance forms, *Mbende/Jerusalem* and Detroit Jit, to create a hybrid dance. *Mbende/Jerusalem*¹⁸ is a traditional Zimbabwean dance used as a form of resistance in the history of Zimbabwe. The dance first appeared around 1840 during the in the

17 *Can't Stop Won't Stop: a History of the Hip-Hop Generation*. St. Martin's Press, 2008.

18 *Mbende/Jerusalem* is characterized by a single polyrhythmic drum sound accompanied by woodblock clapper sounds, hand clapping, yodeling and blowing whistles. Unlike most dances, *Jerusalem* does not rely on intricate foot stamping or many drummers. Instead, the music is performed by one master drummer. In the course of the dance, men often crouch while jerking both arms and vigorously kicking the ground with the right leg in imitation of a burrowing mole. Before colonial rule, this ancient fertility dance was called *Mbende*, the Shona word for "mole", which was regarded as a symbol of fertility, sexuality and family Hatitye, Eddie K. "Traditional Dances of Zimbabwe." <https://www.musicinafrica.net/>.2015

second *Chimurenga*¹⁹, there was a first *Chimurenga*²⁰ which was a series of armed conflicts that preceded the second *Chimurenga* in 1896.

Mbende/Jerusarema played an important role in both times of struggles as a dance of resistance,

"[i]t is a dance of distraction, diversion, and disguise. The combatants in the guerilla war leading to the fall of Rhodesia²¹ and the birth of Independent Zimbabwe, practiced the dance as a symbolic gesture of their military strength and nationalistic pride as well as a demonstration of their collective survival skills. Its beauty, vibrancy, and energy made Mbende/Jerusarema a therapeutic dance for many war-weary and exhausted combatants".²²

19 *Chimurenga* is a Shona word which means to fight or struggle. This word is used to denote the first and second liberation wars between Zimbabwe's indigenous people and the British colonial forces. Traditionally, *chimurenga* or *bongozo* is a fight in which everyone at hand participates. The word's modern interpretation has been extended to describe a struggle for human rights, political dignity and social justice. http://www.zambuko.com/mbirapage/resource_guide/pages/music/chimurenga.html.

20 First *Chimurenga*, or uprising in Southern Rhodesia was a complex set of struggles over land, cattle, and taxes rather than a planned, unified movement intended to overthrow the whites; neither the Africans nor the British were unified. There exists various weaknesses in scholarship due to the inherent lack of primary source material available from indigenous perspectives. In order to explore largely ignored aspects of African resistance to colonialism which was important in shaping later twentieth century African liberation movements,

21 Rhodesia was a country in southern Africa from 1965 to 1979, equivalent in territory to modern Zimbabwe. Rhodesia was the *de facto* successor state to the British colony of Southern Rhodesia, which had been self-governing since achieving responsible government in 1923. After the (second *Chimurenga*) war of Independence from 1966 to 1979 the country became known as Zimbabwe.

22 Asante, Kariamu Welsh. "Introduction." *Journal of Black Studies* 1985: p 355-56.

The earliest record of *Mbende/Jerusarema* starts in the 1840's in a place called Murehwa, northeast of the capital, Harare. According to Welsh Asante, "This dance was used as decoy in the 'Mfecane'²³ wars against the invading Ndebele tribe. "

Once the Shona warriors had positioned themselves and the enemy approached close enough to attack the dancers and drummers, an opening in the lines allowed a surprise attack on the enemy. Those too old and too young to fight were sometimes used in the Mbende. They would be perfect decoys. When the men take the dancing field, they usually do so individually, although they may dance in small groups depending on the size of the drumming and percussion orchestra. By dancing themselves, the old men help to create the illusion that they will be easily overpowered, offering little resistance, because the enemy would only see women, old men, and young boys".²⁴

The Ndebele were a fierce tribe originating from South Africa and were on the move seeking new settlements after breaking away from the Zulu nation under the legendary King Shaka²⁵. They finally settled in

23 The word *mfecane* is derived from Xhosa terms: ukufaca "to become thin from hunger" and fetcani "starving intruders." In Zulu, the word means "crushing." *Mfecane* refers to a period of political disruption and population migration in Southern Africa which occurred during the 1820s and 1830s. It is also known by the Sotho name *difaqane*. Eurocentric historians in the late 19th and early 20th centuries regarded the *Mfecane* as the result of aggressive nation-building by the Zulu under the rule of Shaka and the Ndebele under Mzilikazi.

24 Asante, Kariamu Welsh. "The Jerusarema Dance of Zimbabwe." *Journal of Black Studies* 15, no. 4 (06 1985): 381-403.

25 Shaka, also spelled Chaka or Tshaka, (born c. 1787—died Sept. 22, 1828), legendary chief and warlord (1816–28), founder of Southern Africa's Zulu Empire. He is credited with creating a fighting force that devastated the entire region. His life is the subject of numerous colorful and exaggerated stories, many of which are debated by historians. He is famous for inventing military tactics such as the Cow



Fig. 3 Julia Chigamba, performing Mbende/Jerusalem 2016. Photo credit: Robert Taylor

Several years after the Mfecane wars, on 12 September 1890, a band of British Colonial mercenaries known as the Pioneer Column arrived in Zimbabwe marking the beginning of the colonial era. *Mbende/Jerusalem* appeared in these years of war against the British colonialists as a pre-war dance for psychological armament. This war is known as the first *Chimurenga*. Because of this function, the dance had been criminalized earlier in 1910 by the colonial government when they overpowered the indigenous people in the first *Chimurenga*. The missionary church deemed the dance as hyper-sexual and immoral. Mbende, however, immediately re-appeared under the guise of a new name, 'Jerusalem', which was a reference to the Holy city 'Jerusalem'.

Horn Method and he also designed the assegai (short spear). These changed the face of southern Africa in the mid 1800's. His military prowess and thirst for power also opened up territories for colonization by the Boer and the British in Southern Africa. Morris, Donald R. "Shaka." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Inc., September 18, 2018. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Shaka-Zulu-chief>.

26 Asante, Kariamu Welsh. "The Jerusalem Dance of Zimbabwe." *Journal of Black Studies* 15, no. 4 (1985): 381-403. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2784208>. [2]



Fig. 4 Mcghee brothers, *Pioneers of Detroit Jit*, 2014. Photo credit: @ Pete Deevakul

This dissimulative renaming allowed the dance to continue to live under a new signifier. Today the dance is known by its dual name Mbende/Jerusarema. By the Second *Chimurenga* war, the dance had become associated with a host of complex political connotations. In his book *Music, Power and Being in Colonial Zimbabwe*²⁷, Mhoze Chikowero describes how *Mbende/Jerusarema* was a way to gather around and politicize the masses to support the guerilla warfare by teaching them the origin of the dance and its association with resistance. In July 1964, the second *Chimurenga* war of liberation began as a series of uprisings against the British settler forces. The dance *Mbende/Jerusarema* played a role as an integral part of guerilla warfare against the British colonialists in the second *Chimurenga* war.

Detroit Jit was created around 1975 by the McGhee brothers in [black]

27 6. Mhoze Chikowero. *African Music, Power, and Being in Colonial Zimbabwe*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015. <https://muse.jhu.edu/> (accessed November 24, 2018).

Detroit. This dance is characterized by fast and furious offbeat foot work and comes out of a troubled period in Detroit when the city was still lurking in the shadows of the 1967 riots. White flight had escalated, de-industrialization and governmental neglect was rife in a city whose demographic was 83% black.

This was a defining period for Detroit and would change the character of the city forever. The previous year, 1974, Coleman Young became the first black mayor of Detroit. According to Thomas Sugrue, in his book, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*²⁸, post-World War II city planning was highly segregated and this created potential conditions for racial problems and inevitably among them, the exodus of large numbers of the white demographic along with their economic capital. Detroit Jit emerged from this socio-cultural and political context as an embodied response to the racist and repressive system. Dwight Conquergood articulates embodied response as "... the whole realm of complex finely nuanced meaning that is embodied, tacit, intoned, gestured, improvised, co-experienced, covert, and all the more deeply meaningful because of its refusal to be spelled out"²⁹. There is an extremely limited scholarship on Detroit Jit as an embodied response and a form of cultural resistance. In my research however I have discovered how communities in Detroit created and continue to create new artforms and new cultures that not only defy the odds of their extremely difficult conditions but also seem to be saying to the system we will survive without you. Detroit Jit is one of these voices. A good example of this subtle defiance can be found in Tommy Walker's famous apparel label 'Detroit vs Everybody'³⁰. Bryce Detroit, founder of the Detroit

28 Sugrue, Thomas J. *Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005. Accessed November 24, 2018. ProQuest eBook Central.

29 Conquergood, Dwight. "Performance Studies: Interventions and Radical Research." *TDR/The Drama Review* 46, no. 2, 06 2002: 145-56

30 A homegrown label, the DETROIT VS EVERYBODY brand embodies the pride and unapologetic spirit of Detroit. The idea of his label is positioned in resistance

African Music Institute,³¹ asserts that Detroit Jit, just like Techno, was a response to what he calls “intentional and targeted economic violence” on the black community of Detroit. In economic dire straits people have very limited options and means by which to express themselves, dance became one of these means for black people in a de-industrialised Detroit of the late 70’s. Detroit was the forgotten city left to die, Jit was somewhat a register of discontent and grievance and against this rejection and economic ostracization.

On the other side of the Atlantic, Zimbabwe’s economy began a downward spiral circa 1999 at the beginning of the land redistribution program,³² an economic instrument meant to balance ownership and use of the land, the result of an unbalanced colonial land distribution structure. Given these politically charged backgrounds, my goal was to explore the overlaps and similarities between the two spaces and research how people engaged in cultural resistance and the negotiation of space. I was interested in the place of sculpture, in the conversation of resistance and in relationship to the body as a reservoir of history,

to the media’s continual bashing and lack of cultural recognition for the place that has contributed so much to the world and society. <https://vseverybody.com/pages/our-story>

31 Bryce Detroit is a native Detroiter spearheading multiple cultural and community revitalization projects in the North End. He’s the founder and President of D.A.M.I., Detroit African Music Institute. He is a hip-hop artist and music producer who is devoted to building a resurgent cultural narrative in Detroit.

32 The Zimbabwean government began its land reforms in the 1980s to address the imbalances in land access ownership and use between black indigenous citizens and white settler citizens that had existed in the country before independence. A number of reforms were implemented over the years, with corresponding modifications to the law and redistribution targets. The most recent initiative, the fast track land reform programme (FTLRP), was introduced in 2001 to speed up the redistribution of land. The white minority settlers owned the most fertile land (51%), leaving the majority Zimbabweans with poor infertile lands (22%), while the remainder (27%) was set aside for forestry, national parks and other government developments

memory and socio-political aspirations.

As an artist, working between Detroit and Zimbabwe, I was interested in comparing these two spaces. As part of my methodology, I began by researching the choreography of dances in Zimbabwe and Detroit that were developed as forms of resistance. This research inspired performance pieces that would serve as a structure to better understand the role of dance and performance in cultural resistance. In his book, *On the Postcolony*, Achille Mbembe looks at a broader definition of dance as a means of modifying power. He sees it as a metaphor for negotiation, as political ‘play’, a performance of power and submission. In this way, dance is positioned as a critical socio-political discipline that transcends the frivolity of pastime and entertainment, he says:

Thus we may assert that, by dancing publicly for the benefit of power, the “post colonized subject” is providing his or her loyalty, and by compromising with the corrupting control that state power tends to exercise at all levels of everyday life, the subject is reaffirming that this power is incontestable – precisely the better to play with it and modify it whenever possible. What defines the post colonized subject is the ability to engage in baroque practices fundamentally ambiguous, fluid, and modifiable even where there are clear, written, and precise rules.³³

In this way my work is partly inspired by Nick Cave’s “Soundsuits” which are surreal objects combining performance and wearable sculpture. They originated as a kind of metaphorical armor in response to the beating of Rodney King by the police. Fully concealing the body, the “Soundsuits” serve as a constructed skin that obscures race, gender, and class, allowing viewers to look without bias towards the wearer’s identity. These costumes are also difficult to locate culturally;

33 Mbembe, Joseph-Achille. *On the Postcolony*. University of California Press, 2001.p. 129.

they lie somewhere between European pagan practices, African ritual costumes and Mardi gras aesthetics. This interest in the intersections and the uncomfortable non-defined positioning of objects is something that I investigate in my work, combining objects whose aesthetic defies a singular cultural location or interpretation.

Questions surrounding the activation of sculpture, space, and the body through dance, are issues contemporary artists like Nick Cave and others are grappling with. In his performance projects such as *As Is, Here Hear Detroit, and Heard* see fig 5, Cave addresses sculpture and performance beyond mere costume, including sound, movement and community. Cave's sculptures are crafted from a dizzying array of materials that include beads, raffia, buttons, sequins, twigs, fur, and fabric. The "Soundsuits" are alternately displayed in exhibitions as static sculptures. These varied presentation formats are very present in my own practice giving the work equal agency in both its inert and activated forms. For instance in his work *As Is*, he worked with the community of Shreveport in Louisiana to activate his sculptural creations. The community in this project were the dancers, musicians, and staff, as well as the audience.

Cave explores the idea of dance as a mediated practice with performative sculpture and costumes. Cave regularly performs in the sculptures himself, dancing either before the public or for the camera, activating their full potential as costume, musical instrument, and living icon. In placing himself in the work, Cave centers the story partly around his experience and explores his themes from a first person narrative. In my thesis work, I use the same positioning technique, locating myself within the artwork as I explore how I can resist and negotiate assumptions, 'other' cultural projections, and systemic bias around me.



*Fig. 5 Heard Sydney, Nick Cave 2016 performance at Carriageworks, Sydney, 2016.
Photo credit: Zan Wimberley courtesy Carriageworks*



*Fig. 6 Soundsuits, Nick Cave, Institute of Contemporary Art Boston. Photo credit:
Charles Mayer, 2014*

Cave also works with choreographers, dancers, and amateur performers to produce lavish community celebrations in non-

traditional venues for engagement with his art. While I also work with professional dancers in my performances, I prefer not to work with amateur performers as Nick Cave does, this is to avoid the work falling into the category of social practice art.

The Body Present/The Body Absent

Prior to graduate school, my artistic practice was focused on traditional sculpture, specifically the use of found objects and assemblage. While this medium and approach has yielded a considerable amount of results in visually and materially exploring themes like hybridity and the complexity of postcolonial cultures, it has fallen short in its effectiveness in communicating the essence of resistance and negotiation as demanded by our current times. I'm uncomfortably aware of this shortcoming and the resulting dissonance.

As a sculptor I've always thought of my body as the instrument I use to create sculpture, but had never really looked at the body itself as a medium that can interact with my sculptural creations. As I began my research, I encountered limitations with sculpture as a medium, and started to consider the body as living material on which society projects violence and oppression. In response, narratives of resistance and negotiation becomes imprinted on the same body. My thesis work questions the limitations of sculpture as a medium to effectively communicate these issues in its primary form as a facsimile or simulacrum. In my work, I ask how sculpture can effectively contest or modify power in the post-colonial context.

The purpose of my research is not to subvert the hierarchy between the body and inanimate sculpture, instead it is an effort to understand



Fig. 7 Still shot of a dancer in Mbende/Jerusalem Tehkno, 2018. Photo credit: Rowan Renee

the forms in the liminal space where both mediums can intersect and complement one another. In most African philosophies and aesthetics, sculpture is not a separate, distinguished element but constitutes part of an interdependent, integrated whole. Examples of this are found in many African traditional dances whereby sculptural objects and dance routines share potent spaces and agency in ceremony, ritual or algorithmic social ordering processes. For instance, in the *Makishi* dance of Zambia and Northern Zimbabwe, dancers interact with wearable sculpture and masks. In these dances the sculptures, masks and costumes are not merely objects that complement the dance. The ritual and process of making them is quite elaborate, following particular codes such as chastity, dietary restrictions, among others. With *Makishi* masks, the makers become separated from the rest of the community in an initiation ceremony where certain foods, alcohol and sexual activities are forbidden. Most of the makers also play the role of the dancer and their masks are created in line with their totem

or particular ethnic affiliation. These codes of conduct and rituals create concrete institutions around the objects and performance.

The *Isingoma* dance of the Zulu makes use of the cowhide shield and assegai (short spear) and sometimes knobkerrie, *Mbende/Jerusarema* makes use of *Makwa*³⁴. *Makwas* are elaborate wooden carved elements that work as clappers, also existing independently outside music production for other uses such as divination. *Makwas* can also be used as *hakata*³⁵, see fig 8 (divining tablets), that produce sound accentuating the polyrhythmic drum of the dance by providing syncopated registers. The sacred value, attention to detail and mathematical aesthetics³⁶ ascribed to the objects during the making

34 The *Manja* is a percussion-block idiophone of the Shona people of Zimbabwe. Also known as *Makwa*, *mwakwati*, or *marasha*, the sound of the *Makwa* is an integral part of the *Mbende/Jerusarema shangara* and other dance styles of Mashonaland, the homeland of Zimbabwe's majority Shona peoples. This *Makwa* is decorated with a striped pattern created by application of a hot iron. In some instances it works as *hakata divining tablets*. <https://omeka1.grinnell.edu/MusicallInstruments/items/show/373>

35 The *Hakata* consists of a set of 4 wooden tablets inscribed with distinct design motifs on one side. Before each casting, the diviner enters an altered state or trance to direct specific questions to the *hakata*. Any pronouncements made while in this state were attributed to the spirits that came through the diviner. The tablets were cast and created a visual commentary arranged by spiritual forces, and were interpreted by the diviner in terms of the relevance to an individual's concerns - ranging from illness to personal misfortune. <https://www.africaandbeyond.com/Shona-Hakata-Divination-Instruments-Tablets-Zimbabwe-0325.html>

36 The *Hakata* are carved on each side with geometric shapes and look almost like longer wooden dominos. The art historian Van Binsburg states of the *Hakata*, "all the configurations have been named, each has its standard phrase which the diviner may utter as a first reaction to the fall, and each is interpreted according to a complex, conventionalised yet unwritten catalogue which the diviner has learned by heart in the course of his or her years of training."The *Hakata* like the digital works have little effect prior to their activation; their meaning only articulated through the diviner's act, and in the case of the interactive work, through

process position them above mere craft objects or accessory to being independent sculptural elements that contribute in creating the symbolic and political meanings of the dances. In the book, *Four Tablet Divination as Trans-Regional Medical Technology of Southern Africa*³⁷, Wim Vans Binsbergen summarizes the idea of Ethnomathematics³⁸ and the culture of making in Southern Africa, exploring some of the mathematical processes of making divining tablets among other objects such as baskets.³⁹

Sculpture, dance and sound therefore constitute the structural foundation of most resistance movements from postcolonial nation states. Consideration of these different elements together, allow for political and cultural symbolism to exist in the intersections, providing a

the artists design. The meaning in the Hakata is led by a mathematical order; sixteen possible outcomes depending on which way up they fall when thrown <https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Hakata-of-Shona-Zimbabwean-origins-Collection-of-the-Wits-Art-Muse>

37 Binsbergen, Wim. (1995). *Four-Tablet Divination as Trans-Regional Medical Technology in Southern Africa*. *Journal of Religion in Africa*. 25. 114. 10.2307/1581270.

38 The term ethnomathematics is used to express the relationship between culture and mathematics. The term requires a dynamic interpretation because it describes concepts that are themselves neither rigid nor singular namely, ethno and mathematics D'Ambrósio Ubiratan. *Ethnomathematics: Link between Traditions and Modernity*. Sense, 2006.

39 "The origin and distribution of the four-tablet system. It emerged in the middle of the second millennium AD in the highlands of Zimbabwe from the interaction between pre-existing local divination systems and Arabian geomancy. After a slow spread over a limited part of southern Africa, the 20th century saw the rapid spread of the system over the entire subcontinent, where it is now the hallmark of non cosmopolitan practitioners". Binsbergen, Wim. (1995). *Four-Tablet Divination as Trans-Regional Medical Technology in Southern Africa*. *Journal of Religion in Africa*. 25. 114. 10.2307/1581270.



Fig. 8 Hakata of the Shona people of Zimbabwe 2017 photo credit, University of Witwatersrand



Fig. 9 Makishi performer photo, credit David Crookes

camouflaged lexicons of resistance to be inscribed on these black bodies.

The separation of sculpture from its performative context in African colonies can be traced back to 1885, the year of the Berlin conference when the colonial pioneers brought back trophies and souvenirs from the 'savage' world, divorcing these objects from their original contexts, giving birth to the contentious category known as 'African art'.



Fig. 10 Hardcore Detroit, in Mbende/Jerusalem 2018. Photo credit: Rowan Renee

In the mid 1990s, Richard Shusterman, in his article Somaesthetics

⁴⁰, argued that the body is central to understanding philosophy. Shusterman postulates that pragmatist aesthetics demands a more active and creative engagement than traditional aesthetics. He states, “artistic, practical, creative and political action require humanity’s primary tool, the body”, and that such action could be improved partly by investing and focusing on this corporeal instrument. Shusterman argued for the revival of “Baumgarten’s idea of aesthetics as a life-improving cognitive discipline that extends far beyond questions of beauty and fine arts and that involved both theory and practical exercise” and for an end to “the neglect of the body that Baumgarten disastrously introduced into aesthetics”. Shusterman represents some external voices arguing for a central place for the body in approaching knowledge. In my own research, these arguments (from Conquergood and Shusterman) concerning the place of the body, opens up the argument that shows that its not an insular or atavistic African rhetoric, but a pursuit that has some universal and common philosophical concern. As proposed, Shusterman’s theory of somaesthetics restores “the soma, the living, sentient, purposive body as the indispensable medium for all perception. Such heightening of somatic consciousness not only enhances artistic appreciation and creation, but increases the perceptual awareness of meanings and feelings that have the potential to elevate everyday experience into an art of living.”⁴¹

40 Shusterman, Richard (Summer 1999). “Somaesthetics: A Disciplinary Proposal” (PDF). *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*. 57 (3): 301. Retrieved 4 August 2015.

41 *ibid.*

Syncopation: existing in the gaps

*“In contrast to down beat marches the offbeat rhythms do not obey but resist. Moreover, “they leave behind the phantasm of atomized egos, but instead become alive through the communal interlocking of various players. Instead of the phantasm of mechanized identical repetition they unfold their power through permanent variations and improvisations in the repetition which seems to stretch the bend of time.”*⁴²

*“The common denominator in all African American music is the rhythmical complexity of the syncope”*⁴³

Syncopation in musical terms is a temporary displacement of the regular metrical accent in music caused typically by stressing the weak beat. In other words it is a process by which the gaps in a conventional/dominant musical structure are populated by a secondary beat. This process has a sustained history particularly in African and Caribbean music, Jazz and other musical forms from colonized or former colonized peoples. In an interview with Ariel Florez, Heidi Salaverria analyzes this feature from a political perspective and describes how it exposes the gaps in the binary thinking of Western philosophy and its fascination with certainty.⁴⁴ “Western fascination with binarism and certainty is reflected in the rhythmic structure of their music which emphasizes the downbeat. This is reflected in the marching music created from rhythms of order and obedience which

42 MK. “Syncopated Code.” *SpringerReference*, n.d. doi:10.1007/springerreference_26233.

43 *ibid*

44 MK. “Heidi Salaverria / Ariel Flórez Syncopated Resistance Rhythms of Post-Colonial Thinking.” *Hypc*. February 11, 2018. Accessed May 22, 2019. <https://www.hyperculturalpassengers.org/heidi-salaverria-ariel-florez-syncopated-resistance-rhythms-of-post-colonial-thinking>.

impose, domesticate and conquer.”⁴⁵ She positions syncopation as a metaphorical representation to counter this ‘order’ and be classified as resistance to the dominant Western colonial paradigm.

This ‘offbeat’ or opposing stance offers a counter-narrative for those cultures whose philosophies contest, resist, and negotiate colonial or repressive systems. “In contrast to the dominant down beat marches of power, the offbeat rhythms do not obey; they resist.”⁴⁶ Salaverria also talks about syncopation as a philosophy of disobedience and negotiation. She looks at the ways in which this and other similar philosophies are translated in cultural productions such as art, music and dance. She describes the rhythmic complexity of the syncopé existing as slippage in resistant cultures referring to the architecture of antebellum slave societies as based on populating the gaps that the oppressive system left behind therefore defining a culture of resistance and alternative power negotiations. “The slave (at least in the beginning) had no property, no territory so they inhabited the offbeat, between the 1 and the 3 and infinitesimally between those in-betweens, occupying spaces the slave drivers didn’t even know existed.”⁴⁷

This offbeat nature of dance and music is designed to create new spaces of expression and new time signatures that are different from those imposed by the dominant rhythm. Salaverria refers to the use of offbeat signatures as agents that reclaim time and “regain a sense of resistant subjectivity.”⁴⁸ The underlying idea explores Afro-centric rhythms populating the regions/spaces of the offbeat, thereby articulating a specific kind of resistance, one designed to oppose and negotiate colonial or repressive systems; both *Mbende/Jerusalem* and *Detroit Jit* are dances that based on the offbeat or in the gap or

45 *ibid.*

46 *ibid.*

47 *ibid.*

48 “Syncopated Code.” n.d. *SpringerReference*. doi:10.1007/springerreference_26233.



Fig. 11 Sokunge Installation (back view) 2019. Photo credit: @Rowan Renee

absence.

In the work I attempt to unpack a few of the seven principles of cultural resistance⁴⁹ including healing⁵⁰ and syncopation. Healing is particularly important as a critical form of resistance for postcolonial nation states that have experienced new leaders who have become more brutal versions of their oppressors. In his 2017 essay, *'The Legacy of Slavery ' in Africa Modern: Creating Contemporary Art of a Continent*, Post-colonial writer Ngugi Wa Thiong'o argues the need for Africa needs to stop and mourn its loss from slavery and colonization in order to heal her wounds before moving on.⁵¹ He explains the monstrous_behavior

49 During the process of researching cultural resistance and making the project *Mbende Jerusalem Tehkno*, I discovered the seven principles on which the idea of cultural resistance is based. These principles are syncopation, fight or flight, healing, stillness, dissimulation, hybridity and mimicry.

50 "Addressing our individual and collective suffering, we will find ways to heal and recover that can be sustained, that can endure from generation to generation" (hooks, 1995, 145).

51 "Learning from Slavery– The Legacy of the Slave Trade on Modern Society

of the new nation states leaders as a cyclical result of the absence of healing. According to Ngugi, the Rwandan Genocide (April-July 1994) and other disasters are a result of the absence of healing and mourning in Africa's history. Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok refer to this absence as a condition of unhealed psychic wounds that creates a "psychic tomb" that harbors festering generational traumas that are potentially explosive.⁵² In a series of 2006 Harvard lectures, Ngugi suggested an international day of mourning for the victims of the transatlantic slave trade and those from the colonization of African continent. This idea was embraced by the United Nations in 2007 when the the 25th of March officially declared the "International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade". My performance work in *Sokunge* addresses the absence of healing by experimenting with a part ritual and part algorithm of healing through improvisation, performance, and sound. In this performance I play with the symbolic idea of slowing down time using reverb and delay, echoing Ngugi's sentiments about stopping and mourning. Through the performance, I create and argue for a time of personal and collective slowness and reflection.

| UN Chronicle." n.d. United Nations. *United Nations*. 2006 <https://unchronicle.un.org/article/learning-slavery-legacy-slave-trade-modern-society>.

52 In their 1994 book, *Shell and the Kernel*, they explore denial of individual and collective intergenerational trauma arguing that both victim and perpetrator are negatively affected by unaddressed trauma. Abraham, Nicolas, et al. *The Shell and the Kernel: Renewals of Psychoanalysis*. University of Chicago Press, 1994.



Fig. 12 Masimba Hwati, performing in Sokunge, Stamps Gallery 2019 Photo credit @ Rowan Renee

Different Ways of Knowing

What gets squeezed out by this epistemic violence is the whole realm of complex finely nuanced meaning that is embodied, tacit, intoned, gestured, improvised, co-experienced, covert, and all the more deeply meaningful because of its refusal to be spelled out”, of different ways of knowing is radical because it cuts to the root of how knowledge is organized in the academy. The dominant way of knowing in the academy is that of empirical observation and critical analysis from a distanced perspective: “knowing that” and “knowing about.” Donna Haraway locates this homely and vulnerable “view from a body” in contrast to the abstract and authoritative “view from above,” universal knowledge that pretends to transcend location. Dominant epistemologies that link knowing with seeing are not attuned to meanings that are masked, camouflaged, indirect, embedded, or hidden in context.”⁵³

Dwight Conquergood paints a background of epistemic violence where non-text based forms of knowledge are suppressed. He positions the body as the primary source of this knowledge and questions the traditional empirical definition that is rooted in colonial tendencies:

“This is a view from above the object of inquiry: knowledge that is anchored in paradigm and secured in print. This propositional knowledge is shadowed by another way of knowing that is grounded in active, intimate, hands-on participation and personal connection: “knowing how,” and “knowing who.” This is a view from ground level, in the thick of things. This is knowledge that is anchored in practice and circulated within a performance community, but is

53 Conquergood, Dwight. “Performance Studies: Interventions and Radical Research.” *TDR/The Drama Review* 2002. p. 145

Ephemeral."⁵⁴

According to Conquergood, the importance of performance and community is key to understanding other forms of knowing that might not exist in text. Conquergood does not intend to subvert the hierarchy of text over non-textual knowledge, but aims for a balance between text-centered and soma-centric forms of knowing. Dance and performance become one of the ways to decode the rich knowledge of preliterate peoples who for thousands of years have used several ways of sharing and archiving knowledge. These ways are not necessarily text or script based.

Conquergood argues for a nonhierarchical consideration of both text and non-text traditions of preserving and sharing knowledge. This inevitably creates a dialogue between Western and non-Western approaches to the production of knowledge. In exploring this topic, Conquergood delves into the idea of resistance and negotiation as a process that is mediated by the body with the purpose of reclaiming cultural space and agency. Based on Conquergood writings, dance is seen as a broader practice, outside the lab, stage or theatre, that serves as a metaphor for navigating and co-existing with power structures. Dance, as an everyday practice of negotiation and rhythmic engagement with one's environment, uses the body to negotiate space and freedom from domination.

In this context, I introduce into my work, the living body as a somatic archive that houses not only trauma and violence, but also complex lexicons of resisting and modifying power. I treat the body as both a literal and metaphorical repository of a strongly marked antithesis of oppression and a tool for resistance. In my performance *Sokunge*, I refer to both colonial and post-colonial violence against subjects through the use of video stills, and respond in ways that register a new form of resistance. I position the body as a complex corpus of

54 "Dwight Conquergood and the field of Performance Studies." 2002 a.n.d. Taylor & Francis

narratives of resistance and oppression existing in one space.

According to Achille Mbembe the African postcolonial situation, is more than a binary dynamic of power vs. subjects. He postulates another approach of knowing by observing the complexity of the human body in social and political action. "It is important to understand the postcolonial relationships not primarily as a relationship of resistance or collaboration, but is best characterized as convivial", an interplay between the two...the subject is affirming that this power is contestable-*precisely the better to play with it and modify it whenever possible*".⁵⁵ I explore this complexity through those spaces where sculpture, dance and sound meet, allowing the body to communicate layered and embodied poetics and politics. This process of communication happens through performance, dance and sound-making in the context of both scripted and improvised spaces occupied by the body.

Engagement with Postcolonial Theory

Postcolonialism is the academic study of the cultural legacy and impact of imperialism on colonized people and their lands, especially focusing on the human consequences of this exploitation.⁵⁶

Postcolonial theory is a critical approach to engaging the literature, ideas and artworks produced in countries that were once colonized. It looks at the intersections between European nations and the societies they colonized by exploring seminal issues such as identity, race, class, language, representation, and history. Because of the colonial erasure of native languages and culture that were replaced or superseded by European traditions, part of the postcolonialist project is reclamation. Unpacking the effect of the colonial aftermath, its language, discourse,

55 Mbembe, Joseph-Achille. 2001. *On the Postcolony*. University of California Press.

56 *POSTCOLONIALISM TODAY*. <https://semioticon.com/virtuals/postcol.htm>. 2002.p1.

and cultural institutions has led to an emphasis on hybridity or the mingling of cultural signs and practices between colonizer and the colonized.⁵⁷

My work occupies a geographical time period that is arguably postcolonial. Especially considering my country of origin, Zimbabwe, a country once colonized by the British. I'm surrounded and influenced by ideas of resistance, liberation, repatriation, identity, and freedom which are built upon a postcolonial time period and a plethora of nationalistic thoughts. I find this overarching and generalizing theory of post coloniality quite problematic however, especially in its application to the continent referred to as Africa.

The first of its problems is the problem of origin. Postcoloniality exists more as a Eurocentric construction with its roots in Edward Said's 1978 essay '*Orientalism*'. Even more challenging is the fact that postcolonial culture is shaped by desires and machinations outside of itself. Olu Oguibe argues that "...it seems to appear to manifest itself as a condition of performative duality, a locale of the seemingly impossible."⁵⁸

Several artists as well as writers such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie have refused to identify with this imposed label. In a 2018 interview the author is on record for saying "Postcolonial theory? I don't know what it means. I think it's something that professors made up because they needed to get jobs."⁵⁹ Postcolonial theory essentially references "colonization" as a stimulus for its existence. It merely reacts to colonization and arguably possesses no life of its own apart from its dependence on the object of its reaction. I would place it in the same

57 *ibid*

58 Oguibe, Olu. "Double Dutch and the Culture Game." *Empires of Vision*, 2014.p.594-608.

59 "Postcolonial Theory Is the Force Dismantling What Chimamanda Adichie Termed the 'Single Story' Narrative." 2018. *This Is Africa*. February 12. <https://thisisafrika.me/postcolonial-theory-chimamanda-adichie/>.

category with “decolonization” which is also a reactive theory that owes its agency to the foundation of colonization. These questionable nomenclatures validate the colonial experience as the most important fact or feature about the countries involved.

What about pre-colonial provenance? Both decolonization and postcolonial theories begin at the point that assumes the end of colonization, but is there really an end to the subject in question? There has been rigorous debate regarding some literary texts written during the colonial period, questioning whether they should be canonized as postcolonial, especially when they address the same issues that later canonized postcolonial works do. Because of this some writers have pronounced postcolonial theory dead on arrival.

My creative and written work attempts to challenge some of these colonially imposed nomenclatures. In April 2019, I submitted a paper entitled, “*Escaping the Violence of Nomenclatures: We need new, names terms, and new philosophical postures for the now*” this was published in an independent journal called “Réseau R’études Décoloniales”⁶⁰ (Network of Decolonial Studies). This paper challenges current ideas of postcolonial theory in relation to Africa and other externally generated nomenclatures. In the paper I argue a need to not only reconsider the geographical size of the continent but to critically engage with the common labels of ‘Africa’ and ‘Black’, challenging their origins. I argue and trace the origins of these names as externally imposed and not as endogenous. The visual aesthetics of my work contests geographical boundaries in metaphorical ways by using appropriation and adopting Western paraphernalia in the form of pseudo ‘African’ forms. My work asks questions such as: How does one define Africa? What’s African and what’s not? It engages the current debates regarding the boundaries, definitions and scale of the continent, and deems them fictive rather than factual. In my use of appropriation of cultural elements such as smurfs and marvel comic characters, I am making a

60 <https://reseaudecolonial.org/colonialite-esthetique-et-art-contemporain/>



Fig. 13 Sokunge 2019 (detail) Masimba hwati photo credit: Rowan Renee

statement and pushing the borders, size and definitions of the continent in playful and metaphoric ways. In this playful statement I'm claiming into my African context French Belgian cartoon characters and Marvel comic characters, sneaking and positioning them in my sculpture to say they belong in that African context.

Postcolonial theory assumes "Africa" as a monolithic signifier. In essence, it remains a colonial construct and according Achille Mbembe, the idea of "Africa is a geographical mistake"⁶¹. When the term Africa is used both in academia and in general settings, it attempts to homogenize and simplify a space that is home to over 3000 ethnic groups and more than 2000 distinct languages. The true size of the continent as we know it remains a subject of debate. In 2010, Kai Kruse a designer and author, published a map called, "The True Size of Africa"⁶². Kruse discovered that the mathematical and geographical process called Mercator projection⁶³ used for centuries as the standard tool for visualizing land masses, erroneously exaggerates the area of land masses towards the poles and dwarfs those closest to the equator. Kruse devised his map to show the true relationships among the world's land masses, proving that the African continent is actually 14 times larger than it appears on a two-dimensional map.

There is still much to be discussed regarding the postcolonial condition

61 ZEGEYE, ABEBE. 2017. *CLOSE TO THE SOURCES: Essays on Contemporary African Culture, Politics and Academy*. ROUTLEDGE.

62 "Kai Kruse The True Size of Africa." n.d. *The True Size of Africa*. <http://kai.sub.blue/en/africa.html>.

63 a projection of a map of the world onto a cylinder in such a way that all the parallels of latitude have the same length as the equator, used especially for marine charts and certain climatological maps. The most popular version is the Mercator projection, created by Flemish cartographer Gerardus Mercator in 1569. Mercator projection drastically distorts the size and shape of objects approaching the poles. This may be the reason people have no idea how big some places really are.

and countries at the receiving end of the colonising project. Are they indeed free from colonization, despite declarations of political independence? One questions whether the time signifier “post” is accurate. Are we really in the post of colonization? In a 1991 University of Chicago press journal, Ghanaian-American Philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah asks the question, “Is the ‘post’ in Post Modernism the same as the ‘post’ in Postcolonial?”⁶⁴ He is arguing against an imposed nomenclature that is selective in its application in regards to Africa as compared to Europe. Appiah explains the ‘post’ in postcolonial not as a time signifier, but as having the same meaning linked to the ‘post’ in postmodernism, which is simply a space clearing gesture that heightens the individual agency to define the dominant culture’s own world and time.

“For the ‘post’ in postcolonial and the ‘post’ in postmodernism is the post of the space clearing gesture characterized earlier, and in many areas of contemporary African cultural life-what has come to be theorized as popular culture, in particular, are not in this way concerned with transcending, with going beyond coloniality. Indeed it might be said to be the mark of popular culture that its borrowing from International cultural forms are remarkably insensitive to, not so much dismissive of as blind to, the issue of neo-colonialism or cultural imperialism”⁶⁵

Are we truly in a period of post-colonization? Evidence might say otherwise. Africa continues to witness the meddling of colonial powers through puppet governments, cultural engineering and economic aid policies. To add to this complexity, Southern and East Africa are dealing with a rapidly growing Chinese economic invasion which has all the markers a colonial agenda. Given these circumstances can we really define these spaces as postcolonial?

64 Appiah, Kwame Anthony. “Is the Post- in Postmodernism the Post- in Post-colonial?” *Critical Inquiry* 1991.p. 336–357.

65 *ibid.*



METHODOLOGY

Assemblage: towards a new English

Postcolonial definitions of terms:⁶⁶

1. *Hybridity*: new transcultural forms that arise from cross-cultural exchange. Hybridity can be social, political, linguistic, religious, etc. It is not necessarily a peaceful mixture, for it can be contentious and disruptive in its experience. Under hybridity you have:

66 PostcolDefs. <http://www3.dbu.edu/mitchell/postcold.htm>.



a). *Creolization*: societies that arise from a mixture of ethnic and racial mixing to] form a new material, psychological, and spiritual self-definition.

2. *Abrogation*: a refusal to use the language of the colonizer in a correct or standard way.

3. *Appropriation*: “the process by which the language is made to ‘bear the burden’ of one’s own cultural experience.”

While there are some overlapping and slippage amongst the above definitions, what distinguishes them from one another might be the context and the intention of use.

A handful of artists have in the past explored the idea of hybridity as resistance or at least as a response to a colonial authority. There is still a gap in scholarship and art production exploring strategies of hybridity, as everyday forms of resistance, especially from Africa. My work attempts to address these gaps.

The making process of my assemblages reflects the complex cosmopolitan nature of the world as we see it today. By drawing these complexities together I am complicating simplistic and reductive cultural politics used to define the 'other'. The type of aesthetic I present positions itself in resistance to cultural assumptions and simplistic categorization. The means by which these cosmopolitan, cultural objects are acquired opens up new questions about the fluidity of virtual and actual cultural geographies and problematizes the objects themselves placing them in a crisis of cultural location. Online stores become a central, virtual liminal geography where cultures collide and morph into each other as I acquired most of my materials from these online stores.

I appropriate objects such as golf balls, Smurfs and Marvel superheroes to complicate the postcolonial narrative. Appropriating them in my case is a form of attenuation of their original narrative, you will still recognize their Western origin but you are confronted by their new and unsure position in a pseudo African context. Chikowero writes that the cornerstone of the colonial project is to create cultural and notable difference between the colonizer and the colonized⁶⁷. My work challenges this cornerstone idea by using what Homi Bhabha refers to as disruptive forms of resistance in the cultural context such as

67 Chikowero. M. *"African Music, Power, and Being in Colonial Zimbabwe."* Book. Bloomington ; Indianapolis : Bloomington ; Indianapolis, 2015.

hybridity⁶⁸.

I'm inspired by the work of Nicholas Galanin, a multi-disciplinary artist and musician of mixed Tlingit/Aleut and non-native ancestry. His work often explores a dialogue of change and identity between native and non-native communities. As an artist from Alaska, he is constantly blurring boundaries between what is traditional and what is contemporary. He interrogates our common and linear understanding of time in his performance /video piece, *Tsu Heidei Shugaxtutaan (We Will Again Open This Container of Wisdom That Has Been Left in Our Care)* shown in 2006 at Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, see fig. 14. He explores time, movement slippage and the fluidity of a culture resisting oppression and extinction.

Tsu Heidei Shugaxtutaan is a two part, looping video that mixes traditional Tlingit culture with contemporary Western culture in a hybrid video art project. In the first video, dancer David Elsewhere 'pops' to a customary Tlingit song. In the second, a Tlingit dancer in customary regalia dances to a spare electronic groove composed by Galanin.

Galanin composes his own music for this video and splits his video into two channels that play on the same idea. The Tlingit dancer has contemporary electronic music accompanying him while the Popper (modern Hip-hop dancer) has traditional music accompanying his moves. This contrasting of times, cultures and ideas works well for Galanin's piece in creating a beautiful tension. In my work, *Mbende/Jerusarema Tehkno*, I used a one channel video and combine elements from a traditional Zimbabwean dance with those from Detroit Jit. The music follows suit too, as a hybridized sound from both spaces and both eras in question, this music was composed in collaboration with DJ George Rahme and is used in the second part of the performance.

68 Bhabha H.K. "*The Location of Culture.*" Book. London ; New York : London ; New York, 1994.



2. Nicholas Galanin (Tlingit and Aleut)

Born 1979, Sitka, Alaska

Tsu Heidei Shugaxtutaan (We Will Again Open This Container of Wisdom That Has Been Left in Our Care), Parts I and II, 2006

Digital video: Part I, 4 minutes, 36 seconds; Part II, 4 minutes, 6 seconds

Museum purchase, 2012

2012.25.1

Fig.14 Nicholas Galanin Tsu Heidei Shugaxtutaan, 2002. Photo credit: Nicholas Galanin



Fig.15 Terry Adkins performing, New York, November; with him are giant arkaphones he invented. Photo credit: @ Salon 94

sculpture, performance, video and photography. His artworks were often inspired by, dedicated to, or referred to musicians or musical instruments; specific installations and exhibitions were sometimes labeled “recitals.” Sometimes, these arrangements of sculptures were “activated” in performances by Adkins’ collaborative performance group, the Lone Wolf Recital Corps. Adkins chose materials that created sound in his sculptures. These could be drum parts, trumpets, bells, or drum cymbals. I first encountered his work in 2015 at the Venice Biennale where he was part of a group exhibition in the Arsenale. The overall exhibition was titled “All the world’s futures” and was curated by the late Nigerian American Okwui Enwezor.

Many of Adkins’ sculptures seemed to have undergone a complete transformation from ordinary objects to mediated objects. For instance, his muffled drums, see fig. 16, are a towering sculpture made from bass drums and his Arkaphones, see fig. 15, are conventional musical instruments that have been transformed beyond their conventionality but still manage to keep their character and function. Adkins’ treatment of objects influences my own approach to objects. In my installation and performance piece, *Sokunge*, I use a mediated trombone that was made from parts of a conventional trombone but transformed into another state that is both functional and aesthetic. Adkins was a master in positioning his sculpture and installations in a place where they seemed to belong to an unrecognizable world. It has often been said of Adkins that his work “becomes an odd drama in which the ordinary is rearranged and explored without losing its familiarity”.⁶⁹

69 “Smoke Signals and Muffled Drums: Terry Adkins at the Venice Biennale, 2015.” 2017. *Title Magazine*. February 6. <http://www.title-magazine.com/2015/11/smoke-signals-and-muffled-drums-terry-adkins-at-the-venice-biennale-2015/>.



Fig.16 Muffled drums Terry Adkins, Installation view 2003 photo credit @ Terry Adkins

Tom Csaszar, in reviewing Adkins states, “his sculptures remind us that provocation and consolation can both take part in the same work, and that they can connect to private and public experiences – that is to say, to personal and to social histories”. This existence of strongly marked antitheses in one body is a discipline that I admire in artists, and Adkins’s work seems to possess this special quality. I strive to create that same quality in my performance work, *Sokunge*, in which resistance and healing seem to paradoxically co-exist in the same artwork. After learning about Adkins’ work, I began to explore “activation” in my sculptural installation, specifically in *Sokunge*.

Abrogation and Appropriation

Abrogation in literature resists and questions the hierarchy and authority of standard language as a medium. This concept works hand-in-hand with another highly contested postcolonial concept which is appropriation, a process, which in my work is defined as subordinate cultures taking elements from dominant cultures and using them for their own means. I use these concepts in my creative process as I experiment with materials, objects and aesthetic language whose origins might be considered Western, colonial or both to create a new language so as to resist and question the canon. In my sculptural and performance works, I use materials and objects in an assemblage manner and in relationship or contrast to non-western cultures, especially those cultures from Southern Africa. While the origins of objects remain in constant flux, it is important to note that the kind of discussions generated by my creative works border on transnational themes—transnationalism, migration and appropriation are directly relatable concepts of postcolonial theory.

Abrogation has led to the development of various kinds of “Englishes” that are functional and respectively canonized: *Pidgin*, *Creole* and *Patois* are the most common, but several exists on the streets and

in social circles of most postcolonial states. Abrogation examples in literature are the works of East and West African authors Ngugi Wa Thiong'o (in the early years), Ayi Kwei Armah, and Chinua Achebe. After using English in abrogative ways for many years Ngugi finally disowned the language completely. He does this in *Decolonising the Mind*, his 1986 "farewell to English," Ngugi argues that through language, people have not only framed the world, but also understand and define themselves by it. He calls English in Africa a "cultural bomb"⁷⁰ that continues a process of erasure of the African memory and pre-colonial cultures and history, installing dominance of a new and more insidious form of colonization.

Salman Rushdie argues for an abrogation approach and predicates that working in new 'Englishes' can be a therapeutic act of resistance, remaking a colonial language to reflect the postcolonial experience. In his essay "Imaginary Homelands"⁷¹ from the eponymous collection published by Granta in 1992, he explains that far from being something that can simply be ignored or disposed of, the English language is the place where writers can and must work out the problems that confront emerging/recently independent colonies. My creative work makes use of this concept by adopting a dominant language and then using it to speak in ways that are meaningful to my own seminal and cultural issues.

I am interested in the translation of abrogation and appropriation in contemporary art, pluralizing the idea of the canon and creating several hybrid languages through which art can be experienced. This approach commands a very strong sense of promiscuous hybridity that continues to reproduce and disrupt the Western canonical pedigree. My thesis work is positioned at the intersections of various disciplines. I describe my performances as part algorithm and part ritual. The

70 Thiong'o, Ngugi Wa. *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. J. Currey, 1986.

71 "Imaginary Homelands : Essays and Criticism,1981-1991." Book. London : London, 1991.

common definition of ritual involves a community as well as a commonly shared knowledge of the activity, meaning and steps of the process in question. In her book, *But is it Art*, Cynthia Freeland says of a ritual "...for participants in a ritual, clarity and agreement of purpose are central in the ritual."⁷² Algorithm does not necessarily require a community to have a shared awareness, but is centered on a set of specific agreed upon procedures.

The performance piece *Sokunge* has a complex multidisciplinary aesthetic in which sculptural, performative and sonic elements coexisting within a single space. This positions it as a defiant type of 'postcolonial' visual language that uses an integrated and an intersectional approach. In my creative process I have been following the work of Yinka Shonibare, a British-Nigerian artist living in the United Kingdom. His works explore cultural identity, colonialism and postcolonialism within the contemporary context of globalization. A hallmark of his art is the brightly coloured Dutch wax fabric that he uses to complicate narratives of geographical and cultural origin. Shonibare uses the fabric as a symbol of our hyperconnected, postcolonial material world. He is one artist who has managed to open up dialogue about the complexities of what is African? and what is un-African? in terms of material culture. He has also posed questions in regards to reverse cultural appropriation. Shonibare presents us with the complicated history of the Dutch wax fabric commonly known as 'Vlisco' or African cloth. This fabric is also widely known as *Zambia*⁷³ in

72 "But Is It Art? : An Introduction to Art Theory." Book. Oxford : Oxford, 2002.

73 The fabric first came to Zimbabwe in the early late 50's. It was exported from the neighbouring country of Zambia, so it became known as 'Mazambia' after that country's name. In most African villages it would be very unusual to find a woman not wearing a *chitenge*. It is a practical item that covers their clothes which can become dirty quite quickly in the dust and daily chores of rural life; women also use them to cover their hair so it doesn't smell of smoke from cooking; it can be coiled onto the crown of the head as padding when fetching water and is essential for carrying babies. This cloth has become an important marker

Zimbabwe and *Chitenge*⁷⁴ in Zambia.

Its origins are however in a small Dutch town called Helmond. In this small city in 1846, industrialist Pieter Fentener van Vlissingen purchased a textile factory with the aim of selling upholstery fabric, bedspreads, and kerchiefs abroad. He began creating imitation batik fabric based on designs from Indonesia referred to by colonizing states as the Dutch East Indies. The idea was to capitalize on new forms of roller printing thereby short cutting and hamstringing local Indonesian producers. This short cut would produce an alternative version of the cloth without all of the labor-intensive work required to make the real thing. The Batik-style on which this fabric is based originated in China and India in the 8th century, and was refined in 13th-century Indonesia with the development of a new tool for applying hot wax to fabric known as *canting*. Shonibare's aesthetics are rooted in this complex history and provide us with new ways of thinking about cultural provenance and hierarchies. Similarly, in my own work, I use a limited amount of *Visco* to accentuate one of my sculptures in *Sokunge*. In this work, the fabric is made into small circular cushions that make up part of the American football vest on the sculptural statue. Through the use of abrogation and appropriation I resist the limitation of narrow cultural categorization and insert myself into contrasting cultural spaces that upset the clean cartesian delineations that define the other. By creating an almost culturally unrecognizable space and using an aesthetic that borrows from several cultures, I'm asking questions that point to the locative complexities of culture, and the constant flux in which the objects in question exist.

of a woman's dignity in Zimbabwean culture. Cultured women carry it around in hand bags everywhere as a wrapping cloth for the waist and use it in the presence of elders or around cultural events. The *chitenge* is used to keep everything covered from one's midriff to below the thighs. In many cultures, this area of the body is seen as an erotic area and should not be shown, not even in trousers.

74 Is the original *Bemba* (a Bantu language spoken by the majority people in Zambia) name for the fabric



Fig.17 Yinka Shonibare, *Divine comedy*, 2015. Photo credit @ Stephen Friedman Gallery

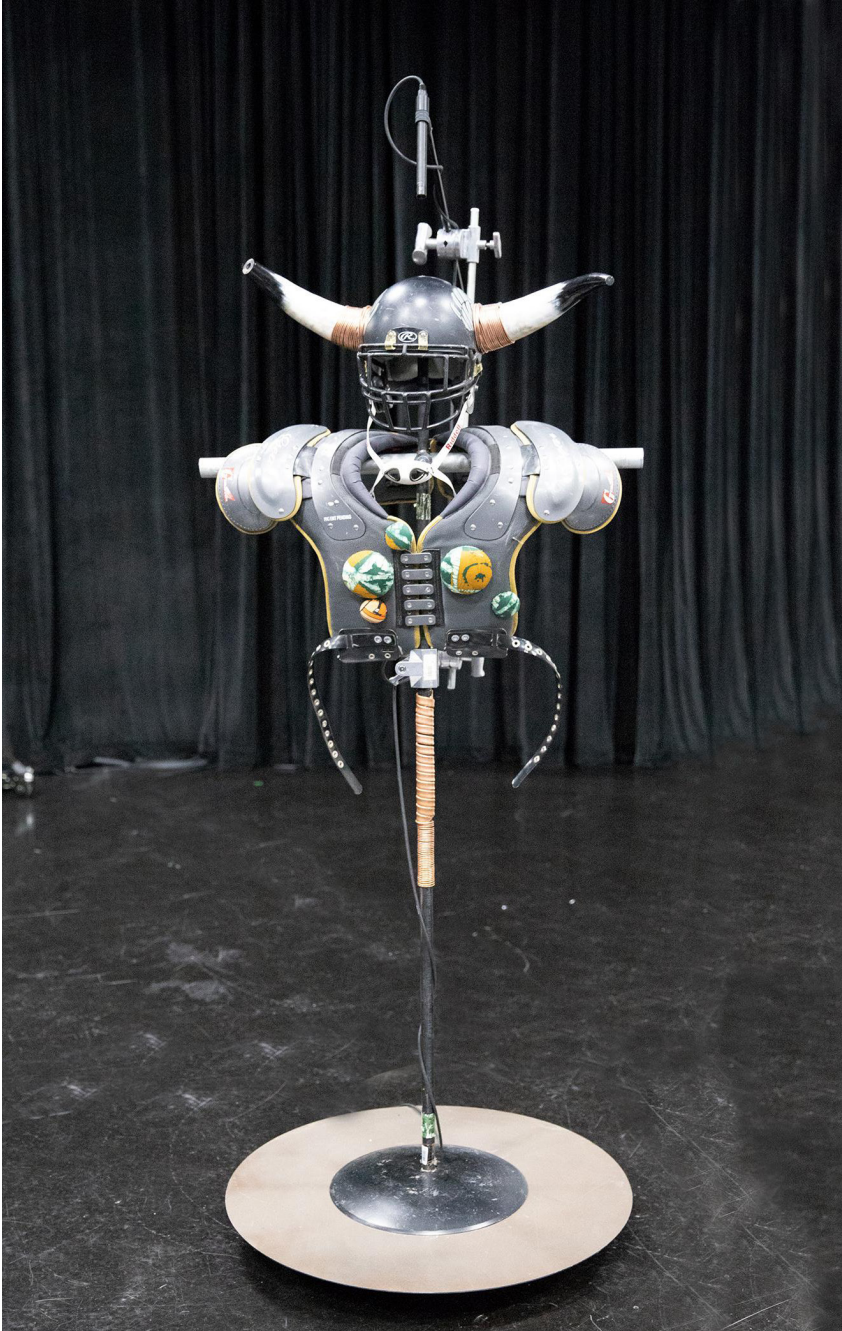


Fig. 18 Installation detail Sokunge, 2019. Photo credit: @Rowan Renee

Sound as embodied response

In *Mbende Jerusarema Tehkno*, I composed a hybrid soundtrack combining Detroit Techno music and *Mbende/Jerusarema* percussion. Detroit Techno was created as a direct response to the inner-city decay that was a result of ‘Reaganomics’ and the trickle-down economic policies that negatively affected African Americans living in Detroit during the Reagan era. Both musical styles emerged from communities experiencing extreme socio-economic upheaval, I decided to merge them to create a new musical form of resistance, a distinct musical hybrid. The percussion music used in the track was recorded live in Zimbabwe and originates from *Murehwa*, a place located Northeast of the capital, Harare, where the dance *Mbende/Jerusarema* was developed around the 1840’s.

In order to create sounds that had the feel of Techno, we used a drum machine called Roland TR 505⁷⁵, which was similar to those used for Industrial music outside the realm of techno. This is the closest we could get to using the ultimate techno drum machine which is the Roland TR 909⁷⁶, a later machine designed by Japanese inventor Tadao Kikumoto and released in 1984. This machine essentially created Techno. Techno was invented in Detroit in the early 80’s by musicians such as Juan Atkins and Jeff Mills, among others. A few years later the radical musical collective, ‘Underground Resistance’⁷⁷, drew more

75 The Roland TR-505 is a drum machine and MIDI sequencer from the same family as the Roland TR-909, TR-808, TR-707, and TR-626. Released in 1986, the unit can be used to sequence short, punchy, 12-bit samples. The drum kit includes basic rock drum sounds similar to those of the 707, plus a complement of Latin-style drum sounds similar to those of the TR-727, which was similar to the TR-707, but it had Latin instruments instead of rock drums.

76 The 909 was designed by Tadao Kikumoto, who also designed the Roland TB-303 Synthesizer. Chief Roland engineer Makoto Muroi credited the design of the analog and pulse-code modulation voice circuits to “Mr. Ou” and its software to “Mr. Hoshiai”.

77 Underground Resistance is probably the most militantly political outcropping

attention to techno, along with artists such as “Mad” Mike Banks, Cornelius Harris and Robert Hood.

The initial audience for Techno was young African American people in inner city Detroit (specifically young males). Techno is considered part of a philosophy of sonic resistance. In composing the track, we also used the Korg ER1⁷⁸, one of the early drum machines for hi-hats, other synth textures and percussion. This instrument was heavily used in early techno production along with the Korg EA1⁷⁹ that was used to create the bass line for the sound track. While the conventional speed for percussion is 130 BPM (beats per minute), the final track was mastered at 145 BPM, which is the standard speed for techno music. It was important to stay as true as I could to the sound and cultural genes of the music. In the performance *Sokunge*, I generated sounds using the sculptures and my body. I used plastic tail combs to scratch the copper coiled surfaces of some of the sculptures to produce sound. Two of the sculptures had chimes, bells and chestnut seed maracas affixed to them. I also used these objects to create different textures of sound.

I acquired a Shure SM58 dynamic vocal microphone with a cardioid

of second-wave Detroit techno. Combining a grubby, four-track aesthetic, an almost strictly DIY business philosophy, and an oppositional, militaristic ethos similar to Public Enemy without the drama (or the familiarity; the members refuse to be photographed without bandanas obscuring their identities), UR have redirected their portion of the Detroit techno legacy to social activist ends, trading mainstream popularity and financial success for independence and self-determination. Begun in the early '90s by Detroit second-wave trinity <https://www.discogs.com/artist/1160-Underground-Resistance>

78 The Korg Electribe R was released in 1999 as a dedicated electronic drum machine to complement the Korg Electribe A bass synthesizer. It was used in later Detroit techno production.

79 Also released in 1999, it ushered in a new era for Korg with the Electribe series beginning with the EA-1 Analog Modelling Synthesizer which was used to create most Detroit Techno Bass lines

pickup pattern and 50Hz-15kHz frequency response. This is arguably the best microphone for vocal pickup used by lead vocal performers. To construct one of the free standing sculptures, I used a broken trombone that I fixed with a new improvised copper tubing slide attached to a mouthpiece receiver. The attached slide was made from soft copper refrigeration tube coil and was coiled into several organic coils which increased the distance from the sounding bell to the mouthpiece, thereby increasing the resistance between the mouthpiece and the bell, requiring extra effort to play the trombone.

I connected a 1 inch, sharkBite brass valve between the slide and the horn during the performance allowing the valve to act as a pitch control. I used this to achieve the non musical sounds from the instrument. These sounds were a result of the air compression. On top of this trombone, I mounted an AKG Vocal Condenser Microphone. Because this was a condenser type, the microphone could pick up extra sounds within a 9 feet vicinity.

For the performance piece, *Sokunge*, I created new assemblage sculptures. In place of spears, I used traditional straw sweeping brooms, skateboard wheels and disfigured smurfs. I maintained assemblage techniques in all the craft work, making use of the pressure and tensions of the various materials involved in tying and binding them together. I used copper tubing to create coil binding for most of the sculptures. This copper tubing was acquired from a local hardware store in Ann Arbor. I wound the copper tubing to the aluminium body of these vertical structures in paracord-like style which resembles the traditional tool and weapon accessorizing techniques from Zimbabwe. This copper tubing was juxtaposed with round basket-weaving reed coiled in the same manner. Part of the musical aesthetic and function was also emphasized by brass goat bells and several sizes of Reindeer bells that I used on some of the sculptures. These provided several textures of sound during the performance. My experiments with sounds are always pushing to, as Deleuze and Guattari propose in a *A*

Thousand Plateaus, “make language stammer, or make it ‘wail,’ stretch tensors through all of language, even written language, and draw from its cries, shouts, pitches, durations, timbres, accents, intensities.”⁸⁰

Oguibe in his book, *The Culture Game*, looks at vetoing or silencing the voice as a form of colonial violence. He says denying audience to a voice in a democratic dialogue turns the bearer of the voice into mere vassalage⁸¹. He says this in reference to an interview of Quattara Watts, an Ivorian painter, by Thomas McEvilley an American art critic. In my creative process I’m aware of these complex political and cultural tropes, tropes that Oguibe calls “perverted pornographic desires that manifest themselves almost significantly in the continued preference in the West for art from Africa that is easily imaged, not as art as we know it but as a sign of the occult, an inscription of the fantastic”⁸². As an artist from mainland Africa, I’m located in what Olu Oguibe calls the ‘terrain of difficulty’⁸³. This cultural and political position differs vastly from that of an African American or any ‘other’ who has the signifier ‘American’ after their identified ethnicity. This is largely because in the West(s) there is a violent lust of hierarchizing and identifying the ‘other’ under the guise of celebrating diversity, and according to Oguibe, the ‘African’ artist in the West has to battle against a pre-designed cultural and structural script that is forced upon him on arrival. He refers to negotiating and resisting this script as a ‘culture game’. For the African artist the ‘terrain of difficulty’ comes with a different set of cultural, aesthetic and ideological demands which warrant a different type of resistance and negotiation .

Roland Barthes in his Lecture in Inauguration of the Chair of Literary

80 Deleuze, Gilles, and Guattari Félix. n.d. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari ; Translation and Foreword by Brian Massumi. Athlone Press, 1988.

81 Oguibe, Olu. “Double Dutch and the Culture Game.” *Empires of Vision*, 01, 2014, 594-608.

82 *ibid.*

83 *ibid.*

Semiology, Collège de France, had proposed the voice as legislature and as an instrument of defining cultural, geography and subjectivity.⁸⁴ I've become interested in the voice as material and in the political connotations of such a statement. In the context of cultural resistance the voice through song, poetry and speech is one of the most commonly used mediums in contesting power. Olu Oguibe explores silencing the voice the voice as a type of colonial suppression and violation of one's dignity as a human being.

In her book, *Sensing Sound*, Nina Sun Eidsheim offers a vibrational theory of music that radically re-envision how we relate to and think about sound and listening. Thinking of this in my performance piece, I explore body movements that suggest sound but do not produce audible sound, for instance pretend blows or other movements. Eidsheim shows how sound, music, and listening are dynamic and contextually dependent, rather than being fixed, knowable, and constant. Eidsheim releases the voice from a constraining set of fixed concepts and meanings. This expanded definition of sound as manifested through material and personal relations suggests that we are all connected to each other through sound. The use of the voice in my performance has introduced a new dimension to the sculptural and performative elements in my work. The voice is elusive and resists singular definitions⁸⁵. Olu Oguibe posits the voice as social-cultural and political legislature echoing Roland Barthes. The ephemeral quality of the voice in both my performances creates a quality in the work that cannot be domesticated by space or stringent definitions of categories. I'm also exploring voices or sounds that are not primarily aural. An example would be feigned playing: *Kusikiza* is a *Zezuru* description of feigned gestures or pretended blows and strikes in performance. These gestures do not create an aural sound but a

84 Barthes, Roland, and Richard Howard. 1979. "Lecture in Inauguration of the Chair of Literary Semiology, College De France, January 7, 1977." *October* 8: 3. doi:10.2307/778222.

85 Chion, Michel. 2015. "Sound." doi:10.1215/9780822374824.

visual expectation of sound to the viewer, they arguably have their own sound as well, however inaudible it appears. Raven Chacon in the collaborative performance piece: *Tremble staves*⁸⁶ with *The Living Earth Show*⁸⁷ and School of Music Technology and Dance at the University of Michigan used a lot of feigned or pretend blows in the set he composed to be performed at The Matthaei Botanical Gardens on May 14 in 2018. ‘Intermaterial vibrational phenomenon’ looks at this type of inaudible sound or voices wherein oscillating bones and flesh are themselves sonic objects.⁸⁸

My treatment of sound is inspired by sound artist, Christine Sun Kim, who makes kinetic installations that combine performance with scores of harmonies, cacophonies and vibrations. Kim was born deaf and has made it her project to explore the physicality of sound. “I constantly questioned the ownership of sound, now I’m reclaiming sound as my property,”⁸⁹ Kim has said. She also makes paintings and drawings from her experiments with field recordings and breathing. For her “Seismic Calligraphy” works, she places canvases with ink-laden brushes on top of subwoofers. As sound is piped through the speakers, the brushes move and mark the canvas. The “Scores and Transcripts” series visualizes sound with poem-like compositions of words and syncopated lines on paper. From Christine Sun Kim’s work I learned

86 <https://events.umich.edu/event/61418>

87 The Living Earth Show is an unconventional music duo thriving on pushing the boundaries of technical and artistic possibility in its presentation of commissioned electro-acoustic chamber music. It has presented seasons of commissioned multimedia productions since 2011, working with dance companies, visual artists, sculptors, poets, and other musicians to craft compelling, immersive, San Francisco-centric work.

88 Eidsheim, Nina Sun. *Sensing Sound: Singing and Listening as Vibrational Practice*. Duke University Press, 2015.

89 Sekoff, Hallie, and Hallie Sekoff. 2012. “A Deaf Artist Explores Sound.” *HuffPost*. September 10. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/christine-sun-kim-deaf-pe_n_1870489.

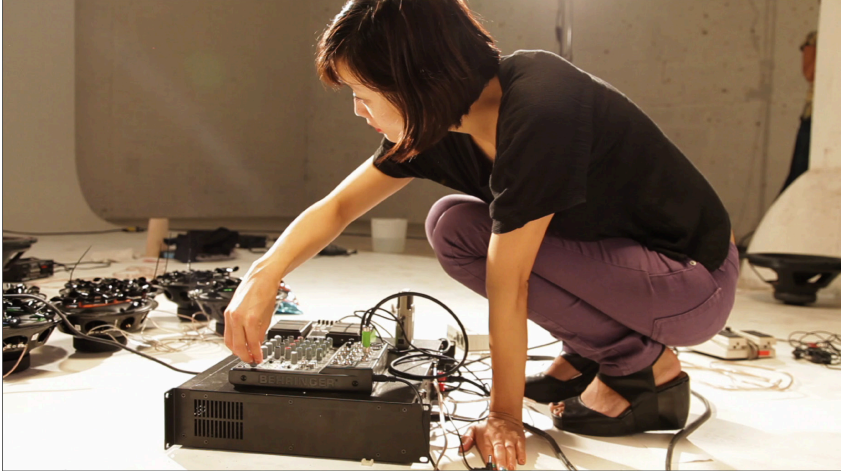


Fig. 19 Christine Sun Kim, 2008. Photo credit: Todd Selby

about non-audible and non-aural sound and other forms in which sound can exist. I explored these sounds in my performance piece, *Sokunge*, through the use of feigned strikes and body movements. This led me to explore a larger field of intermaterial vibrational phenomena.

Dance as Negotiation

In my first performance piece, I collaborated with Hardcore Detroit, a dance company specializing in Detroit Jit and other forms of hip hop dances. Another important collaboration was with DJ George Rahme from Hamtramck. George and I composed and recorded the soundtrack that was used for the second part of *Mbende/Jerusalem* which was held on the 28th of September, 2018 at the Duderstadt Video Studio. The sound track was a negotiation of sorts and a hybrid between traditional *Mbende/Jerusalem* percussion and several early Detroit Techno elements from the late 1980's. I decided to focus on Techno specifically because of its association with Detroit Jit and its origins of cultural resistance. Even though techno arrived later on the scene, in the late 1980's, it is now heavily associated with Detroit Jit.

This performance grew out of my membership in (ZCCD) Zimbabwe Cultural center of Detroit, ⁹⁰an organization founded in 2010 whose mandate is to facilitate cultural research between Zimbabwe and Detroit, fostering collaborations between artists from both spaces. These two spaces share a history of community resilience despite the epic failure of capitalism and an economic collapse in these places.

Throughout the project I was fascinated by certain aspects of structural detail that appeared in the two dance forms I was exploring. They both seemed to share a complex structure based on gaps, syncopation, and negotiating the dominant beat.

In my research I discovered that colonial and repressive systems are quick to censor and domesticate what they deem violent or hyper-sexual elements of culture, especially in dance as in the case of Capoeira⁹¹ which was banned⁹² by the Portuguese colonial government. In the same oppressive ways the colonial government

90 zccd.org

91 Capoeira, especially Capoeira Angola, is presented as entertainment but is actually a site of euphemized revolutionary processes expressed by the body with several shades of concealed warfare strategies against a dominant aggressor. In colonial Brazil, Capoeira was seen as a threat to the plantation system. Because of this, its teaching was banned. This led to the creation of secret societies ('Quilombos') where escaped slaves would play capoeira (because it's considered a game) and establish their freedom re-appropriating their identities and their sense of time. By disguising Capoeira as a dance and music form, Brazilians escaped criminalization by the Portuguese colonial government.

92 On October 11, 1890, a new Penal Code was enacted (*Código Penal, Decreto No. 847, de 11 de Outubro de 1890*). In order to address the social disturbances that were caused by capoeira, the new government (after the abolition of slavery) decided to criminalize its practice as well as its related activity of loitering. Capoeira was only decriminalized in 1930 and only in 2008 did it achieve the status of a cultural patrimony. similarly, Mbende Jerusarema was only recognized in 2005 on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Capoeira would be presented as mere dance in the presence of the colonizer and it enjoyed a complex duality in its manifestation.

in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) led campaigns to restrict the practice of *Mbende/Jerusalem*, the white media in the late 70's labeled and ostracized Detroit Jit as a 'gangster's dance'.

.Zora Neale Hurston's asserts that African American dances contained concealed and suppressed politics⁹³. The same dissimulative and suppressed protest qualities found expression in other forms such as the Zoot suit which was a symbol of opposition and resistance that created a subcultural space for expression in the 1940's in Los Angeles. The LA riots are evidence of how a symbol of resistance can possess so much power In shared histories this attempted curtailing of resistance often results in the creation of secret societies and dissimulative cultural practices as evidenced through dance and performance cultures of subaltern cultures. Some of these secret societies or hush harbors were the matrixes of resistance dances.

Concerning the use of collaborative dance, I was inspired by artist Hetain Patel's collaboration with Nigerian dancers in London. His film, "Don't Look at the Finger", is a video work that follows a ceremonial 'fight' between two protagonists, a man and a woman, in the grand architectural setting of a church. The way the characters communicate is a feat of choreography that combines Kung Fu with sign language to express a ritualistic coming together.

I met Hetain Patel when he was a featured speaker in the Penny W. Stamps lecture series at the University of Michigan in November 2018. I conversed with Patel and was surprised to learn that he was also interested in fight culture and the thin line between fight and dance. This conversation happened a few months after I had performed the *Mbende/Jerusalem Tehkno*. Patels's film title *Don't look at the finger* is taken from one of Kung Fu master Bruce Lee's most celebrated sayings, voiced in a key scene in his magnum opus *Enter the Dragon*. In this scene, he warns his students never to be distracted by a finger that

93 J.Chang , *Can't Stop,Won't Stop: A History of the Hip Hop Generation*, St Martin's Press New York, 2005, p

is pointing at something lest they miss the big picture. Growing up in Zimbabwe in the mid 80's, Bruce Lee was a cult hero and a symbol of resistance to Hollywood and Western model heroes. As young people with unhealthy television watching habits, we could identify with Bruce Lee in his non-caucasian and always victorious minority ethnic disposition.

Bruce Lee's maxim seems especially relevant to the art of Hetain Patel, which frequently points us in one direction, only to reveal, after a series of feigns and swerves, that its real substance lies elsewhere. This use of the feign as both metaphor and literal device is key to my own process in *Mbende Jerusarema Tehkno*. It takes center stage as the performers explore pseudo kung fu dance moves that are mostly feigned. This quality of gesture has always been a part of Detroit Jit. The use of feigned gestures in dance is a subtle type of resistance that communicates through euphemism, the implicit ability to inflict physical harm. This is also a common feature in dances like *Capoeira*. In Patel's work, he has two protagonists and a small contingent that looks like close family, all dressed in vibrantly patterned West African robes, gathered in a church for a wedding ceremony for what looks like an arranged marriage. The proceedings are conducted in sign language and a mixture of several martial arts styles.

Don't Look at the Finger had the greatest influence on my work even though I was already waist deep into my own processes. Late discoveries such as these are very important to me because they confirm the fact that I'm asking the right questions—questions which some artists, like Patel, have been asking for some time. I deliberately position myself to work with very minimal knowledge of artists exploring the same themes or mediums as I do and then at a certain point in the process, I deepen my research to explore works and processes that align with my intentions.

I have discovered strong connections between the inspirations and approaches to my work and those of Hetain Patel. Though we come

from different places, we share similar cultural backgrounds. Patel's Indian heritage and British colonial history connects with my own situation in a postcolonial sense. The kind of mainstream philosophy and entertainment that was transmitted through television in the former British colonies is also one of the things our works have in common. The use of marvel characters like Spiderman and the fascination with Kung Fu films are basic examples of these kinds of tropes.

The use of sound in Patel's movie is based on classic Kung Fu film techniques whereby the sound of the draped body, throwing punches and movement is exaggerated and made hyper audible. This was an idea I had been exploring in *Mbende/Jerusalem Tehkno* by focusing on the sound made by the friction of the dancers feet with the floor as well as the sound made by gestures with the dancer's clothes and their breath. The Duderstadt video crew made use of acoustic floor mics. In my editing processes, I worked on bringing all of these sounds to the fore in the final video in order to achieve a Kung Fu aesthetic mixed with a street dance mood to the performance.



Fig. 20 Hetain Patel, *I fight scene*. Photo credit @ Hetain Patel



CREATIVE WORK

"The white man's always trying to know into somebody else's business. Alright I will set something else outside of the door of my mind to play with and handle. He can read my writing but he sho can't read my mind. I will put this play thing in his hand and he will seize it and away. Then I will say my say and sing my song."

-Zora Neal Hurston⁹⁴

94 "Their Eyes Were Watching God." Book. New York : New York, 2000.



Artworks on display:

The final thesis exhibition consisted of three artworks: One is a video documentation of *Mbende/Jerusalem Tehkno*, see fig. 21, a performance piece with dance and sculpture performed at the Duderstadt Video studio in September, 2018 at University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. In *Mbende/Jerusalem Tehkno* the stage area is framed by 7 found-object assemblage sculptures made from vertical steel round tubes measuring 1 inch (outside diameter). A variety



Fig. 21 Still image of Hardcore Detroit dancers in Mbende /Jerusarema Tehkno 2018.

Photo credit @ Rowan Renee

of materials are attached to the tubes, such as parts of broken trumpets, golf balls, Smurfs, and other toys including skateboard wheels. The sculptures stood approximately 7 feet tall. Three of these sculptures were constructed to rock back and forth on their large round bases and were equipped with a small flat panel television monitors (mounted in the portrait orientation). The television monitors had a shift sensor and a Raspberry PI programmed to switch from one video to another when activated by the dancers touch during the performance. One video on the monitors was of Bruce Lee in his famous 1975 interview with Terry McBride when he uttered his famous statement “be water my friend”⁹⁵. The second video is of me drum slapping the water and making percussion sounds in a river. This ability to switch videos and rock between different positions transformed the sculptures into dynamic forms that stand in stark contrast to conventional, static gallery sculptures that cannot be handled.

95 McBride, Terry Lee. 2013. “Bruce Lee Be As Water My Friend.” *YouTube*. August 14. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cJMwBwFj5nQ>. 0:38

Metaphorically, this characteristic of rocking in different directions around a center point speaks of the improvisational resourcefulness of the postcolonial subject who, through quick wit and resilience, resists the stationary and imposed status quo, negotiating among several socio-cultural positions. Achille Mbembe in his book, *The Postcolony*, calls this 'political improvisation'⁹⁶. Colonial subjects often use improvisation as a survival strategy incorporating unpredictability, impermanence, and spontaneity into their lives to avoid being restricted and domesticated by an oppressive system.

The second work is a triptych of upright spear sculptures made with parts of my old installation and performance piece, *Mbende/Jerusalem Tehkno*. These sculptures have television monitors flipped to portrait orientation, playing on them is a 40-second continually looped video of a life support, heart rate monitor. The sculptures are secured on thick flat steel bases.

The third piece is a sculptural installation activated by a performance by the artist. This installation is made up of vertical assemblage sculptures set and attached around a large wooden box measuring 6.7ft x 2.3ft x 2.5ft. These sculptures blend conventional Western popular culture symbolism and pseudo African and Caribbean aesthetics from fake Nkisi Nkondi⁹⁷, Smurfs to Mexican maracas

96 Mbembe, Joseph-Achille. 2001. *On the Postcolony*. University of California Press.

97 In the cosmology of The Kongo peoples Nkisi Nkondi is a wooden power figure and a magical charm carved in the likeness of human being, meant to highlight its function in human affairs.). A nkisi nkondi can act as an oath taking image which is used to resolve verbal disputes or lawsuits (mambu) as well as an avenger (the term nkondi means 'hunter') or guardian if sorcery or any form of evil has been committed. Nkisi nkondi figures are highly recognizable through an accumulation of pegs, blades, nails or other sharp objects inserted into its surface. "Power Figure (Kongo Peoples)." Khan Academy. <https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/ap-art-history/africa-ap/a/nkisi-nkondi>.2019.

made from chestnut shells purchased from Amazon. On top of the box, I have placed a Zimbabwean flag to introduce a specificity of space in contrast to the homogenous generalization associated with African art, and on it sits a paraphernalia of trinkets and homemade percussion instruments used to produce sound. These include aluminum Chinese chopsticks see fig 24, an old cow bell from rural Zimbabwe, tail combs, percussion brushes, reindeer bells and monkey fruit rattle balls.



Fig. 22 Fake Nkisi power figure (detail). Masimba Hwati photo credit @ Masimba Hwati



Fig. 23 Comparison: Smurf Nkisi(smurf)(detail) 2019 Masimba Hwati,Original Nkisi photo credit @ Charles B. Benenson. 1933



Fig. 24 Sokunge, installation detail, instruments on top of the box. Photo credit: @ Bridget Quinn

The front surface of the box is activated by a video projection and the attachment of three conventional brass drum cymbals, two that are 12 inches in diameter and one that is 7 inches in diameter. The short video loop (4 minutes long), shows atrocities that implies a colonial racial history but also includes black on black violence in Zimbabwe from the colonial Rhodesian era and the postcolonial period of independence. The video is made from still photographs that slowly move and scale up or down, making use of a popular video effect known as the “Ken Burns video effect”. This effect allowed me to create an arresting video from still images. The imagery is obfuscated by the presence of drum cymbals attached to and protruding from the front side of the box. By deconstructing the projected image through obfuscation I was experimenting with the idea of creating physical gaps that would also mirror the narrative and political gaps in an oppressive system. The box serves as a platform or stage for me to build a galaxy of new ideas outside and around it.



Fig. 25 Masimba Hwati performing Sokunge, Stamps Gallery 2019. Photo credit: @Rowan Renee

I activate this installation by means of performance in a way that echoes Schusterman's ideas of . During the performance, I make sounds from rubbing, tapping and shaking some of the sculptures and throwing them off their pseudo sacred inanimate balance. My experimenting with the idea of sculpture as part of a larger context. I also use my voice and am deeply inspired by the work of composer, performer and installation artist Raven Chacon from Fort Defiance, Navajo Nation, New Mexico who serves as an important reference for this performance. Chacon works with unconventional music composition, and the production of sound from disparate objects, using techniques and patterns that normally fall outside conventional western music parameters. Chacon offered advice on how to think about time in music and sound performance and suggested methods to slow time down by using reverb and echo effects.

One of his most influential performances and compositions is a piece called, 'Report' see fig 26. 'Report' is a musical composition scored for an ensemble playing various caliber firearms. The sonic potential of revolvers, handguns, rifles, and shotguns are utilized in a tuned cacophony of percussive blasts interspersed with voids of timed silence. In the piece, guns – instruments of violence, justice, defense, and power – are transformed into mechanisms for musical resistance. This transformation of firearms into musical resistance, and his innovative techniques of arranging and choreographing sounds from objects and sculptures, inspired my use of the spear as an object of inherent threat and violence taking full advantage of its potential to make scraping, pounding sounds that enhanced my performance. Through this activation the sculptures were given a new life and voice that transcended their spatial and material limitations.

As you enter the Stamps Gallery and pass the first exhibition space walking towards your right, you encounter spear sculpture that stands like a sentry, introducing viewers to the installation piece titled *Sokunge*. The entire installation is positioned within a white wall

enclave (14 feet wide and 4 feet deep) in a white cube gallery see fig 27. The installation is positioned in such a way that $\frac{3}{4}$ of its physical form is contained within the enclave. Projected on a wall behind the enclave is a 16 feet by 8 feet silhouetted still image of dancers

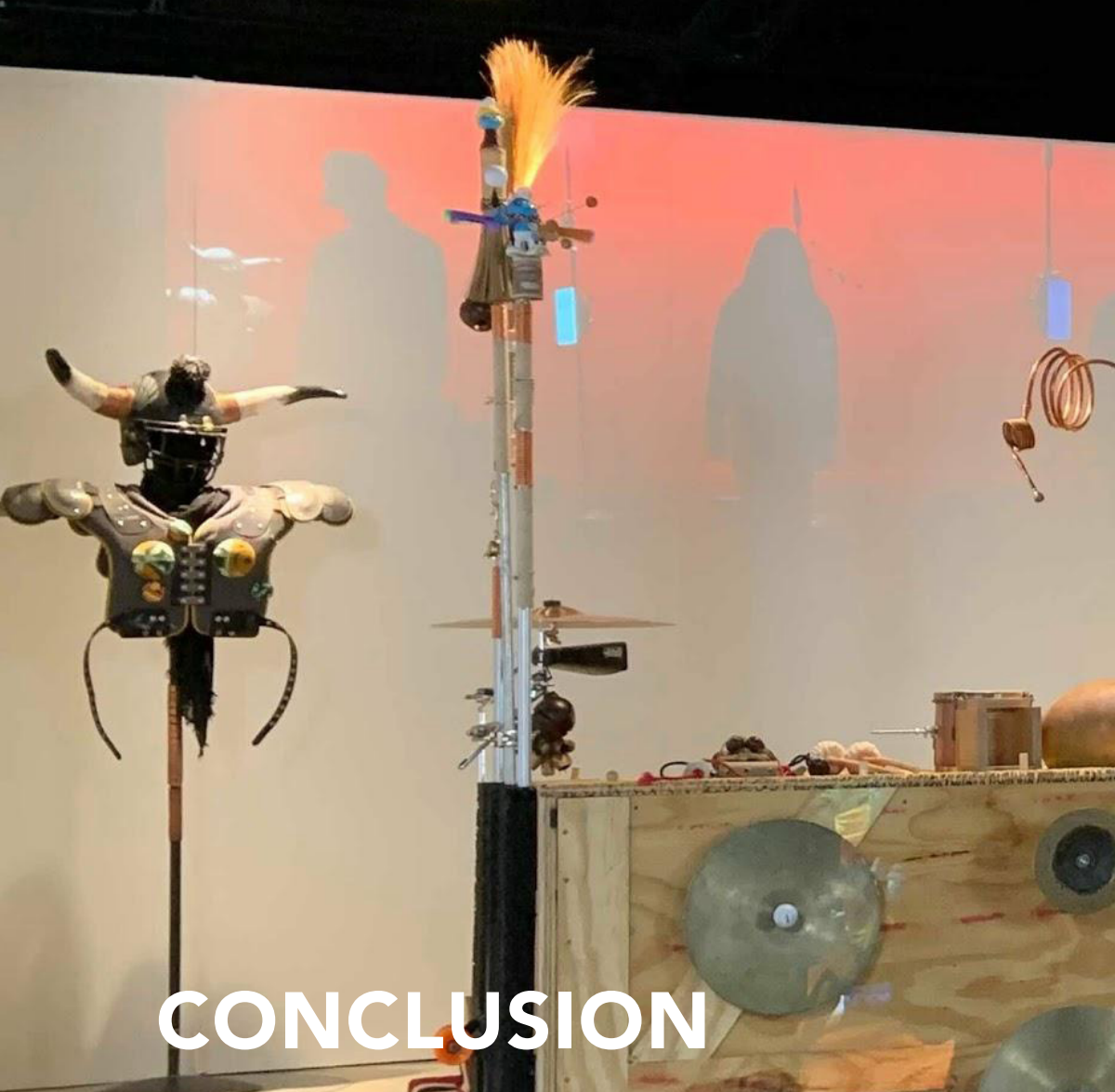


Fig. 26 Raven Chacon, Report, 2001-2015. Photo credit: @Raven Chacon

posing against a deep reddish backdrop with some of the sentry-like sculptures visible in the background image. During the live performance I shake, rub, and strike the surfaces of the objects in the installation, creating sonic textures that are then arranged and played back as audio loops through the use of a boss loop station, a small electronic audio sampling device that manipulates sound. This technique also captured the improvised vocal component of my performance. As more and more sounds are recorded over the course of the performance, I improvise the arrangement and sound samples, composing them into a complex sonic blanket that extends outside the enclave and fills the entire gallery space. My activation of the sculptures demonstrates the multi-layered nature of inanimate material.



Fig. 27 Sokunge Installation shot Masimba hwati photo credit @ Rowan Renee



CONCLUSION

“Subordinate people do not have the privilege of explicitness, the luxury of transparency, the presumptive norm of clear and direct communication, free and open debate on a level playing field that privileged classes take for granted.”⁹⁸

98 Conquergood, Dwight. “Performance Studies: Interventions and Radical Research.” *TDR/The Drama Review* 46, no. 2 (06 2002)



Thesis Questions:

a) *How do I critically explore the human body as a medium of cultural resistance and negotiation in relation to sculptural objects? What is the place of dance, gesture, and sound in this relationship and how does this contest and modify power and specific narratives of epistemic violence?*

b) *How can I use dance/gesture, sound as a medium to resist and negotiate euphemistic colonial configurations embedded within the socio-political systems in which the postcolonial subject exists?*

What:

My questions center around the notion of the body, its absence, invisibility or distance in relation to sculpture in my practice as well as in other artists' from a postcolonial African provenance. I explored Dwight Conquergood and Richard Shusterman's theories of the colonial hierarchy of text versus embodied knowledge. The idea of somaesthetics reverberated well with the historical pan African philosophical practices of dance with and around sculpture.

How:

By activating sculpture using living bodies in both my thesis performances I experienced and learnt how the formal elements of sculpture and performance can complement one another in a contemporary setting on level ground, in other words performing with and activating the sculptures in a way that they are not relegated to props. Though historically common in precolonial pan 'African' traditions, the idea of living bodies complementing and activating sculpture is not an atavistic intervention but a contemporary completion to the cycle of knowledge from two sources namely the *Soma*⁹⁹ and the Sculptural object.

My first performance piece *Mbende/Jerusalem* Techno was created and choreographed to explore and complicate the relationship between the body with sculptural objects. This was achieved by selecting two dances that had ritualistic and symbolic ideas of resistance. The sculptures in the performance are assemblages in their form, with hybrid aesthetics from pseudo African and Western consumer cultures. By creating these hybrid forms I was empowering

99 Greek for body

them to stand in between seemingly polarized cultural locations. In this way the forms become somewhat resistant to singular cultural claims, categorization or hierarchization. These sculptures play a complex role as structures to be resisted against but also to be negotiated with. Sometimes they play the role of accompaniment to the dance and because of their independent agency, they also resist the category of props.

Ascribing individual agency to the sculptures in their pre-activation state was an experiment to bypass the hierarchy and dichotomy of props and bodies in my two performances. Short circuiting this hierarchy and complicating the relationship between bodies and sculpture revealed the dancers new relationship with the sculpture. In *Mbende/Jerusalem* Techno the dancers felt that the sculptures were an extension of their own bodies but also felt they had to resist and negotiate their own space in relationship to the sculpture. This challenged old ideas of Detroit Jit and suggested new trajectories in which the dance can develop exploring new performative relationships to sculptural objects. I'm currently working on a proposal for a new performance with Hardcore Detroit to explore new Detroit Jit techniques with sculpture. In my art and ideas of resistance, I argue for the centrality of the soma by introducing the dancers living bodies to activate the sculptural installation. In my performance *Sokunge* I go even deeper and narrower, allowing the voice of the body to activate the sculpture.

Why:

Through my creative process I'm experimenting and creating a model of language around improvisation, hybridity and abrogation, a language that goes beyond *Mbende/Jerusalem* and Detroit Jit to engage issues in the here and now. Both *Mbende/Jerusalem* and Detroit Jit are powerful dances that embodied resistance in their respective times but issues today demand new languages and responses. I perceive

that these new forms are located in interdisciplinary spaces. In her last words Victoria Santa Cruz the Afro Peruvian choreographer, composer, and activist (1922 - 2014) alludes to the futility of reactive confrontational resistance. She responds to the question what has racism taught you? by stating, “[i]n a little while, I will leave this life... and I want to leave in peace with my conscience clean, and we’ll see what happens here. But everything is weakened, dislocated in the entire world. And everyone is losing because really, this is not how you fight.”¹⁰⁰ It seems here that she describes the conventional confrontation type of resistance that has failed to transform systems but has only managed to subvert hierarchies.

My work is important because it not only continues the conversation of resisting and negotiating colonial configurations on contemporary art and sculpture from ‘Africa’ but also questions anti- *Soma* and hyper-textocentric Western ideas of how knowledge is preserved and shared. In my thesis work, I am positioning the body with sculpture in a relationship that defines the body as both, site and medium of resistance. Othered¹⁰¹ contemporary artist like Terry Adkins and Nick Cave are asking the same questions as I am. I on the other hand I explore the voice as material and space to this language of resistance and negotiation. The voice as a material presents ephemerality as resistance.

100 https://deskgram.net/p/1998012500508362242_6909090562

101 member of a dominated out-group, whose identity is considered lacking and who may be subject to discrimination by the in-group J.F. Staszak Publié dans *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*, 2008, Elsevier

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