

**THE NEO-DIASPORA:
EXAMINING THE SUBCULTURAL CODES OF HIP-
HOP AND CONTEMPORARY URBAN TRENDS IN THE
WORK OF KUDZANAI CHIURAI AND ROBIN RHODE**

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of

MASTER OF ARTS (ART HISTORY)

of

RHODES UNIVERSITY

by

SCOTT STIRLING

January 2010

Abstract

This thesis is structured around an exploration of the global phenomenon hip-hop. It considers how its far-reaching effects, as a cultural export from the United States, have influenced cultural production in South Africa. The investigation focuses specifically on the work of two visual artists: Zimbabwean born, Johannesburg-based Kudzanai Chiurai, and Cape Town born, Berlin-based Robin Rhode. The introduction familiarises the reader with the two artists and briefly outlines their histories and methods, as well as giving a short history of the development of hip-hop as a subculture from its beginnings in 1970s New York. The first chapter follows this brief introduction to outline some of the parallels, especially concerning race relations, between 1970s America and post-apartheid contemporary South Africa. This comparison aims to highlight similarities that gave rise to the hip-hop phenomenon, and which also place South Africa in a prime position to welcome such influences. The second half of the chapter explores how migration theory and issues of diaspora have not only influenced the development of hip-hop, but have also become points of focus for both artists, who are in fact diasporans themselves. The second chapter explores 'ground level' concerns of everyday life in the city. Issues of crime, gangsterism, politics and activism are characterised as focal elements of Chiurai's and Rhode's artwork and also of hip-hop musical content. Inner city contexts in different parts of the globe are compared through a discussion of the art and music that come out of them. This comparison of the philosophical and conceptual content of the art and music is extended, in Chapter three, into a comparison of methods of production, considering how these influence various readings of the artistic output, whether musical or visual. Ideas of authenticity are discussed and finally the focus shifts to explore how both the conceptual and practical concerns of musicians and artists are being shaped by an increasingly 'globalized' world. The conclusion explores the challenges that globalization poses to cultural practitioners and seeks to highlight some of the artists' methods as examples with which to facilitate the growth of a more inclusive global aesthetic.

Table of Contents

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	v
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 1: HOME, DIASPORA, AND BEYOND	18
I. REPRESENTATIONS OF RACE AND NATIONAL IDENTITY	18
i) An Interconnected History of Racial Constructs and Race Relations in South Africa and the United States	20
ii) The Black Male Body	28
iii) The Burden of Representation	32
II. ISSUES OF MIGRATION AND DIASPORA	35
i) Africa and its Culture of Mobility	36
ii) Xenophobia: The Scourge of the Migrant	41
iii) Johannesburg and Other Global Localities	43
Figures 1 to 18	52
CHAPTER 2: “BIG CITY LIFE”	67
I. THE CITY AND ITS CULTURAL SPACES	67
i) Discussions of the Spatial Politics of Hip-Hop in Relation to Rhode’s and Chiurai’s Use of Graffiti	69
ii) Characters on the Street: The Space of Performance	74
iii) Blurred Lines: The City as Subject	78
II. CRIME AND VIOLENCE	81
i) A Brief History of Hip-Hop’s Ties to Gang Culture	83
ii) Representations of Fear and Paranoia	88
iii) The ‘Burden of Representation’ and Depictions of Marginal Figures	91
III. IDEAS OF POLITICS AND RESISTANCE	95
i) Chiurai and Activism	99
ii) Images of Protest and Resistance in the Work of Robin Rhode	102
Figures 19 to 43	109

CHAPTER 3: IN THE MIX!	126
I. THE TECHNOLOGIES OF PRODUCTION	126
i) Hip-Hop: “The Black CNN”	126
ii) “Hip-Hop’s Postmodern Mah Man!”: Chiurai’s Sampling Techniques	131
iii) On The Wheels of Steel: Rhode Remixes	136
II. CONFRONTING MODERNIST NOTIONS OF AUTHENTICITY	141
III. THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY	150
i) No Option But Co-Option: The Rise to the Mainstream	154
ii) Do the Right Thing!	161
Figures 44 to 61	166
CONCLUSION	178
BIBLIOGRAPHY	186

List of Illustrations

- Figure 1 Examples of some graffiti from in and around Johannesburg city centre (photographs taken from http://www.ghettoradio.nl/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=498&Itemid=61).
- Figure 2 Kudzanai Chiurai, *10 years* (2007), mixed media on board, 200 x 122 cm, Obert Contemporary Gallery (reproduction taken from Obert Contemporary website).
- Figure 3 Kudzanai Chiurai, *Sex* (2007), mixed media on board, 200 x 122 cm (reproduction taken from Obert Contemporary website).
- Figure 4 Robin Rhode, *Leak* (2000), performance, South African National Gallery (video still taken from <http://www.artthrob.co.za/00nov/images/roode06a.jpg>).
- Figure 5 Kudzanai Chiurai, *End the Silence* (2005), mixed media on board, 230 x 100 cm, Obert Contemporary Gallery (reproduction taken from Obert Contemporary website).
- Figure 6 Kudzanai Chiurai, *Graceland* (2007), mixed media on board, 120 x 240 cm, Obert Contemporary Gallery (reproduction taken from Obert Contemporary website).
- Figure 7 Kudzanai Chiurai, *We* (2007), mixed media on board, 122 x 200 cm, Obert Contemporary Gallery (reproduction taken from Obert Contemporary website).
- Figure 8 Kudzanai Chiurai, *50* (2007), mixed media on board, 247 x 122 cm, Obert Contemporary Gallery (reproduction taken from Obert Contemporary website).
- Figure 9 Kudzanai Chiurai, *Mzansi* (2005), triptych, mixed media on board, 245 x 365 cm, Obert Contemporary Gallery (reproduction taken from Obert Contemporary website).
- Figure 10 Robin Rhode, *Night Caller* (2004), 11 gelatin silver prints, 30.5 x 45.7 cm each, Edition of 5 + 1 a.p. (reproduction taken from *Walk Off: Robin Rhode* – see bibliography).
- Figure 11 Robin Rhode, *Untitled (Dream Houses)* (2005), 10 C-prints, 31 x 46 cm each, Edition of 5 + 1 a.p. (reproduction taken from *Walk Off: Robin Rhode* – see bibliography).
- Figure 12 Kudzanai Chiurai, *Fela* (2007), mixed media on board, 122 x 247 cm, Obert Contemporary Gallery (reproduction taken from Obert Contemporary website).

- Figure 13 Kudzanai Chiurai, *Jozi Republic* (2007), mixed media on board, 200 x 120 cm, Obert Contemporary Gallery (reproduction taken from Obert Contemporary website).
- Figure 14 Kudzanai Chiurai, *Black President* (2008), mixed media on canvas, 200 x 180 cm (reproduction taken from Obert Contemporary website).
- Figure 15 Kudzanai Chiurai, *Congestion* (2005), triptych, mixed media on board, 245 x 365 cm, Obert Contemporary Gallery (reproduction taken from Obert Contemporary website).
- Figure 16 Kudzanai Chiurai, *Repatriation* (2008), mixed media on canvas, 220 x 170 cm, (reproduction taken from Obert Contemporary website).
- Figure 17 Kudzanai Chiurai, *Why Wait?* (2008), mixed media on canvas, 200 x 180 cm, (reproduction taken from Obert Contemporary website).
- Figure 18 Kudzanai Chiurai, *Lucky Star* (2008), mixed media on canvas, 120 x 220 cm, (reproduction taken from Obert Contemporary website).
- Figure 19 Artists Impression of Rhode's optic environment created on the Queen Elizabeth Hall undercroft at the Southbank centre, London (2008), (reproduction taken from *Walk Off: Robin Rhode* – see bibliography).
- Figure 20 Graffiti on the Queen Elizabeth Hall undercroft at the Southbank centre, London (personal photograph taken on 6th December 2008).
- Figure 21 Examples of Kudzanai Chiurai's "tagging" and stencilling techniques (photographs courtesy of the artist).
- Figure 22 Kudzanai Chiurai, *Shopping for democracy* (2008), mixed media on canvas, 200 x 180 cm, (reproduction taken from Obert Contemporary website).
- Figure 23 Robin Rhode, *New Kids on the Bike* (2002), animation, 00:01:01, Edition of 5 + 2 a.p. (video stills shown taken from *Walk Off: Robin Rhode* – see bibliography).
- Figure 24 Robin Rhode, *Stone Flag* (2004), 9 C-prints, 30.5 x 45.7 cm each, Edition of 5 + 1 a.p. (reproduction taken from *Walk Off: Robin Rhode* – see bibliography).
- Figure 25 Robin Rhode, *Juggla* (2007), 20 digital pigment prints, 53.3 x 35.6 cm each, Edition of 5 + 2 a.p. (reproduction taken from *Walk Off: Robin Rhode* – see bibliography).
- Figure 26 Robin Rhode, *Car Wash* (2003), performance, Walker Art Centre, Minneapolis (video stills shown taken from *Walk Off: Robin Rhode* – see bibliography).

- Figure 27 Kudzanai Chiurai, *I Write What I Like* (2008), mixed media on canvas, 120 x 220 cm, (reproduction taken from Obert Contemporary website).
- Figure 28 Kudzanai Chiurai, *Opportunity* (2008), triptych, mixed media on canvas, 220 x 360 cm, (reproduction taken from Obert Contemporary website).
- Figure 29 Kudzanai Chiurai, *Moneylenders* (2007), mixed media on board, 122 x 247 cm, Obert Contemporary Gallery (reproduction taken from Obert Contemporary website).
- Figure 30 Kudzanai Chiurai, *City Fabric* (2008), mixed media on canvas, 200 x 180 cm, (reproduction taken from Obert Contemporary website).
- Figure 31 Robin Rhode, *Car theft* (2003), performance, Walker Art Centre, Minneapolis (video stills shown taken from *Walk Off: Robin Rhode* – see bibliography).
- Figure 32 Robin Rhode, *The Stripper* (2004), animation, 00:02:22, Edition of 5 + 2 a.p. (video stills shown taken from *Walk Off: Robin Rhode* – see bibliography).
- Figure 33 Kudzanai Chiurai, *How Could You?* (2008), mixed media on canvas, 200 x 180 cm, (reproduction taken from Obert Contemporary website).
- Figure 34 Kudzanai Chiurai, *Battle for Zimbabwe* (2004), mixed media on paper, 110 x 160 cm, (reproduction taken from Obert Contemporary website).
- Figure 35 Kudzanai Chiurai, *Rau Rau* (2004), mixed media on paper, 180 x 120 cm, (reproduction taken from Obert Contemporary website).
- Figure 36 An example of one of the posters/prints that Kudzanai Chiurai produced for his mock election/exhibition entitled *One Vote* (photograph taken from <http://www.gothamgal.com>).
- Figure 37 Examples of images and text from Chiurai's printed T-shirts (personal photograph taken on 6 January 2010).
- Figure 38 Robin Rhode, *Park Bench* (2000), performance, charcoal on wall, Houses of Parliament, Cape Town, (video still taken from ARTTHROB website).
- Figure 39 Robin Rhode, *The Score* (2004), performance, Artists Space, New York, (video stills shown taken from *Walk Off: Robin Rhode* – see bibliography).
- Figure 40 Marcel Duchamp, *Fountain* (1917), assisted readymade, porcelain urinal rotated 90 degrees, no dimensions recorded of original,

(reproduction courtesy of Alfred Stieglitz photo [1917] taken from the website <http://arthist.binghamton.edu/duchamp/fountain.html>).

- Figure 41 Robin Rhode, *Stacked Drawing* (2004), 10 gelatin silver prints, 26.7 x 40 cm each, Edition of 5 + 1 a.p. (reproduction taken from *Walk Off: Robin Rhode* – see bibliography).
- Figure 42 Robin Rhode, *Black Tie* (2003), 8 C-prints, 36.8 x 24.1 cm each, Edition of 5 + 2 a.p. (reproduction taken from *Walk Off: Robin Rhode* – see bibliography).
- Figure 43 Robin Rhode, *Master Blaster* (2004), 6 C-prints, 30.5 x 45.4 cm each, Edition of 5 + 1 a.p. (reproduction taken from *Walk Off: Robin Rhode* – see bibliography).
- Figure 44 Banksy, *Tesco - Pledge Your Allegiance* (official title *Very Little Helps*), spraypaint, exact dimensions unknown, (reproduction taken from http://www.artofthestate.co.uk/banksy/banksy_tesco_pledge_your_alliance.htm).
- Figure 45 Marcel Duchamp, *L.H.O.O.Q.* a.k.a “Duchamp’s Mona Lisa with moustache” (1919), ink on postcard, exact dimensions unknown, (reproduction taken from <http://www.marcelduchamp.net/L.H.O.O.Q.php>)
- Figure 46 Robert Rauschenberg, *Erased de Kooning Drawing* (1953), traces of ink and crayon on paper, with mount and hand-lettered ink by Jasper Johns, 64.14 x 55.25 x 1.27 cm, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, (reproduction taken from <http://www.tate.org.uk/tateetc/issue8/erasuregenteel.htm>)
- Figure 47 Andy Warhol, *Campbell’s Soup Can* (1964), silkscreen on canvas, 35.75 x 24 in, Leo Castelli Gallery, New York (reproduction taken from http://www.artinthepicture.com/artists/Andy_Warhol/campbells.jpeg)
- Figure 48 Kudzanai Chiurai, *The Black Issue* (2008), mixed media on canvas, 200 x 180 cm, (reproduction taken from Obert Contemporary website).
- Figure 49 Kudzanai Chiurai, *As Seen on TV* (2008), mixed media on canvas, 220 x 170 cm, (reproduction taken from Obert Contemporary website).
- Figure 50 Kudzanai Chiurai, *End of the Day* (2008), triptych, mixed media on board, 180 x 300 cm, (reproduction is the work in progress taken from Obert Contemporary website).
- Figure 51 Kudzanai Chiurai, *One Time on Communication* (2008), mixed media on canvas, 170 x 220 cm, (reproduction taken from Obert Contemporary website).

- Figure 52 Kudzanai Chiurai, *Reclining Black Label* (2008), mixed media on canvas, 170 x 220 cm, (reproduction taken from Obert Contemporary website).
- Figure 53 Giorgione, *Sleeping Venus* a.k.a “*Dresden Venus*” (1508), oil on canvas, 108.5 x 175 cm, Alte Meister Gallerie, Dresden, Germany (reproduction taken from <http://www.abcgallery.com/G/giorgione/giorgione1.html>)
- Figure 54 Robin Rhode, *He Got Game* (2004), animation, 00:01:04, Edition of 5 + 2 a.p. (video stills shown taken from *Walk Off: Robin Rhode* – see bibliography).
- Figure 55 Robin Rhode, *Wheel of Steel* (2006), 9 gelatin silver prints, 39.4 x 55.9 cm each, Edition of 5 + 2 a.p. (reproduction taken from *Walk Off: Robin Rhode* – see bibliography).
- Figure 56 Robin Rhode, *The Storyteller* (2006), 16-mm film transferred to video, Color, 00:13:18, Edition of 3 + 2 a.p., Perry Rubenstein Gallery, New York and carlier/gebauer, Berlin (film stills shown taken from *Walk Off: Robin Rhode* – see bibliography).
- Figure 57 Kudzanai Chiurai, *Sometimes* (2008), mixed media on canvas, 120 x 220 cm, (reproduction taken from Obert Contemporary website).
- Figure 58 Kudzanai Chiurai *Black Alter Ego* (2004), mixed media on paper, 180 x 120 cm, (reproduction taken from Obert Contemporary website).
- Figure 59 Kudzanai Chiurai, *Press Freedom* (2005), mixed media on board, 215 x 132 cm, (reproduction taken from Obert Contemporary website).
- Figure 60 Robin Rhode, *Untitled (Skipping Rope)* (2005), performance, The Museum of Modern Art, New York (video stills shown taken from *Walk Off: Robin Rhode* – see bibliography).
- Figure 61 Kudzanai Chiurai, *Y-Propaganda* (2004), mixed media on paper, 180 x 120 cm, (reproduction taken from Obert Contemporary website).

N.B. the address for the Obert Contemporary website from which many of these images were taken is http://www.obertcontemporary.com/artist_work.aspx?ar=5#

Introduction

The pop-culture phenomenon that is known today as hip-hop began in the 1970s as a result of socio-political unrest in Jamaica and the Bronx. In the 1970s the South Bronx was “a spectacular set of ruins, a mythical wasteland” (Chang 2005: 17) where neighbourhood block parties were a temporary escape for youths reeling in the aftermath of the civil rights struggle. At the same time in downtown Kingston, Jamaica, victims of post-colonial political unrest were beginning to release their tension to the beat of the street sound systems. Jeff Chang (2005: 39) suggests that it was the “fevered dreams of progress [that] had brought fires to the Bronx and Kingston. The hip-hop generation, it might be said, was born in these fires.” Chang (2005: 2) notes that by the mid-1990s as this generation grew and searched for new ways to define itself “many young writers took to calling themselves ‘the Hip-Hop Generation’”.

A child of this revolutionary generation struggling to find new ways to express themselves was a young street artist by the name of Jean-Michel Basquiat. Initially operating under the infamous signature “SAMO” (i.e. same old shit), he successfully took graffiti from the walls of New York and transformed it into artworks that would inspire countless different artists in the generation to come. One of these artists is a 28-year-old artist who has been described as “the sharpshooter of the Joburg art scene, [whose] huge triptychs and canvasses combine hip hop, graffiti and stencils with a keen political sensibility” (Kahn 2005). Although the term has been thrown around since Basquiat’s time, Kudzanai Chiurai’s work still gets described as “hip-hop art” without much understanding of what this term implies. Across the globe in Berlin

another young Johannesburger who started his career drawing on the streets is forging a path of success into the mainstream Fine Art world, just as Basquiat did over two decades ago. Although Robin Rhode is becoming increasingly familiar to international art audiences, he still struggles to shake off the shackle of “hip-hop” artist, which he thinks ties him down. Roberta Smith writes that “Robin Rhode practices a light-hearted, but socially aware form of graffiti art crossed with performance to charming illustrational effect” (2004: page unknown).

Such descriptions are common when reading reviews or articles discussing the work of artists Kudzanai Chiurai and Robin Rhode. The first description of Chiurai’s work is taken from an article entitled ‘Propogandist’ by Rebecca Kahn for *SL magazine* (Student Life) in which she interviews Chiurai about his swift ascent to success in the South African art world. However, the article deals very little with his artwork and more with his persona. Although the magazine has its place as a vehicle for showcasing up-and-coming young practitioners in various fields, such general treatment and limited engagement with the artist’s work does not do it justice at all. In fact, in a more recent article in *Art South Africa*, Catherine Green (2007: page unknown) notes that, “it is clear that Kudzanai Chiurai’s artistic persona overshadows his art”. Although various texts deal with his art in slightly more detail, many of them use the term “hip-hop” in their descriptive vocabulary without much consideration for the origin of the term and its scope.

Although both artists have spent a considerable amount of time in Johannesburg they are both, in a sense, “migrants”¹ (a condition which I will discuss in Chapter 1 in more detail) and have lived in different cities and countries. Kudzanai Chiurai was born in early, post-independence Zimbabwe where he grew up and went to school. He graduated with a BA (Fine Art) from the University of Pretoria and now lives and works in Braamfontein, central Johannesburg, not far from the Obert Contemporary gallery that represents him in Melrose Arch. Chiurai acknowledges the similarity of his stencilling and spray-can techniques to those of street graffiti artists but to merely define his work as hip-hop or liken it to graffiti is too simple a reading. His stencilled and spray-painted images are juxtaposed against loose brush painting, or frantic charcoal sketching. His canvases vary in size and his complete triptychs may take up the space of a complete wall spaces in a small gallery. His subject matter predominantly incorporates inner city scenes and architecture but continually varies, as does his media, to incorporate portraits and poster-like text. Thus, the simple description of “hip-hop” or “graffiti” art needs to be questioned and unpacked in numerous ways.

Robin Rhode was born in Cape Town during the height of apartheid in 1976. He studied in Johannesburg in the late 1990s and now lives and works in Berlin, Germany. He is currently represented by the Perry Rubenstein Gallery in New York. Although Rhode is more established than Chiurai and has been practicing as a professional artist for longer than him – with more discussion surrounding his work in

¹ I use this term in inverted commas as Rhode is not a migrant in the usual sense of the word, but rather has migrant sensibilities, basing himself in one place while creating artworks in and about other places.

academic or pseudo-academic² discourse – the term hip-hop is too often loosely used to describe his art as well. It is the use of what Smith (2004: page unknown) terms graffiti that is most commonly linked to the term hip-hop with regard to both Rhode's and Chiurai's art. Rhode is aware of the similarities and comparisons that have been drawn between his work and urban graffiti and acknowledges that the idea of hip-hop is a subcultural relation, although he personally does not situate his practice explicitly within it³. Most of Rhode's works exist as performances in which the artist attempts to interact with a wall drawing he has created. The subjects are often banal objects, such as a basket ball or skateboard. Rhode raises important questions about the function of art and indeed its social context through his seemingly impossible attempt to transcend spatial dimensions. It is because Rhode uses similar urban spaces to those graffiti artists would use, such as walls and pavements to do his drawings that he is immediately aligned with them and therefore his art linked to their graffiti. However, although he shares the same environment and context, his drawings often take the form of simple linear charcoal drawings, quite different from the polychrome frescos that many graffiti artists create (Fig. 1). Rhode is continually searching for new ways to reinvent his work and practice, and so his subject matter and indeed techniques also continue to evolve. However, Rhode does state⁴ that he loves hip-hop and recognises it as “a way of confronting a status quo, a process of reinventing the norm” and this fits in with the notion that he draws on hip-hop's subcultural codes (Ilesanmi 2004 :172).

² By pseudo-academic I mean sources that discuss the artwork from somewhat of an informed critical perspective, but which are not located within a conventionally academic framework, for example newspaper and magazine articles as opposed to journal articles or essays.

³ Personal correspondence with the artist via email on 1st April 2008.

⁴ Ibid.

Considering all of the above it becomes apparent that both artists are uncomfortable with strict classification, or simplification of their work as “hip-hop art”, however, their work is situated within a Fine Art cannon that is becoming increasingly cross-pollinated by pop-culture influences such as hip-hop. Therefore, my intention is not to attempt to validate classifications of their work as “hip-hop art”, but rather to explore the contingent influence and consider the conceptual links in their use – whether conscious or sub-conscious – of the so-called subcultural codes of hip-hop.

Although I have just stated that there is an increased cross-pollination of the art world, there are still central power systems that need to be broken down or re-organised.

Gerardo Mosquera (1994: 134) observed in 1994:

A very centralised system of museums, galleries, publications, collectors and market networks still prevails, and it exercises its legitimising power on an international scale based on Eurocentric and even Manhattan-centric criteria. These central circuits possess the money to invest in the construction of ‘universal values’ from their points of view and those of the market.

This is still the case in many instances, however, there is the development of an increasingly global, inclusive and interconnected art world with ever varying cultural influences, where strict classifications of what constitutes Fine Art are becoming more and more blurred for a number of reasons. For instance, the development of world-wide communications, through mechanisms such as the internet, are enabling artists from all over the globe to network and gain exposure to international platforms for exhibition. Thus, Western institutions which for centuries were the “central element in the power system, or mechanism, and defined the notion or boundary of art itself”, are slowly having to re-negotiate that position as other discourses are becoming more prominent (Gule 2005: page unknown).

The movement of culture is becoming more fluid due to developments in transport and communications, and consequential developments in technology are providing cultural practitioners such as visual artists, the means with which to redefine production methods and, by extension, definitions of visual art itself. In this world where the boundaries around what was once thought to be Fine or High Art are constantly being re-defined, gaps are opening up for new methods of expression. As Kathy Halbreich (date unknown) notes “disciplinary boundaries are crossed as easily as geographical ones”, and she goes on to question whether the global information age has facilitated an “international language of art” and an alternative reading of Art History, toward art histories. She suggests that museums and art institutions need to renegotiate their own structures now that “the hegemony of western modernity is being challenged” and they need to “connect with new audiences through different practices, different scholarship, and different interpretive strategies growing out of the sedimentation of their history” (Halbreich, date unknown).

South Africa was once located in these so-called peripheries for two reasons. Firstly, its location within the context of colonized Africa meant that cultural production was fetishized as “other”, and while art produced by white people generally reflected Eurocentric style and content, art produced by black people was strictly relegated to the realm of craft. This was the case with the rest of Africa too, but South Africa’s exclusion from global cultural discourse was further compounded by cultural sanctions during the time of apartheid. This meant that South Africans living in South Africa were limited in their exposure to, and engagement with global cultural forms. However, on the other hand this meant that many South Africans (such as the artist Gerard Sekoto who left to Paris in 1947) fled the country in order to obtain

opportunities elsewhere, and so became more a part of the global cultural flow. However, since independence the rest of South Africa has been hungry for a taste of such global trends in their attempts to establish themselves within a global cultural discourse. Such hunger was evident at the advent of the Johannesburg biennale which occurred within one year of the South Africa gaining its independence in April 1994. Lorna Ferguson (1995: 9) cites the primary reason for having a biennale as a celebration of South Africa's presence in the global cultural arena. With the emergence into this arena new questions began to be asked with regard to South Africa's relationship to the rest of the world. People began to ask how much, if at all, power relations had changed in post apartheid South Africa (Kellner 1997: 29 ; Koloane 1997: 34). Due to this need for answers, and the technological and communications development that have resulted from South Africa's position at the top of Africa's economy, more South Africans began taking an interest in global issues and trends, whether cultural, social, political or economic.

This hunger has created a vacuum for cultural forms such as hip-hop to be sucked up and popularised among the youth. It must be said, however, that hip-hop has become a world-wide phenomenon at the same time which is evident in an increased amount of literature which has recently elevated it to a subject of academic study. It is therefore no surprise that hip-hop's influence in the wider cultural sphere is being seen more clearly considering that disciplinary barriers are becoming increasingly permeable (Halbreich: date unknown). With the help of concepts such as Achille Mbembe's 'Afropolitan'⁵, I will attempt to illustrate how this cross-disciplinary aesthetic and hybridity of culture is characteristic of African society, and how this has

⁵ Some critics claim that Taiye Tuakli-Worsornu coined the term at the same time, however, the majority of literature I have found concerning 'Afropolitanism' is written by Mbembe. Thus I will only use it in reference to Mbembe, as this is more familiar.

extended into African-American aesthetic traditions resulting in the development of hip-hop. Thus I will also show how this has enabled hip-hop codes to be adopted back by artists such as Rhode and Chiurai, in order to create more socially aware and cutting-edge contemporary art.

Jeff Chang (2005: 2) points out that what is particularly attractive about hip-hop is its ability to defy the boundaries of the prefix “post-”. He writes that:

Up until recently, our generation has mainly been defined by the prefix “post-”. We have been post-civil rights, postmodern, poststructural, postfeminist, post-Black, post-soul. We’re the poster children of “post-”, the leftovers in the dirty kitchen of yesterdays feast.

This has particular appeal in a South African context as it too is outgrowing descriptions such as post-apartheid and post-independence. It is hip-hop’s inclusive aesthetic which I will draw out in this thesis, that I argue makes it particularly attractive to South Africa. Jeff Chang’s description of this is not incongruent with what the ideology of the “rainbow nation”⁶ represents. Chang observes:

The idea of the Hip-Hop Generation brings together time and race, place and polyculturalism, hot beats and hybridity. It describes a turn from politics to culture, the process of entropy and reconstruction. It captures the collective hopes and nightmares, ambitions and failures of those who would otherwise be described as “post-this” or “post-that” (ibid).

Although Chang argues that hip-hop breaks through the “post-” barrier and provides a new and exciting perspective from which one can view the world, not everyone is so convinced of this. In his forward to the book *That’s The Joint!: The Hip-Hop Studies Reader*, Michael Eric Dyson (2005: xi) notes:

There are some who dismiss hip-hop as the dead letter of brazen stereotype-mongering among the severely undereducated and their gaggle of learned and over-interpreting defenders. Other critics claim that the deficits of hip-

⁶ The ‘rainbow nation’ is a term coined by Archbishop Desmond Tutu which has been used to promote South Africa as a culturally and racially diverse nation. However, the term is problematic as it implies superficially that there is no longer any racial or cultural inequality.

hop are amplified because they blare beyond the borders of ugly art to inspire youth to even uglier behaviour. And others protest that stripped of politics, history, and racial conscience, hip-hop is little more than sonic pathology that blasts away all the achievements of the civil rights struggle.

Through unpacking hip-hop's influence on the critically acclaimed artwork of Robin Rhode and Chiurari, I hope to dispel such simplistic and uninformed views, and show that hip-hop can be used positively to create a discourse surrounding urbanity that affects significant social change. In conjunction with the view that hip-hop goes beyond such blatant "stereotype-mongering" as that referenced above, Dyson (2005: xii) goes on to highlight the fact that "many critics don't account for the complex ways that some hip-hop artists play with stereotypes to either subvert or reverse them". As I will show, this notion of playing with stereotypes is a key aspect in both Rhode's and Chiurari's work. In short Dyson (2005: xiii) tackles criticisms of hip-hop saying that "these views don't require much beyond attending to surface symptoms of a culture that offers far more depth and colour when it's taken seriously and criticised in a proper fashion". Hence I will attempt to interrogate the phenomenon of hip-hop by drawing parallels between its inception, development, and production to the themes that run through the work of Chiurari and Rhode.

In the first chapter I will give a detailed introduction to Robin Rhode and Kudzanai Chiurari focussing on their specific contexts and histories. In turn, I will outline certain sociological and political issues that have shaped these contexts and localities in which they are situated, and I will consider how these may link to similar issues which played a role in the development and evolution of hip-hop music. I will show that hip-hop is a complicated cultural form with a complex history. In doing so I will investigate certain theories relating to migration and diaspora and will explore how

these theories explain the development and spread of hip-hop into a world-wide phenomenon. Likewise I will illustrate how these theories inform and influence hip-hop's cross pollination of the work of Chiurai and Rhode.

After outlining these theories relating to cultural movement, I will focus more specifically on issues of "race", ethnicity and national identity, as these concepts in turn evolve and are redefined with the movement of culture. This will start to shed light on some of the primary ideological issues that hip-hop practitioners sought to interrogate and discuss. I will highlight how hip-hop is primarily thought to be a *black* cultural form, but will also attempt to go beyond this in order to draw out its inclusive philosophy.

After outlining the context of hip-hop's development (and by extension Rhode and Chiurai's contexts), Chapter 2 will consider consequential issues that rise out of the movement of cultures through migration and racial discourse. In other words, I will take a closer look at the specific contexts mentioned in order to explore and unpack their conditions. This discussion of the places in which the artists situate their practice, and those out of which hip-hop grew, will extend to an exploration of how urban space is represented. I will draw out how hip-hop, and the visual interrogate issues of space appropriation and organisation, and how the city quite literally becomes the canvas for the artists to incorporate such concerns into the music and visual art.

In the second part of Chapter 2 an investigation into the part that crime plays in mapping out the city space will follow on from this discussion of urban space and its

organization. I will focus on violent crime such as gangsterism, as well as the recent spate of xenophobia which completely disrupted the social orientation of Johannesburg and other cities⁷. However, this focus on crime will extend to a more subtle look at issues such as poverty and the legacy of apartheid, and how these too link to the way that criminal activity has developed and evolved in American culture, as seen through hip-hop music. In this subsection I will start to discuss the subgenre ‘gangsta rap’ and its links to representations of crime and violence.

Due to the fact that crime is often a result of desperate and oppressive social conditions such as those of apartheid or segregated America, my discussion of crime and its aesthetics manifested through cultural products will lead into a similar discussion of politics and resistance. Here I will discuss the other subgenre, namely “conscious hip-hop” and its polarity to gangsta rap as a more politically motivated and aware form of the subculture. This forms the latter part of my chapter as I first investigate issues concerning urbanity in order to more fully understand how political concerns and actions involve the urban space. I will also focus on the link between international politics and will consider how the political situations of America and South Africa have been played out through hip-hop and the work of Rhode and Chiurai.

Having dealt mainly with theoretical concerns of both the music and the artwork in the previous chapters, Chapter 3 will begin with an in-depth discussion of what Murray Forman calls the “Technologies of Production” (2004: 389). The various essays in Forman’s book investigate the impact that various developments in

⁷ This spate of xenophobia began in the Johannesburg townships of Alexandra and Soweto in May 2008 and spread across the country. Suspected foreigners were attacked by gangs and were beaten and in some cases killed, while others had their homes ransacked and the possessions stolen.

technology have had on the production and style of hip-hop music. I will take this further and draw parallels in the way that technology influences hip-hop music production to the way that evolving techniques and materials also influence artistic production. I will start to focus in more detail on the different elements of hip-hop – namely DJing, breakdancing, graffiti and rapping or MCing – and my interrogation will not only investigate the similar evolution of art and music in relation to technology, but will also make links between various audio and musical techniques and styles. I will consider how these styles may be translated into visual representations, further elaborating on the concept of a hip-hop aesthetic.

This discussion of the evolution of technological procedures will link up to previous discussions in earlier chapters on cultural mixing, and will illustrate how such cultural mixing and urban flux impact methods of representation, be they musical or visual. Thus, I will link earlier concepts such as Mbembe's 'Afropolitan' to ideas of hybrid genres and methods of creative production. Through this discussion it will become apparent that, as with many forms of unique and alternative cultural production, arguments have been made against hip-hop's validity as an art-form. Such arguments come mainly from purist or modernist quarters debating and condemning hip-hop's hybridity and eclecticism. By highlighting examples of such arguments and similar arguments that could be made against Rhode's and Chiurai's artwork, I will suggest instead that all three forms of expression, while borrowing from, and playing with existing trends or conventions, can indeed be viewed as original and unique. Questions about the definitions of Fine Art or street art will arise through this investigation. By discussing notions of awareness of self and concepts such as "keeping it real", I will show how Rhode, Chiurai, and various hip-hop artists attempt

to debunk or question short-sighted stereotypes attached to the art-world, hip-hop, an society at large.

Finally, in the last part of Chapter 3 I will extend my discussion of issues of validity and authenticity in hip-hop to considerations of how it attempts to maintain its critical or subversive potential as a subcultural movement in the face of growing global popularity and commercial imperatives. While many arguments against the creative potential of hip-hop and other subcultural movements focus on their co-option into the mainstream and the subsequent dilution of original expression, I will attempt to show how hip-hop has negotiated the mainstream while still remaining a vehicle for marginalised voices to speak against exploitation. This discussion will focus on hip-hop's position as a worldwide cultural export from America and how this is a symptom of the expansion of what Adam Haupt (2003) calls "Empire", which he discusses in detail in his book *Stealing Empire*. My discussion will also consider how hip-hop – although flowing almost entirely from the United States to the rest of the world – has evolved and been reconfigured in the various geographies (in this case South Africa and its diaspora) to which it has spread, in order to influence new forms of expression such as the artwork of Rhode and Chiurai.

It is due to this exportation of hip-hop as a cultural product from America that I come to the choice of title for my thesis. Dyson (2004: xiv) notes that the rise of the hip-hop generation, which began in the 1970s as a result of socio-political unrest in Jamaica and the Bronx, "sparked emulation in countless different countries and among widely varied ethnicities". The predominantly black neighbourhoods where hip-hop had its roots were comprised of the descendants of slaves taken from Africa to the Caribbean

and United States. David Coplan (1985: 148) suggests that South African's use of American genres of music, such as jazz, has a history that dates back to the 1940s. Jazz itself is argued to have developed from earlier forms of African music which slaves brought to America, and I therefore use the term "neo-diaspora" to describe the 'return'⁸ to Africa of cultural influences and ideas from the diaspora of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. One can recognise the contemporary embrace of this cultural influence in the appeal of hip-hop in South Africa. Sandra Kloppe (2000: 181), for example, compares the emergence of hip-hop (in particular graffiti) in South Africa in 1950s Sophiatown, "where 'cosmopolitan' aesthetic forms were used to focus and articulate local expressions of resistance". Adam Haupt (2001: 176) takes this notion further, arguing that:

The decision by crews, such as Prophets of da City (POC) and Brasse vannie Kaap (BVK), to employ hip-hop in their attempts to engage critically with South Africa's political reality "conforms with black artists' reliance on African American or Caribbean material in their attempt to construct black nationalist narratives that rely on a global black experience of oppression and resistance".

Thus one can draw parallels between the political strife and spatial separation which sparked the beginnings of hip-hop in the Bronx and Kingston, and the deterritorialisation (Papastergiadis: 2000), displacement and violence (characteristic of the recent spate of acute xenophobia) seen in post-apartheid urban communities of South Africa. Such parallels between the urban environments of the African diaspora and post-apartheid South Africa, combined with the current worldwide move towards globalisation, situates the South African social and economic landscape in a prime position to adopt a unique and critical attitude essential for the embrace of such hip-

⁸ I put the term 'return' in inverted commas in order to highlight that it is not a linear straightforward return, but a complex return of something that is not exactly the same, but has a new and hybrid form developed directly out of previous musical traditions.

hop values. It is thus important as I stated earlier, that one begins an investigation of hip-hop's far reaching effects into the sphere of South African art with a discussion of the cultural and racial factors which have shaped South Africa's contemporary urban environment, and how the legacies of events such as the mass migrations which apartheid caused, are still played out today. Mbembe (2007: 28) writes:

Awareness of the interweaving of here and there, the presence of the elsewhere in the here and vice versa, the relativisation of primary roots and memberships and the way of embracing, with full knowledge of the facts, strangeness, foreignness, and remoteness, the ability to recognise one's face in that of a foreigner and make the most of the traces of remoteness in closeness, to domesticate the unfamiliar, to work with what seem to be opposites – it is this cultural, historical and aesthetic sensitivity that underlies the term 'Afropolitanism'

When considering this revolutionary aesthetic sensitivity that Mbembe describes, one may note further that he characterises Johannesburg as a key space influential in its development, and likens the city's potential as a site of revival of cultural creativity to that of Harlem or New Orleans in the United States. As I have already shown, hip-hop grew out of this cultural revival in Harlem and the South Bronx. I will talk about the cultural melting pot that is Johannesburg in the latter part of chapter 1, as it has played a major role in both artists' development, with Rhode starting his career there and Chiurai currently living and working in the heart of the city. However, I will first introduce the specific historical and geographic contexts that have undoubtedly shaped these two artists.

It is not one specific place or time in particular that has influenced these artists. More appropriately it is their movement through different spaces and contexts, and the observations accompanying these journeys that inform the aesthetic and cultural awareness that Mbembe writes about which, I will argue, both of these artists possess. It is also relevant to note here that just as these artists have been exposed to a

multitude of cultural influences, so too has hip-hop always been a product of cultural hybridity. Imani Perry (2004: 13) explains in her assertion that “it is the very fact of postmigration fragmentation and reintegration that explains much of the music’s beauty, as well as its various regional and international variations and interactions.” However, she does argue in contrast to many trends in hip-hop scholarship that hip-hop’s identity is rooted specifically in black American culture.⁹ She acknowledges the “nonlinear and promiscuous course of cultural production within the African-American context in particular”, however, she argues quite convincingly that its identity is founded on its specific social and political location in relation to race, and its use of oral, literary and musical tradition. Hip-hop found initial popularity among racially segregated communities due to its capacity as a tool for political resistance. However, although its identity is linked to race as Perry points out, DJ Kool Herc highlights exactly how it in fact negotiates and crosses cultural divides. He states:

I think hip-hop has bridged the culture gap. It brings white kids together with Black kids, brown kids with yellow kids. They all have something in common that they love. It gets past the stereotypes and people hating each other because of those stereotypes (Chang 2005: xi).

It becomes apparent that a discussion of socio-cultural context is integral to an investigation of what has been termed hip-hop art, and through this one can see how the multiple environments that the artists occupy have resulted in them being able to observe varying cultural intersections which they interrogate in their work. This multiplicity of localities has enabled them to become more clearly aware, as Mbembe (2007: 28) puts it, of “the interweaving of here and there, [and] the presence of the

⁹ Some scholars argue that a biological or natural core to black music and culture cannot be found. For more on these views see Chapter 5 entitled ‘Black Music’ in Brian Longhurst’s book *Popular music and Society*, pp. 127-133.

elsewhere in the here and vice versa.” In a recent interview with Catherine Green concerning the 2008 Johannesburg ArtFair¹⁰, Rhode observed that:

Local themes have resonated globally since many African artists are living abroad and engaging in various international discourses. It’s the development of new localities outside of our borders that will have the greater resonance. My interests are to examine the relational aspects between these localities (Green 2008: 4).

Thus Rhode highlights an interest of African artists in developing unique ways of interrogating the various racial, cultural, and trans-national identities of the environments they inhabit. I will now begin to discuss this in relation to concepts of migration and diaspora – not only overseas but within Africa – and will consider how the resultant cultural exchange in turn informs contemporary hip-hop culture and philosophies.

¹⁰ Touted as the “world’s first contemporary African Art fair” the event has taken place at the Sandton Convention Centre in both 2008 and 2009. The fair is an opportunity for galleries from all over South Africa and indeed the world to showcase their collections and to sell art. However, special projects are also included in order to facilitate public engagement with the world of contemporary African Art. Rhode took part in one of these special projects for the 2008 fair and more details can be found at www.joburgartfair.co.za/2008/special_projects.html.

Chapter 1: Home, Diaspora, and Beyond

I. Representations of Race¹¹ and National Identity

Before one can talk about the cultural hybridity and diversity that go hand-in-hand with hip-hop – and their influence on Chiurai’s and Rhode’s work – one may note that South Africa and Johannesburg in particular, have not always played such a cosmopolitan role. The country has a long and violently contested racial history, and one should first consider how its society came to be racially controlled, in order to explore the contemporary social environment with regards to the conceptions of diversity and hybridity. Then one can make a parallel exploration of hip-hop’s development in relation to how it deals with the issue of race, and in comparison how Rhode and Chiurai deal with the concept of race as a theme in their artwork.

In his description of one of Rhode’s performance pieces, Khwezi Gule (2005) brings to light the fact that racial stereotypes are far from being dismantled in the new South Africa:

The first performance I ever saw of his was at the NSA Gallery in Durban. Rhode looked like a tsotsi¹² and simply wandered into the gallery munching on an apple. ‘Why the hell is this person drawing on the gallery wall?’ I wondered as he drew the charcoal outline of a computer.¹³

¹¹ Zimitri Erasmus argues that “there is no such thing as the Black ‘race’”. She says that “Blackness, whiteness and colouredness exist, but they are cultural, historical and political identities” (2001: 16). As such she uses the term in inverted commas, however, as many of the authors that I will mention in relation to hip-hop theory do not put the term in inverted commas, I will not either. This does not mean that either I or they disagree with Erasmus’s theory.

¹² The word is a colloquialism meaning someone who is up to no good.

¹³ Gule, K 2005, ‘At the Centre’s Edge’, *Art South Africa*, 4, 1, viewed 28th January 2009, www.artsouthafrica.com

Gule highlights the fact that a young “coloured”¹⁴ man wearing sneakers and a beanie, is still viewed as a somewhat foreign identity to the predominantly white, gallery-going elite. However, it is exactly these stereotypes that Rhode attempts to confront and interrogate in his artworks. He touches on this in an interview with Andrea Bellini (2005: 91):

I for one was completely inspired by my own cultural identity being a coloured person (of mixed origins) in South Africa. I believed that a subcultural language impregnated by politics and marginalization could give birth to a broader artistic vernacular. The only way I could create my own language was to investigate my own cultural experience.

This is also true in the case of hip-hop, where politics and marginalization inspired youths to search for new ways to express themselves. However, in a South Africa where the majority of wealth is still confined to the minority white population, with the rare ‘black diamond’ disrupting the norm¹⁵, a young black or “coloured” man dressed as Gule describes is still seen in many cases as someone that one ought to be suspicious of, a tsotsi or criminal. I mention the specific characteristic of attire as Rhode is conscious of how this shapes his identity, and it is a common instrument he uses in his performance pieces, many of which adopt the scenario of a crime in progress. Andre Lepecki (2007: 20) describes such performances as follows:

In several of his performances, Robin Rhode uses a strategy [in which] he shows up at a time when the gallery or museum is filled with members of the public, pushes his way into the crowd with the directness of a fighter, or maybe of a burglar, performs an action usually around the creation of a

¹⁴ Zimitri Erasmus notes that “coloured identity has never been seen as an identity ‘in its own right’”. She noted that “pre-apartheid conceptualizations understood coloured identities in terms of ‘mixed race’”. She describes how this tendency to construct colouredness as a category midway between black and white resulted in a stigma of shame. She argues that “we need to move beyond the notion that coloured identities are ‘mixed race’ identities, but rather we need to see them as cultural identities comprising detailed bodies of knowledge, specific cultural practices, memories, rituals and modes of being” (2001: 21-25). For more details on these characterisations see the introduction to her book.

¹⁵ In 1997, when Rhode was breaking onto the public art scene, there was great hope in previously disadvantaged communities that a new government and economic empowerment would improve their lives. However, only a relative few of those previously disadvantaged have managed to considerably better their circumstances, while many are still unemployed, live in informal housing, and exist in conditions of poverty.

drawing or a painting on an empty wall, and then leaves. Get in, do the job, get out. Fast – since no one ever knows what the future may bring.

Although I will discuss the themes of crime and fashion in more detail later, I highlight these characteristics of Rhode's works in order to support the fact that racial stereotyping and prejudice are still part of day-to-day life in contemporary South Africa, and hence play a significant role in both Rhode's and Chiurai's artworks. I will attempt to address these issues in the context of the country at large, but specifically urban Johannesburg and Cape Town (both of which were important to the artists' development) and also the contemporary South African Fine Art scene. However, in order to do this an investigation of the country's torrid racial past is needed to more clearly understand the issues concerned in the various artworks to be discussed.

i) An Interconnected History of Racial Constructs and Race Relations in South Africa and the United States.

As Achille Mbembe (2007:26) points out, "African discourse has been dominated for almost a century by three politico intellectual paradigms, which as it happened were not mutually exclusive: variations of anti-colonial nationalism; 'African socialism'; pan-African sphere". All three of these have similarities to ideologies from the black-nationalist and black power movements of the United States. One can make earlier connections between Africa's racial past and the Black civil rights movement in America as the Black community in America is actually a diasporan community resulting from the movement of people during the Atlantic slave trade. Thus many felt a connection to Africa, and it is due to this that the Afrocentric movement grew out of the civil rights struggle. It is thus easier to understand the links between the black civil

rights movement in America which hip-hop in turn was so closely aligned to, and Africa's colonial past, which I will argue has resulted in similar issues being discussed by Rhode and Chiurai.

The organisation of South Africa as a racialised society began in the 1800s when the colonial powers cemented their control through accumulation of vast wealth in the form of newly discovered gold deposits on the Witwatersrand. This gold required labour intensive mining in order to retrieve it from deep within the earth and so the black population was seen as a readily available source of labour. Mbembe (2004: 381) explains the reasons for this:

Native life in turn was both indispensable and expendable. Because native life was seen as excessive and naturally doomed to self-destruction, it constituted wealth that could be lavishly spent. Although many whites in South Africa were disinclined to undertake manual labour, they were convinced that the natives were "indolent individuals whose habitual shyness of work made them a sort of naked leisure class." As a consequence, "confiscation of land, discriminatory taxation, and all the means used to drive [them] into the labour market" were justified on moral grounds "because they struck at superstition and sloth."¹⁶

This is explained further when one considers his preceding observations that:

Racism was not only a way of maintaining biological difference among persons, even as mining capitalism, migrant labour, and black urbanization established new connections between people and things. More fundamentally, racism's function was to institute a contradictory relation between the instrumentality of black life in the market sphere, on the one hand, and the constant depreciation of its value and its quality by the forces of commercialism and bigotry, on the other (Mbembe 2004: 380-381).

It becomes clear that similar beliefs to those that drove the Atlantic Slave trade were at play in justifying the use of black labour on the mines. Mbembe (2004: 384) writes that, "although race as such could not be pinned to a stable biological meaning, it was used as a weapon in the production of a city of barriers and asymmetric privileges".

¹⁶ Mbembe quotes de Kiewiet, *A History of South Africa, Social and Economic*. London: Oxford University Press, 1957. pp. 83-85.

Ironically though – considering the philosophy of exclusion – it was exactly the need for cheap labour that would draw migrants from surrounding countries such as Mozambique and Rhodesia¹⁷, which in turn would see the beginnings of the cosmopolitan blending pot that Johannesburg is today.

It was views such as those that Mbembe (2004) outlines – that the black population was excessive, naturally doomed to social destruction, indolent and shy of work – that would become some of the reasons for the implementation of the apartheid social structure. This structure was based on a system of separatist pass laws which prohibited people of colour from accessing certain public spaces and from living in certain areas¹⁸. Although this strict demarcation of public space was part of the country's legislation, the racial separatism that resulted was not unlike that of pre-1960s America where whites separated themselves from black people too. In fact this racial segregation in America carried on well after the civil rights struggle into the advent of the hip-hop era in 1970s and 1980s. An example of this is relayed by Craig

¹⁷ “Rhodesia” was the previous name for Zimbabwe when it was under colonial rule, and at the time when migrant workers began moving to South Africa to work on the mines.

¹⁸ These laws were South African legislation controlling the movement of blacks and Coloureds (people of mixed race origins). The earliest pass controls were developed in the 18th century by the whites in South Africa in order to control black labour and to keep blacks and Coloureds in inferior positions. A regulation of 1760 passed in the Cape Colony (what is now the Western Cape) required slaves moving between town and country to carry passes signed by their owners authorizing their journeys. Beginning in 1923, pass regulations were constantly tightened and amended. In 1952, the Natives (Abolition of Passes and Coordination of Documents) Act substituted a single reference book for 11 existing pass laws. It was a crime for black men and women from the age of 16 upwards to be without their books, which gave their personal information and also their employment record. At the same time an amendment to the Natives (Urban Areas) Act applied strict regulations to all urban areas; a black person entering such an area had only 72 hours to find employment before being subject to arrest. Amendments to the laws in 1955, 1957, and 1964 made it increasingly difficult for blacks to qualify for permanent residence in any urban area. The aim was to control the population in such a way that only single male contract labourers could go to work in urban areas, and they could work for no more than a year before returning to the rural areas. What became known as “endorsing out” took place, which meant that Africans without work in an urban area had their passes stamped to show that they had to return to the rural areas. The pass laws and influx control were finally abolished in 1986 when the process of dismantling the apartheid system began. (Online Encarta encyclopedia accessed at www.encyarta.msn.com on 28th January 2009).

Werner (1999: 241) who describes travelling to watch Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five featuring rapper Melle Mel in Memphis:

I'd driven up from Mississippi with three black friends. On the way we'd been pulled over twice by the cops, presumably on suspicion of race mixing. When Melle Mel called out, "don't push me cause I'm close to the edge," the response from my friends and the rest of the fifteen thousand people gathered there, almost all of them black, was thunderous.

Werner (1999: 253) continues to highlight this legacy of racial prejudice and separation in sectors such as education, employment, housing and other areas of American life when he observes that, "with great regularity, the most comprehensive studies of race in the United States conclude that white and black Americans in effect occupy different nations." This comparative social past with South Africa is one of the reasons that prompted the rise of the anti-apartheid movement in America which began to peak in the mid 1980s. This movement flourished at universities where it "unlocked the connections between their campus struggles and those in their communities, and the South African shantytowns reveal[ing] the links between the global and the local" (Chang 2005: 219). At Columbia University, revolutionary hip-hopppers Run DMC performed at the takeover protest and name-change of one of its halls to Mandela Hall. The anti-apartheid movement sparked a political fire in many and they turned in various directions: "some turned to memories of the Panthers¹⁹... some to Jesse Jackson... many to the Nation of Islam" (Werner 1999: 257).

Although so far I have restricted my characterisations of race to the binaries 'black' and 'white', which have been used to facilitate much of the discourse surrounding race inequality in both South Africa and America, these binaries overlook host of

¹⁹ The Black Panther Party was formed in California in 1966 by Huey Percy Newton and Bobby Seale. They were aligned with the black civil rights movement but preached more radical solutions to inequality and oppression of minority groups.

other racial groups. For instance some theorists such as Kerkham [Simbao] (2003: 93) have made reference to Rhode's performances in relation to stereotypes concerning the black male body ('black' used broadly), however, in a South African context Rhode classifies himself as 'coloured',²⁰. As I have already pointed out this is a perceived racial group that carries with it unique socio-cultural characteristics separate from other racial groupings included under the general classification 'black'.²¹ In South Africa there are eleven official languages linked to different socio-linguistic groups, and to complicate this more racial terminology has been continually shifting through apartheid to the present in order to serve various agendas. For instance, although the different socio-cultural groups in South Africa are recognised as such on one hand in order to promote the idea of the country as uniquely diverse, in the context of Black Economic Empowerment (B.E.E.)²² the government uses the term 'black' to cover all who are not white, even Chinese South Africans. Thus, one becomes aware of the need to dig deeper than the racial binaries in order to get a richer reading of society and by extension cultural productions such as art and music.

I would argue that this is what Rhode's work *Coffee Cup*²³ sets out to do. The work is a looping video piece in which a cup of coffee, shown from above, continually changes its shades from pale beige to black. Kathryn Smith (1999: page unknown) observes that "Rhode adopts this as a sign of racial preference" and she goes on to make a link with Thabo Mbeki's analogy of "the 'cappuccino' of cultural diversity: white froth on top and dark coffee beneath". Rhode is attempting to make one aware –

²⁰ In the American context the term 'colored' is used as a broad classification for people of colour, including black people (note the different spelling).

²¹ I do not by any means suggest that Kerkham is neglecting the importance of recognition of various other socio-linguistic groups often included under the classification black.

²² The Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act was passed in 2003 (see www.southafrica.info/business/trends/empowerment/bee.htm for further information).

²³ I was unable to obtain video stills from this piece to include as a reference.

through the metaphor of coffee and its infinite varying shades – of the subtle differences and varying cultural characteristics which give South Africa multiple socio-linguistic groups that, in the aftermath of apartheid, need to be considered. The blurring between the shades of coffee could also talk about the way that such characterisations blur through governmental rhetoric to promote concepts such as B.E.E.

However, the concept of cappuccino as Mbeki describes it may become a very different metaphor for South African society, with the definite separation between white froth and dark coffee reflecting the racial make-up of South African commerce and industry, and the mining sector in particular (which as I have shown was the primary industry in the country's growth and played a major part in South Africa's history). A discussion of one of Chiurai's works entitled *10 years*²⁴ (Fig. 2), further highlights the fact that, although the country is culturally diverse, economic equality is far from achieved in contemporary South Africa. The work is a large painting that depicts a cityscape with the focal point, a billboard on top of a building, portraying a black man holding what looks like a hotdog on a stick, with the accompanying text that reads "Enterprise, where black business lives, 10 years later". One could argue that "Enterprise" (also the name of a processed-meat company) is a reference to the informal enterprise including street vendors that would sell such edibles, and who are so characteristic of contemporary urban Johannesburg. However, the streets in this particular work are devoid of people and thus Chiurai may be criticising the much

²⁴ It is interesting to note that the title of the work could also connect to a number of publications and exhibitions such as *10 Years 100 Artists: Art In A Democratic South Africa* (published by Bell Roberts Publishing in 2004) and '*A Decade of Democracy*' (curated by Emma Bedford at the Iziko South African National Gallery in 2004) which also reference the milestone in their titles. This emphasizes the irony in the work, indicating that this time period is seen as a milestone and is meant as a celebration of how far the country has come. However, Chiurai's work does not take the form of a celebration at all.

debated success of the informal sector²⁵. One could therefore read it as a direct comment on the fact that much of the black economy is still restricted to this sector and unable to make inroads into the more formal, still largely white-controlled economy.

Similar to South Africa, a legacy of racial segregation meant that a situation was also apparent in 1980s America where whites dominated positions of economic power (although unlike 1980s America, independent South Africa has a predominantly black government). In an excerpt from one of his speeches Louis Farrakhan, the leader of the Nation of Islam²⁶ stated, “We believe [the government] sees in Black people a useless population that is considered by sociologists a permanent underclass. And when you have something that is useless, you attempt to get rid of it if you cannot make it serviceable” (Chang 2005: 225). This accusation bares a sobering resemblance to the views, quoted earlier, of the Apartheid government towards black labour on the mines in South Africa. Although black labour was “valued for its industrial utility as a commodity form” (Mbembe 2004: 380), it was still seen as something expendable, described by Mbembe as superfluous. Farrakhan began preaching against such views of disposable black life as a result of the racial and economic isolation felt by almost all African Americans in northern cities such as Detroit, Chicago, Cleveland and New York under the Reagan administration (Chang 2005: 223).

²⁵ Some people believe that the informal sector provides much needed jobs to alleviate a high unemployment rate, while others see it as an excuse for insufficient efforts by government to deal with high unemployment, and believe it increases congestion, pollution, and crime.

²⁶ This is the association that Malcolm X was the spokesman for.

Chang (2005: 223) goes further to expand on the reasons for this by directly indicating that it was “Reagan’s America”, and implying therefore that responsibility landed on his shoulders and those of the rest of government :

Reagan’s America had become perilous to youths of colour in ways that had never been seen before. The well-organized and well-financed right-wing backlash foreclosed opportunities for urban youths of colour. Trickle-down economics and local taxpayer revolts starved local governments and encouraged suburban sprawl, which in turn speeded white flight and racial resegregation. These trends were occurring as demographers projected the most racially diverse generation of youths the United States had ever seen.

A number of parallels can be drawn to post independence South Africa right up to the present day. Under proclamations heralding the advent of the ‘Rainbow Nation’ and celebrating racial diversity, Johannesburg and other urban centres in South Africa are sites of urban sprawl similar to that described by Chang above. Although programmes such as Black Economic Empowerment have been initiated, unemployment is still incredibly high. This problem is further impacted by the fact that rural people flock to metropolitan centres in order to find employment and so overcrowding occurs, with many forced to resort to street-side vending or hawking. Bremner (1998: 51) observes:

Previously uncluttered, sanitized urban parks and open spaces are now dotted with braziers and campfires, and used for storing goods over night or conducting commercial transactions; pavements have become crowded with hawkers, tailors and hairdressers [and] streets are congested with taxis.

Due to this fact, since the abolishment of apartheid’s pass laws, the influx of the rural black working class to urban centres has meant much of the more affluent white population has resettled in northern suburban areas, resulting in a similar racial resegregation to that which Chang describes. Bremner (1998: 62) goes further to observe that, “Apartheid[’s] ... spatial logic will continue to affect people’s daily lives for generations to come ...; chasms separate one citizen from another, so much

so that people feel like tourists in each other's worlds." This condition echoes Werner's notion of two separate American nations, one occupied by black and one by white. It is therefore useful to return to the initial site of this "othering" in order to realise how present conditions have come to develop.

ii) The Black Male Body

It is clear that in apartheid South Africa "territorial segmentation was a key form of the state's inscription of power onto the landscape" (Mbembe 2004: 390) and that similar segmentation, albeit more subtle, has occurred in America. As Bremner (1998: 62) notes, this segmentation has a continuing effect. Mbembe (2004: 390) describes black body itself as the main site of such inscription, which was responsible for this segmentation. He writes:

It could be searched everyday at the end of the shift in the mines. It could be stripped naked, required to jump over bars. Hair, nose, mouth, ears, or rectum could be scrutinized with meticulous care. Floggings with a sjambok (leather whip) or tent rope, or striking with fists were the rule. In order to memorialize themselves, public and private powers traced their signs on the naked flesh of the black body.

Thus the separated worlds that people occupied during apartheid which resulted in feelings of foreignness in the Other's world also fostered an attitude of fear which was in turn directed back at the black body. Mbembe (2004: 382) gives a possible explanation for this in which he describes the commodification of labour and the superfluity of black life: "the native [becomes] something more than the object he or she was, a thing that always seemed slightly human and a human being that always seemed slightly thing-like."

In many cases this fear took a sexual nature and was directed at the black male body in particular. Mbembe (2004: 383) describes the situation and explains how this fear manifested itself:

Between 1890 and 1914, “periodic waves of collective sexual hysteria” swept Johannesburg, in which “white women, on an unprecedented scale, alleged that they had been sexually molested or assaulted by black men.”²⁷ According to Deborah Posel,²⁸ the policing of sexuality manifested itself, among other ways in the state’s “determination to prohibit sex across racial boundaries,” the stigmatization of miscegenation, the criminalization of homosexuality, and the banning of pornography... political coercion demanded psychic and sexual repression.

Many of these issues such as censorship and sexuality, are linked to issues of race and are reflected in a reading of Chiurai’s work *Sex* (Fig. 3). The artwork appears in the form of a *Drum* magazine cover. Catherine Green (2007: page unknown) notes that, “*Drum* has become an exemplar for urban black South African identity to be imagined and expressed, [and] in the late 1950s, the *Drum* generation used films, magazines and music to empower themselves”. The central image on Chiurai’s magazine cover is of a naked woman straddling a standing man with his back to the viewer. The woman does not seem to be in any distress and seems to be directing a questioning gaze at the viewer. If one considers Green’s observation about the 1950s and the text at the bottom of the image that reads “we say one word, they say another”, then it could be possible that the “they” and “we” may have racial connections. I would argue that if Chiurai is pointing to this, he is using the figures on the cover to question the possible prejudices of the viewers and embody a critique of negative perceptions regarding the sexualized racial body that have continued to filter through from the “sexually-hysterical” early twentieth century to contemporary times.

²⁷ Quotes Charles van Onselen, *New Babylon, New Nineveh: Everyday Life on the Witwatersrand, 1886-1914*, Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 2001, pp. 257.

²⁸ Posel, D. (date unknown). ‘Sex, Death and the Fate of the Nation: Reflections on the Politicisation of Sexuality in Post-Apartheid South Africa’ in *African Affairs* (Publishing details unknown).

Green (2007: page unknown) offers the possibility for a slightly different critique when she discusses the same caption and the concept of empowerment:

Chiurai's contemporary re-imaging of the *Drum* cover, in the context of an emergent black bourgeois culture and the AIDS pandemic, takes such idealism with a pinch of salt. To use his own words from the canvas itself, "We say one word and they say another".

Perhaps considering this, the "we" and "they" refer to two different generations in South Africa. However, although the concerns may be slightly different, the context of the magazine cover still situates the critique within a racial discourse.

Perry (2004: 27) argues that, "what really makes hip-hop music black American is America's love-hate relationship with it", and as a consequence the stereotype of the black male as an explicitly sexual being is a topic of much debate in academic hip-hop discourse. This particularly concerns the sub-genre of gangsta 'rap'. Adam Haupt (2003: 3) gives an example of gangsta rap's "celebration of 'thug life', misogyny and negative racial stereotypes" in an excerpt taken from Snoop Dog's²⁹ 1993 hit "Gin and Juice":

*I got bitches in the living room getting it on
And, they ain't leavin till six in the morning (six in the morning)
So what you wanna do, sheeit
I got a pocket full of rubbers and my homeboys do too*

Perry (2004: 29) writes that rap's "in-your-face examples of black masculinity and excess frighten the mainstream, exploiting its fears and simultaneously challenging the economic disenfranchisement plaguing black American communities." However, bell hooks (1994: 16) contends that the "sexist, misogynist, patriarchal ways of thinking and behaving that are glorified in gangsta rap are a reflection of the prevailing values in our society, values created and sustained by white supremacist

²⁹ Previously known as Snoop Doggy Dog

capitalist patriarchy” (Haupt 2003: 3). Haupt (2008: 148) explores hooks’s view further, stating that:

Gangsta rap discourse’s acceptance into the mainstream discourses does not necessarily happen on the terms of gangsta rap artists themselves, but on the terms of the gatekeepers of the music industry (the major record labels). It is in this sense that co-option becomes possible and this is where bell hooks’ argument that ‘white capitalist patriarchs’ do not find gansta rap threatening is plausible.

Thus one becomes aware of the ambiguous relationship between gangsta rap – and by extension its connection to black masculinity – and the mainstream media. When considering a similar relationship, in connection to the visual arts, it is interesting to note Allan de Souza’s (2003: 18) view taken from his catalogue essay entitled ‘Name Calling’ for the exhibition *Looking Both Ways: Art of the Contemporary African Diaspora*:

The racialized body [has achieved] a hypervisibility through commodification. The black body, in the guises of the entertainer, the athlete and more recently the gangsta, sells; difference is not only assimilated and filtered into the centre but is actively promoted as a tenet of the marketplace.

In light of the above views, it is interesting to look at Rhode’s representation of the so-called black male body in his performance piece *Wall/Line/Body*³⁰, which took place in the United States at an exhibition of South African artists (the performance was done in a university building at Brandeis University)³¹. In the performance Rhode used duct tape to “draw” a single line the whole way across a large wall of the gallery. He repeatedly ran and attempted to jump over the line that was six feet above the ground. Ruth Kerkham [Simbao] (2003: 92-93) argues that he turns the space below the line into its own conceptual “wall”. Considering the fact that Rhode often adopts the character of a criminal in his performances, it is not hard to realise that he is making

³⁰ After speaking to Ruth Simbao and asking for her assistance, unfortunately we were unable to trace any sort of stills or images from the performance to include as a reference.

³¹ Rhode had an artist’s residency at The Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University in Boston, MA in 2003.

reference to the six-foot high security walls that encompass many South African suburban homes. Kerkham [Simbao] (2003: 92-93) argues that the performance played on a “stereotypical co-joining of race, criminality and athleticism.” This in turn relates to the way black masculinity is portrayed and often aligned to criminality in hip-hop music and particularly gangsta rap. I would argue that the fact that Rhode chose to do such a performance in this context (a South African exhibition in the USA) means that he is aware of the similar ways that the above mentioned perceptions have impacted both societies. At the end of the performance Rhode ripped the duct tape off the wall which peeled off the paint, and thus the remnant of the performance, Kerkham [Simbao] argues, was the marred institution. Rhode’s actions in *Wall/Line/Body* become significant when one considers that they may be a direct critique of education or art institutions. In fact Rhode was not allowed to ‘ruin’ the gallery walls at the university so was forced to do the performance in a building assigned for more general use of the university.

iii) The Burden of Representation

In a similar piece entitled *Leak* (Fig. 4) performed at the South African National Gallery, Rhode urinated over his drawing of a urinal (referencing Marcel Duchamp’s *Fountain*) on the gallery wall. This too could be seen as a desecration of the gallery space. Thus his critique of the institution extends to encompass both the United States and South African art fraternity and is compounded by the fact that the majority of the gallery owners, curators and academics in South Africa and the United States – the “gatekeepers” of the art world – are white. This is not a suggestion that everyone in Fine Art world is necessarily racist, but that like the rest of South Africa and the United States, it is still struggling to negotiate the legacy of racial inequality.

Thus a situation arises similar to that of the music industry in relation to hip-hop music. Artists such as Rhode and Chiurai find themselves expected to represent race in a particular way. Silber (2007) gives an example of this when he highlights the fact that Chiurai is sometimes asked whether he is an artist or a black artist, implying that there is a difference, and that the latter is expected to identify with a different set of characteristics. This is compounded by the fact that white artist's are never asked a similar question, for example, is one a "white artist"? This focus on race is again highlighted in an interview with Bogani Madondo (2005) in which the journalist questions Chiurai about the fact that the gallery that represents him is white-owned, and the people he names as referees are two white professors from the University of Pretoria. Later in his article Madondo writes that "if one were given to careless, racist conclusions, it would be easy to shrug Kudzi off as an example of 'black talent for a white tool'"³². However, Chiurai is uneasy with such assumptions and revealed in the same article, and at a later date in a personal conversation³³ with me, that race has not affected his choice to associate with these people.

Chiurai's situation is reflective of what Eithne Quinn describes as the "burden of representation" (Haupt 2008: 148). She describes this in relation to African American cultural practice and criticism:

The burden of representation took the form of two discourses: the discourse of authenticity demanded that representations should depict black culture as it exists in reality, whereas the second discourse characterised every representation as an act of delegation – black artists and intellectuals were thus expected to accept the burden of speaking for the black community in every instance. Black artists and critics thus faced a great deal of pressure to always represent black subjects in ways that were considered to be authentic,

³²In *The Sunday Times*, 1st May 2005, accessed at www.obertcontemporary.com on 28th January 2009.

³³ Personal conversation June 2007

representative and positive – this makes sense of many hip-hop references to the notion of ‘keeping it real’ or ‘representing’.

Adam Haupt’s (2003: 2) gives an example of this when he describes how:

The decision by Cape Town crews Prophets of da City (POC) and Brassevannie Kaap (BVK) to employ hip-hop in their attempts to engage critically with South Africa’s political reality ‘conforms with black artist’s reliance on African American or Caribbean material in their attempt to construct black nationalist narratives that rely on the notion of a global black experience of oppression and resistance’.

Both Rhode and Chiurai are wary of being restricted by characterisations such as “South African”, “black”, or “coloured” artist. I would argue that the fact that Chiurai portrays himself in works such as *End the Silence* (Fig. 5) with his face partially covered may be a conscious refusal to expose his complete identity as an artist for fear of being “bottled in” (Chiurai in Madondo 2005). Many of the figures in Chiurai’s artworks, such as those in *Graceland* (Fig. 6), *We* (Fig. 7), and *50* (Fig. 8), have their faces partially or totally obscured, making it difficult to categorise them in the realm of the black subjects that Quinn describes. Rhode also exhibits a reluctance to be labelled. His concept of “Selfinkoozament”, taken from the Venda word “Kooza” meaning “support”, and describing a proper sense of one’s dignity and integrity, can be likened to the hip-hop concept of “keeping it real”, and possibly embodies a refusal to compromise one’s beliefs and philosophies in order to fit into predetermined classifications or stereotypes. De Souza (2003: 18) states that, “Just as the strategy of naming or self-naming and demanding the use of one’s name is a political response, so passing as unnamed or refusing to be named is equally strategic.” De Souza explains that this is due to “naming’s failure or perceived failure to cast visibility on the practices indicated by the names” (2003: 18). It is fair to say that Rhode’s and Chiurai’s reluctance to be “named” as De Souza puts it, situates

them in a space between classification, a condition that is symptomatic of the diasporan artist.

II. Issues of Migration & Diaspora

As I pointed out in the Introduction, both Chiurai and Rhode have occupied multiple geographies at different times, and thus are familiar with the condition of migrancy³⁴ that characterises the diasporan artist. Iain Chambers suggests that:

The migrant's sense of being rootless, of living between worlds, between a lost past and a non-integrated present, is perhaps the most fitting metaphor of this (post) modern condition. This underlies the theme of diaspora, not only black, also Jewish, Indian, Islamic, Palestinian, and draws us into the process whereby the previous margins now fold into the centre (Peffer 2003: 29).

As Imani Perry (2004: 15) writes, “the African aesthetic origins of hip-hop, as with all black American music, allows for it to have a shared resonance among a wide range of diasporic and continental Africans”. Thus one becomes aware of the debt that hip-hop owes to the condition of migrancy, considering Perry’s (2004: 13) preceeding view which I quoted earlier that, “it is the very fact of postmigration fragmentation and reintegration that explains much of the music’s beauty, as well as its various regional and international variations and interactions”. In this postmodern condition of migrancy that Chambers describes, it becomes increasingly difficult to define and assign distinct characteristics to the terms ‘black’ or ‘African’. Achille Mbembe supports this when he says:

There are those that deal with new answers to the question ‘Who is African and who is not?’ For many, to be ‘African’ is to be ‘black’ and ‘not white’,

³⁴ Citing Iain Chmabers, Nemiroff (1998: 32) argues that this condition “involves a movement in which neither the points of departure or those of arrival are immutable or certain” and “calls for a dwelling in language, in histories, in identities that are constantly subject to mutation”. She expands on this saying that “migrancy is an important term in the discourse of displacement, literal and figurative, because it shifts attention from origins to the journey itself, to the multiple intersections of identity, and to the many crossings – cultural, psychological, and geographical – that constitute our sense of location.

with the degree of authenticity being measured on the scale of raw racial difference. Thus, all sorts of people have a link with or, simply, something to do with Africa – something that gives them the right ipso facto to lay claim to ‘African citizenship’.

Therefore, in this part of the chapter, I will attempt to illustrate how an understanding of concepts such as Mbembe’s ‘Afropolitan’ – outlined in the introduction – allow one to extend readings of Rhode’s and Chiurai’s artwork. I will discuss the interweaving of culture, how it has become characteristic of hip-hop, and may assist one to interrogate such readings that exist beyond conceptions of race in a “novel culturo-political era in which the dividing line between various forms of expression no longer appeals to the sensibilities and aspirations of vast numbers of young and black people” (Perry 2004: 5). Although Perry (2004: 10) characterises hip-hop as specifically black American music, she argues that this description is not inconsistent with an understanding of its hybridity.

i) Africa and its Culture of Mobility

Perry states that, “music is never compositionally pure, even as it exists within a culture and is identifiable with a community” (2004: 11). I would argue that the same could be said of the visual art world. Kathy Halbreich illustrates this point regarding the Walker Art Centre’s³⁵ global initiative and the exhibition ‘How Latitudes Become Forms: Art in a Global Age’. She writes:

To be a more locally engaged institution, we need to become more sensitive to the increasingly interconnected world reflected in the demographics of our own community: a world in which social, political, economic, and cultural boundaries are recalculated daily by both ancient and new definitions of home, history and hierarchy... Deviating from the linearity that dominated so much Western modernist thinking in the twentieth century, we began to visualize a metaphor more appropriate to the 21st century: a network of

³⁵ The Walker Art Centre is in Minneapolis, Minnesota U.S.A.

connections with open spaces for cultural, historical and political debate (Halbreich: date unknown).

This metaphor becomes very useful for my purpose and is particularly significant as Rhode took part in the above-mentioned exhibition in 2004. In a conversation between Philip Blither³⁶ and Baraka Sele³⁷ that discusses “current issues and trends in global performing arts”, Sele (2002: 7) notes, “I remember the first time I mentioned ‘multiculturalism’ to an African exchange artist. He said, ‘that is not our term. We do not subscribe to American or European intellectual, aesthetic terminologies, or to your curatorial philosophies.’”

A reason that Western institutions – such as the Walker Art Centre – have become increasingly aware of African or diasporan artists such as Rhode, is due to “the institutions beginning to acknowledge that their communities had become very diverse and the audience for the arts was not exclusively white and middle class” (Blither 2002: 1). Such diverse communities have been commonplace in Africa for centuries and this may be why the relatively new Western concept of ‘multiculturalism’ was not entirely accepted by the African artist that Sele spoke to. Achille Mbembe (2007: 27) describes how African societies cannot be understood through the restrictive boundaries of custom or tradition:

The pre-colonial history of African societies was a history of people in perpetual movement throughout the continent. It is a history of colliding cultures caught in the maelstrom of war, invasion, migration, intermarriage, a history of various religions we make our own, of techniques we exchange, and of goods we trade. The cultural history of the continent can hardly be understood outside the paradigm of itineracy, mobility and displacement. It is this very culture of mobility that colonisation once endeavoured to freeze through the modern institution of borders. Recalling the history of itineracy and mobility means talking about mixing, blending and superimposing.

³⁶ Curator of performing arts at the Walker Art Centre.

³⁷ Curator and producer of NJPAC World festival, New Jersey Performing Arts Centre, Newark.

One becomes aware that even before the displacement that occurred through the trans-Atlantic slave trade, which resulted in the formation of the communities out of which hip-hop would later rise, Africa's past was characterised by movement. In today's world where the old margins are increasingly becoming incorporated, Allan de Souza (2003: 20) questions whether the term 'diasporic art' is still useful. In most discussions of diaspóra, it is commonly perceived as relating to a binary between Western communities and those from the rest of the world. What I would call intra-continental diasporas and reverse diasporas – where cultural influences such as hip-hop are returning *from* the diaspora – are perhaps more useful tools to assess cultural production. It is from this concept that I use the term 'neo-diaspora' in the title of this thesis, relating to that which comes after the diaspora, but also continues with a similar flow of culture merely in a different direction.

Throughout this thesis I attempt to investigate the multi-directional movement and transfer of culture back and forth, and the influence that African American culture, in the form of hip-hop, has had on South African culture. However, in light of the above views, one cannot ignore the multitude of other cultural influences that are intertwined in order to create the aesthetic sensitivity that is symptomatic of the Afropolitan, and which enhance the artist's use of hip-hop philosophies.

As I have already noted, Johannesburg in particular has played an important role in the development of both Rhode and Chiurai, and it is in fact an intricate web of cultural influences, being a "gateway" to Africa and a crossroads for people from all over the world. Johannesburg began its development as a global city with the influx of foreigners looking to eek out a fortune on the newly discovered Witwatersrand gold

fields in the 1800s. Mbembe (2004: 378) describes some of these early foreigners as follows:

Migrants to Johannesburg came from all corners of the earth. They included Cornish “hard-rock men” and Australian miners, Scottish and American engineers, bankers, lawyers, adventurers, gamblers, schemers, criminals, and fortune hunters, journalists, sex workers, refugees, thousands of impoverished eastern Europeans (including Polish and Russian Jews fleeing persecution), Frenchmen, Italians, and Greeks... They were joined by criminals, vagabonds, hustlers, musicians, and other marginal figures.

Along with these people came the migrant black workers from neighbouring African countries that would become the ‘superfluous black labour’ that Mbembe (2004) describes. This influx is the reason that Mbembe states: “from the start, a dense nexus of overlapping and interweaving threads connected migrancy and modernity in South Africa” (2004: 379). Thus, just as the African American communities in places such as Harlem became shaped by the diverse socio-cultural groups that inhabited and passed through them, so South African cities, and in particular Johannesburg, would become webs of such interweaving threads. Simone (2000: 428) highlights Hamilton’s explanation of this transformation that “the process of migration itself, and the diversified activities of migrants, shape the institutional and social spaces of the territories from which they leave and to which they arrive”.

Whereas in the 1800s the gold rush proved to be the initial reason for Johannesburg’s cosmopolitan transformation, the reasons for its diverse demographics are somewhat different today. Johannesburg is still a centre for commerce and a gateway for international trade with Africa, and it is these reasons that make it a hot spot for African migrants³⁸ looking to create a more prosperous life than that available back home. Post-colonial Africa has been scourged with civil wars and political uprisings

³⁸ A large number are refugees from other war-torn African countries.

in which genocides are not uncommon, and so considering Africa's history as a continent in perpetual movement, migrants are often forced to move at a moment's notice. In many countries such as South Africa, along with the large immigrant populations come problems such as xenophobia, and they are perceived to be the reason for high unemployment and crime. Thus, as AbdouMaliq Simone (2000: 429) observes, many states make it more difficult to acquire refugee status. However, he does note that:

The more [African] states try to narrow legitimate definitions of refugee status, the more these conceptualizations become dissonant to African realities and the vast and often subtle ways in which individuals can be thoroughly marginalized and immobilised... South Africa is a preferred destination because political refugee status here enables mobility and the freedom to seek employment and live anywhere [in the country](Simone 2000: 429).

Thus, because South Africa is perceived as a more easily accessible destination due to its relatively strong economy and the Rainbow Nation rhetoric, and as I have already pointed out in the first half of this chapter unemployment rates in South Africa are still high, many of these immigrants are forced to become entrepreneurs in the informal sector creating economic competition for South Africans³⁹. However, due to permeable borders that are a feature of post-independence African nations, these foreign immigrants are much more adept at creating trans-national trade connections than South Africans, who have only really been exposed to international markets since their relatively recent independence. Simone writes that the foreign entrepreneurs "base both business and residence in dense inner city contexts, and this allows them to 'stay close to the ground' (Berry 1988), observe the ebb and flows of various transactions, and position themselves in the nexus of information exchange" (2000: 436). This in turn situates the inner city as a volatile site of confrontation

³⁹ This competition is seen to be negative, and a threat to the livelihood of local South Africans.

between South Africans and foreigners, and the xenophobia that results can be devastating as was shown in the spate that spread from Johannesburg townships, Alexandra and Soweto, to the rest of the country in May 2008.

ii) Xenophobia: The Scourge of the Migrant

Living in one of the most volatile locations in Braamfontein, Chiurai witnessed the xenophobic attacks first hand. In an interview⁴⁰ he relayed to me how he would not go out after dark for fear of his safety, and how he watched violence ensue in the streets below, from his apartment window. Consequently in Chiurai's exhibition that opened at the Obert Contemporary in Melrose Arch in October 2008 and was entitled 'Yellow Lines', he used road markings as a metaphor for the resultant separation of public space. In an interview with Paula Gruben (2008) he explains:

There are boundaries which have been created between cultures and sub-cultures in urban spaces. The lack of integration boils down to fear and not knowing how to relate to or utilise the space itself. It seems hostile because you feel you don't belong there, you don't know how to consume it, and there is nothing with which you can personally identify. Integration cannot be forced. It has to happen organically otherwise the occupants feel resentful.

Although for slightly different reasons, this separation of public space is reminiscent of the separation that took place in the South Bronx in the 1970s. Tens of thousands of Bronx residents were displaced by the Cross-Bronx expressway and forced to relocate to the South Bronx where "public housing was booming but jobs had already fled" (Chang 2005: 11). In the following years tension rose and the poverty and squalor of what had become a slum, forced more youths to join a new breed of gangs that were becoming increasingly violent. Chang (2005: 49) notes that, "the gangs' re-emergence had coincided with the sudden availability of Southeast Asian Heroin."

⁴⁰ This interview took place in July 2008.

These gangs targeted junkies who they saw as the scourge of the community. One can draw parallels with the context of urban Johannesburg, “where foreign Africans are blamed for an overcrowded informal trading sector, the growth of the narcotics trade, and the general deterioration of the inner city” (Simone 2000: 434). It was with the ferocity of such gangs that South Africans attacked, and even killed people who they suspected of being foreigners that were supposedly stealing their jobs and making “the government authorities and the private sector unwilling to invest in upgrading and service provision” (Simone 2000: 434).

However, as Simone has pointed out, confrontation between foreigners and South Africans has been coming for some time. Chiurai voiced his concern about urban interaction saying, “[what I wanted to show] was the city and the dynamics that occur when people [from different countries and cultures] come together and are resocialised”⁴¹. When I spoke to Chiurai in July 2007⁴² he had already begun planning his ‘Yellow Lines’ exhibition, and explained to me that careful observation shows various streets are divided along cultural and ethnic lines where different areas and groups of shops are frequented and owned by people of the same socio-cultural group. Simone (2000: 440) explains this as follows:

Many are forced to withdraw into tightly bounded universes where exposure to unpredictable situations is minimized... Solidarity with one’s compatriots then emphasizes the superiority or saliency of boundaries (of us versus them) rather than a platform of multi-faceted social action.

Feelings of displacement and discomfort, and the need to stay connected to one’s “own kind” in a foreign city, are translated vividly by Chiurai through works such as *Mzansi* (Fig. 9). The background of this piece shows a bleak inner city landscape with

⁴¹ Quoted in the *Mail And Guardian*, 20th May 2005.

⁴² This was a personal conversation at his flat in Braamfontein.

power-lines, barbwire fences and railway tracks, and in the top right corner the word ‘Mzansi’ is repeatedly stencilled. The word ‘Mzansi’ is a Xhosa colloquialism and is used to describe what foreign Africans call ‘the South’,⁴³ implying South Africa, and is used in a way that implies a sort of “promised land”. However in the foreground three public telephones become emblems recognisable to those who have been separated from their home and loved ones, and are representative of the condition of displacement. They evoke feelings of physical separation, longing, and the need to keep in contact. Each of the public phones has either the word ‘dismiss’, ‘displace’ or ‘disperse’ emblazoned on it and “an overriding grey ‘dismay’ lurks over the cityscape”.⁴⁴ According to Chiurai the stencils he creates to reproduce graffiti images and text and which were used on this piece, are signifiers of impermanence⁴⁵. I would suggest that this is not only due to the fact that the stencils themselves can be easily made and destroyed, but also that the images are created and re-created in different places and on different artworks as though they have moved, and are produced with full awareness that they may be “bombed”⁴⁶ and covered up at any time. With this concept of impermanence in mind, one is reminded again that Chiurai is in limbo, symptomatic of his political asylum from Zimbabwe, and thus the displacement and sorrow felt by the inner city migrant become tangible in his work.

iii) Johannesburg and Other Global Localities

Rhodes too is concerned with themes and issues surrounding migrancy in its various forms and the foreign contexts that are related to this condition. When one returns to

⁴³ Some foreign Africans such as Zambians and Zimbabweans say I am going “South” or “to South” meaning South Africa.

⁴⁴ Author unknown, 2005, ‘Charcoal Revolution’, *Mail & Guardian*, 20 May 2005 accessed at www.obertcontemporary.com on 28th January 2009.

⁴⁵ Personal conversation, July 2007.

⁴⁶ When a work is bombed it means that another graffiti artist has created a different piece over the original piece, either partially or completely obscuring it.

his response from his interview with Catherine Green concerning his participation in the Johannesburg Artfair 2008, one becomes aware of his interest in what he calls the “different localities” that artists inhabit:

Local themes have resonated globally since many African artists are living abroad and engaging in various international discourses. It’s the development of new localities outside of our borders that will have the greater resonance. My interests are to examine the relational aspects between these localities”. (Green 2008: 4).

Considering this, one can compare the slightly different way that Rhode employs the public telephone as a motif, as opposed to the way that Chiurai utilises it. Rhode uses it as a signifier of urbanity in one of his performances at the Perry Rubenstein Gallery in New York in 2004. Goldberg (2004) relays a personal description of the performance in question:

Rhode took up a position in front of a freshly prepped wall, frequently looking over his shoulder as though anticipating that he might have to quit and run at any time. He quickly drew the outlines of a free-standing public telephone, adding several skilfully rendered receivers connected by a looped cable. He then grabbed an audience member by the wrist and had her “hold” the illusory instrument, which she did, thus pinning her to the wall, spread-eagled like a police suspect. Before one could fully absorb the ingenious humour of this small piece of interactive theatre, Rhode had made his way out the door and escaped onto the street, leaving his hapless volunteer to contemplate how to end *her* contribution to his play.

I argue that perhaps the multi-receiver telephone becomes a metaphor for urban webs of interaction and the interconnectedness of multiple global localities. Rhode uses his volunteer to demonstrate how easily one can get caught up in one of these intricate networks. His cautiousness reflects the paranoia that often accompanies urban interactions, as Simone notes that “the common assumption is that overly intrusive scrutiny or even curiosity [from an observer] constrains the possibility of enjoining others to any given activity” (2000: 438). Chiurai describes a similar sense of paranoia in his interview with Madondo (2005) as an adaptation he has developed

from living in Johannesburg where “the most minute information and details connote some sense of vulnerability, and thus opportunity for incursions of all kinds” (Simone 2000: 442). Simone expands on this explaining that,

What foreign Africans note the most about urban South Africa is the degree to which one is scrutinized in public space – how one looks, how one is walking, what one is wearing – not to assess conformity to some consensually determined urban norm, but to assess weakness, either in a person scrutinized or, implicitly in oneself in terms of ‘what do I lack?’

Rhode employs the telephone again in a similar piece entitled *Night Caller* (Fig. 10). If one considers the title of the piece, it is plausible Rhode is playing on the fact that urban environments are rife with the scrutiny that Simone mentions, and the only way that one may avoid this is to conduct one’s dealings (in this case over the phone) under the cover of night. On the other hand, Rhode may be embodying the character of the migrant worker calling home late at night in order to account for the difference in time zones, or the exhausted labourer who has worked very long hours thus he slumps and falls asleep at the end of the piece. Either way, I would argue that the obsessive need to observe the ebb and flow of urban environments has consequently become a habit of both Rhode and Chiurai, and their fascination with urban environments has become apparent in their artwork. Through his use of the telephone motif, Rhode creates a link between the urban contexts he observes, from that of New York (where the pieces were performed) to the various other international localities he passes through. Thus, he shows that urban environments across the globe share certain characteristics. Consequently he exposes how culture becomes fluid and mobile in such environments, and how this has facilitated the growth of sub-cultural movements such as hip-hop.

In an interview with Khwezi Gule for *Art South Africa*, Rhode describes how his work bridges gaps between these environments:

Whether I create work in Barcelona or Mexico City, Japan or South Africa, the frame becomes completely autonomous. This allows my work to become relational, from the South African context to other contexts. The idea of existing on the periphery has become extremely important to me. How can an artistic practice exist in an isolated geography like South Africa, then become a vehicle for new artistic ideas and practices in another geography, be it a dominant discourse, as in Europe or the United States, or other foreign discourses (Zondi 2005: page unknown).

Rhode plays with contexts and culture in another work, *Untitled (Dream Houses)* (Fig. 11), produced in Las Palmas in the Canary Islands, in which he references a New Year's eve celebratory tradition from Hillbrow Johannesburg. Rhode explains that the tradition involves people throwing old furniture out of apartment windows, and in some cases people on the ground have been killed by falling objects. It hinges on the idea that the new year will bring prosperity and therefore ability to buy new devices (Boutoux 2007: 34). In the piece (as with most of his artworks) Rhode blurs the boundary between that which is two dimensional and that which is three dimensional, as the various photographic frames show him attempting to "catch" drawn objects that "fall" down the wall, ranging from a TV to a car. Once again Rhode links urban contexts in different corners of the globe.

Another point that possibly influenced Rhode's reference to Hillbrow is the fact that it is particularly notorious as having a high concentration of foreign nationals, particularly Nigerians. Paul Kirk (2000) attributes this high concentration of Nigerians (specifically Ibo people) to their flight as refugees from the Biafran war of the late 1960s⁴⁷. The continual degradation that plagued the inner city and which

⁴⁷ Kirk discusses research by University of Natal (Durban) academic Tony Legget in an article entitled 'Suffering Sleazy Hotel Syndrome' from the *Mail & Guardian*, 4th July 2000 accessed at

coincided with the high concentration of Nigerians resulted in them being stereotyped as criminals and drug lords. Chiurai also makes reference to this Nigerian presence in the inner city. Fela Kuti, the Nigerian music icon, is shown in a number of works such as *Fela* (Fig. 12), *Jozi Republic* (Fig. 13) and *Black President* (Fig. 14), and he becomes a metaphor for the presence of foreign culture in the city. This is especially poignant as a tell-tale sign of one's location, with regard to the invisible boundaries that define different socio-cultural areas on the sidewalks, is the music coming from the adjacent shop-fronts⁴⁸. A line of text on one of his more recent series – featuring the faces of controversial black political figures such as Thabo Mbeki, Jacob Zuma and his Favourite 'Uncle Bob' (Robert Mugabe) – reads 'Fela Kuti gave me syphilis'. Considering other text included in the pieces, such as the line "Lolo's date disappoints" covering Zuma's cheek (a reference to the rape charges laid against him)⁴⁹, or "Africans manufacturing poverty" underlining Mugabe's face and "shopping for democracy" which accompanies a hoard of missiles (a reference to the Zimbabwean president's arms purchase)⁵⁰, the comment regarding Kuti and syphilis may be a comment on the perceived negative influence that foreigners are having on the urban landscape. However, this reading may extend deeper as Kuti is in fact a hero of Chiurai's, and thus he is possibly critiquing the negative accusations targeted

www.queensu.ca/samp/sampresources/migrationdocuments/commentaries/2000/hotel.htm on 28th January 2009.

⁴⁸ Personal conversation with Chiurai in July 2007.

⁴⁹ In December 2006 Zuma was charged with raping a 31 year old family friend who was HIV positive. Zuma denied the charges and was found not guilty in May 2006. The timeline of the trial can be found on the Mail&Guardian website at www.mg.co.za/article/2006-03-21-timeline-of-the-jacob-zuma-rape-trial.

⁵⁰ In May 2008 a Chinese cargo ship believed to be carrying 77 tonnes of small arms including ammunition, AK47 assault rifles, mortars and rocket-propelled grenades docked in Durban harbour, its shipment destined for Zimbabwe. The Chinese government is an ally of Robert Mugabe and the shipment raised fears of impending war in Zimbabwe which was suffering from an economic meltdown. More details can be found at www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/apr/18/china.armstrade.

at foreign migrants that many urban South African's have made in order to justify xenophobic violence⁵¹.

The inclusion of railway tracks and coaches in *Fela* (Fig. 12) and in other works such as *Congestion* (Fig. 15) further suggests impermanence and the mobility of journeying migrants, as well as the imports they bring with them – good or bad, cultural, sexual (syphilis) or otherwise. Considering the title of *Repatriation* (Fig. 16) – the term concerns laws governing the movement of immigrants within a country and encompasses regulations regarding deportation of illegal immigrants – the coaches in the work also become a reminder of the precarious existence that many immigrants pursue, always aware that they could be removed from the country at a moment's notice. They become symbols of the way that inner city culture is fluid and by extension, how people's lives are always in a state of flux. Although in reference to the title of Chiurai's exhibition "Yellow Lines", Gruben (2008)⁵² argues that road markings become a metaphor for boundaries, I would take this further and propose that they perform a paradoxical double purpose, as roads may stand in as signifiers of the way that travel and movement is directed between different locations.

Another feature in many of Chiurai's works that evokes a sense of ephemerality in relation to one's geographical locations is the facelessness of many of his figures. In the earlier part of this chapter I discussed his masking of his own face in relation to a reluctance to be stereotyped. However, I would argue that the masking of figures in numerous works such as *Why Wait* (Fig. 17), *Lucky Star* (Fig. 18), *Repatriation* (Fig.

⁵¹ See www.infectingthecity.com for information and details of the *Infecting the City* performance project which took part in Cape Town from the 21 to the 27 of February 2009. It was a festival of collaborative site-specific artworks focusing on the broad theme of "home affairs" and interrogated citizen/immigrant, insider/outside relations and issues surrounding exclusion and xenophobia.

⁵² Taken from the Obert Contemporary website, www.obertcontemporary.com on 24th November 2008.

16) and *Graceland* (Fig. 6) refers to the fact that in a condition of migrancy which characterises urban environments, one is never in a place long enough to form lasting social relationships beyond those needed to facilitate economic gains. It may also refer to the large numbers of people concentrated in urban environments and the consequent difficulty in recognizing individuals. This too supports Simone's (2000: 436) view of migrants that, "an ambiguous 'front' [is] a way of forcing their potential customers and suppliers into revealing more about their respective abilities, knowledge and styles, so as better to manipulate them". Perhaps it also evokes the sense of freedom that Mbembe (2004: 390) describes when he notes that:

Johannesburg, for many blacks who migrated there, offered a sense of cultural release, a partial state of freedom, inebriation, and ease. The potential for freedom rested as much on the sensory flow of urban experience as on the contingency and unpredictability of everyday life.

Both views come together to support the fact that in diasporan communities such as those that occupy much of inner Johannesburg, "the Self is in constant formation through discursive intersections of and with location; and both Self and 'location' are constructed as much through fantasy and desire as through physicality" (de Souza 2003: 20).

In his discussion of diasporan artists, de Souza (2003) gives a reading that identifies their mode of operation as very similar to the inner city migrants that Simone (2000) describes. De Souza (2003: 21) argues that:

Some artists live in multiple locations, commuting between one continent and another for professional reasons. These artists can perform "Americanness" and "Asianness", as well as neither-one-but-both. The two former choices suggest passing, attempted infiltrations that carry the constant anxiety of being uncovered.

This constant anxiety connects to the paranoia that Chiurai described and which Rhode employed in his public phone performance. Rhode in particular (but also Chiurai on a regional scale) takes on the role of commuter, as he moves between his current base in Berlin, his gallery in New York, various international exhibitions, and returns “home”⁵³ to South Africa in between. This claim of multiple locations is at the centre of the value of diasporic artists, as de Souza (2003) sees it. He argues that, “they construct for themselves new identities, which trickle down into the societies around them, [and] they also expose and deconstruct those pre-existing identities that would otherwise remain naturalized under the cloak of the nation” (de Souza 2003: 21). They do this in order to “counter particular nationalisms, fundamentalisms, and xenophobias” (de Souza 2003: 21).

John Pepper (2003: 30) argues that diasporan’s art is doubly privileged and doubly burdened, a condition similar to that of the black American hip-hop artists discussed in the first part of this chapter. He expands on this saying:

Their condition as transnationals gives them improved access to international structure for education and exhibition, and they also see in two worlds in the manner proposed long ago by Du Bois. Their vision of the world is thus privileged because it is more circumspect. Their visibility is also greater than that of most artists residing in Africa, since they have better access to the platforms for exposure afforded by the (mostly Western-oriented) circuit of international biennales and exhibitions (Pepper 2003: 30).

Due to Simone’s (2000: 442) view that “Johannesburg as an urban system seems to act like an ‘immigrant’ in its ‘own’ continent”, even though Chiurai still resides in Africa he is able to perform the same role that Rhode does, as an interrogator of different urban localities. Both artists become vessels through which the flow of

⁵³ There is a vast amount of literature on the concept of “home”. For more see Iain Chambers’ book *Migrancy, Culture, Identity*. London: Routledge, 1994, especially Chapter 1 entitled ‘An Impossible Homecoming’, and much of this literature moves beyond a fixed, stable sense of home.

culture is interpreted as they in turn become part of that flow. The ambiguous space they occupy is a questioning space where, as Peffer (2003: 32) argues, “one may object to reductive concepts of identity”, and by questioning such concepts and stereotypes, attempt to break barriers across cultures. This mixing then flows into the philosophies that they (diasporan artists) employ when producing their artwork, and it is here that their work begins to inherit a hip-hop aesthetic. Philip Blither touches on this in his conversation with Baraka Sele. He observes:

I’m thinking specifically of the form’s (hip-hop) DIY aesthetic, its natural cross-disciplinary hybridity (mixing movement, music, text), and how the meaning and relevance of an essentially local/regional phenomenon has been effectively rearticulated through the cultural perspectives of artists around the globe (Blither 2002: 9)

Considering Blither’s comment with regards to cross-disciplinary hybridity and its links to reinterpretation in various geographical locations, one may remember Mbembe’s notion of the ‘Afropolitan’ as possessing a unique cultural, aesthetic and historical sensitivity born out of the interweaving of cultural influences. It is with this sensitivity that the Afropolitan interprets and interrogates the world around him or her. As such, the next chapter will take a closer look at the city spaces, and in particular Johannesburg, around which the artist’s work is often focussed. In order to understand how Chiurai and Rhode employ their Afropolitan sensibilities it is important to interrogate influential factors such as politics, crime and violence that shape the artists’ surrounding city spaces.

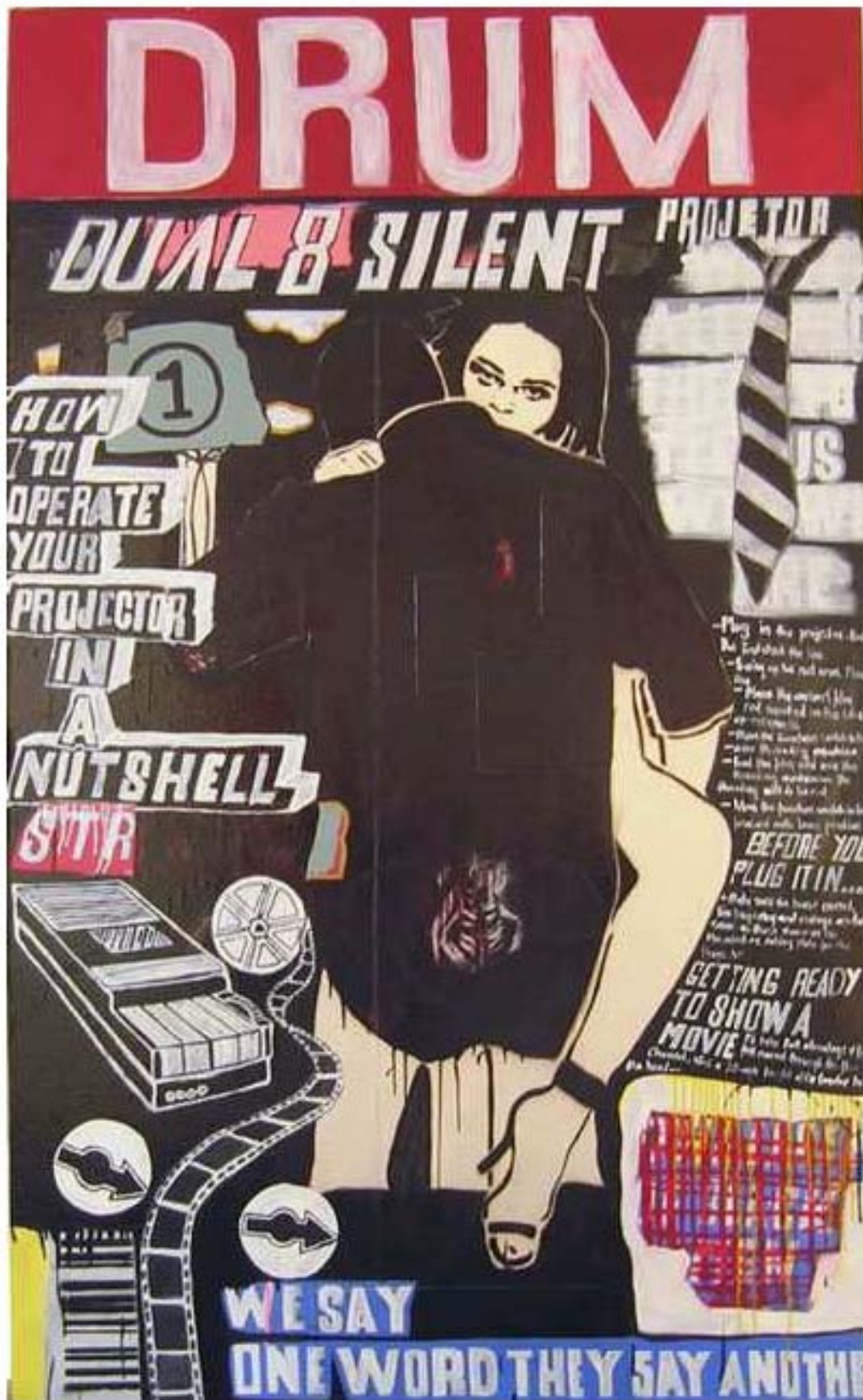
Figures 1 to 18



Figure 1: Examples of graffiti in and around Johannesburg city centre



Figure 2: Kudzanai Chiurai, *10 Years*

Figure 3: Kudzanai Chiurai, *Sex*

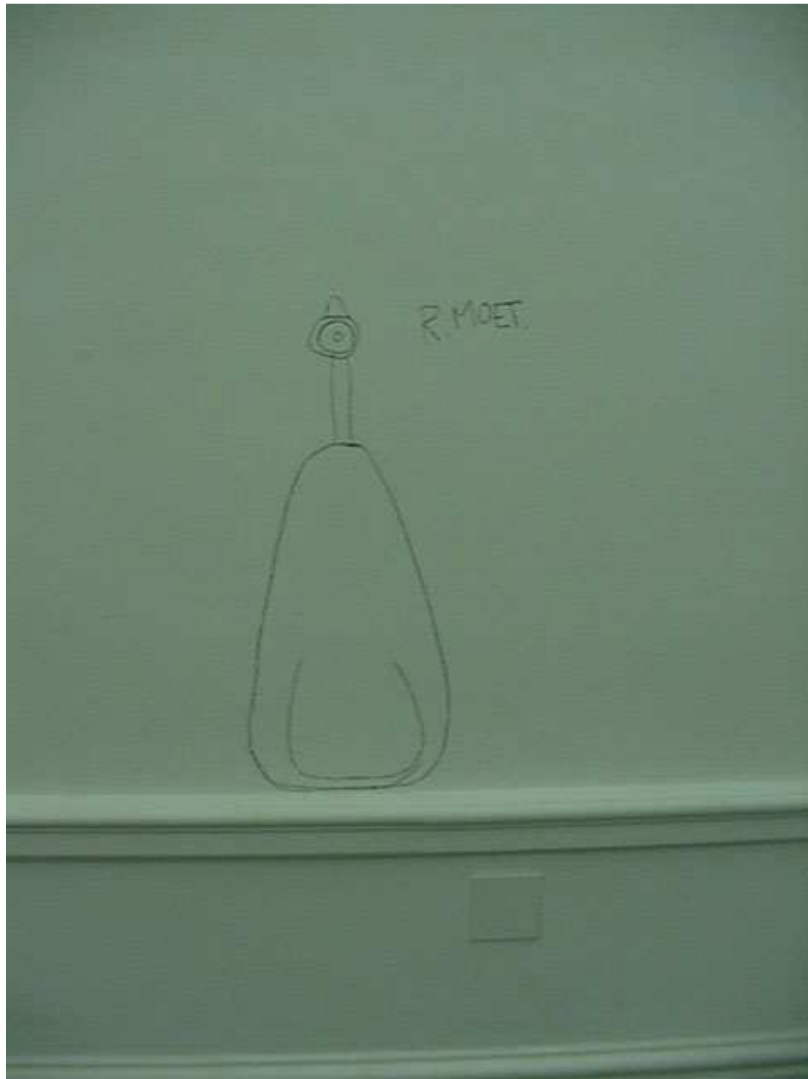


Figure 4: Robin Rhode, *Leak*



Figure 5: Kudzanai Chiurai, *End the Silence*



Figure 6: Kudzanai Chiurai, *Graceland*



Figure 7: Kudzanai Chiurai, *We*



Figure 8: Kudzanai Chiurai, 50



Figure 9: Kudzanai Chiurai, *Mzansi*

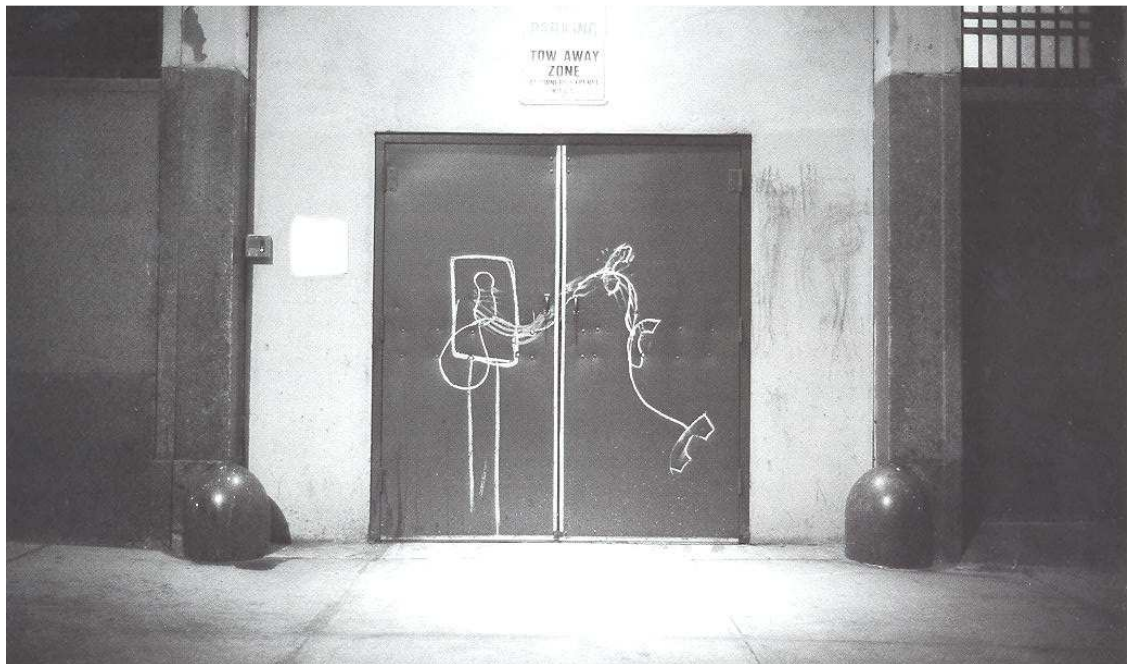
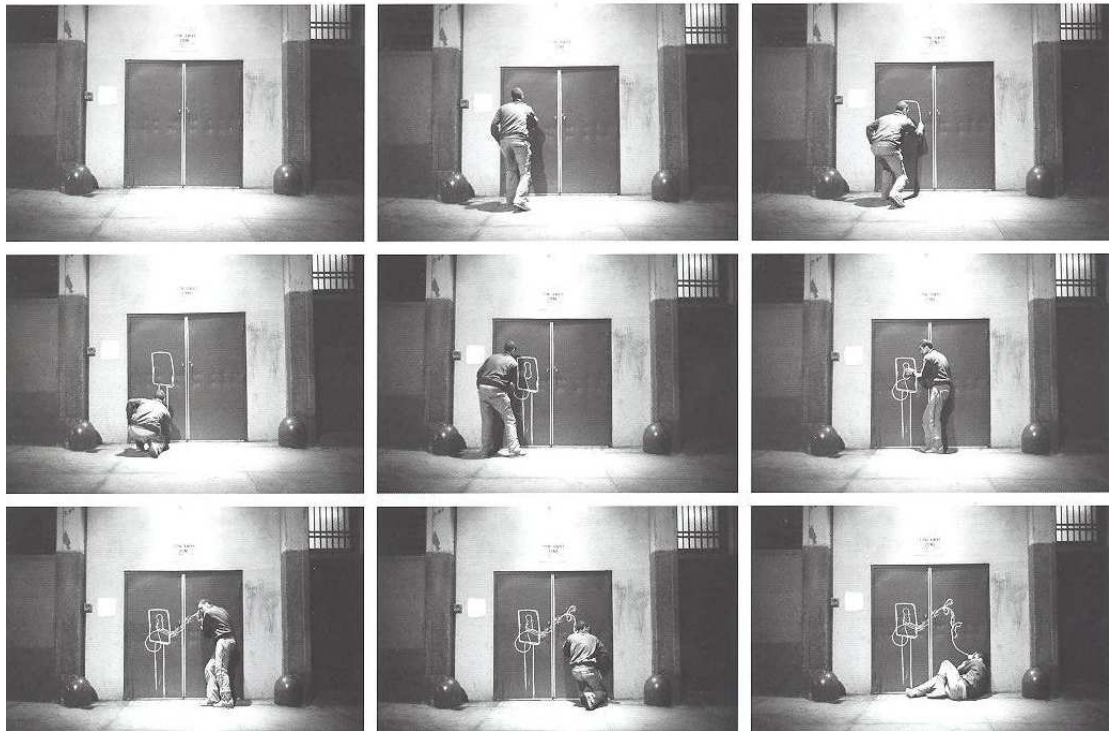


Figure 10: Robin Rhode, *Night Caller*

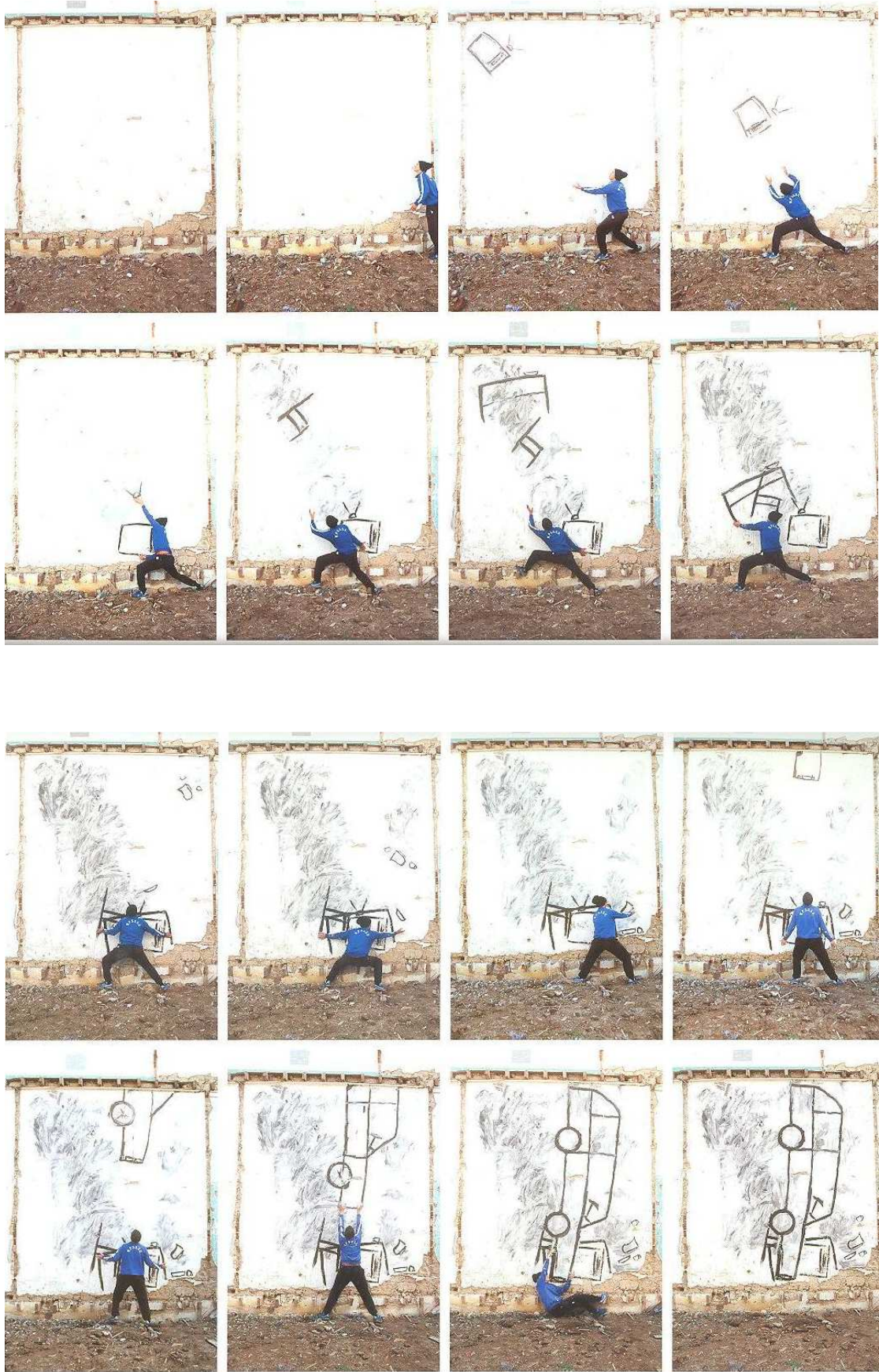


Figure 11: Robin Rhode, *Untitled (Dream Houses)*



Figure 12: Kudzanai Chiurai, *Fela*

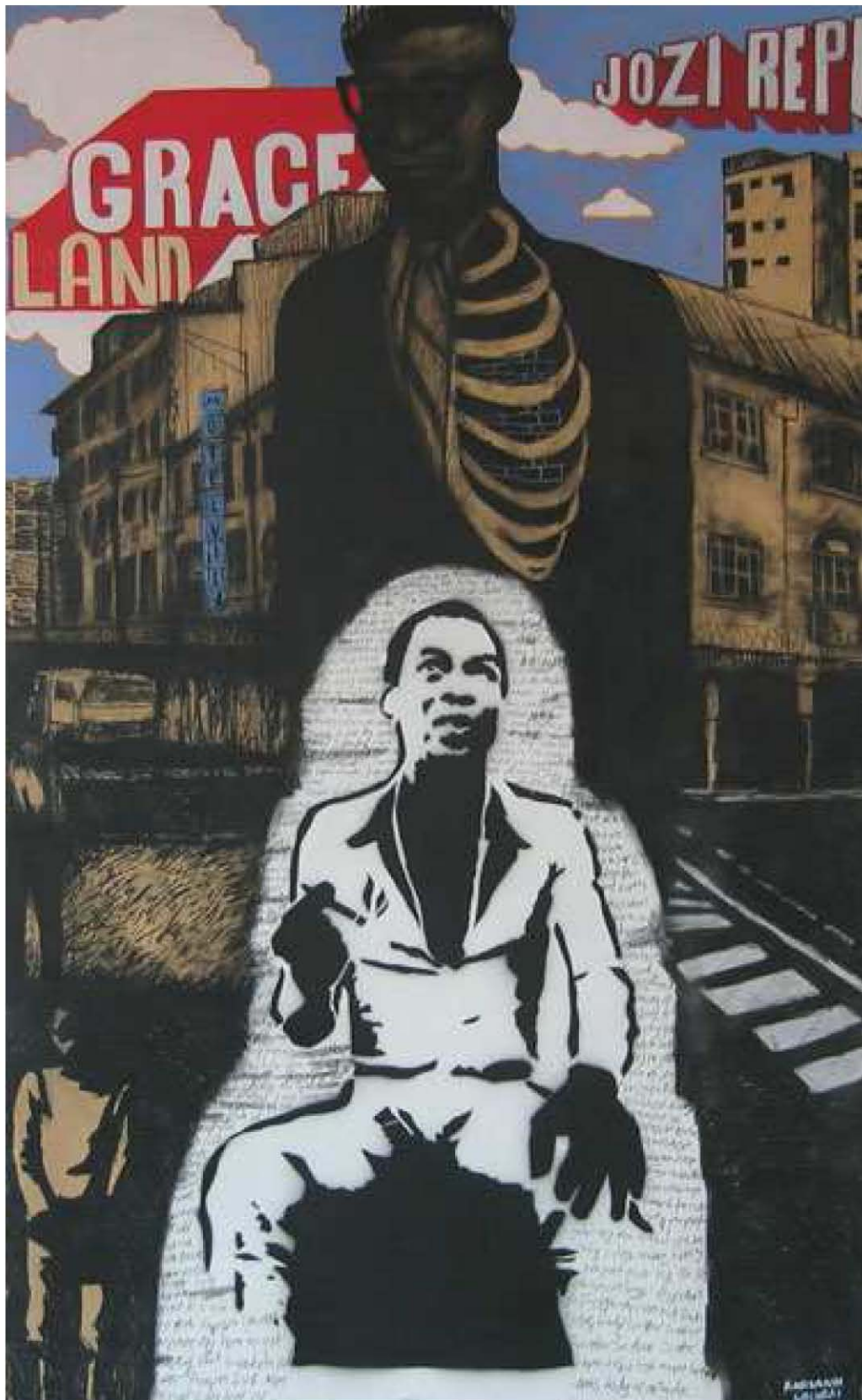


Figure 13: Kudzanai Chiurai, *Jozi Republic*



Figure 14: Kudzanai Chiurai, *Black President*



Figure 15: Kudzanai Chiurai, *Congestion*



Figure 16: Kudzanai Chiurai, *Repatriation*

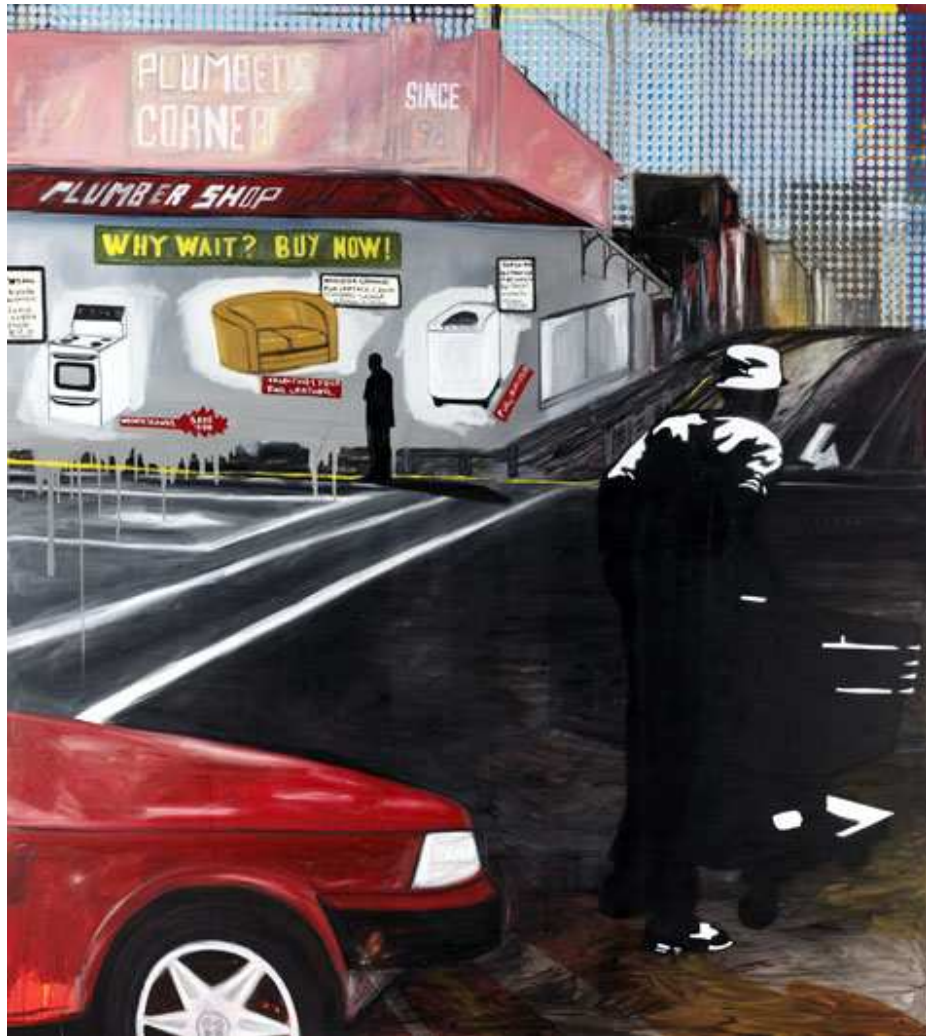


Figure 17: Kudzanai Chiurai, *Why Wait?*



Figure 18: Kudzanai Chiurai, *Lucky Star*

Chapter 2: “Big City Life”

I. The City and its Cultural Spaces

Approached from both east and west, Johannesburg (a.k.a. Jozi), the City of Gold, presents a lyrically beautiful cityscape; nestling between ridges and flanked by dumps of gold mine effluvium that have grown into the landscape as hills, it rises up as a characteristic vista. There are the fifty stories of the Carlton Centre alongside, in this long view, the Brixton Tower, still broadcasting signals. Over there, the outline of new construction, cranes gracefully picked out in relief against the sky as the World Cup 2010 stadiums take shape. The serrated edges of the city's skyscraper profile, framed by highway overpasses and the natural landscape, are hung here and there with Christo-like, building-sized advertising drapery, recognisable as one draws nearer. Gradually, another city looms up – murder capital of the world, walled-in suburbs, rampant gun crime, drug-running, prostitution, homelessness, AIDS, poverty, money, energy, art. Welcome to Jozi. (Sey 2008: 14)

As I observed in Chapter 1, Johannesburg was a key sight concerning the inscription of apartheid's legacy onto the landscape, and it is clear that this inscription is not yet erased. There is hope though, as Mbembe (2004: 404) suggests that, “despite all appearances to the contrary, the fabric of the racial city is in the process of being destroyed”. However, in the process of these threads being unwoven, new webs of interaction are being developed. The space of the city is being reorganised and – as Chiurai attempts to illustrate in his ‘Yellow Lines’ exhibition – new boundaries are being defined, although they are drawn along slightly different lines. The metropolis, as Mbembe (2004: 400) describes it, “is fundamentally fragmented and kaleidoscope.” It becomes a space of contrasts, where crime and poverty exist in the shadow of development and progress, where desegregation and independence have opened the way for xenophobia and the accompanying violence, and where constant movement and urban flux are directed by barb wire and security walls. However, through this “experience of fragmentation and the permutations that may never

achieve coherence, the play of intervals enable everyone to construct his or her own story of Johannesburg and form memories of place” (Mbembe 2004: 404).

James Sey (2008: 15) highlights the way that artists in particular employ the city as a space about which to construct narratives or stories: “Urban artists work in a plethora of modes, using the city to produce discourse and refine practices in many different subcultures ... Music has a role with all of the languages, loyalties, spaces and fashion it provides”. Thus it becomes apparent that music and art go hand in hand in the Johannesburg context and, I would argue, also the urban context of cities the world over. So too, by extension, the same is true of the urban spaces that hip-hop and rap music take as the foundation of their cultural production. Just as Murray Forman (2004: 203) argues, “in the music and lyrics, the city is an audible presence, explicitly cited and digitally sampled in the reproduction of the aural textures of the urban environment”, so too does an experience of the city and its textures become tangible in the visual sense through Rhode’s and Chiurai’s artworks. In fact, along with the contestation of space mimicked by Chiurai’s busy combination of media in his pieces, the connection between music and art in the city is drawn out by Gus Silber (2007) when he proposes:

To look at them [Chiurai’s artworks] is to hear music: the trigger-happy pulse of hip-hop, the sour janglings of African guitar, the meandering doodles of modern jazz. The galleries call this sort of thing mixed media, but the real medium is the mix of life in the city.

Chiurai occupies the position of the diasporan artist, the interrogator of identities as de Souza (2003: 21) suggests, and his main focus is the urban environment. He suggests this in an interview with Rebecca Kahn in 2005: “I’m an outsider in Joburg, so I get to see things that other people don’t, I like observing urban interactions.”

Even though Robin Rhode is now based in Berlin, Johannesburg too has remained one of the main sites of his creative inspiration (Rosenthal 2008: 10). From his early days working on the streets of Johannesburg when he started making art, to nowadays when he exhibits in locations across the globe, he still uses Johannesburg and its urban makeup to inform his interrogation of other locations and their histories. Sey (2008: 16) makes a link to Mbembe's notion of the city as a space in which stories are created, when he observes that "it is in the interstitial space between the planned and the visible nature of the city, and its street level cultures and practices that Robin Rhode's work takes root ... in particular, it takes root in the streets of Jozi"⁵⁴. This influence of the urban environment on Rhode's and Chiurai's art is what I wish to investigate further and link to the similar way in which rap or hip-hop artists situate their work in relation to the city.

i) Discussions of the Spatial Politics of Hip-Hop in Relation to Rhode's and Chiurai's Use of Graffiti

Rap music is bound to its urban context, and the specificities of *place* become of the utmost importance in the consumption and production of it. This became especially evident with examples like the East Coast/West Coast feud that was sparked by the deaths of Tupac Shakur and Biggie Smalls (a.k.a. The Notorious BIG). Due to such feuds and the posse structure⁵⁵ (adapted from that of Jamaican gangs) employed by producers and record labels, the production of rap music is very localised and varies distinctly from place to place. As Public Enemy's Chuck D suggests, "rap has

⁵⁴ "Jozi" is a nickname used by South Africans when referring to Johannesburg.

⁵⁵ This concept has grown out of the link between rap music and gang culture, and is a result of the influence of Jamaican sound systems on early hip-hop. It has adapted the terminology and gang imagery and has placed importance on the link between home, turf and identity and is expressed in the term 'keepin it real' linking an artists raps back to his 'hood.

different feels and different vibes in different parts of the country.” Thus it must follow that different places imbue these vibes in the music. So too does Johannesburg inject a vibe into Rhode’s and Chiurai’s artwork. Rhode describes the way that it does this for him: “Even though the frame of the work is autonomous in that the viewer cannot completely pinpoint the geographical location, the feeling of fear and uncertainty affects the working process completely” (Sey 2008: 25). These feelings are a product of working in such environments as Brixton in Johannesburg which Sey (2008: 22) describes as, “a hard and mean-streets inner-city suburb, characterised by street vendors, squatters in ramshackle houses, drug running and, at its edge as it rises over one of the city’s many ridges, spectacular views to the horizon – a classic Jozi contradiction”.

It is such contradictions and a “multiplicity of worlds in this divided city” (Bremner 1998: 63) that makes “Jozi” so attractive to artists. Sey (2008: 18) notes that the city’s fractured edginess, born of its troubled history is what makes it a fertile site to open up discourse around urban politics, and as such it has the highest concentration of artist’s studios in the country. Chiurai’s studio is among these in Braamfontein near Newtown, where Rhode has also worked.

Urban politics are a main concern of hip-hop artists too, and one of the four elements of hip-hop⁵⁶, graffiti, is a means by which the city space is organized and contested. This is a consequence of the gang culture which was rife in the inner city suburbs where hip-hop had its beginnings. In fact as Forman (2004: 203) notes, there was a transition from gang orientated affiliations (formed around the protection of turf) to

⁵⁶ As a reminder, the four elements are DJing, rapping, breakdancing and graffiti.

music and break dance affiliations, which were responsible for preventing many youths from becoming part of the violent gang culture, but which still placed emphasis on systems of territoriality. Grandmaster Flash a founding DJ of the early hip-hop scene in New York notes the way that, just like gangs, hip-hop sound systems laid claim to their own turf:

We had territories. It was like, Kool Herc had the west side. Bam had Bronx River. DJ Breakout had way uptown past Gun Hill. Myself, my area was like 138th Street, Cypress Avenue, up to Gun Hill, so that we all had our own territories and we all had to respect each other (Forman 2004: 202).

The link to gang culture has grown more explicit with the rise of gangsta-rap and the west coast hip-hop scene based in Los Angeles. Due to the more localised production system which I noted earlier, significance of territory is as important as ever. As I pointed out in Chapter 1, this competition for space is a common feature of any high density urban environment anywhere in the world, and with the global popularisation of hip-hop, graffiti has become commonplace in many cities, Johannesburg included. Some of this is a result of vandals looking for an opportunity to deface public property, some is an outlet for creative minds looking for alternative forms of expression and some is inevitably still linked to the strict demarcation of boundaries marking inner city gang turf. Rhode creates many of his artworks on the same walls that are used by graffiti artists in central Johannesburg, and he took this *modus operandi* overseas with him for his recent exhibition at London's Hayward Gallery. He created an optic environment (Fig. 19) using a repeated pattern of geometric diamond shapes on the walls of the undercroft of the Queen Elizabeth Hall at Southbank Centre, a world renowned site for skate-boarders and graffiti artists since the 1970s (Fig. 20). Rhode notes that similar to hip-hop, the piece's "main issues have a lot to do with reclaiming space and its meaning, the function of the realised wall

drawing and the politics within the various subcultures that exist within the given space”. However, unlike hip-hop graffiti his concern is not to own the space in any conceptual way but rather to just highlight it (Rosenthal 2008: 53). This choice to create an international work concerning the contestation of space through wall drawing and graffiti was most probably sparked by experiences he had while working in Johannesburg.

In 2006 one of the walls that Rhode frequently used in Johannesburg began being used by local graffiti artists. Stephanie Rosenthal describes how Rhode was “unable to persuade them of the importance of his own drawings, which they regarded as substandard” (2007: 11). She notes how Rhode leaves the drawings on the wall and is interested in how people react to them, observing that “if the graffiti artists ‘bomb’ his drawings he comes back and ‘bombs’ their pieces” (2007: 13). She also references Rhode’s view that this sort of thing has been happening for years in Johannesburg. Thus Rhode is clearly familiar with the subcultural codes of graffiti. By producing his work at the Southbank Centre, which had already been ‘bombed’ beyond recognition by the time I visited the site in early December 2008, he shows a keen awareness that there is an international link between such codes, where graffiti artists compete for space across the world. The value that such awareness has given Rhode is highlighted when Michele Robecchi (2008: 88) notes that he admits “his exposure to the graffiti community has been significant in giving him a better understanding of his position as an artist”. This is a result of the fact that he has been labelled a “street artist” or “graffiti artist” (Boutoux 2007: 31) by much of the South African Fine Art community, but is not seen as such by the graffiti artists with whom he interacts, leaving him to contemplate the in-between space that he occupies.

Chiurai's position as an artist is also blurred due to his performance of the dual role of both street and Fine artist. He is also familiar with the practice of graffiti in public spaces as he frequently 'tags'⁵⁷ a wall near his studio in Johannesburg. Although Rhode's work usually consists of simple line drawings very different from the large fresco-like compositions that many 'graf'⁵⁸ artists produce, Chiurai's work is more conventional in style. He uses stencils to create figures and motifs that comment on political and economic issues (Fig. 21). Thus Chiurai's graffiti pieces perform a different role to Rhode's, taking on a more conventional purpose with regards to the canon of graffiti and hip-hop art, usually founded on political agendas, be it spatial politics, social politics or governmental politics. While I will discuss the aspect of resistance art in relation to both artists later in this chapter, it is interesting to note at this point that Chiurai transfers some of the images from his street works onto his Fine Art paintings and mixed media pieces. For example, the wild dog in *Black President* (Fig. 14), the masked gunman in *Shopping for Democracy* (Fig. 22) and the flaming head of Robert Mugabe, seen in a lot of his earlier work, were all stencilled onto the very same wall that he tags in downtown Johannesburg. Therefore one could argue that a direct link is formed between his canvas and the physical space of the street, as the painting becomes a mirror of the street and vice versa. This link extends when one considers that the flaming head motif is also included on some of the T-shirts Chiurai produces, reflecting both the street and studio in another interesting way.

⁵⁷ Tagging refers to leaving ones individual mark, in a sense, a signature.

⁵⁸ 'Graf' is a slang abbreviation for graffiti.

A more tangible connection between the dimensions of the street and the artwork is obvious in Rhode's work, as the city and its pavements and walls become his canvas. Although the narrative of Rhode's pieces focuses on the protagonist and his interaction with the drawing on an urban surface, these surfaces that he chooses tell a story too. As Rosenthal (2007: 11) suggests, "they always contribute something of their own history, conditions, inherent structures, and colours." Early works such as *New Kids on the Bike* (Fig. 23) and *Stone Flag* (Fig. 24) were produced in the backyard of his parents' home in Johannesburg and in such works the shadow of a washing line can be seen. Rhode notes how this "typical South African landscape with the sun-baked concrete outdoor floor/ground which has been stained over the years by dog urine and washing powder ... recreate[s] an observable universe" (Rosenthal 2008: 48). This analogy of the microcosm within the urban environs stands as a reminder to us that space is precious in the city and many daily activities overlap in city spaces, where there is no room for spacious gardens or rolling lawns. This experience of cramped conditions is something that lends a tension to Rhode's work and this tension is a result of "the interaction of the performing body and the marked surface of the city wall, or its asphalt that unlocks the ludic power that Rhode draws from the urban landscape" (Sey 2008: 21). He suggests that the "matter" of bricks and concrete "become a metaphor for construction and building, while touching on ideas of violence and vandalism" (Rosenthal 2008: 48). One could argue that a very similar energy is communicated through hip-hop music as well.

ii) Characters on the Street: The Space of Performance

Hip-hop is a phenomenon that is most potent in the present. The live energy that fuels the improvisational raps of an emcee, or the fresh beats of a DJ in a live battle is

something that can never be identically reproduced in the studio. This is backed up by Robecchi's view that:

Hip-hop's power is predicated on its immediacy. Rhode's moving images similarly work on the moment, and what is left after the artist is finished his work is little more than marks on a wall. Their life ceases to exist once the human presence is gone (2008: 88).

Just as the hip-hop performance loses energy or power in the studio, Sey argues that inserting Rhode's performance pieces into a gallery space "can bring an unwelcome sterility to the interaction." In fact Peggy Phelan (1993: 146) argues that "performance's only life is in the present". She goes on to argue that once it is documented, saved or recorded and begins to "participate in the circulation of representations of representations... it becomes something other than performance". Even though Phelan's book *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* specifically focuses on performance art such as Rhode's, it could be argued that the same is true of any live act, including musical ones such as hip-hop performances. Phelan notes the importance of the audience as the 'Other' and one could suggest that it is the presence of the audience which is the most crucial element linking both forms of production. In both Rhode's street performances and live emcee battles, there is a nervous or excited energy in the audience due to its uncertainty and anticipation as to what will happen next. Just as rappers rely on the audience's response to direct their improvisation – and often they interact with and call out to the audience – so too does Rhode rely on audience interaction, often unexpected by the audience themselves. Just as with the telephone piece that I analysed in the first chapter, where an audience member was chosen by Rhode to interact with his drawing and left to contemplate the awkward consequences, so too does he employ such tactics on the street with random passers-by. Rhode explains his fascination with the unpredictability of dealing with

street audiences: “People from the street are more emotionally and physically engaged than any other audience... I feel that this could reverse the role of the voyeur from being on me, the subject, back onto themselves” (Bellini 2005: 91).

An example of such an unexpected interaction is apparent in a discussion Rhode has with Thomas Boutoux concerning his work *Juggla* (Fig. 25). The work involves the protagonist as a sort of street clown or magician who ‘juggles’ painted black circles on the wall. When he catches them they seem to attach to the ends of his arms where no hands are visible. This piece was created on the wall of an old restaurant in Johannesburg. Rhode used to walk past the wall as a child and since that time the restaurant had become a panel-beater’s shop, and the wall in question was used to test spray guns. Rhode found the place desolated, and while preparing for the piece he was about to create, became nervous about two men watching him from the other side of the road. They were waiting to get jobs at a factory nearby and Rhode ended up employing them to help him paint the wall and create his piece. He notes that it added another layer to his piece expanding the possibilities for audience interaction (Boutoux 2007: 34). Although it is debatable whether the men could be considered as an audience in the conventional sense, the fact that they as passive bystanders unexpectedly became actively involved in the creation of the artwork, creates the extra layer Rhode is talking of.

A similar thing happened in 1999 when Rhode performed one of his bicycle works in downtown Johannesburg. Rhode had drawn a bicycle on a wall and was attempting to ride it when a security guard came from nearby and helped Rhode to climb onto his drawing, after which the security guard also attempted to ‘ride’ the bike. Rhode noted

how suddenly the viewer became part of the work, just as the audience becomes part of a live music act. Rhode performs the role of city characters like the security guard in other performances such as *Car Wash* (Fig. 26) in which he draws the outline of a car on a wall and becomes “a parking assistant/car guard/windscreen washer, the seemingly ubiquitous male character found in every urban grid in the country” (Hobbs 2001: 18). He has performed this both at the South African National Gallery (in the car park at the back) in Cape Town and the Walker Art Centre in Minneapolis, once again bringing the street into the gallery and linking urban contexts across the globe. Although the car guard is a slightly different persona, he occupies a similar position to the gangsters, hustlers and pimps that feature in hip-hop tracks. As I will discuss later in relation to Imani Perry’s (2004: 14) notion of the black outlaw, these fantastical personas have become glorified and celebrated in gangsta rap songs, however, such urban characters were commonplace in the ghettos out of which hip-hop originally emerged. As such many rap artists do actually come into daily contact with such characters and, therefore, include portrayals of them in their songs. Thus the car-guard in Rhodes piece also becomes part of the urban landscape in a similar way.

Although Chiurai does not literally create his Fine Art works “onto” the city itself as Rhode does, he utilises the cityscape in a more conventional way as subject matter. He still employs representations of the characters of the city, and other similarities can be drawn between his representations of it and hip-hop’s discourse surrounding street life. In his piece, *We* (Fig. 7), he portrays the figures of three street children “that bridge the gap between a starkly divided composition, on one side a white-washed canvas and on the other a darkly hued urban Johannesburg landscape, rendered in expressionist strokes” (Green 2007). As Green notes, these individuals do not fit into

the scheme of urban renewal and once again bare resemblance to the marginal figures described in rap-lyrics. These characters become characteristic of, and stand-in for the city space.

iii) Blurred Lines: The City as Subject

As I suggested earlier, Chiurai's pieces become a mirror of the cityscape around him. They are accurate depictions of his immediate environment and although Rhode's inner city performances are inspired by his history and heritage in Johannesburg, Chiurai still occupies the spaces he depicts on a permanent basis. Many of his 'Yellow Lines' pieces – and indeed much of his previous work – was inspired by, and created from images he has captured photographically in the streets around his apartment as well as the views from his studio. A prime example is the piece *I Write What I Like* (Fig. 27) in which some viewers may recognise the tavern in the background which is situated on Pritchard Street, and which I noticed as I drove past recently on my way to interview Chiurai. The view depicted in *Opportunity* (Fig. 28) may also be easily recognizable to anyone who has looked from the Nelson Mandela bridge towards the city in the direction of Parktown station, which is situated just a few blocks from where Chiurai lives. *10 Years* (Fig. 2) is an example of a representation of the view from one of Chiurai's studio windows, and the more time one spends in this area of the city the more one recognizes imagery taken from local billboards or signs, which are overlaid onto some of the busier hybrid cityscapes that the artist depicts. It is this mixture of signs and signifiers that Silber (2007) describes as the mix of life in the city.

I would like to suggest that although I have argued that Chiurai depicts the city space in a different way to Rhode, there is a connection which can be drawn out in relation to Rhode's *modus operandi*. Although Chiurai's mixed media works are not done onto city walls in the way that Rhode creates his drawings, his canvases are extremely large and sometimes, as in the case of triptychs like *Opportunity*, which measure 220cm by 360cm, their dimensions are wall-like anyway. Thus Chiurai works in similar dimensions to Rhode and so, as his representations of the cityscape take shape, these dimensions echo Rosenthal's (2007: 11) notion of the city as canvass, or rather in Chiurai's case, the canvas as city. This bears even more resemblance to Rhode's work, when Chiurai inserts text or images on top of these cityscapes to facilitate a critique or comment on the environment onto which they have been inserted. These function in the same way that Rhode's drawings comment on sub-cultural codes of the environments into which they are inserted.

This theme of sub-cultural codes and their relation to each other and the city is explored further in the catalogue-come-magazine that Chiurai produced in conjunction with his 'Yellow Lines' show. When discussing the concept with Chiurai⁵⁹, he explained to me that his intention was to invite various other cultural practitioners to contribute some form of expression communicating their views on the concept of 'Yellow Lines'. By extension a discourse could be created surrounding the implications that the concept has for modern day South Africa, and indeed Africa too. In the 'Ed's Note', Mbalì Soga (2008: 6) explains the concept of 'Yellow Lines' as "an urban contemporary take on the lines that divide and define us as humans... The yellow lines control the populace, they tell you where to go, where you're allowed to

⁵⁹ This discussion came from a personal conversation I had with Chiurai at his flat in Braamfontein on the 9th February 2009.

go and where you're not – in sum controlling and influencing us". The result is a vibrant combination of work from some of the most cutting-edge graffiti artists, fashion designers, photographers, graphic designers, and writers that call Johannesburg home and situate their work in relation to the city. The works deal with a multitude of topics and "the major themes that run through the body of work include xenophobia, the city, identity, music, religion and film" (Soga 2008: 6). These are all meant to create a discourse that compliments or enhances a reading of the artist's work, which is shown at the end of the catalogue.⁶⁰

This cross-disciplinary hybridity reflects that of hip-hop as described by Blither (2002: 9). The subculture is referenced directly, and its influence can be seen in the catalogue through the graffiti of Faith47 and the writing of Soweto born MC Ben Sharpa "who pays homage to the best socially conscious lyrical traditions of hip-hop with his solo offering", while he discusses the power of music as a tool for affecting social change (Soga 2008: 3). It becomes evident through the juxtaposition of such an article with the composite cityscapes of photographer George Mahashe, or the animated fashion shoot of 'The Smarteez' – a young collective of 20 Soweto-born fashionistas – that music, hip-hop and art flow together in their varying currents through the yellow lines that direct life in the city.

Deutsche notes in a study of the public art scene in New York that "the city is an environment formed by the interaction and integration of different practices" (Klopper 2000: 191). Sandra Klopper continues to explain that in this notion "the city is the product of social practices, rather than a space defined from above by state

⁶⁰ Chiurui conveyed to me in a personal conversation (Johannesburg, 9th February 2009) that he intends to produce such a publication regularly, in conjunction with his subsequent shows, as a platform for young intellectuals and artists to share their views on the subject in question.

institutions.” This aligns with Soga’s observation that these lines are created by us the city dwellers, and that they are formed rather as ideological constructs than physical entities themselves. Thus as one can observe, these unseen lines are created by various groups and are not necessarily concurrent with the agendas of government or municipal authorities. In fact very often these informal lines have a sinister root and are set up to facilitate criminal or antisocial behaviour – as Soga writes, “they tell us where we’re not allowed to go”. As I have already suggested, hip-hop has a notorious link to gang culture and crime, and it is no secret that Johannesburg is one of the crime capitals of the world. It is therefore important to extend one’s reading of Rhode’s and Chiurai’s art to encompass its possible references to a criminal subculture apparent in the city, and how this compares to the way that hip-hop has engaged with the themes of crime and violence.

II. Crime and Violence

In contrast to Klopper’s (2000) notion of the present day city space as a site defined predominantly by social interactions, very slightly affected by government agendas, Johannesburg, as an apartheid city, was strictly controlled by the state and its laws. The organization of city space was a prime weapon in the apartheid government’s battle to maintain racial boundaries. In such a context there was a survival imperative that dominated, and often, as Lepecki suggests, “the subaltern’s active, agile and imaginative engagement with the world was cast as the manifestation of a dangerous, rebellious – if not plainly criminal – character” (2007: 23). Thus suspicion and fear dominated the city space. As I have noted already, the breakdown of these boundaries with political independence has left space for other groups, powerful enough to take advantage of this culture of fear, to reorganize their own informal boundaries.

Bremner sums it up in one sentence: “a new city is emerging, in which certain of apartheid’s social and spatial divisions are being deepened, at the same time as other, largely illicit ways of controlling, managing, and using urban space challenge its rules” (1998: 62).

If one doubts the existence of such feelings of fear that link to a criminal subculture, one only needs to take a look at some of Chiurai’s cityscapes such as those in *Moneylenders* (Fig. 29), *Graceland* (Fig. 6), *10 Years* (Fig. 2) and *We* (Fig. 7), to begin to get a feeling of discomfort. The harsh rendering that Chiurai uses to illustrate the city buildings makes their aesthetic similar to that of prison architecture. The dark insides, with no light escaping from within, look as though the many windows were those of cells containing criminals. Another immediate link between many of Chiurai’s cityscapes and Soga’s notion of the city as a combination of spaces from which some are restricted, is the complete absence of a populace, or the inclusion of solitary ghostly figures. This is in stark contrast to the bustling throng of people that is characteristic of the streets of downtown Johannesburg. Is Chiurai creating a representation of a city of exclusions? I would argue so.

This feeling of fear or danger filters through Rhode’s work as well, stemming from his fascination with his subject, as he puts it, “a personal experience of rough Johannesburg neighbourhoods and its criminal subculture” (Smith 1999). Lepecki (2007: 20-23) explains the reason for this sense of impending danger when he describes Rhode’s process of creating gallery work:

In several of his performances he shows up at a time when the gallery or museum is filled with members of the public, pushes his way into the crowd with the directness of a fighter, or maybe of a burglar, performs an action usually around the creation of a drawing or a painting on an empty wall, and

then leaves. Get in, do the job, get out. Fast – since no one ever knows what the future may bring... It is almost as if Rhode prepares the gallery space for a crime that is about to take place, and if the gallery is a scene where Rhode performs, this scene is not totally dissimilar to a crime scene.

As Bremner (1998: 63) points out, public interaction in urban South Africa is marked by caution and suspicion. The reason for this caution and suspicion can be linked back to the influx of migrant workers and their need to find a niche in the competitive environment of the inner city. Due to the post-independence mass migration to the city centre, there are extreme conditions of overcrowding, and even with a massive informal trading sector much of the population are unemployed and have become disillusioned, some being forced to make a living from involvement in criminal activities. Bremner highlights the fact that control of development is no longer in the hands of the city's officials (1998: 52). She attributes this to the abandonment of the inner city by property owners and capital holders foreseeing its demise from about the mid 1980s onwards, and she notes that "its economic and social base is now substantially outside the law". This extreme divide between the rich and the poor has also contributed to a rise in the more organized violent crime that has become common in the city, and also reflects conditions in a number of cities across the Atlantic.

i) A Brief History of Hip-Hop's Ties to Gang Culture

As I discussed in Chapter 1, the exodus of wealth (mainly white owned) from Johannesburg's inner city, and the resultant urban sprawl is similar to the situation in Reagan's America where starved local governments could not maintain and control city spaces. Craig Werner (1999: 236) notes that these demographic shifts and the collapse of New York's industrial economy transformed the South Bronx into an

emblem of urban despair. The same collapse of efficient policing and monitoring of urban spaces that enabled the early South Bronx DJs to play in public space wherever they could, also left room for the gang culture to flourish. Werner goes further to point out that marginal figures aligned with this gang culture soon became heroes and role models to youths. He observes the epiphany that arises out of Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five's track featuring Melle Mel, ominously entitled 'The Message':

A half decade before the birth of gangsta rap, 'The Message' came to the obvious conclusion that kids growing up in the projects, their eyes singing a "song of deep hate", would idolize the thugs, pimps, and pushers, the only ones in their neighbourhoods with any cash (Werner 1999: 241).

The rise in gang culture grew parallel to the rise in the drug trade. The disenfranchised youths of the poverty stricken South Bronx turned to gangs, 'first for self-defence, then sometimes for power, sometimes for kicks' (Chang 2005: 12). Chang notes how the gangs began to compete with organizations like the Black Panther Party for the hearts and minds of the youths, and in the turmoil the space opened up for "heroin dealers, junky thieves and contract arsonists to fill the streets like vultures" (2005: 13). Due to the mass exodus from the Bronx and the high level of unemployment, real estate prices dropped incredibly and as Chang observes, apartment buildings passed into the hands of slumlords who let the buildings reach such a state of disrepair that they often ended up contracting arsonists to destroy the buildings so that they could collect money from insurance policies. A similar situation is now occurring in the notorious suburb of Hillbrow in downtown Johannesburg, where foreign gangs and slumlords (most notoriously Nigerians) have occupied whole buildings in order to extort tenants or run drug and prostitution operations out of these buildings. This very situation is illustrated in the movie *Jerusalema*⁶¹ which is based in Hillbrow. In the

⁶¹ See www.jerusalemamovie.com

movie the local South Africans rally against foreign drug lords and pimps in order to expel them from buildings, blaming them for the disrepair and poor living conditions.

In the South Bronx the gangs of youths preyed on the weak, the elderly, drug addicts and unaffiliated youths. Chang (2005: 49) observes that after time they became the law on the streets, they organized the chaos. As I pointed out in Chapter 1, these gangs began to target the large number of junkies that were a result of the sudden availability of Southeast Asian heroin. In May 2008 South African youths organized themselves into similar gangs to combat what they saw as a scourge of foreigners responsible for the rise in the drug trade and degradation of the inner city (McKenzie 2008)⁶². This xenophobic outbreak became a cover for criminals to loot, rape and steal from innocent civilians who quite often were not even foreigners or “makwerekwere”⁶³.

Just as the early hip-hoppers bore witness to the rise of gang culture and the resultant violence in the South Bronx, so too was Chiurai witness to the “horrific violence and senseless victimisation” of the xenophobic attacks (Smith 2008: page unknown). In both contexts an *us-versus-them* mentality developed, in which anyone that is not one of *us* is treated with suspicion and marked as a target. When, in both cases the perpetrators of the violence should have been looking to local authorities as responsible for poor maintenance of urban space and its infrastructure, instead the infighting became worse. Nhamo Rupare (2008: 43) makes the chilling suggestion

⁶² Also see ‘Debate on Xenophobia by the Mpumalanga MEC for Finance, Honourable Jabu Mahlangu, MP, issued by the Department of Finance, Mpumalanga Provincial, 2nd June 2008 accessed at www.queensu.ca/samp/migrationresources/xenophobia/responses/debate.htm

⁶³ ‘Makwerekwere’ is slang word used mainly by black South Africans to describe foreigners, especially illegal immigrants. It seems to be an inter-linguistic term with unclear origins, and is modified according to the language of the speaker with variations including ‘amakwerekwere’ implying plural, and ‘kwerekwere’.

that “killing another African is like killing your own brother or sister”, and perhaps Chuck D most prophetically sums up the sad state of affairs in Public Enemy’s track ‘Welcome to the Terrordrome’ when he observes that “every brother ain’t a brother” (Werner 1999: 289). This becomes particularly significant when one notices that almost a third of the casualties in the May 2008 attacks were actually South Africans, thought to be foreigners because they came from outlying areas or had a darker complexion that what was perceived ‘typical’ for South Africans.

Returning to the case of the South Bronx, the rise of hip-hop in grew concurrently with the gang culture and often the two were seen to be intrinsically linked, due to the emphasis that both philosophies placed on a connection to public space and its ownership. Although as I pointed out earlier, many of these early hip-hop artists tried to bring kids out of the negative gang culture and offered them alternative means of gaining respect through rapping, break-dancing and graffiti, the link between hip-hop and gang culture and its perceived negative implications has been forged in much of the general public’s eyes. This link was further cemented with the advent of the sub-genre ‘gansta rap’ which originated on the west coast in Los Angeles.

As with the Bronx, in Los Angeles gangs sprouted in specific areas that had been neglected due to racial segregation and a shift in economic bases. Chang notes that as a consequence gansta rap and post-industrial gangs began in Watts, a northern neighbourhood, and spread into the area now known as South Central L.A., and Compton, the suburb that would later become synonymous with gansta rap and immortalised through the NWA (Niggaz With Attitude) track ‘Straight Outta Compton’. In Chang’s discussion of the origins of gangsta rap he suggests that Los

Angeles's black people were different from those in New York and were "less idealistic, more pragmatic and even a little mercenary" (2005: 307). This hard edge view on life was transferred into early gangsta rappers lyrics. One of these founding father's of the west coast scene, Ice-T points out the difference between concerns in the music when he claims that: "Where New Yorkers would rap about parties and clubs, I would rap about car chases and guns and the shit I was living through." Adam Haupt places responsibility on the shoulders of gangsta rap for creating the negative stereotype that has been attached to all hip-hop, due to the sub-genre's "celebration of 'thug life', misogyny and negative racial stereotypes" (2003: 3).

These differences between the different rap scenes meant that tensions began to rise, and due to a competition for audiences and the heightened male bravado now associated with rap music, feuds began to break out between east and west coast rappers. The link between hip-hop and gang culture was cemented most solidly, when east coast gansta rapper Tupac Shakur was murdered by an alleged gang-banger and not long after, west coast rapper Notorious BIG was killed in what seemed to be retaliation.

As I pointed out earlier in this chapter, it was because of such circumstances that the production of rap became a regionally specific phenomenon. I highlight this point to illustrate the way that rap production may mirror the way that different communities band together in city spaces such as Johannesburg, to protect shared economic interests. Just as rappers place value in their spatial context and maintain the posse structure to defend their interests, so too will other urban communities protect their interests, often violently as in the case of the xenophobic attacks described earlier.

I would like to return to these xenophobic attacks in relation to Rhode's and Chiurai's work in order to draw similarities between the way that the artists deal with marginal, or criminal figures and the way that rap – in particular gansta rap – has a tradition of celebrating the figure of the outlaw or hustler.

ii) Representations of Fear and Paranoia

In many of Chiurai's works from his earlier exhibition 'Graceland' and the more recent 'Yellow Lines', he has begun to focus on the interaction of people within city space, and lone individual figures rather than groups of people have started to crop up more commonly in his subject matter. Most often the city space remains his prime focus, but the insertion of these bodies into the space must inevitably communicate something to the viewer about the space in question. In Chapter 1 I argued that perhaps the faceless individuals in works like *Why Wait* (Fig. 17), *Lucky Star* (Fig. 18), *Repatriation* (Fig. 16) and *Graceland* (Fig. 6) were stand-ins for the migrant who loses his identity in the mass of people that crowd the city streets. However, in light of what I have discussed in relation to the xenophobic attacks, I would like to develop this reading to suggest that, perhaps, these individuals become the potential victims of such attacks, protecting their identity for fear of persecution. I would argue that this reading is further supported by works like *City Fabric* (Fig. 30) and *Graceland* (Fig. 6).

In the former work the scene is a typical streetscape from downtown Johannesburg. The background shows a couple of shop fronts, two of which advertise public phone services. As I observed in Chapter 1, the public phone becomes a signifier of migrant communities, as members of these communities frequent establishments offering such

services. This is a result of the fact that many migrants do not have access to a personal phone, but still wish to stay in touch with relatives or business connections back home, who in turn might not have access to email or other means of more personal communication. The scene is devoid of any human life except for what looks like the shadow of a person, possibly hiding behind two rubbish bins in the right foreground of the piece. The fact that one does not see that actual person further suggests that the individual may be hiding. The argument could be made that, considering this information, the individual is a migrant scouting out the scene in front of him to be sure that no one is stalking the pavements looking for random foreigners to attack, so that he may not be recognised as he attempts to make contact with people back home. However, on the other hand this individual may be staking out the area in order to ambush unsuspecting foreigners as they pass by.

In *Graceland* (Fig. 6), an individual stands faceless confronting the viewer with the streetscape behind him. He stands holding a cross and becomes the stand in for the victims of xenophobia, carrying the burden of his origins, beliefs and culture. Perhaps this point is again compounded by two figures lurking in the background possibly scrutinizing the individual to figure out his identity, as Simone argues is characteristic of Johannesburgers (2000: 438).

Perhaps the most telling depiction of the foreign victim fleeing violence is the figure in *Repatriation* (Fig. 16). Clad in sunglasses and cap, and again without a distinguishable identity, the individual makes his way towards a train possibly leaving the city. A repatriation fee is paid to the government by an immigrant to ensure that if irregularities are found in that immigrant's status in the country, there are funds to

facilitate deportation. However, the individual in the image is not forcibly being removed, but is departing of his own accord. Although the majority of foreigners were not able to flee the violence, perhaps this image speaks of the migrants who chose to return to their homes in surrounding countries during the xenophobic attacks, despite the various other dangers that returning posed. A poignant detail is included in the background, in the form of a South African customer care service number, printed on the back of a bus. I would argue that this may be a tongue-in-cheek criticism of the South African authorities' ineffectiveness in dealing with the violence, and their inadequacy in regulating immigrant relations which resulted in tensions escalating to the scale that they did.

Rhode's work may also elicit a different reading in light of the xenophobic violence that plagued some of the areas in which he often creates work. Lepecki's (2007: 20) comparison of Rhode to a burglar comes to mind, in which he observes that Rhode's nervous and urgent movement into the gallery and around his drawing creates an impending sense of danger, implying that something sinister or untoward is happening. This observation is quite accurate and is a sobering reminder of a documentary that I watched recently entitled 'Shooting Bokkie' in which a film crew tracks a young gang member on the Cape Flats as he carries out executions, darting in and out of a small kiosk to shoot the owner. This type of swift operation is characteristic of gang hits all over. However, this nervous energy that Rhode employs may now have evolved to communicate a desperate attempt to escape, as if one was escaping a gang of thugs. This escape scenario may most aptly be applied to his piece *Wall/Line/Body*. In a footnote to her review which talks about this piece, Ruth Kerkham [Simbao] writes that Rhode told her that he is playing on the perception that

“a black man sure can jump high when he is running from the law”. In light of recent forms of xenophobic violence in South Africa, it is plausible to expand this interpretation to include the idea of a fleeing foreign victim jumping for his life to escape pursuing gangs. Along this line, a wall can also become a metaphor for a borderline between nations.

Either way, the link to common criminal activities in Rhode’s pieces is evident. There can be no mistake that he takes on the role of a car thief in his works *Car Theft* (Fig. 31) and *Stripper* (Fig. 32). In the former work which he performed in 2003 at the Walker Art Centre in Minneapolis, he attempts to “break into” the charcoal drawing of a car using various objects such as a wire hanger, a piece of scrap metal and a spark plug, and in desperation tries to throw a brick through the window in the end. This sort of theft is common in South African cities and Rhode even notes that it is a well-known fact that the type of car he draws, a Citi Golf, is the easiest type to steal. In the latter piece Rhode continues this theme as he tries to “dismantle” the charcoal drawing of a van by wiping away each part and makes off with the aerial or antenna at the end of the performance. Ratner (2005: page unknown) observes that the “the ghost image is suggestive of a ruined black and white photograph, an urban haze or, most blatantly, the evidence of a professional criminal at work”.

iii) The ‘Burden of Representation’ and Depictions of Marginal Figures

Recalling the history of hip-hop, and in particular gangsta rap, it is no surprise that the character of the criminal, in various guises, is a common theme in the rhetoric of rap

songs too. This tradition has its roots much further back in African American history. In her discussion of the influences of hip-hop, Imani Perry (2004: 14) claims that the use of imagery of the black outlaw in hip-hop “derives from Jamaican employment of such imagery in folk culture, most likely resulting from the appropriations of second-run cinematic images to postcolonial identity”. She contributes the continual use of this character to strained race relations in America, contending that “the isolation of black bodies as the culprits for widespread, multiracial social ills is not unique to rap, and what really makes hip-hop music black American is America’s love-hate relationship with it” (2004: 27). She makes this claim in relation to an argument that rap gains unfair criticism for depicting violence, sexism, and criminal activity “despite enormous levels of violent, sexist, and racist imagery all over American media forms and the glorification of criminal behaviour on television and film” (2004: 27). She explains that this fascination with rap artists, whose image often does not correlate with their lyrics or actual personality, is due rather to a perception of the music as “violent ghetto expression” (2004: 28). However she does argue that rap artists’ choice to represent issues such as violence, sexism, racism, or crime in their songs fits in with a long-standing strategy in black-cultural politics, in which “in-your-face examples of black masculinity and excess frighten the mainstream, exploiting its fears and simultaneously challenging the economic disenfranchisement plaguing black American communities” (2004: 29).

This perspective fits in with Eithne Quinn’s view concerning the ‘burden of representation’ – which I discussed in Chapter 1 – which she uses “to make sense of gangsta rap’s often offensive and abrasive lyrical content” (Haupt 2008: 148). To

return to Quinn's description, she outlines this burden in the form of the two discourses it encompasses as follows:

The discourse of authenticity demanded that representations should depict black culture as it exists in reality, whereas the second discourse characterised every representation as an act of delegation – black artists and intellectuals were thus expected to accept the burden of speaking for the black community in every instance. Black artists and critics thus faced a great deal of pressure to always represent black subjects in ways that were considered to be authentic, representative and positive (Haupt 2008: 148).

Quinn then argues that gangsta rappers were aware of this burden and employed the discourse of authenticity while “reneging on the contract to act as delegates, self-consciously repudiating uplifting images of black life in a gesture of rebellion and dissent” (Haupt 2008: 148). She attributes the perpetuation of this attitude to the fact that gangsta rappers realised that such representations were successful in selling records and thus the market began typecasting black artists.

It is through these observations that a clear difference becomes apparent in the portrayal of marginal or criminal figures in relation to race in gangsta rap songs, and similar figures in Rhode and Chiurai's art. As I noted in Chapter 1, Rhode follows a philosophy of “Selfinkoozament” describing a proper sense of one's dignity which could be related to the hip-hop concept of “keeping it real”. Adam Haupt relates this concept to the expectancy of black subjects to be represented authentically and positively with regards the ‘burden of representation’ (2008: 148). Rhode's representations of figures such as the car thief, or his tactic of infiltrating galleries like a burglar, are not glorified and overtly explicit like the representations of gangsters or pimps in rap songs. His representations operate on a different level to critique social relations. Where gangsta rappers seek to shock and frighten the mainstream with overly exaggerated representations of the ‘hell’ that is black America, Rhode attempts

to cleverly and subtly highlight social ills by focusing on the criminal character as a product of history and a stereotypical construct. Although the sinister figures in rap songs have become stereotypical constructs too, their portrayal celebrates the stereotypes and does not attempt to critically question their representation as Rhode does with his marginal figures.

Chiurai too does not overtly glorify the black body as criminal or sexual, but rather situates it within a discourse of history, prejudice, and perceptions. Just as in his work *Sex* (Fig. 3) – where what seems at first glance to be an explicit depiction of black sexuality but turns out to be an insightful investigation of racial relations and the media – so too does the work *How Could You* (Fig. 33) cleverly critique portrayals of sexuality and crime in the media. The work is one of Chiurai's magazine-cover series, which includes *Black President* (Fig. 14) and *Shopping for Democracy* (Fig. 22), and was touched on briefly in Chapter 1 in relation to a line of text that reads "Fela Kuti gave me syphilis". It again takes the form of a drum magazine cover with the then president of the ANC⁶⁴ (African National Congress) Jacob Zuma's blue face as the central image. Another line of text in particular situates this piece within a discourse of sexual criminality. This piece was created in 2008 during the height of the president's rape investigation and the line 'Lolo's date disappoints' cannot be ignored as a possible critique of Zuma's questionable moral fibre. Another line that reads 'how could you Busi?' further compounds this argument, because although it does not direct the question at the politician, it implies a sense of disappointment in *Busi's* actions and, possibly by extension, the allegations that face Zuma.

⁶⁴ Jacob Zuma has since been elected as president of South Africa.

This stands not as a misogynistic celebration of patriarchal power structures, but rather as a subtle mockery of Zuma in his position as one of the country's role models. Chiurai is not glorifying his sexual conquests but rather criticises them. Ironically Zuma's nickname is *Jay-Z*, also the name of a prominent hip-hop artist. Although Jay-Z's music is not explicitly gansta rap, Chiurai highlights his awareness that the mainstream situates all hip-hop in relation to a particular type of black masculinity, which Matthew Henry characterises as defined mainly by an "urban aesthetic, nihilistic attitude, and an aggressive posturing" (Haupt 2008: 149) – a masculinity that many would argue Zuma represents as well.

Political critiques are common in Chiurai's work, with heads of state like Thabo Mbeki and, most notoriously, Robert Mugabe coming under fire. Rhode also situates many of his works within a political discourse, although not always as blatantly as Chiurai. It is here that another similarity arises with hip-hop music, particularly the other subgenre 'conscious' hip-hop, and one notices a need to draw out the political connections which are sometimes overlooked in many of the artworks.

III. Ideas of Politics and Resistance

As I pointed out in the previous part of this chapter, Ethnie Quinn puts forward an argument that gangsta rap's use of in-your-face representations of black life could be seen as an attempt to frighten the mainstream and challenge the social ills that face black America. However, Adam Haupt contends that "along with its celebration of 'thug life', misogyny and negative racial stereotypes, gangsta rap appears to do anything but move beyond oppressive discourses" (2003: 3). Haupt then quotes bell hooks' view that the "sexist, misogynist, patriarchal ways of thinking and behaving

that are glorified in gangsta rap are a reflection of the prevailing values in our society, values created and sustained by white supremacist capitalist patriarchy”. He then explains that the “more critical and subversive artists such as Sarah Jones, KRS-One, Dead Prez, Immortal Technique or Talib Kweli do not receive as much airplay in the mainstream media because they do not serve the interests of ‘white supremacist patriarchy’” (Haupt 2003: 3).

It becomes evidently clear from a consideration of the above views, and issues discussed in Chapter 1, that the primary concern on which hip-hop makes a political stand is the issue of race and racial relations. In Chapter 1 I described the long and intertwined history that hip-hop – historically a black American cultural form – has shared with the Black Consciousness movement and the civil rights struggle in America, and race issues in general. However, hip-hop has evolved in its form as a political tool used by the marginalised, to speak out about other issues not necessarily founded on race relations, but often stemming from the inequality that results. I also highlighted in Chapter 1 that America shared common ground with South Africa and its struggle against apartheid, and in fact the anti-apartheid movement found popularity among many black youths in the late 1970s and 1980s in America.

It becomes apparent that America and South Africa shared concerns and a common past when it came to political protests and resistance, and such concerns were taken up by many of the founding hip-hop artists. Members of seminal hip-hop groups like Public Enemy’s Chuck D had been exposed to the late stages of the civil rights and black power era. Mark Anthony Neal observes that this generation that had been witness to the changes brought about through the civil rights struggle now came of age

“in the face of Reagan-era domestic policy and the inability of black elected officials to respond adequately to the worst aspects of those policies” (2004: 307). A similar situation to present day South Africa becomes apparent. After the struggle to obtain rights and equality, as was the case with the apartheid struggle, black Americans were left feeling disenfranchised and, much like contemporary urban South Africans, found themselves in economic situations that were the same if not worse than before. Nhlanhla Hlongwane (2008: 27) describes such feelings in the South African context when he states:

The people are still suffering, and more so the youth of the country. They are reeling from the shock of seeing their hopes dashed and their dreams slipping through the fat fingers of elected African leaders from across the board.

Such were the feelings of black American youth, and following in the tradition of the black popular music of earlier decades in America – particularly the 1960s – that reflected political tensions of the time, and inspired by forerunners like Gil Scott-Heron, hip-hop acts such as Public Enemy began to take up the cause, speaking out about the poor state of affairs that much of the nation still found itself in. However, a problem arose in that the generation of youth that hip-hop now looked to enlighten and inspire, had not been witness to the struggles and era of activism that had preceded them, and so were somewhat apathetic to political causes. Neal recognizes that hip-hop sought to inspire people by rapping about revolution, however, he poses the question of whether “political lyrics in hip-hop – which are not necessarily confined to so-called ‘conscious rappers – affect sustained political empowerment among audiences in the absence of grassroots and mainstream political organizing?” (2004: 307). Angela Ards (2004: 312) answers this question when she states that:

Once the institutions that supported radical movements collapsed or turned their attention elsewhere, the seeds of hip-hop were left to germinate in American society at large – fed by its materialism, misogyny and a new, more insidious kind of state violence.

Further on in her essay Ards identifies a key way in which many rappers fail to facilitate meaningful political change when she quotes activist/artist Boots of rap group The Coup from a 1996 interview with radio personality Davey D. Boots explains:

Rappers have to be in touch with their communities no matter what type of raps you do, otherwise people won't relate. Political rap groups offered solutions only through listening. They weren't part of a movement, so they died out when people saw that their lives weren't changing. On the other hand, gangsta groups and rappers who talk about selling drugs are part of a movement. The drug game has been around for years and has directly impacted lives, and for many it's been positive in the sense that it earned people some money. Hence gangsta rap has a home. In order for political rap to be around, there has to be a movement that will be around that will make people's lives better in a material sense. That's what any movement is about, making people's lives better (Ards 2004: 317).

I argue, then, that one could project the same paradigm onto the Fine Art world, for as with art, hip-hop – and all music – is about communication. Therefore, if one seeks to inspire political empowerment and social change through art, in order to facilitate a meaningful change, it should ideally be accompanied by some sort of tangible political action. As I have noted already, many black South Africans are in a situation where the 'promised land' that was expected in the form of post-independence South Africa has not materialised. Hlongwane (2008: 27) sums it up accurately when he says: "the times have been disheartening, particularly after the people were lead to believe that once we went democratic, our mirage would indeed be transformed – with real rivers flowing and desert sands becoming arable land". Many still live in conditions of abject poverty, however, as with the case of post civil rights America, much of the current generation of youth were not first hand witness to the freedom struggle. In the aftermath of apartheid the majority of young people are not familiar with means of political empowerment, and so therefore much of the time find

themselves disillusioned or even apathetic when it comes to taking up a significant political cause – a task that many believe was the responsibility of previous generations. However, some young Africans such as Chiurai recognise the inter-related function of music and art as political tools, and in Chiurai's case, the need to combine his art with organized political action, to impact change.

i) Chiurai and Activism

Chiurai has always had a political interest and this has manifested in his work. In fact his current situation as an exile from Zimbabwe is due to threats directed at him because of early works that he did concerning the political situation in his home country. Works such as *Battle for Zim* (Fig. 34) and *Rau Rau* (Fig. 35), depict the dictator Robert Mugabe in various guises, most notoriously with flames coming out of the top of his head – an image that Chiurai has used for various other purposes including election posters and t-shirts. In the former work the despot's image is surrounded by graffiti scribbles akin to hastily written political slogans, and various other text and musings. Chiurai's first exhibition that encompassed such works makes direct reference to early hip-hop activism in its title which replicates Gil Scott-Heron's famous poem, 'The Revolution Will not be Televised'⁶⁵.

As I noted, due to this overtly political early work Chiurai now finds himself in exile and so has taken to examining urban politics in South Africa instead. As such he reflects Boot's notion that hip-hop artists should be in touch with their communities, as he has shifted his focus to interrogate his immediate environment. However, this does not mean that he has completely abandoned the cause of his birth country's

⁶⁵ The words of this poem can be found at www.gilscottheron.com/lyrevol.html

political plight. Just prior to Zimbabwe's presidential and parliamentary elections in 2008, Chiurai organized a mock election-come-exhibition to which he issued an open invitation to everyone of eligible voting age. The exhibition consisted of a range of posters (Fig. 36) that Chiurai had produced, depicting representations of police brutality and acts of violence. The images were accompanied by text that read – "We Always Have Reason to Fear", "Who Got it Worse", "Vote At Own Risk", and "Shopping For Democracy" which were, as Soga (2008: 9) suggests, "lamenting the state of things in Zimbabwe as well as many African states at present". Attendees cast a vote against a list of leaders with dubious track records. Soga notes that the most disappointing part of the exhibition was the lack of attendance by young black people, an observation which supports my earlier argument about the youth's apathetic relationship to politics. As activist and minister of information for Public Enemy, Lisa Williamson a.k.a. Sister Souljah puts it: "it's very difficult to mix education and consciousness with capitalism", and so many might see Chiurai's efforts as a means of using a highly contentious political issue to further economic gains, as some rap artists have done. However, Soga notes that Chiurai's election/exhibition showcased affordable artwork, and I can vouch for this as Chiurai actually gave me some of the extra prints completely free of charge on a recent visit. A further argument can be made against any view that Chiurai puts capital gains completely ahead of his role as activist, when one considers the fact that he uses much of his earnings from his larger artworks and previous exhibitions to fund his siblings tertiary education and other initiatives he is involved in.

As any artist knows, a constant and reliable source of funds is rare, and Chiurai, not only invests his time, but also puts his finances into producing T-shirts and other

posters and pamphlets to alert the public to the injustices that face so many Africans. Chiurai has personally given me T-shirts to hand out, which he created in order to protest in a political statement on Zimbabwe. The T-shirts (Fig. 37) feature the aforementioned image of Mugabe's head in flames emblazoned on beer cans or alcoholic beverage labels. The labels feature text such as "warning: consumption of this beverage will result in self-inflicted poverty", "Absolute Power" and "win a trip for two to see the Great Zimbabwe Ruins". These are obviously satirical pokes at the state of affairs in the country, and Chiurai has also created a series of stencils featuring similar images of Mugabe. He noted in an interview with Michelle Constant from the show 'CREATE' on SAFM's 'Midday Live' that initially he planned a protest march but thought that it would restrict his message to one place (2008)⁶⁶. Therefore, by creating mobile forms of protest to create awareness, such as posters, stencils and T-shirts, he could reach more people and places. He claims that the information becomes far more accessible, and in his words: "I think personally, I had no choice in the matter, I had to do something".

Hlongwane (2008: 27) states that, "with the all-consuming apartheid monster gone, it seems local artists generally continue to be bankrupt of worthy causes and ideas to interpret and champion". However, at this time when artists "have to dig a little deeper to come up with relevant post-independence themes to rally around", Chiurai finds his plate full of concerns to investigate and interrogate. While constantly trying to create awareness about the situation in Zimbabwe, as I have pointed out, Chiurai is equally concerned with creating discourse around the urban politics of his new found home Johannesburg. If one were to sum up the entire 'Yellow Lines' catalogue, one

⁶⁶ A transcription of this interview which included DJ Kenzhero, Nomzamo Mji and Anthea Buys is featured in the Yellow Lines publication on page 36.

could simply describe it as a multidirectional plea to the youth of South Africa to take up the sword, pen, paintbrush or mic and start trying to affect change in order to prevent the country from following the well trodden path that many other African nations have followed to dictatorship, despair and war.

ii) Images of Protest and Resistance in the Work of Robin Rhode

Although as suggested in the first half of this chapter, it is debatable whether an art form is able to affect change without the help of tangible political groundwork as well, the power of the art form to move others to action cannot be underestimated. Angela Ards (2004: 314) observes – in the case of hip-hop – that its creation amid social devastation was in itself a political act. She cites Jakada Imani, co-founder of the Oklahoma-based production company Underground Railroad, when she states: “To – in front of the world – get up on a turntable, a microphone, a wall, out on a dance floor, to proclaim your self-worth when the world says you are nobody, that’s a huge, courageous, powerful, exhilarating step”. She follows on to argue that “concerted political action will not necessarily follow from such a restoration of confidence and self-expression, but it is impossible without it...radical movements never develop out of despair” (2004: 314).

Hlongwane (2008: 28) describes the artist as visionary saying that, “in any forward looking society, it is the artists who holds up the mirror, reflecting back to the people some of their beauty and ugliness... they nudge and urge us to reflect on the critical questions of the day”. In order for the artists to perform the role of revolutionary, Hlongwane highlights a need for an intimate knowledge of self and kind, or community. This is akin to what Boots (in Ards 2004: 317) describes, and is exactly

what Rhode terms as ‘Selfinkoozament’ which I have mentioned already. As such, although Rhode does not take such an overtly political stance in his artwork, he operates Hlongwane’s mirror in slightly different, perhaps more subtle, but no less poignant ways.

Earlier in this chapter I likened Chiurai’s canvases to a mirror, reflecting the city, and by extension I would argue that the walls and pavements that Rhode utilises in his performances perform the same role. In fact if we consider that Rhode interacts with drawings that are virtual representations of everyday objects around him, and therefore his performances replicate urban interactions that he observes, the analogy of the mirror becomes quite apt. In consideration, this now fits it quite nicely with Hlongwane’s notion of the artist reflecting society back onto itself, and is supported by Rhode’s statement when he says:

Initially, I took a more political position, performing in the public realm in South Africa so as to reach out to an audience who had little or no contact with contemporary art.” ... the urban landscape becomes an immediate partner, or “a form of thought process”. (Lepecki 2007: 21)

In these early performances Rhode used significant buildings such as the Houses of Parliament in Cape Town to comment quite clearly on the legacy of apartheid and its ongoing consequences. In the work *Park Bench* (Fig. 38), which he performed at this location, he made a drawing of a bench on the outer walls of the building and attempted to sit on the bench. This was a reflection on the fact that not too long ago during apartheid, Rhode could have been arrested for sitting on such a bench that may have been designated for whites only. When the parliamentary police questioned him as to what he was up to, he told them: “I want a seat in parliament” (Kino 2007). Claire Tancons (2003: 67) suggests that “the dis-functionality of the bench and the

failed demeanours of Rhode further suggest the un-viability and inherent flaws of the apartheid system”. Although this piece was created post independence and therefore well after the apartheid legislation had been abolished, it serves to highlight the inequality that remains as a result of apartheid, and in a present day context, could stand as a criticism of the failure of elected leaders to remedy such inequalities.

A more recent piece in which Rhode has made reference to apartheid era protest is *The Score* (Fig. 39). Rhode notes that, “creating ballads, or dance pieces without receiving formal schooling has strong political resonance in marginalized communities in South Africa” (Farrell, date unknown: 68). This idea converges with Ards’ assertion which I mentioned earlier, that the creation of hip-hop amid social devastation was in itself a form of protest (Neal 2008: 307). The way in which Rhode created the performance piece bore another resemblance to hip-hop music as well. Rhode quickly drew the forms of four instruments (trumpet, bass, drum kit, and an electric keyboard) onto the wall and then proceeded to ‘play’ them. However, the soundtrack to the performance was an original score of the artist’s voice mimicking the featured instrument. This is essentially what beat-boxing in hip-hop music is, where one performer creates sounds and a beat with his own voice for another artist to rap over. It also has political significance in that people saw creating something out of nothing, as in the case of beat boxing, as a defiant gesture towards their bleak circumstances.

Although Rhode has directed multiple critiques at the racial injustice of apartheid, as with Chiurai, he also broadens his focus to interrogate social and urban politics and power structures. This is an important inclusion, as Ards notes in relation to hip-hop

and politics, that a race-based political analysis of issues affecting urban youth is becoming insufficient. She states that, “increasingly, the face of injustice is the colour of the rainbow, so a black-white racial analysis that pins blame on some lily-white power structure is outdated” (Ards 2004: 320). Although this may be slightly less true of South Africa, where racial equality continues to be a goal⁶⁷, it is important that cultural practitioners such as artists and musicians interrogate other imbalances in power structures that contribute to these inequalities being perpetuated.

The main site onto which Rhode projects such imbalances and begins to interrogate them is the gallery. The gallery becomes a stand in for any number of hierarchical power structures, and by directing a critical discourse at this space he extends such criticisms to a range of other institutions including government. Claire Tancons highlights an example in her discussion of Rhode’s work *Leak* (Fig. 4). The work was a performance piece in which Rhode drew a urinal on the wall of the South Africa National Gallery in Cape Town and proceeded to urinate on it. This work makes obvious reference to Marcel Duchamp’s famous work *Fountain* (Fig. 40), in which Duchamp placed a ready made urinal up-side-down on a gallery wall and signed it ‘R. Mutt’. This consequently changed the way people would view art forever, raising questions about what actually constituted art and how much privilege the gallery as institution held in defining such boundaries. Rhode signs his piece “R. Moet”, the word “moet” translated from the Afrikaans to mean “must”. What “must” Rhode do? Perhaps Tancons (2003: 69) gives the answer when she argues that Rhode’s subversive mimicry, “questions the privilege of the museum as the depository of art, and adds critique of representation to institutional critique”.

⁶⁷ I am not implying that genuine racial equality has been reached in other places such as the US but am just suggesting that at the moment it is still a hotly contested issue in South Africa.

Another work entitled *Stacked Drawing* (Fig. 41) is a photographic series in which Rhode throws breeze blocks at the then under construction gallery wall. White imprints or drawings of the bricks are left on the wall and they arch into a virtual stack on the wall. Ratner (2005: page unknown) describes the “implicit aggressiveness” with which Rhode tosses the bricks at the wall. Considering this I would argue that once again it could be viewed as an attack or critique on the gallery as institution, however, this reading may be extended into another dimension when one considers that the bricks that Rhode draws form a stack. As such this creation may be a hint that the gallery’s privilege as a depository of art exists predominantly as an ideological construct rather than a physical presence. Ratner (2005: page unknown) goes further to undermine Rhode’s menace by stating that even though he has a self described intimacy with “the rough and criminal elements of Johannesburg, his interpretations display a reassuring, safety-netted level of risk... Rather than instilling a real sense of desperation and danger, his menace remains at best adolescent.” If one takes this point of view, one could liken it to the way that many rap artists are criticised for rapping about violent situations – which many of them have not necessarily been first hand witnesses to – in order to sell records. However, Gule dismisses such an unfair reading of the credibility of Rhode’s work to subvert the frameworks of society, when he states that, “since the language of resistance is transient and can be predictable, even prosaic, Rhode also approaches resistance as a playful intervention, fantastical rather than purely oppositional” (2004: page unknown).

Gule makes this observation in relation to his discussion of another of Rhode's photographic series entitled *Black Tie* (Fig. 42). In this work Rhode, wearing a white long-sleeved shirt, proceeds to draw a tie with charcoal onto the shirt. Gule (2004) argues that "the formalities of high society functions and dress codes are debunked with his usual tongue-in-cheek style" while Rhode sees his scenarios as "speaking of trying to fit into standards and frameworks that are devised by others, situations devised for exclusions". However, Rhode does anything but fit into these standards, as his escapist persona becomes the embodiment of his philosophy. Rhode explains this in his interview with Boutoux when he says that this persona enables him to avoid getting trapped in the white cube (2007: 33). It is clear that Rhode is not willing to be confined by authoritarian power structures and so his performances themselves stand as protests against hegemonic ideologies that are imposed by official organizations like government and the gallery, or unofficially like through globalisation and the infiltration of media technology into our lives. The latter is highlighted in a description that Kathryn Smith gives of performance that Rhode was preparing for 'Softserve', a multimedia event at the South African National Gallery. The performance was entitled *Radio Rahim*⁶⁸ and Smith explains that it takes its title from a character Rahim in Spike Lee's 'Do The Right Thing', "who's ubiquitous ghetto-blasters blares Public Enemy's 'Fight the Power'" (1999: page unknown). Smith explains that the piece is about the infiltration of media technology into our lives and thus it could be likened to Rhode's more recent work *Master Blaster* (Fig. 43). It consists as a series of six photographs showing Rhode struggling against a wall with

⁶⁸ The piece is a performance piece but I have not seen it myself and cannot find any images from it. Kathryn Smith makes reference to this piece as a work in progress in her November 1999 article on Rhode in the artbio section of the Artthrob website (www.artthrob.co.za). Perhaps the piece never materialised however it is still useful to draw a link between Rhode's conceptual process and his interest in hip-hop.

an invisible burden. Sean O'Toole describes how he gradually 'lowers' the burden to reveal, against the green bottom half of the wall, a white chalk drawing of a ghetto blaster that he had been 'carrying', but has been disguised against the white upper half of the wall (2005: 131). Once again this stands as a reference to hip-hop culture and the similar way in which both art and music often have to carry the burden of remaining original and authentic in order to acquire a recognized value, in the face of globalised markets and growing media monopolies.

Until now, my discussion and comparison of Rhode's and Chiurai's work in relation to the hip-hop subculture has mainly focussed on theoretical concerns that have faced the artists, both visual and musical. However, in my discussion of these themes and concerns that surface in the different forms of expression, similarities have arisen in the modes of production used in hip-hop expression and in the visual artworks of the two focus artists. Although I have highlighted these similarities at times – for example the likeness of Rhode's vocal soundtrack for the piece *The Score*, to hip-hop's beat boxing – this has merely been to facilitate a comparison of themes. Therefore, at the beginning of the next chapter I will specifically discuss the comparisons that can be drawn between hip-hop production (and I use the term in the broad sense to encompass the four elements), and the artistic production of Rhode and Chiurai, in order to set the stage for a discussion of issues of authenticity, globalization and commercialization later in the chapter.

Figures 19 to 43

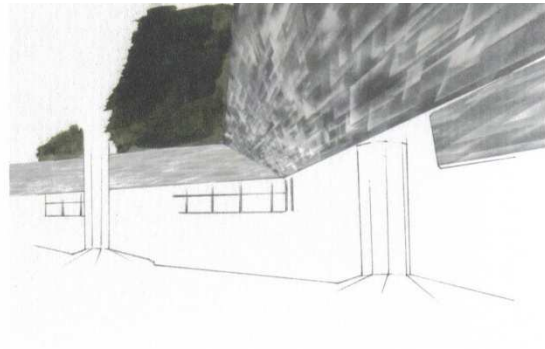
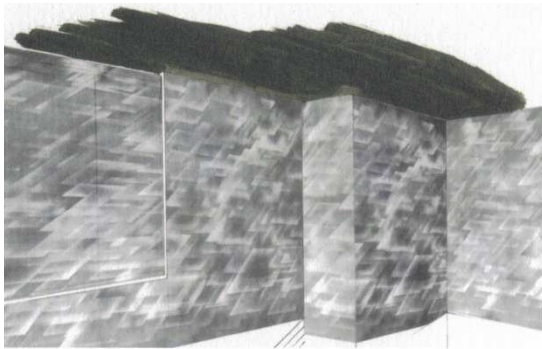
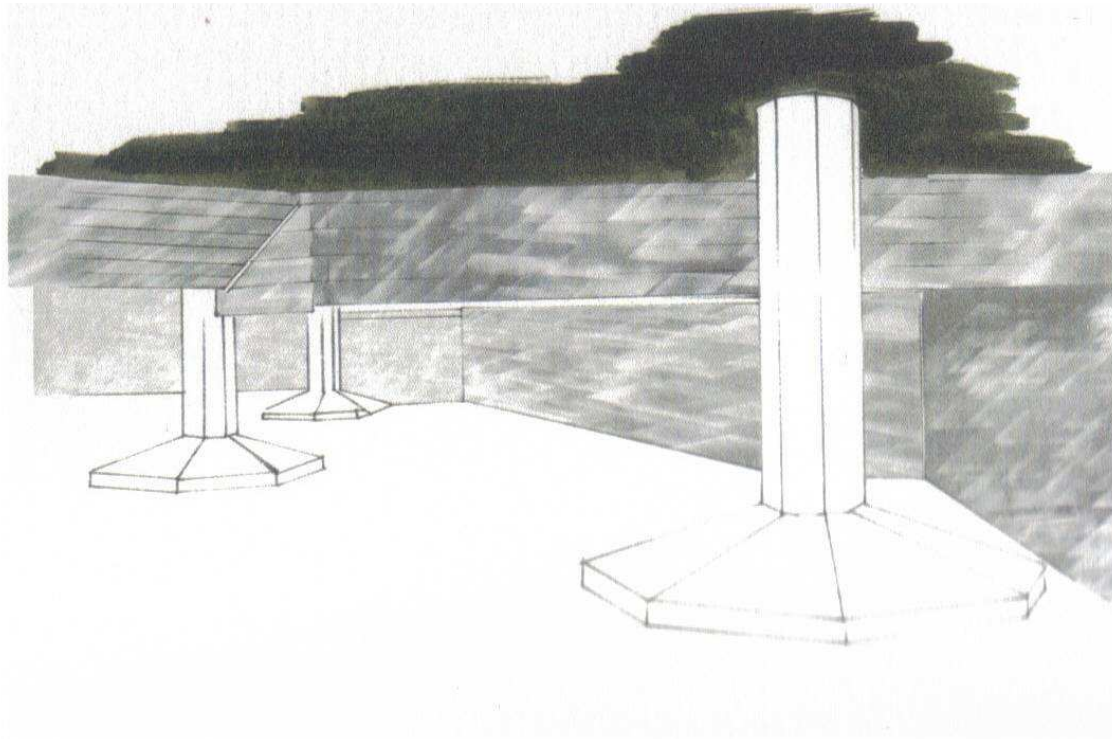


Figure 19: Robin Rhode, *Artist's Impression (Queen Elizabeth Hall undercroft)*

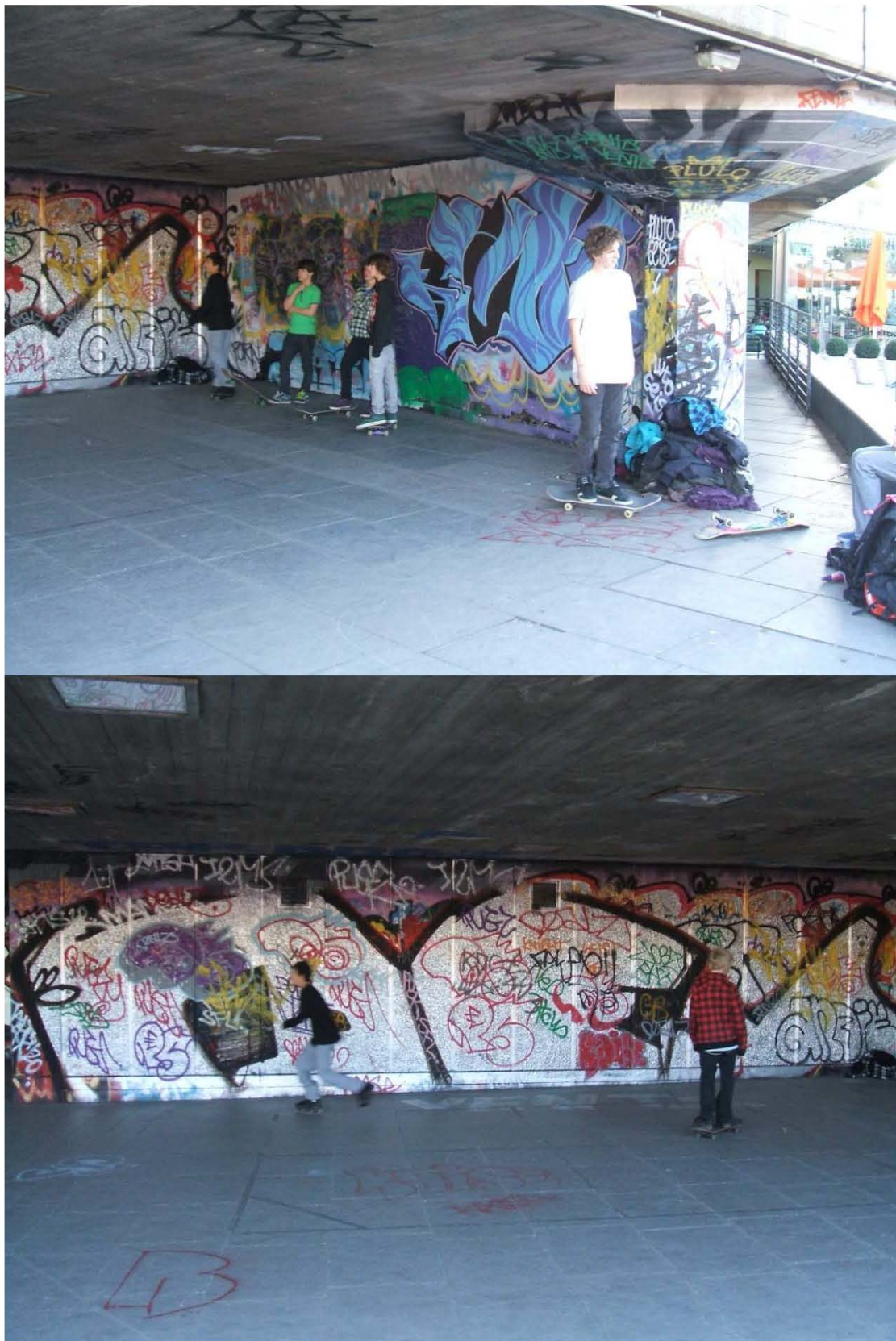


Figure 20: Graffiti on the Queen Elizabeth Hall undercroft



Figure 21: Example's of Chiurai's stencils



Figure 22: Kudzanai Chiurai, *Shopping for Democracy*



Figure 23: Robin Rhode, *New Kids on the Bike*

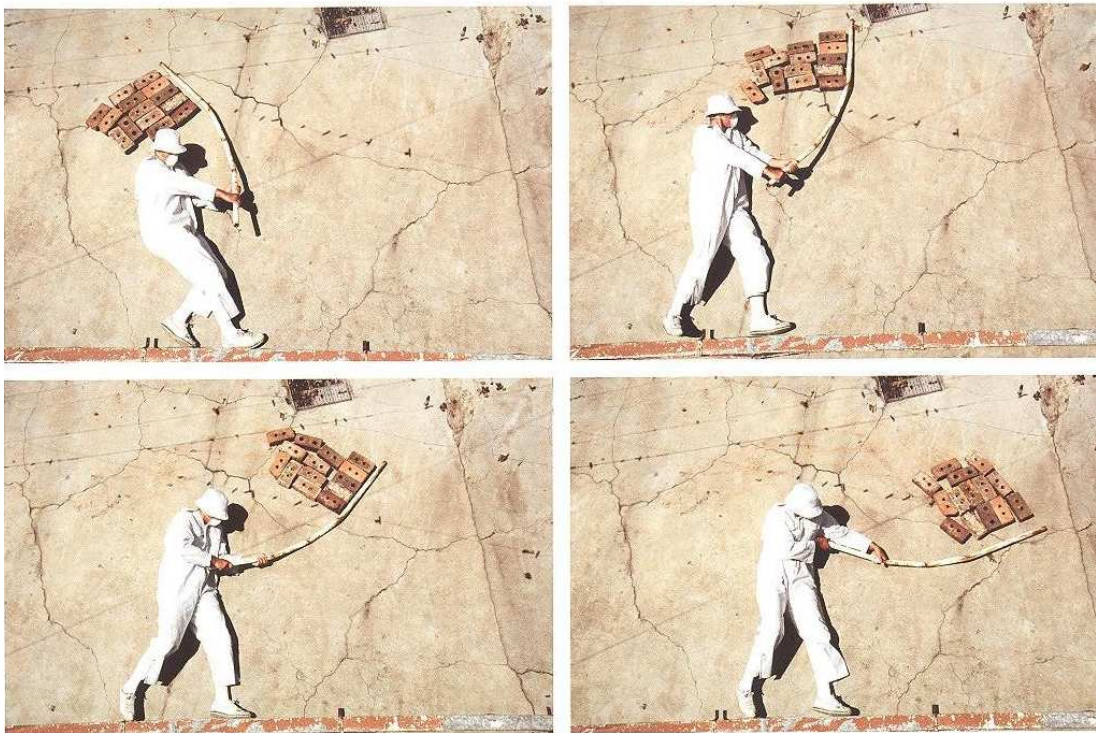


Figure 24: Robin Rhode, *Stone Flag*

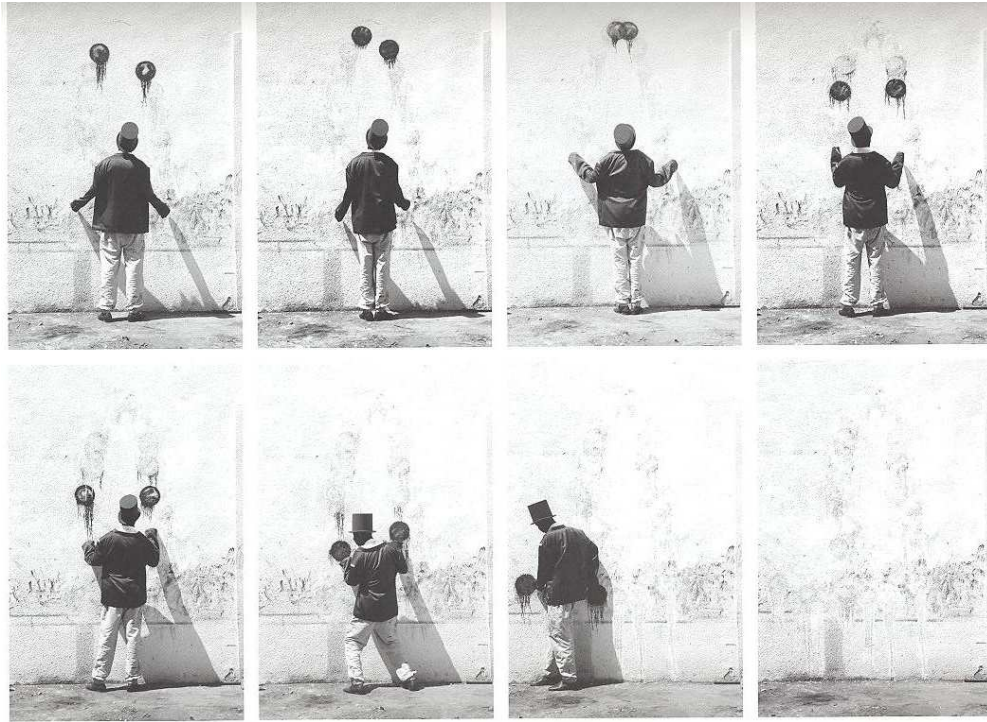


Figure 25: Robin Rhode, *Juggla*

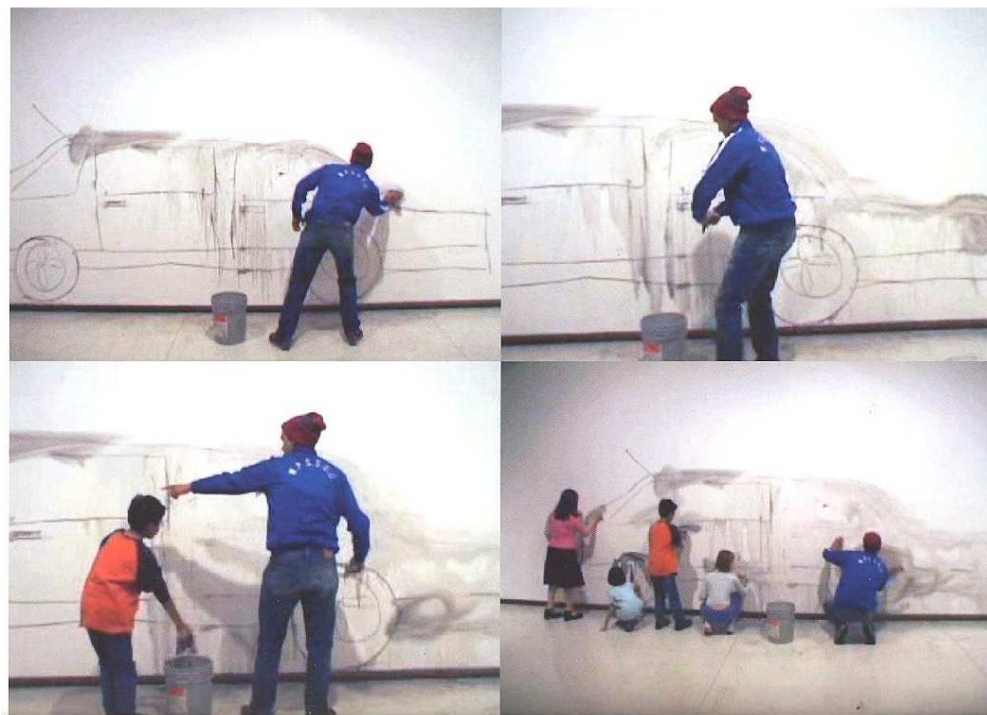


Figure 26: Robin Rhode, *Car Wash*⁶⁹

⁶⁹ The image is from the same performance at a different location, not actually the South African National Gallery.



Figure 27: Kudzanai Chiurai, *I Write What I Like*



Figure 28: Kudzanai Chiurai, *Opportunity*



Figure 29: Kudzanai Chiurai, *Moneylenders*



Figure 30: Kudzanai Chiurai, *City Fabric*

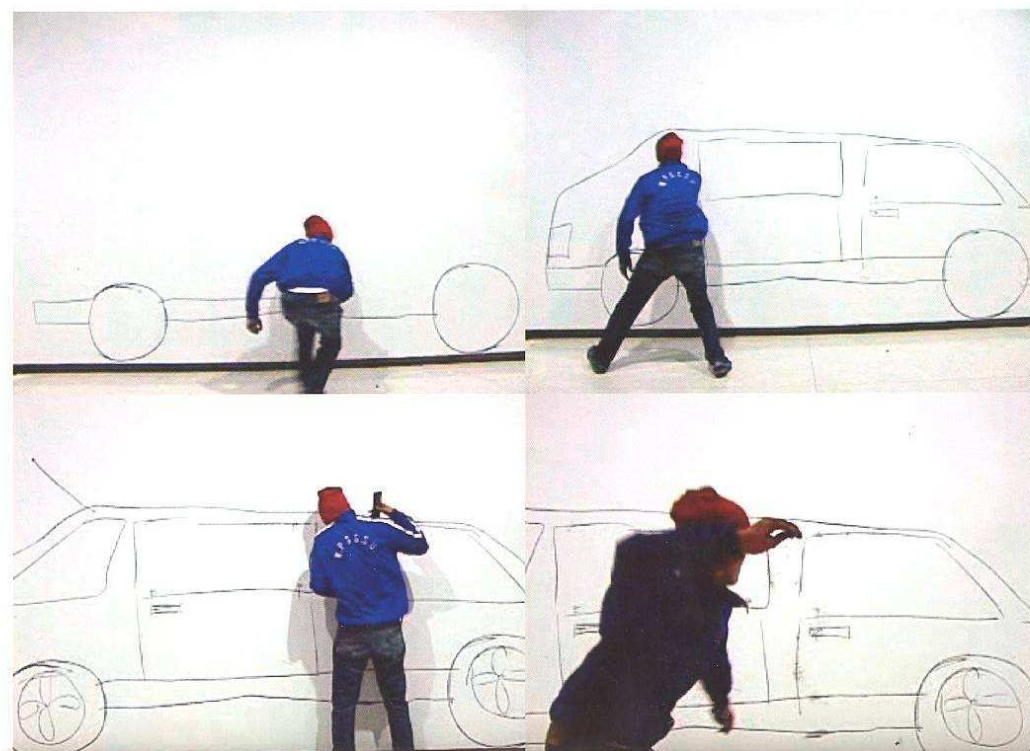


Figure 31: Robin Rhode, *Car theft*

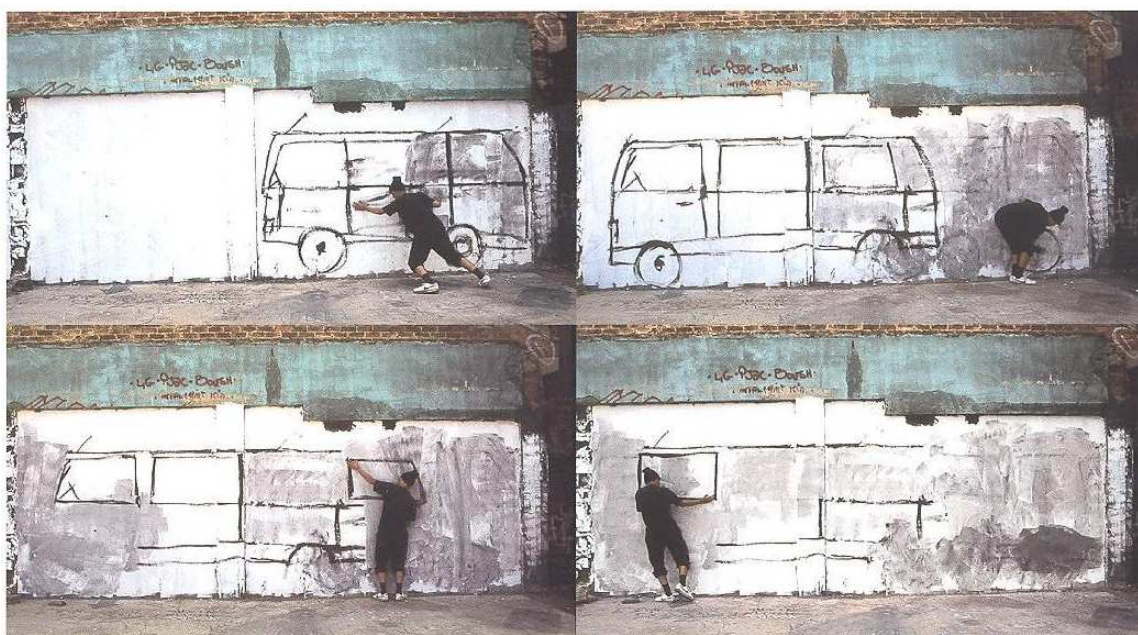


Figure 32: Robin Rhode, *The Stripper*



Figure 33: Kudzanai Chiurai, *How Could You?*



Figure 34: Kudzanai Chiurai, *Battle for Zimbabwe*

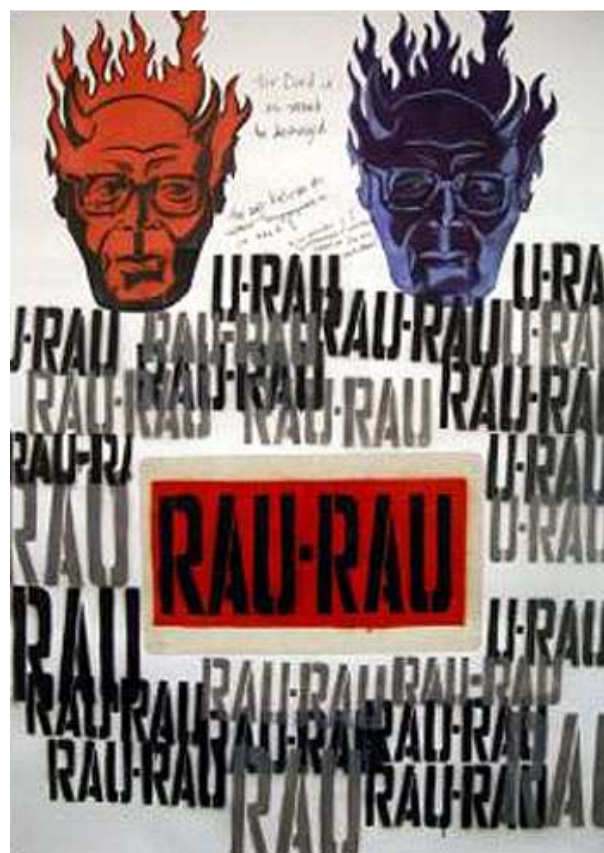


Figure 35: Kudzanai Chiurai, *Rau Rau*



Figure 36: An Example of Chiurai's posters at mock election/exhibition

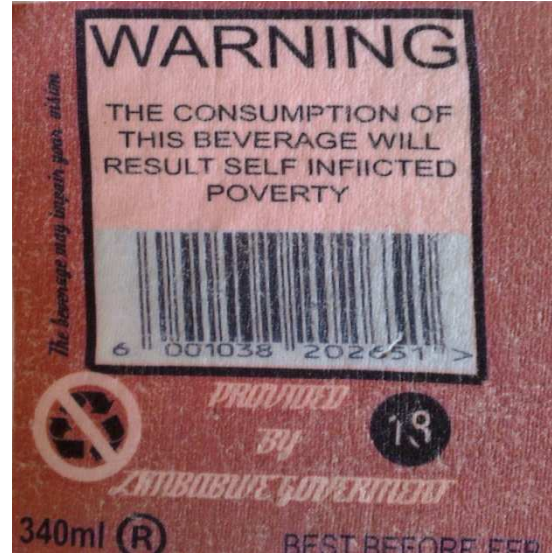


Figure 37: Examples of Chiurai's printed T-shirts



Figure 38: Robin Rhode, *Park Bench*



Figure 39: Robin Rhode, *The Score*



Figure 40: Marcel Duchamp, *Fountain*

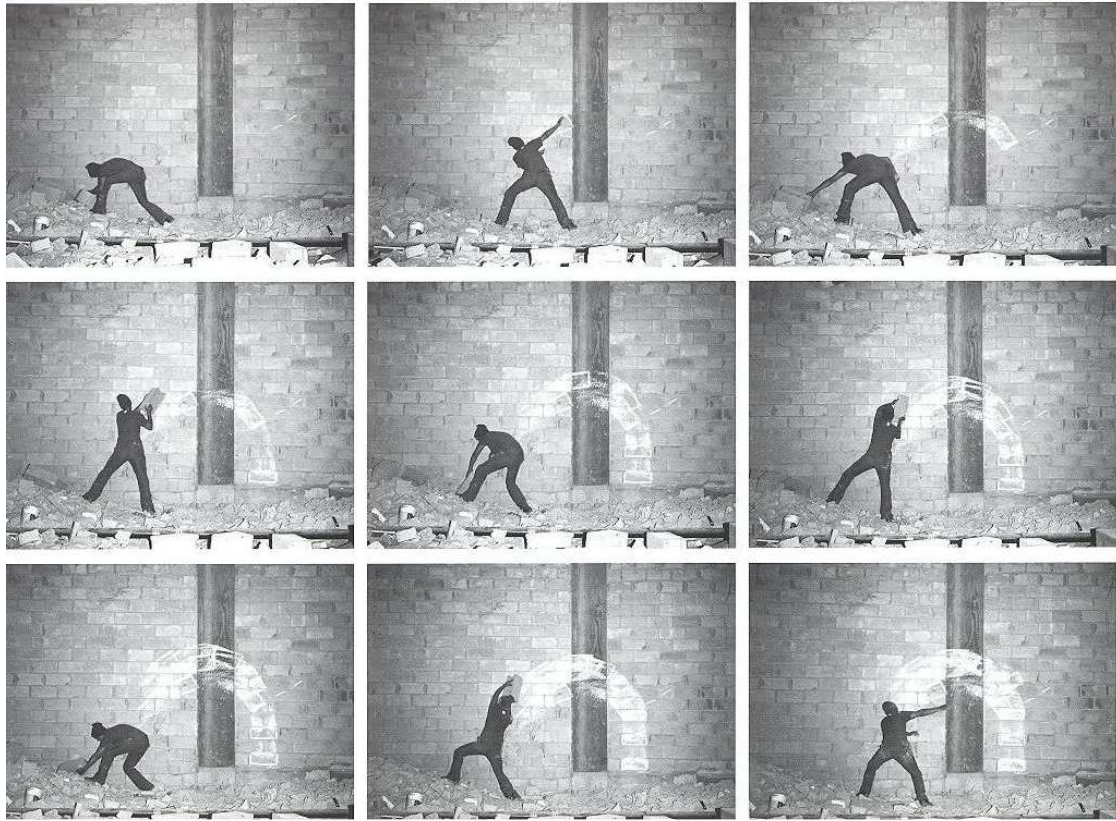


Figure 41: Robin Rhode, *Stacked Drawing*



Figure 42: Robin Rhode, *Black Tie*



Figure 43: Robin Rhode, *Master Blaster*

Chapter 3: In The Mix!

I. The Technologies of production

Despite a central impact, it is essential not to adopt a technological determinist position identifying technology as the motivating force in the change and evolution of cultural practices; technology has never been the sole drive of hip-hop's development. Rather, the technologies of hip-hop are culturally inflected at diverse scales of effect, woven into prevailing social contexts, and enfolded within the systems of production and exchange that are prone to transition in the face of historically specific stimuli. As Langdon Winner notes, "what matters is not technology itself, but the social and economic systems in which it is embedded" (Winner in Forman, 2004: 389).

If technological developments in the production of rap music are a product of social and economic circumstance, then so too – if one follows Forman's assertion that technology plays a significant role in the development of all cultural practices – may it have the same relationship to visual art. Therefore, one must assume that the production practices of visual artists are not necessarily their focus but rather also inflected by social and economic factors. Thus, I have discussed such social and economic systems in previous chapters, and now will investigate how technology⁷⁰ plays its part within those systems.

i) Hip-Hop: "The Black CNN"

The most obvious point to start a discussion of the similarities between Rhode's and Chiurai's artistic production and its link to hip-hop culture is the common use of graffiti. I have already noted that Chiurai and Rhode are both well aware of the socio-political history and codes of graffiti, and have made use of it in their work in various ways to create a discourse surrounding similar socio-political issues. However, as I

⁷⁰ I must clarify here that I use the term "technology" in its conventional way to describe the production of rap music, but also use it as a broad term to encompass the production practices of the visual artists I am discussing as well.

have also noted, there are both obvious and more subtle differences between the artists' work (especially Rhode's) and that of conventional graffiti artists. Claire Tancons highlights some of these differences, at the same time noting that both Rhode's art and graffiti in general deal with the idea of territoriality and its markers. She observes:

Most of Rhode's drawings are fine-lined monochrome sketches that have a fine-arts quality to them and depict one single banal object in actual size – pop culture icons such as a bike, a car, or a basketball playground – unlike the often heavily narrative and overtly political polychrome frescos that most graffiti are" (Tancons 2003: 67).

However, as I have pointed out in Chiurai's case, he employs graffiti more conventionally not only creating actual graffiti onto Johannesburg's walls, but also in his work, using stencils and spray cans to insert images onto his paintings.

When considering this insertion of the street art graffiti into the Fine Art canon, one can draw a similarity to the way that hip-hop sought to use alternate methods to produce hybrid forms of expression in rap music. Early DJs such as Kool Herc, Afrika Bambaataa and Grandmaster Flash elevated the turntable from a playback unit to an instrument of musical production to allow new styles to be performed in alternative contexts. Iain Chambers draws quite an apt comparison between the visual and the aural through his interpretation of rap as "sonorial graffiti". He describes it as "a musical spray that marries black rhythms and the verbal gymnastics of hip street talk to a hot DJ patter over an ingenious manipulation of the turntable" (Chambers in Forman 2004: 389).

Chambers's comparison of something aural to something visual is quite a difficult concept to grasp. Andrew Bartlett (2004: 394) sheds some light on this when he

highlights the way that “literate” Western culture has fetishized reading as a function solely of print and the sole model of learning and “actionality”, whereas in African American aesthetic history artists have put things learned by listening into action by way of performance. He gives an example in the way Duke Ellington, the famous jazz musician, explains that his composition “Harlem Air Shaft” was explicitly heard before it was written and arranged. Ellington observes:

You get the full essence of Harlem in an air shaft. You hear fights, you smell dinner, you hear people making love. You hear intimate gossip floating down. You hear the radio. An air shaft is one great big loudspeaker. You see your neighbour’s laundry. You hear the janitor’s dogs. The man upstairs’ aerial falls down and breaks your window. You smell coffee.... An air shaft has got every contrast.... You hear people praying fighting snoring.... I tried to put all that in my *Harlem Air Shaft* (Bartlett 2004: 394)

The above passage and its musical interpretation of city space, bears a striking resemblance to the way that Gus Silber describes Chiurai’s urban experiences and how these are translated through his work. Silber (2007: page unknown) writes of Chiurai:

On his foot patrols through the inner city he tries to observe without being observed, his senses attuned to the accents of the makwerekwere, the blasts of pan-African pop and the smell of mealies roasting on a brazier... He assimilates through art, leaving his trail in slappings of oil and stenciled shadows, stabs of line and scribbles of poetry, newspaper cuttings and jets of paint dripping from a spraycan. His works are big, vivid and busy, with ideas and media colliding and fighting for space. To look at them is to hear music: the trigger-happy pulse of hip-hop, the sour janglings of African guitar, the meandering doodles of modern jazz. The galleries call this sort of thing mixed media, but the real medium is the mix of life in the city.

Thus, in these comparisons of the similar ways in which Chiurai and Ellington attempt to represent experiences of the inner city in their different mediums, one begins to grasp how Chambers’s concept likens rap to “sonorial graffiti”. Bartlett (2004: 394) shows that this borrowing or influence of non-musical sounds and stimuli combined with appropriated bits and pieces of other music, highlights the closeness of

listening or observing, and performative possession in rap music too. This appropriation of other bits of music is known as sampling and is a core aspect of rap music. Bartlett (2004: 393) argues that this strategy is “intricately connected to an African American/African diasporic aesthetic which carefully selects available media, texts, and contexts for performative use”. He goes on to discuss how performance is used in African, and by extension diasporic communities, as a way of teaching and communicating stories and narratives about social happenings and historical events. In a sense, it parallels Chuck D’s description of rap music as “the black CNN”, which he elaborates on further when he says:

Our music is filled with bites, bits of information from the real world, a world that’s rarely exposed. Our songs are almost like headline news. We bring things to the table of discussion that are usually not discussed, or at least not from that perspective (Bartlett 2004: 404).

This link between music and its role as a purveyor of community issues and identity is made by David Coplan when he describes how metaphoric enactment becomes important:

In musical performances, metaphors fuse several realms of experience into single, encapsulating images linked to the formation of personal identity.... The images of performance embody values and characteristics that people identify, at some level, with themselves (Bartlett 2004: 396).

I would argue that, considering all of the above, Chiurai employs a kind of visual sampling, in order to achieve the same sort of communication as rap music does. As I have tried to illustrate, Chiurai embodies what Mbembe describes as Afropolitanism, which is an awareness of the mixing and cultural blends that diffuse throughout today’s urban society, and it is through an innovative combination of signifiers with multiple meanings that Chiurai communicates this. When discussing his art in relation to hip-hop he states:

Hip-hop? Yep! I can relate to it. It samples varying bits and pieces of other musical styles, references different personalities and recreates itself as it goes. Its single identity is made of varying stories. You see, hip-hop is very post-modernist, mah man (Madondo, *Sunday Times*, May 2005).

In order to understand the similarities between Chiurai's visual sampling and the audio sampling used in hip-hop, one needs to draw parallels in relation to the different elements involved in digital sampling in music. In turn, in order to do this one needs to start considering hip-hop music as a sort of "massive archive" as Houston Baker calls it (Bartlett 2004: 401). This archiving comes about due to the hip-hop producer's ability to select a segment of digital sound and edit it into a composition of other sounds to be played back as a track. Thus, fragments of previously recorded sound sequences, including popular music tracks, can be sliced out and inserted into a new sequence of sound. This is similar in some ways to the "archivings" used by jazz artists in which, as musicologist James Patrick explains, "many contrafact compositions derive at least in part from solo improvisations on well-known tunes and the blues" (Bartlett 2004: 402). However these expropriated pieces from other tunes are not always localizable as their own entity, and as Dizzy Gillespie points out, "when we [jazz musicians] borrowed from a standard we added and substituted so many chords that most people didn't know what song we were really playing" (Bartlett 2004: 402). The difference, however, is that often in hip-hop songs the sampled sound-bite is easily recognizable as a part of another tune, advertising jingle, or political speech, whatever the case may be. This borrowing has had massive implications for issues of ownership and authorship of the music, and I will discuss such implications in the next part of this chapter that deals with authenticity. However, as Bartlett (2004: 401) notes "such issues are part and parcel of high-tech

aesthetic exercises, and the disjuncture seen by some in hip-hop sampling indicates the fragmentation of post-modernity”, which echoes Chiurai’s sentiments.

ii) “Hip-Hop’s Postmodern Mah Man!”: Chiurai’s Sampling Techniques

An investigation of the concept of post-modernity in relation to art and hip-hop is the subject of Richard Schusterman’s essay ‘Challenging Conventions in the Fine Art of Rap’, and is useful to illustrate the intricate similarities and differences between hip-hop sampling and Chiurai’s sampling. Schusterman (2004: 460) outlines the themes and stylistic features that are most commonly recognised as characteristically post-modern:

These include recycling and appropriation rather than unique and original creation, the eclectic mixing of styles, the enthusiastic embracing of mass-media technology and culture, the challenging of modernist notions of aesthetic autonomy and artistic purity, and an emphasis on the localized and temporal rather than the putatively universal and eternal.

It becomes evident on consideration of these characteristics that Chiurai’s work and hip-hop are, as he claims, post-modern. The main point on which this assertion rests is obviously the notion of that which is post-modern including recycling and appropriation of eclectic styles and culture. There are two distinct ways in which hip-hop utilises other musical influences. As I have noted, the first is through the cutting and pasting of fragments of an aural text into another through sampling. If one were to draw a parallel to this in terms of Chiurai’s art, one could liken it to the way that Chiurai utilises recognisable advertising logos, or catchphrases in much of his work. A prime example of this is in his magazine series where he employs the recognizable motifs of well known magazines such as *Vogue* or *Drum* as a background on which to

base his critique of society and its prominent figures. The loaded history of the recognizable signifier sets the context for the piece to communicate. This is the case with the piece *Sex* (Fig. 3) which I discussed in chapter 1 and 2, and in which the *Drum* magazine motif used is described by Green (2007: page unknown) as “an exemplar for urban black South African identity to be imagined and expressed”. Thus, it is akin to the way that certain rap songs may open with, or contain classical music, TV theme songs, a section from a well known public address by a celebrity, or a political speech in order to set the tone for the narrative that follows. Chiurai not only does this with recognizable commercial or mass media imagery but also utilises figures like Fela Kuti repetitively in *Fela* (Fig. 12), and in other works such as *Black President* (Fig. 14) and *Jozi Republic* (Fig. 13). Chiurai also samples directly from hip-hop itself in the way that he employs titles such as “The Revolution Will Not be Televised”, which as I have pointed out already, is the title to Gil Scott-Heron’s famous poem. All of these ways that Chiurai achieves this sampled aesthetic become possible through his means of production. The repetition of the Fela Kuti figure is a product of the stencilling Chiurai employs, and his method is very similar to that used by infamous graffiti artist Banksy (Fig. 44) to whom Chiurai has been compared before. As such his stencilled figures become Banksy-like with their stark black and white contrast, and it is on this point that one can begin to discuss the second way in which hip-hop production links to Chiurai’s art.

Hip-hop utilises a blending of styles that involves its use of technology such as the turntable, which was originally intended for playback, as an instrument of production. Schusterman outlines three different techniques, namely cutting, mixing, and scratching used by DJs to manipulate records on their turntables. He likens these

devices and the variety of forms of appropriation that they enable, to Marcel Duchamp's moustache on the Mona Lisa (Fig. 45), Robert Rauschenberg's erasure of a De Kooning canvas (Fig. 46), or Andy Warhol's multiple re-representations of prepackaged commercial images (Fig. 47) (Schusterman 2004: 461). Bongani Madondo even goes so far as to draw an initial similarity between Chiurai and the founder of the reproduced repetitive image, Andy Warhol:

His work is burlesque realism, much in Warhol's tradition, but far more socially engaged than the famous father of pop art. Stylistically, he is more Jean-Michel Basquait than Warhol. Chiurai's ingenuity is unique. He uses media culture - television and magazines - on a much more visceral level, challenging stereotypes, by embracing them. His clever use of collage, abstract, portraiture and poetry all in one is not just beyond the post-anything fad, but an embrace of the one medium he truly excels at - paint on canvas (2008: Sunday Times Lifestyle page unknown).

The way that Chiurai references these other artists and styles, but essentially adapts them, is the same way that hip-hop DJs take a song or record of another genre of music, and evolve the sound to make use of it as they please. Schusterman (2004: 461) describes the techniques used to do this:

"Scratch mixing" is simply overlaying or mixing certain sounds from one record with those of another already playing. "Punch phasing" is a refinement of such mixing, in which the DJ moves the needle back and forth over a specific phrase of chords or drum slaps of a record so as to add a powerful percussive effect to the sound of the other record playing all the while on the other turntable. "Scratching" is a more wild back-and-forth scratching of the record, too fast for the recorded music to be recognized but productive of a dramatic scratching sound that has its own intense musical quality and crazed beat.

Thus one could liken scratch mixing to the way that Chiurai blends media and techniques characteristic of other genres. This is evident in most of his work where stencils are over-laid onto painterly, impressionistic backgrounds. In *Jozi Republic* (Fig. 13) the figure of Fela Kuti has been inserted, using one of the above-mentioned Banksy-like stencils, into a harshly rendered city-scape reminiscent of the prison

buildings I spoke of earlier. Chiurai has used the exact same stencil to overlay the figure, with identical upward gaze, into the work *Fela* (Fig. 12). However, in this work the iconic musician seems to be taking a train ride through an environment incredibly evocative of one of Anselm Kiefer's paint splattered landscapes complete with railway tracks receding to the distant horizon⁷¹. Chiurai also remixes genres when he includes scribbled text and fine-lined sketches around, and over the airbrushed stately portraits of politicians in the magazine series.

In a different way Chiurai employs hip-hop mixing techniques when he repeatedly “punch phases” his pieces with differing patterns. Chiurai uses a similar pulsating dot pattern as the background to Winnie Madikizela Mandela's floating head in *The Black Issue* (Fig. 48), as he employs to animate the bikini-clad “Hip-Hop Honeys” that form the focal point of his piece critiquing “bling” culture, *As Seen On TV* (Fig. 49). Perhaps it is not a random coincidence that two pieces that show the “icons” of separate generations become linked by this punctuating effect. These repeated patterns are at once simple and uniform as in the two pieces I just spoke of, and at the same time become quite intricate to compliment the mood in *End of the Day* (Fig. 50), a beautifully detailed piece where a woman rests her head on her exhausted male partner's lap as he slumps down on the sofa.

If one follows this paradigm then “scratching” could be paralleled to the visceral way in which Chiurai spray paints or brushes messages and images over some pieces. In the work *One Time on Communication* (Fig. 51), the scribbled text takes the form of advertising logos and catchphrases in the foreground and on posters in the background

⁷¹ See Kiefer's *Lot's Wife* for example.

of the piece which again sees the use of a stencilled figure as the focal point. In *Lucky Star* (Fig. 18), again recognisable advertising text is combined with untidy text bubbles to create a dialogue between three young girls protruding their posteriors and a sinister looking figure wearing a balaclava to conceal his identity. In this seemingly chaotic blend of text and image, half-figures or barely recognisable squiggles begin to gain a life of their own and somehow, quite unusually seem to blend into the more organised backdrop of charcoal and oil paint.

Perhaps the most fitting example of this unusual mix of media and signifiers is the work *Reclining Black Label* (Fig. 52). The piece consists of the image of a black woman reclining nude in a classic venus pose very similar to that of Giorgione's *Sleeping Venus* (Fig. 53) from the renaissance period. She is exquisitely rendered in charcoal, with strict attention to detail and occupies space on a sheet and cushions which are shaded with immaculate attention to detail. With regards to technique, one could compare this to beautifully composed classical music. However, Chiurai transfigures the conventional pale skinned goddess into an African woman. This afrocentric remix is backed up by a composition of abstract and stylised figures including a beauty queen and the silhouette of the man in 50 (Fig. 8). These figures are accompanied by various lines of text, several of which make reference to hair care product pitches such as "Damaged hair? No more!" This is rather ironic considering the female figure's bald head. Noting Chiurai's contempt for the dictates of mass-media advertising, I would argue that this may be a critique of the labels and images that such advertising suggest one should conform to. In doing so he once again, in the tradition of the hip-hop DJ, takes that which is canonised as artistic purity in modernist terms and gives it a funky post-modern twist that opens up its interpretation

to a contemporary audience versed in such codes of mass-media advertising. Although thus far I have directed my comparison of hip-hop modes of production to Chiurai's work because it facilitated a detailed investigation of sampling as a technique in both art and music, Rhode too expresses similarities in the way that he produces art to the way in which hip-hop artists work.

iii) On The Wheels of Steel: Rhode Remixes

As I have pointed out in the previous chapter, Rhode is consciously aware of the sub-cultural codes and history of graffiti, and in the case of works like the one he produced at the undercroft of the Southbank Centre, situates his drawings within a discourse surrounding graffiti's relationship to space. However, it is not only through his reference and interrogation of the element of graffiti that Rhode demonstrates his familiarity with hip-hop culture. Like Chiurai, Rhode also borrows hip-hop song titles for his own work as in the case of *He Got Game* (Fig. 54), the title of a Public Enemy track. I will give a description of this piece later on in this chapter but here it serves my point to note that this track was originally featured on the soundtrack to Spike Lee's movie of the same name. Once again references to Lee and Public Enemy are made in Rhode's piece *Radio Rahim*, in which Rahim (the character in Lee's movie 'Do The Right Thing') plays the Public enemy song 'Fight the Power' on his ghetto blaster. Rhode also makes another more subtle reference to the origins of hip-hop and DJ culture in the title of his work *Wheel of Steel* (Fig. 55) which echoes the name of Kool Lady Blue's Thursday night parties that began in 1981, in the basement of the reggae club Negril in New York, and which became an early platform for DJs such as Afrika Bambaataa. 'Wheels of Steel' is a nickname referring to the turntables that DJs

use to mix tracks, and Michele Robecchi (2008: 91) describes the work showing how Rhode represents them:

In *Wheel of Steel*, the white chalk lines framing the record and creating a basic turntable highlight the formal qualities of the vinyl. Not interested in perfect deletion, Rhode left the marks of the moving coil on the vinyl as the record spins so that, multiplied, they give the round black object a new form.

Thus through his inclusion of the actual vinyl into his drawing, and the overlapping of the drawing onto the vinyl, one could argue that Rhode quite literally blurs the line between the music and art. Although the record in question is Romanian flutist Zamfir's *Romance of the Pan Flute* (1990), Robecchi (2008: 91) argues that "a vinyl record on the street looks like the quintessential hip-hop image". In fact his choice to feature the flutist's record in the context of the turntable follows directly in the tradition of hip-hop DJs, who mixed and blended the old with the new, the street with the opera house through their juxtaposition of varying soundbites.

It is through such blurring of boundaries that Rhode's work begins to take on a hip-hop aesthetic. Perhaps he does not sample in such clearly defined terms as Chiurai does, although his work *Leak* (Fig. 4) does borrow Duchamp's urinal. However, in the way that he merges techniques his work starts to become a blend of genres similar to the way hip-hop music does. In talking to Robecchi (2008: 90), Rhode insists that his work exists essentially as drawing, and in an email to me he cited hip-hop as more of a subcultural relation to this ephemeral wall drawing. He states that the performance which evolves around the drawing becomes a kind of drawing study (Robecchi 2008: 91), and hence Lepecki (2007: 20) argues that "what feeds the correspondence between these distinct art forms – what intensifies both their maximum amplitude, like a composite sound – is Rhode's precise, clear, fluid, exact line... and then, the

smudging of that line”. Once again one becomes aware of the comparison between the visual and the aural as Rhode merges drawing and performance, usually distinct from each other, into a hybrid form. In a description of his work *The Score* (Fig. 39), which I drew to attention in the previous chapter, Rhode himself highlights the link that his choice of medium – in this case paint – has to aural texture. He says that “it was important to work with musical elements, echoing fusion art, while at the same time linking it to the lyricism of the painting medium with its overtly weighted quality when compared to chalk or charcoal” (Farrell, date unknown: 68). The musical instruments that Rhode paints are simple outlines, hastily created so as to maintain the fluidity of the performance. However, through Rhode’s frantic movement between instruments their outlines start to blur and smudge, and the instruments begin to link up through the smudges and the trickles of paint. One could liken this to the way that the instruments’ individual sounds become one in the performance of a musical piece. It is, perhaps, the literal fluidity of the medium that inspires Rhode to link the aural and visual as he does in his description above.

This “interdisciplinary hybridity”, which Blither (2002: page unknown) describes, is characteristic of Rhode’s artwork, and is perhaps most apparent in his piece *The Storyteller* (Fig. 56). The work is a film in which a life-size tree drawn by Rhode sprouts branches in an interactive process involving a dancer, Jean-Baptiste Andre. Rosenthal (2007: 15) notes how Rhode videoed the dancer in Andre’s own choreography and translated these movements into the drawing. The piece is the combination of these two elements in which the dancer and the tree grow together and separate again. The dancer appears to wrestle with the tree, bending it over until it finally breaks in two, the resulting parts sprouting uncontrollably until their branches

become an immense tangle that finally overcomes the dancer. Rosenthal observes how the work continues in the tradition of earlier collaborations between Robert Rauschenberg and Merce Cunningham or Trisha Brown (2007: 15). In particular the collaboration between Rauschenberg⁷² and Cunningham makes an interesting comparison as Rauschenberg would create fanciful sets, props, and costumes independent of Cunningham, only revealing them to Cunningham's dancers the day before a show, or on opening night, leaving them to interpret at will.

In Rhode's piece which lasted just longer than thirteen minutes, the dance was developed to music that was a collaboration between the composer Christian Seville and the cellist Didier Petit. Rhode then composed the final soundtrack mixing various sounds from three different tracks to create what he calls "one composition that matches the tempo and feeling of the moving image", while describing the musicians as "the tools, the paint brushes" (Rosenthal 2007: 15). In doing so Rhode not only references previous collaborations in the post-modern way that hip-hop does, but also mixes a soundtrack in a very similar way to hip-hop producers who compose one track from others, in order to create a satisfactory rhythm.

Chiurai also displayed such a cross-disciplinary aesthetic in a recent show by accompanying his exhibition with a soundtrack composed and mixed by a friend of his. In true hip-hop sampling style, the soundtrack was a combination of sound-bites ranging from orchestral music to electronica, and punctuated by snippets of political speeches from leaders such as Barack Obama and Thabo Mbeki. This inclusion of an extra dimension to his work was not something new for Chiurai. In one of his projects

⁷² Rauschenberg was the first official artistic advisor of the Merce Cunningham Dance Company from 1954 to 1964.

while he was still a student at university, he organised a multi-media event at Pretoria's Sidewalk Cafe where he exhibited paintings that he had left at some friends' houses, asking these friends to complete the artworks. These collaborations were exhibited in conjunction with performances from a DJ and a slam poet while video pieces were projected around. Chiurai noted that not many black students attended exhibitions, and so felt excluded from what was going on in the art world. Thus, by bringing the artwork to them it meant that the exhibition was also their work (De Vries 2007: page unknown). In this way Chiurai demonstrates what I would argue hip-hop founders tried to exemplify in their notions of 'keeping it real', by relating directly to an intimate relationship with one's community, and an honesty in representing that community and experiences thereof. However, this notion of what is real and authentic becomes ambiguous, especially when referred to ideas of authorship and ownership, as could be argued with Chiurai's collaborative exhibition.

When discussing the question of authenticity in hip-hop, it is easy to see how some may argue against hip-hop's validity as an original art form, considering the explicit borrowing of other musical texts involved in digital sampling and DJing. However, one needs to examine the context of such arguments against hip-hop's validity as an artform, in order to relate them to discussions of Rhode's and Chiurai's artwork with respect to their authenticity in the Fine Art canon. Richard Schusterman highlights how easy it may be to find aesthetic reasons that seem to discredit rap music as a legitimate art form. He writes:

Rap songs are not even sung, only spoken or chanted. They typically employ neither live musicians nor original music; the soundtrack is instead composed from various cuts (or "samples") of records already made and often well known. Finally the lyrics seem to be crude and simple-minded, the diction substandard, the rhymes raucous, repetitive, and frequently raunchy. Yet these same lyrics insistently lay claim to and extol rap's status as poetry and fine art (Schusterman 2004: 459).

Schusterman makes this observation in his argument that militant black pride and thematizing of the ghetto experience – related to America’s black underclass – represent a threatening siren to society’s complacent status quo. He observes that although rap is the fastest growing genre of popular music, “its claim to artistic status is still drowned under a flood of abusive critique, acts of censorship, and commercial cooptation” (2004: 459). In his essay he continues to attempt to validate rap as a legitimate art form and thus by a comparison and discussion of his views in relation to rap production, I will highlight similar arguments that may be levelled against Rhode’s and Chiurai’s art. In doing this I will further attempt to draw parallels between the production of rap and the aesthetic practices of both visual artists.

II. Confronting Modernist Notions of Authenticity

As I attempted to illustrate in the previous part of this chapter, the central strategy that connects the production of the visual art of Rhode and Chiurai and rap music is one of post-modern blending and hybridity. I highlighted at the beginning of the chapter the intertextual way that different expressive forms can be interpreted, the way that one genre of music can reference another genre, one song can refer to another, or the way that art can reference musical texts. This is in fact a characteristic of the artistic expressions of diasporic communities. Schusterman (2004: 460) also highlights that many white people “find it difficult to imagine that verbal virtuosity is greatly appreciated in the black urban ghetto”. He contends this by showing that sociological study has in fact revealed that verbal skill is highly valued there, and that anthropological research indicates that “asserting superior social status through verbal prowess is a deeply entrenched black tradition that goes back to the griots in West

Africa” (Schusterman 2004: 460). However, he highlights that the semantic inversion, feigned simplicity and covert parody of African American English were all originally designed to conceal the real meaning from hostile white listeners (Schusterman 2004: 460). Thus he reveals that:

An informed and sympathetic close reading will reveal in many rap songs not only the cleverly potent vernacular expression of keen insights but also forms of linguistic subtlety and multiple levels of meaning, whose polysemic complexity, ambiguity, and intertextuality can sometimes rival that of high art’s so called open work (Schusterman 2004: 460).

Thus if one returns to my comparison of rap music and Chiurai’s artwork, and if one were to compare the visual signifiers and techniques in his paintings to sampled sound-bites, then one could compare Chiurai’s use of text to the way that the rapper or MC compliments his tune or beat with a suitable lyric or rhyme. A parallel may begin to be drawn when one considers the way that rappers use the abovementioned linguistic techniques to inject hidden meaning into their tracks, and Chiurai’s assertion when he says: “I like to hide information in my paintings like little images, and lines of text” (Kahn 2005: page unknown). Chiurai’s works often include a substantial amount of text such as in *Sometimes* (Fig. 57) where the artist relaxes topless on a sofa with nothing to accompany him but his radio, a beer, and numerous text and hand-written poetry scribbled across much of the upper half of the composition. However, Chiurai used text much more prominently in his earlier works. In pieces such as *Black Alter Ego* (Fig. 58), *Battle for Zim* (Fig. 34), and *Press Freedom* (Fig. 59) the drawn or painted figure of the artists, a faceless man, and the ever present despot Mugabe become almost overwhelmed with text referencing newspaper clippings, political speeches and slogans, and the artist’s commentary on such issues. As Chiurai has matured as an artist he has begun to favour using less text. When he does use it, it is usually larger and often directs a tongue-in-cheek poke at

the focus of the artwork. A prime example, as I have pointed out in chapter 2, is the text and image of Jacob Zuma in *How Could You?* (Fig. 33), or the cleverly subversive text on his protest t-shirts, which I also described in chapter 2. As Chiurai says: “Satire and parody are so important, and we still take ourselves too seriously” (Kahn 2005: page unknown), and so he too plays with double and inverted meanings to achieve his subtle social commentary. It is neither a chance happening that Chiurai hides information in his images, nor the result of some frivolous intellectual game. One must remember it is never far from his mind that he is a political exile, and so it becomes a survival strategy in order to avoid persecution from those that support the very power systems he seeks to critique.

Returning to the notion of sampling, Schusterman (2004: 460) notes that “the borrowing and transfiguration in hip-hop did not require creative skills in composition or in playing musical instruments but only in manipulating recording equipment”. However, as I have discussed in relation to the techniques used in cutting, mixing, and scratching, keen sensitivity to the way that one sound sequence may feed into, or off another and compliment it became a precise art in itself. Furthermore the DJs did not try to conceal the fact that they did not compose their own music and in fact, as Schusterman notes, they openly celebrated the method of sampling (2004: 461). In conjunction with this, Schusterman (2004: 461) goes on to point out that visual artists have always borrowed from one another’s work although the fact was generally denied or ignored, and he states that in contrast to the ideology of originality, rap shows that “the unique and novel text is always a tissue of echoes and fragments of earlier texts”. He goes further to say that “as the dichotomy of creation/appropriation is challenged, so is the deep division between creative artist and appropriative

audience; transfigurative appreciation can take the form of art” (Schusterman 2004: 462).

This dichotomy between performer/artists and viewer/audience is something that has been breeched by both Chiurai and Rhode. When leaving incomplete artworks (which he had started) for his friends to finish, and then exhibiting them in the multi-media event I described previously, Chiurai debunked the romantic notion of art as transcendental and sacred, “an organic whole so perfectly unified that any tampering with its parts would destroy the whole” (Schuterman 2004: 462). In a sense it is akin to the outsourcing of various elements of an artwork, that many artists employ today in order to facilitate easier means of production while still claiming ownership of the art. However, just like rap artists, Chiurai did not deny the input of others, but made it the celebrated focus of his exhibition, using it to include people that otherwise would never take part in such an event. Thus, although in a slightly different manner, the works were deconstructed or re-interpreted just as many other records are referenced and interpreted in rap songs too.

Rhode blurs the dividing line between artist and audience even more, as his performances often fully realise their communicative potential through audience interaction. However, this interaction is not stagnant, but an active involvement of the audience members in the outcome of the artwork. In this way Rhode’s interaction with the audience challenges “a well-entrenched modernist convention of artistic purity: the idea that a proper aesthetic response requires distanced contemplation by a transcendental and temperately disinterested subject” (Schusterman 2004: 464). Schusterman argues that this convention is also challenged by rappers in their need to

be appreciated through the audience's interaction as they call out to the audience to shout louder or dance more energetically. Rhode explains his reasoning behind the importance of public interaction in his work when he says:

Working in the public realm allows me to disappear from the white cube and take a new role as artist/activator. I prefer to work unannounced in public so that the work and its process be integrated into society, allowing the performance/happening to function as a daily occurrence, to fuse art and life in that moment (Green 2008: 4).

As Rhode fuses the realms of art and everyday life in this way he negates the modernist notion of art as "putatively universal and eternal", and places its emphasis on the "localized and temporal" (Schusterman 2004: 460). Not only are Rhode's works meant to be ephemeral, they only exist as series of photographs after the performance, essentially only a record of the original incident. An example of this interaction between his audience and the artwork was the 1999 bicycle performance that I made reference to in chapter two. In the performance a security guard from nearby helped Rhode to climb onto his drawing of a bike, and afterwards attempted to "ride" it himself. Rhode notes how something in that moment changed his practice completely. He states: "It wasn't about me anymore, the artist wasn't the subject of the gaze, suddenly the viewer became part of the work" (Boutoux 2007: 32). Rhode has now made this commonplace in his work, as with another performance which I mentioned in chapter one, where he drew a telephone on a wall and forced an audience member to hold the receiver, leaving her trapped against the wall to contemplate her contribution as he escaped the gallery.

The audience becomes a crucial part of the performance, and indeed the artworks would not function as autonomous entities without them. This becomes even more obvious when considering a work like *Untitled (Skipping Rope)* (Fig. 60). The piece

consists of a series of curved lines drawn by Rhode on a floor or wall forming an oval shape and representing the locus of a skipping rope. Rhode and various audience members then attempt to skip through this skipping rope. The lines become so blurred with the smudges of bodies brushing against them that it appears the rope is moving faster and faster, however, the end product, separated from its animated connection to the audience is nothing but a mess on a wall. Although Rhode states that his performances exist ultimately as a kind of drawing study, he transports them into the same realm that hip-hop occupies – that of deconstructive art – where he removes the autonomy of the drawing by dismembering or altering it, just as hip-hop does with old songs, dismantling the pre-packaged and transforming it into something stimulatingly different (Schusterman 2004: 462). In a sense it becomes more about the process and less about the finished product, and it embodies his notion that “an artwork’s integrity as object should never outweigh the possibilities for continuing creation through use of that object” (Schusterman 2004: 462).

The inclusion of political content is another tool which both rap, and Rhode’s and Chiurai’s artwork use to confront modernist notions of authenticity. Schusterman (2004: 463) argues that rap’s “belligerent insistence on the deeply political dimension of culture challenges one of the most fundamental artistic conventions of modernity: aesthetic autonomy”. He describes how art is situated in relation to other spheres of culture in modernist terms when he writes:

Modernity according to Max Weber and others, was bound up with the project of occidental rationalization, secularization, and differentiation, which disenchanted the traditional religious world view and carved up its organic domain into three separate and autonomous spheres of secular culture: science, art, and morality, each governed by its own inner logic of theoretical, aesthetic, or moral-practical judgement... in this division of cultural spheres... art was sharply differentiated from the practical activity of the realm of ethics and politics, which involved real interest and appetitive will (as well as conceptual thinking)... As the aesthetic was distinguished

from the more rational realms of knowledge and action, it was also firmly differentiated from the more sensate and appetitive gratifications of embodied human nature – aesthetic pleasure residing rather in a distanced, disinterested contemplation of formal properties (Schusterman 2004: 463).

As I have pointed out, observation and appreciation of both artists' (particularly Rhode's work) is anything but distanced, disinterested, and concerned merely with formal properties. Their hybrid aesthetics – a paradox in modernist terms – debunk the notion of secular culture, and their inclusion of a political undertone (sometimes more overt than subtle) breaks barriers between the aesthetic, and the ethical and political realms. In fact it may be argued that high modernism as a period in its prime was quite exclusive, and it is exactly such exclusivity that Rhode's and Chiurai's work seeks to depose. As Schusterman (2004: 463) argues in relation to "knowledge" or "conscious" rappers:

They repeatedly insist that their role as artists and poets is inseparable from their role as insightful inquirers into reality and as teachers of truth, particularly those aspects of reality and truth that get neglected or distorted by establishment history books and contemporary media coverage.

It may be argued that rap is not complex enough to consciously challenge such conventions or perform such institutional critiques. Schusterman (2004: 467: 476) submits though that "semantic complexity is richly enfolded within its seemingly artless and simple language" and he poses an argument to critics of rap's validity suggesting they should remember that "although now culturally sacralised, art was itself sometimes deligitimated as pretentious lies and idle foolishness"⁷³. Rhode outlines this when he says that "African art has always been peripheral on the greater

⁷³ This is particularly true in the case of African art which for a long time struggled to gain credibility as so-called Fine Art, instead of craft in a Western-dominated art world. Although more contemporary African art is not still viewed as craft, it may still be seen as naïve or less sophisticated.

art market, but remains critically influential on Western modernity” (Green 2008: 4).⁷⁴

These parameters of what stands as popular or more legitimate contemporary art are laid out by Western institutions that impose a privileged or exclusionary status. In opposition Schusterman (2004: 468) argues, that “art can be appreciated in many ways on many levels and new modes of appreciation by new audiences cannot be outlawed as necessarily disenfranchising those of the original audience”. He argues – and one could agree that the same is true of the art in question – that “there is no compelling reason to limit rap’s meaning to explicit authorial intentions; its meaning is also a function of its language, a social product beyond the determining control of the individual author” (Schusterman 2004: 468). He states that the inversion or duplicity of meaning in rap is particularly significant as a source of protest and a source of extremely subtle linguistic skill, because it disrupts language systems which both embody and sustain societal power relations (Schusterman 2004: 469). Chiurai employs a similar duplicity of meaning in the way he includes text in some of his images such as the works that I have discussed already, including *10 Years* (Fig. 2) and *Sex* (Fig. 3) in chapter one, and the magazine series and *Repatriation* (Fig. 16) in chapter two. He subtly uses language to complement his images with tongue-in-cheek comments targeted at the focal figure of his work. Thus, he uses language to critique the societal power relations which Schusterman argues that it often sustains. Although Rhode does not use written text as such, the duplicity of dimensions – the merging of the two and three-dimensional – in his work performs the same function by breaking

⁷⁴ However, he notes that it is gaining more popularity when he states that “the local scene does embody an ‘authenticity’, which makes it attractive to the international scene”. (Green 2008: 4).

down barriers of what is usually considered purely fictional or aesthetic, and reality. As such, the boundaries of what is considered performance art, drawing, painting, dance or video are confused and it becomes difficult for Rhode's work to be rigidly classified, and as such limited.

Just as the duplicity and inversion of meaning in rap songs is not a mistake, neither are these deliberate visual strategies that the two artists use. I would argue that they employ them very specifically to debunk institutional ideologies, and to playfully question stereotypes in order to create a discourse that investigates hegemonic power relations with regards to art, music, or society at large. As such I would argue that they are self-conscious strategies. Schusterman (2004: 472) highlights that such "artistic self-consciousness is regarded by many aestheticians as an essential feature of art". This is further backed up by a consideration of another conventional requirement of art; to display its defining originality and distinction from the ordinary. Schusterman (2004: 473) observes that art in its conventional sense must "somehow take a stand against a generally accepted but unacceptable reality or status quo (artistic or societal), even if this opposition be expressed only implicitly by art's fictionality or by the difficulties it poses for ordinary comprehension".

Thus, both art and rap fulfil the abovementioned requirements as art forms. However, as I have said, both artists are incredibly aware of the pigeonholes or stereotypes they flirt with, and which are often attached to them by the media or art institutions. Although there is more access to forms of expression and reference points through ever-widening media webs, the growing influence of mass media is a thorn in the side of those who try to resist the hegemonic capitalist and patriarchal agendas that are

spread through media monopolies. It is also more difficult for artists, both hip-hop and visual, to maintain a sense of credibility linked to their work in the face of commercial pressure which often blurs the dividing line between art and commodity. Bongani Madondo (2005: page unknown) provides one with a sense of this when he writes:

Like his heroes, the late artistic genius Jean Michel Basquiat and the invisible “graff” icon Banksy (both hip-hop artists who succeeded in taking graffiti from the streets to the high-street art galleries), Kudzi is trapped in a hot capsule - a revolutionary who can't escape the lure of glamour the mainstream art world inevitably holds for the radicals.

There is a thin line between capitalist and revolutionary agendas. Artists must try to tread this line in order to earn a living but also create art that is critical and contemporary. Some succeed and some fail, however, even the parameters of success and failure vary depending on the artist's goals and motives. Thus the next part of this chapter will explore how both the visual artists and hip-hop artists negotiate this thin line, and how the line shifts with the times.

III. The Global Commodity

It is clear from the previous part of this chapter that both Rhode's and Chiurai's work is situated within a post-modern discourse, merging influences and techniques from a wide range of sources and redefining them as contemporary art. Their work is quite revolutionary within the South African art scene, however, until relatively recently (in the case of Rhode) they have not stood out as much abroad. Rhode has, however, seen a considerable amount of critical acclaim and commercial success of late overseas. It could be argued that a determining factor in this recent access to international artistic arenas is the development in internet and digital communications which have enabled

his pieces, often recorded on video, to be viewed by audiences all over who might not have access to them without the internet. However, as I have pointed out in previous chapters, although not as up-to-date or efficient in its communication systems, Africa has been a continent of flux and exchange far before any sort of Western influence, and due to this the African aesthetic has always been one of inclusion and eclecticism. With developments in communications, and local artists' access to international collections and systems of signifiers or image banks, we are beginning to see Western influences being appropriated and made local. Kwezi Gule hints at this when he writes that "it's tempting to compare Rhode's work with pop art in the way it embraces popular culture, but Rhode goes further, infusing popular culture with his own experiences and context, making it local, our own" (Gule 2004: page unknown). Rhode suggests that South Africa's geographical context has influenced this: "South Africa is very isolated geographically [which] gives the artist an opportunity to create work that is not so much dominated by a market economy as other places are" (Rhode in Bellini 2005: 91).

Although this may still be true to an extent, this view is becoming less relevant as time goes by. This is reflected as the greater South African economy becomes further incorporated into the global economy and South African companies compete on an ever-increasing global scale. Therefore, more international investors see opportunities in South Africa as the largest economy in Africa, and focus on the immense promise held in the prospect of the 2010 FIFA Football World Cup. With this the average South African is becoming more of a global consumer as they are exposed to more and more global brands and advertising. This increased exposure to advertising is highlighted by James Sey (2008: 14) when he describes his approach to urban

Johannesburg: “the serrated edges of the city’s skyscraper profile... are hung here and there with Christo-like, building sized advertising drapery, recognisable as one draws near”⁷⁵.

Although the rest of South Africa is catching up, as I have pointed out already, Johannesburg has always been somewhat of an international city. Achille Mbembe (2007: 282) supports this when he writes, “in Johannesburg the formal and the informal, official and unofficial, cohabit and at times become entangled, so that the city resembles now Los Angeles, now Kinshasa or Cairo, now all three at the same time”. Mbembe (2004: 398) also notes that Johannesburg has “a history as an urban form that served the needs of capital”, and he states that it is above all, the product of industrial capitalism which grew out of the gold rush to the Witwatersrand in 1886 – as gold is the foundation of the global economic system (2004: 377).

As I pointed out in chapter one, the resultant influx of foreigners transformed Johannesburg into a cosmopolitan urban environment, and as such today it remains the commercial hub of the African continent, where many international businesses base their regional headquarters. Since the end of apartheid, Mbembe (2004: 393) observes that:

Contemporary Johannesburg is undergoing massive spatial restructuring... driven as much by private developers, real estate capital, architects and designers, and fuelled by capital for middle- and upper-income residence, insurance companies, banks and corporations.

⁷⁵ Christo (born Christo Vladimirov Javacheff) and Jeanne-Claude (born Jeanne-Claude Denat de Guillebon) were a married couple who created works of art in which they would wrap buildings, monuments, and landmarks in various fabrics and materials. For examples see works such as *Wrapped Reichstag*, *Verhüllte Bäume (Wrapped Trees)*, and *Pont Neuf*.

Due to this restructuring he proposes that “more than ever before in its history, Johannesburg’s city space is a product that is marked, measured, marketed, and transacted. It is a commodity, and as such its representational form has become ever more stylized” (2004: 393). Due to all of this Johannesburg has become globally homogenised, resembling any other city around the world. As such aesthetic tastes have become globally inflected too. Mbembe (2004: 400) discusses how sites such as Melrose Arch and Montecasino – both entertainment and shopping venues in Johannesburg – have become what he calls “synthetic spacetimes, constructed tableaux on which disparate images are grafted”. He suggests that Montecasino (which is designed to look like a Tuscan village) and Melrose Arch (which resembles a miniature European city) are products of late modern capitalism which has brought about proletarianization of commodity desire and a stylization of consumption (Mbembe 2004: 400). Although these two are extreme examples, similar effects can be seen to a lesser degree in much of the rest of urban Johannesburg.

This becomes interesting when one begins to consider how such globalization has come to affect the urban population, and in particular, Rhode and Chiurai as they inhabit and represent the city space. With access to the internet, satellite television, and global branding all around them, the artists are much more capable of incorporating some sort of globalized aesthetic into their work. However, how exactly do they interrogate this infiltration of the commodity form while maintaining a critical standpoint? Rhode is even more exposed to global strategies of dealing with such a question as he now bases himself in Berlin, and is more exposed to the international art scene. Not only is it important to investigate how both artists include or interpret a contemporary globalized aesthetic, but also to compare it to the way that hip-hop too

has negotiated globalization, and what similarities can be drawn between the two, as hip-hop, with its ever increasing popularity has become somewhat of a global phenomenon.

i) No Option but Co-Option: The Rise to the Mainstream

As I hoped to illustrate in the earlier part of this chapter, although increasingly popular, hip-hop has fought a continual battle since its advent to assert its claim as a verified art-form. Again one is reminded of Schusterman's assertion that "its claim to artistic status has been drowned under a flood of abusive critique, acts of censorship, and commercial cooptation" (2004: 459). This commercial co-option becomes a political strategy to maintain control over hip-hop in order to monitor its message and content. In chapter two, I highlighted Haupt's (2003: 3) view that the "sexist, misogynist, patriarchal ways of thinking and behaving that are glorified in gangsta rap are a reflection of the prevailing values in our society, values created and sustained by white supremacist capitalist patriarchy". In fact gangsta rap's exceeding popularity over the earlier, more "conscious" hip-hop, is a result of these ways of thinking and the lyrics that embody them, which do not engage critically with structures of domination. As such gangsta rap has become "an exploitable commodity in hands of major record labels as its message poses no significant threat to hegemony" (Haupt 2008: 147). Therefore, one becomes aware that black artists have become typecast, due to the fact, as Quinn puts it, that they "have been so successful in portraying, manufacturing, and selling ghetto imagery, that market demands have channelled black commercial output into certain narrowly defined coordinates" (Haupt 2008: 149). Haupt goes further to include Mtume ya Salaam's assertion that, "when the profit oriented major labels entered the rap scene... the fertile breeding ground for

good rappers disappeared” (2008: 151). Jeff Chang (2005: 439) concurs with this saying that in the USA, “government-deregulated, globalized media monopolies have colonized and branded hip-hop’s countercultural spirit”. He expands on the reason for this stating:

Once there had been a creative tension between hip-hop’s role as commodity in the global media industry and as the lifeblood of a vast vibrant network of local undergrounds. But during the mid-’90s, the power shifted decisively in the direction of the media monopolies. And when corporations began to understand the global demand for post-white pop culture, hip-hop became the primary content for the new globally consolidated media, the equivalent of gold dust in the millennial monopoly rush. The tensions between the culture’s true believers and the captains of industry intermittently flared into open, polarized conflict (Chang 2005: 439-440)

This subcultural, or countercultural spirit which has been colonised, as Chang puts it by global media monopolies, is described by Dick Hebdige as that which “interrupts the ‘process of normalization’ and contradicts the ‘myth of consensus’ in its attempt to challenge hegemony” (Haupt 2008: 151). Thus, Haupt (2008: 155) argues that hip-hop’s co-option into the mainstream, along with its elements such as graffiti and hip-hop fashion, has diluted its subversive potential, and he observes that hip-hop style is the main theme of commercials for anything from cellular phone service providers to banks and alcohol.

Although this globalized branding of hip-hop as pop-culture has somewhat compromised its status as a revolutionary subculture, it has however, made it accessible to a vast number of people around the globe that had never even heard of it. It may now be argued to be counter-discursive in the general sense, but its mere popularization has lead many to investigate where hip-hop started and how it came about. Although spread by globalization and capitalism, thanks to hip-hop’s original function as a form of protest and rebellion, marginal communities all over the globe

have found a new means by which to challenge hegemonies. Haupt situates his discussion of the globalization and co-option of hip-hop in relation to the way that hip-hop has experienced a rebirth in under-privileged 'coloured' communities on the Cape Flats. Not just on the Cape Flats, but all over South Africa, and indeed Africa, a new 'conscious' hip-hop is being used as a tool to empower the disenfranchised, and as a voice for the previously unheard to air their opinions. This point is backed up by the emergence of outlets such as the website africanhiphop.com which broadcasts African Hip-Hop radio and incorporates material from emerging artists all over the continent. In fact this very interconnectedness of African hip-hop is illustrated by Chiurai's inclusion of photographs by Sandy Haessner of Senegalese hip-hop artists in his 'Yellow Lines' publication.

This being said, commercial hip-hop transferred via media such as cable television and global advertising campaigns, remains the main source of exposure to South African youth. Haupt (2003: 6) argues that, in the reverse, hip-hop from South Africa – and I would argue the rest of Africa to some degree – “has never really been commercially viable for local artists and this might explain why it has never truly recuperated or been commercialised”. This was somewhat true of early hip-hop in America too as Neal (2004: 493) states that, “while early purveyors of hip-hop clearly had [some] commercial interests in the music, there was little expectation that hip-hop would transcend its distinctly localized existence and become a primary cog in the mainstream music industry”. Tony Mitchell's view illustrates the extent to which hip-hop has become such an influence when he notes that the “flow and consumption of rap music within the popular music industry continues to proceed hegemonically,

from the USA to the rest of the world, with little or no flow in the opposite direction” (Haupt 2003: 6).

I have already noted that Chiurai references the work of the infamous British ‘graff’ artist Banksy, and it could be argued that it is from Banksy that Chiurai takes his cue on issues concerning globalization. He states in an interview with Fred de Vries that, “Banksy’s like an urban legend, an urban guerrilla, he’s an influence: the stencil and the satire... For him government and big corporations are the enemy” (De Vries 2007: page unknown). Chiurai certainly took the government to task when he started to employ Banksy-like stencils in his political commentary on Zimbabwe, however, as I have pointed out, he has utilised them to comment on South African urban politics as well. Bongani Madondo (2005: page unknown) describes another concern of Chiurai’s when he writes: “Besides Uncle Bob⁷⁶, Kudzi is also passionate about the commercial imperatives that define what is and what is not main-stream... He’s also maddened by the ‘bling’ dictates of corporatised hip-hop that define “the hip-hop generation”. One starts to notice that Chiurai is not only aware of the debates or discourse surrounding the authenticity and commercialization of hip-hop production, but also uses it as an influence and something to comment on in his work. To be more specific, Chiurai is concerned with exactly the type of diffusion of subversive potential that Haupt talks about. He is specifically concerned with the stereotypes and typecasts that have filtered through the global media from the American context to the local. Robyn Sassen (2004: page unknown) touches on this when she writes:

Chiurai resents contemporary radio station YFM defining black South Africans as a diluted version of their US counterparts. He condemns Y magazine for promoting cultures like hip-hop emptily – today’s youth are caught in the immediacy of popular culture, but can’t interrogate these imposed values.

⁷⁶ A nickname used by Zimbabweans to refer to Robert Mugabe.

This supports my earlier argument that, although conditions are favourable for ‘conscious’ hip-hop production to occur in South Africa, the majority of consumers are still attracted by the glamorised American artists. Zingi Mkefa (2004: page unknown) quotes Chiurai’s view regarding some of the stereotypes she describes as being projected by YFM:

Yfm is a station which projects the archetypal young black hip-hop and kwaito diggers wearing baggy jeans and oversized t-shirts, or stilettoed girls with hoop ear-rings and Stoned Cherrie gear in all its programming. “Do I have to identify with that culture to listen to Yfm?”

Mkefa makes this observation in relation to a discussion about one of Chiurai’s earlier works entitled *Y-Propaganda* (Fig. 61). The work is a painting of a faceless black man, who only wears boxing gloves and boxing shorts, and who exposes an unclothed abdomen. The man’s upper body consists of what looks like muscle fibres on one side, and an x-ray image of bones on the other side, on top of which Chiurai has added very small text. Higher up in the image is the insignia ‘Y-Propaganda’. Mkefa (2004: page unknown) argues that:

The insignia speaks to the greater meaning of the work: is there a difference between the Zimbabwean-style propaganda that encourages people to speak with a pro-Mugabe voice and that propagated by the independent free-speaking radio station like Yfm?

It is obvious that Chiurai advocates an attitude of awareness similar to that of conscious hip-hoppers that Haupt describes being counter-discursive and critical of hegemony. Rhode too is aware of the issues surrounding globalization and the commodification of subculture. Olukemi Ilesanmi (2004: page unknown) illustrates this, writing that Rhode’s performances are:

Humorous, evocative experiences laced with sharp commentary on the politics of leisure, global branding and the commodification of youth

cultures. Rhode's visual and conceptual alphabet is built around issues of desire, loss, and dislocation in a capitalist world.

An example of such a work, although not actually a performance, is the photographic piece entitled *He Got Game* (Fig. 54), which I briefly mentioned in the first part of this chapter. As I pointed out, the piece borrows its name from a Spike Lee movie and a Public Enemy song which was released as the soundtrack for the movie. The piece was created on a street in Cape Town and consists of twelve photographs in which Rhode dressed in clearly branded Nike clothing and shoes and interacted with a real basketball, and the illustration of a life-size hoop drawn on the ground in chalk. His actions in the photographs suggest that he is flipping in mid air before completing an impossible slam dunk. Claire Tancons (2003: 68) argues that:

Acknowledging his generation's fascination with sports, Rhode also undermines their glamorous attraction by concentrating on their most stereotypical – consumable – aspects around issues of branding and media recuperation. He verges towards a critique of representations, not only focusing on the social and political implications of (coloured) body in space but he also articulates a critique of object in the realm of art and consumer culture.

This opinion is backed up by the fact that Public Enemy's politically aware lyrics talk about media monopolies, global consumerism and urban politics. This track was released in the year 1998 and makes clear reference to the impending change of millennium in its content. At the end of the song the audience is implored to take control of their minds, as in the middle of the song the line is sung that "folks don't even own themselves, paying mental rent to corporate presidents". I argue that the track is a call for people to question what is fed to them through the media, in the midst of the hype surrounding what was predicted as a meltdown to be caused by the millennium bug at the beginning of the year 2000. It is ironic that this predicted meltdown was nothing more than speculation resulting from propaganda spread by

media across the globe. The chorus line of the song warns “Fuck the game if it aint doin nothin’”. This is interesting when considering that at first glance Rhode’s work seems to be merely a playful illustration of the popular urban sport of basketball. In fact the “game” is saying something! Tancons (2003: 67) suggests that the noticeable imaging of American brands such as Nike, and the way that stereotypical postures and hip attitudes are shown “points out to the challenges of a young democratic state [South Africa] facing the pitfalls of global consumerism and cultural assimilation”. South African artists such as Rhode and Chiurai, set themselves the challenge of creating socially aware art while catering to the wealthy art buying public, without letting this public dictate the parameters of what they produce. Rhode touched on this in his interview with Catherine Green concerning the Johannesburg Artfair of 2008 where he was in fact the featured artist. He notes that, “The commercial aspect of the fair could become a distraction to the artist [and] besides that fact the context of the fair is not always suitable for political commentary” (Green 2008: 4). It is hard for artists, just like hip-hop groups, to completely ignore capitalist imperatives, as they need to survive economically as well. Chiurai noted to me in an interview how a lot of the work from his ‘Yellow Lines’ show in Johannesburg was sold to overseas buyers from the United Kingdom. He is creating artwork that speaks to a South African audience which is being consumed by wealthy buyers from elsewhere. Does this compromise the effectiveness of his art for spreading a message and creating meaningful social change? I would argue that it does not, and will support this by referring to similar arguments posed against hip-hop.

ii) Do the Right Thing!

In the case of hip-hop music, many have argued against its co-option into the mainstream, on the basis that its transition from a localised grassroots form of expression into a trans-national commodity has “fundamentally changed its production, distribution, reception and function as an art form” (Neal 2004: 493). This was founded on the idea that most of the meaning invested in the art form was lost through its commercialization. However, Ted Swedenburg (2004: 584) shows how many rappers have subverted this notion of commercial artforms being shallow and less meaningful, and have begun to play on “capital’s insatiable demand for new, sensational and different products – a need that is partially responsible for turning ‘otherness’ and ‘ethnicity’ into the latest hip commodities – without appearing to be co-opted”. He argues that:

Rappers’ posture of menacing danger appears mysteriously cool and soulful to the white listener, while sending a chilly frisson down his/her spine; whereas for the young black, the cold scariness of rap is merely realism. Therefore rap sells in both markets. And because a hostile attitude is marketable and commercially successful, rappers can retain control of the message and keep it undiluted (Swedenburg 2004: 584).

It is this commitment to representing the realities of everyday life – or ‘keeping it real’ – with a specific concern for one’s community, that I would argue prevents accusations being levelled against Rhode and Chuirai that they are sell-outs by way of seeking commercial success internationally. Their case is the same as that which Swedenburg puts forward for rappers when he states that it is their, “fundamental connection to a young black community – a community ‘imagined’ yet real – that allows them to get paid without selling out” (2004: 583). In fact an even more solid defence comes with Swedenburg’s idea that, “‘conscious’ rappers also aren’t selling out because their strategy is to deploy the market to disseminate crucial political

messages to the widest possible audience” (ibid). I have already tried to illustrate that both Rhode’s and Chiurai’s political concerns and the social arrangement of their communities form a parallel with those of ‘conscious’ rappers, and therefore this statement should hold true for them too. Both have highlighted issues such as apartheid’s legacy, xenophobia, and the economic and political crisis in Zimbabwe in their work. Thus the distribution of artworks on a national and international level, have increased awareness about such issues.

The fact that their art is being received well internationally and they are gaining recognition for it, is something to be celebrated. It is still the case in many respects, as Rhode said, that “African art has always been peripheral on the greater art market and was critically influential on Western modernity” (Green 2008: 4). Such cases, in which black artists are not acknowledged correctly for their cultural contribution, have been characteristic of the development of many popular musical forms too. As M. Elizabeth Blair (2004: 497) observes “historically, blacks have not been able to reap the financial rewards from the musical forms that were uniquely theirs” as in the case of blues, jazz, gospel, soul, funk and most importantly rap. In the case of these musical forms, white companies and performers would pick up on the unique musical style that is developing, and attempt to hijack it, making it popular through exclusive promotional and marketing tactics.

As I noted earlier in chapter one, some people have criticised Chiurai for supposedly being “black talent for a white tool”, implying that his previous affiliation to a white owned gallery in an upmarket area such as Melrose Arch meant that he was subject to white capitalist patriarchy, similar to that which Haupt argues pre-packages gangsta

rap. However, as Haupt (2008: 156) notes, the “key determining factor is the degree of control that artists or cultural producers have in determining the terms upon which such acts of incorporation take place”. He gives the example of the documentary of the making of producer Spike Lee’s film *Do The Right Thing*, which revealed Lee’s “refusal to compromise on prospective film distributors’ demands that the films incendiary political content be toned down somewhat” (Haupt 2008: *ibid*). He argues that “this refusal signifies the artist’s agency in negotiating the terms upon which they enter mainstream markets and points to the possibility of marginal subjects’ views and artistic approaches circulating in larger arenas” (*ibid.*). Considering Haupt’s argument, I can confirm that from personal discussion with Chiurai, he is involved completely with arranging the production and distribution of his artwork. It is interesting to note that Chiurai’s choice to change his representative gallery to the Goodman Gallery was actually motivated by his intention to seek a more international audience. However, he still attempts to maintain as much control of his artistic output as possible, evident in the fact that he has played the predominant role in the organization of his catalogue/periodical for the show *Yellow Lines* which I have referenced in numerous places throughout my discussion.

The elevation of Rhode’s art to the international stage is also somewhat on his own terms. He notes that this elevation allows him to highlight the interconnectedness of global contexts but says that Johannesburg still holds a special attraction to him and thus he returns from his base in Berlin to still create artwork there. On his specific choice of relocating to Berlin he says:

It has offered me a different viewpoint, both on life and my artistic practice. In distancing myself from the familiar context of South Africa, I have had to dig deep to find new forms of inspiration and to investigate new methodologies of creating works of art. The city’s political history raises

complex questions about space, unity and division – certain topics that are quite related to my interests (Rosenthal 2008: 49).

Although it is evident that his move to Berlin was to expand and develop his artistic practices, and not to abandon his original context to be co-opted into a dominant Western discourse, one might find it harder to understand why he chose to be represented by the Perry Rubenstein gallery in New York. I believe it creates an interesting and quite poignant angle to his commentary on the interconnectedness of what he calls global localities. One may remember Dick Hebdige's view that "subcultures communicate through commodities and therefore work from within the operation of capitalist processes of retail, marketing and distribution" (Haupt 2003: 1). Blair (2004: 498) states that hip-hop and in particular rap music "is the ultimate commercial product, because its main features have often been borrowed from other, successfully tried-and-true products". Hebdige backs this up with the assertion that:

In hip-hop, sampling relies on the use of elements of music texts – that are commodity items – in order to produce new music texts, which will become commodity items themselves [thus] a significant amount of tension exists in the creative process of producing counter-discursive music texts as the process of music production is already quite complicit in commercial processes (Haupt 2003: 5).

In a sense, this is similar to art, where Rhode and particularly Chiurai adopt signs and signifiers, often related to advertising and commodities, and insert them into their artworks, which also become commodity items. Art, as with rap music, particularly 'conscious' rap, begins as a way of engaging critically with one's social, political, and economic realities. If the products of this engagement then become commodity items, surely they still serve to spread the message that the artists attempt to communicate through their work. As long as these cultural forms are not stripped of their vitality, power, and message by dominant forces in order that they become instruments solely to serve a hegemonic capitalist agenda, and as long as the artists are recognised, both

financially and creatively, then surely one cannot argue against the spread of such cultural forms even if they exist as commodity items. One is lead to Hardt and Negri's⁷⁷ notion outlined by Haupt that, "the only strategy available to the struggles is that of a constituent counterpower that emerges from within Empire" (2003: 12). In other words the artists make use of increasingly connected global networks, facilitated by globalisation, to comment on and critically engage with the effects of such corporate globalisation.

⁷⁷ Hardt, M. & Negri, A. 2000. *Empire*. Hardt, M (Ed.). London & Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Figures 44 to 61



Figure 44: Banksy, *Tesco - Pledge Your Allegiance* (official title *Very Little Helps*).



Figure 45: Marcel Duchamp, *L.H.O.O.Q.* also known as “*Marcel Duchamp’s Mona Lisa with moustache*”



Figure 46: Robert Rauschenberg, *Erased de Kooning Drawing*



Figure 47: Andy Warhol, *Campbell's Soup Can*

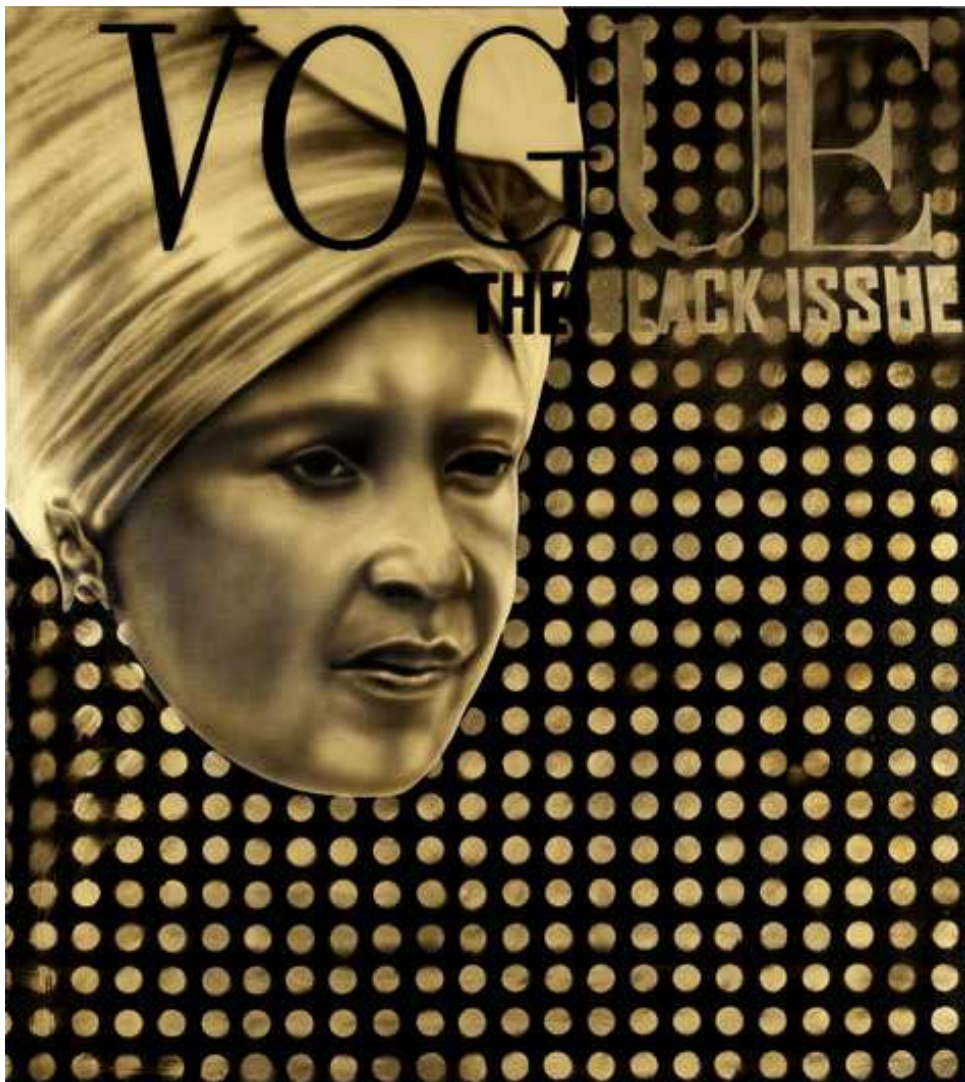


Figure 48: Kudzanai Chiurai, *The Black Issue*

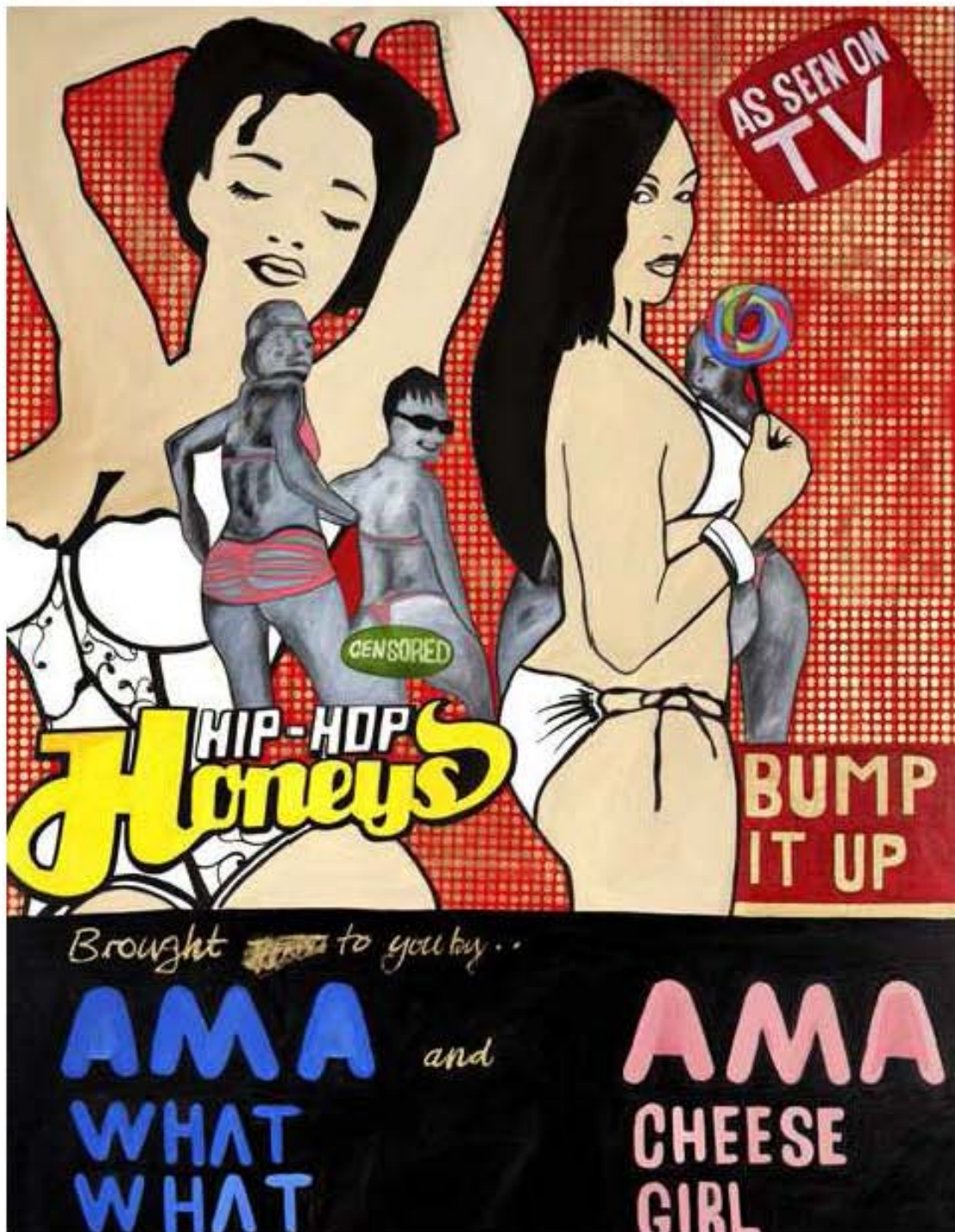


Figure 49: Kudzanai Chiurai, *As Seen on TV*



Figure 50: Kudzanai Chiurai, *End of the Day* (In progress)

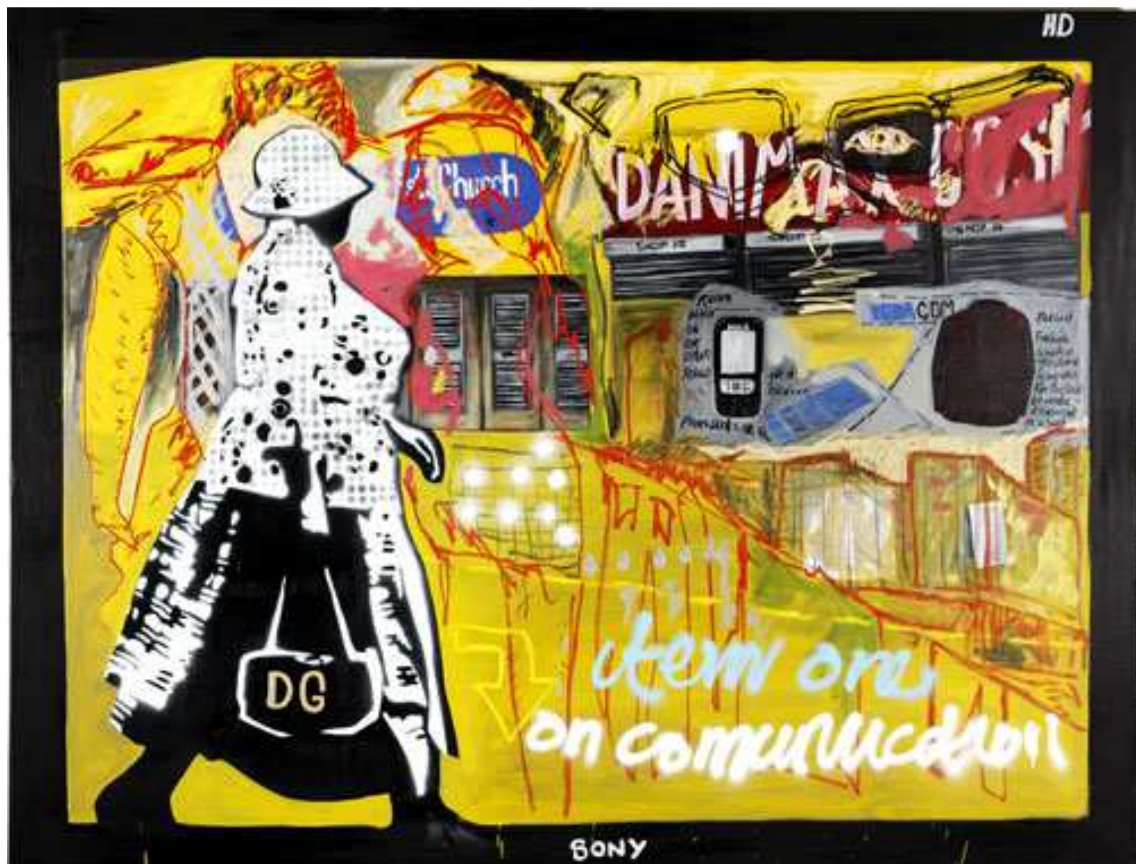


Figure 51: Kudzanai Chiurai, *One Time on Communication*



Figure 52: Kudzanai Chiurai, *Reclining Black Label*



Figure 53: Giorgione, *Sleeping Venus* a.k.a. *Dresden Venus*



Figure 54: Robin Rhode, *He Got Game*

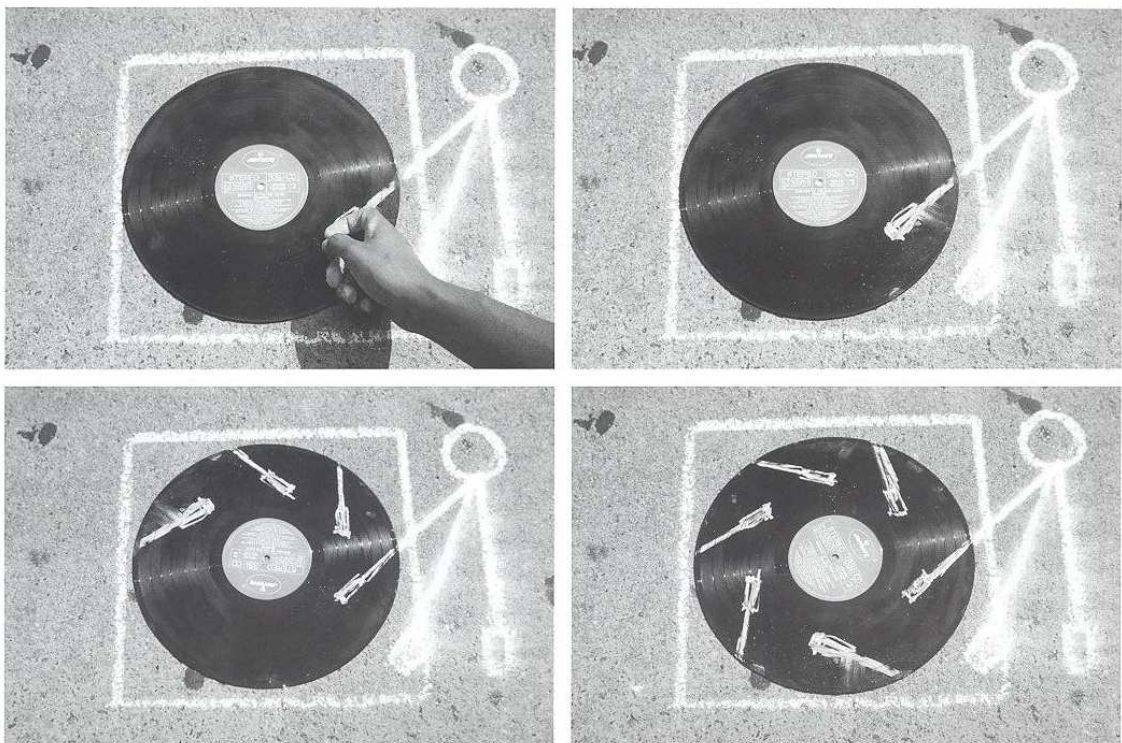


Figure 55: Robin Rhode, *Wheel of Steel*

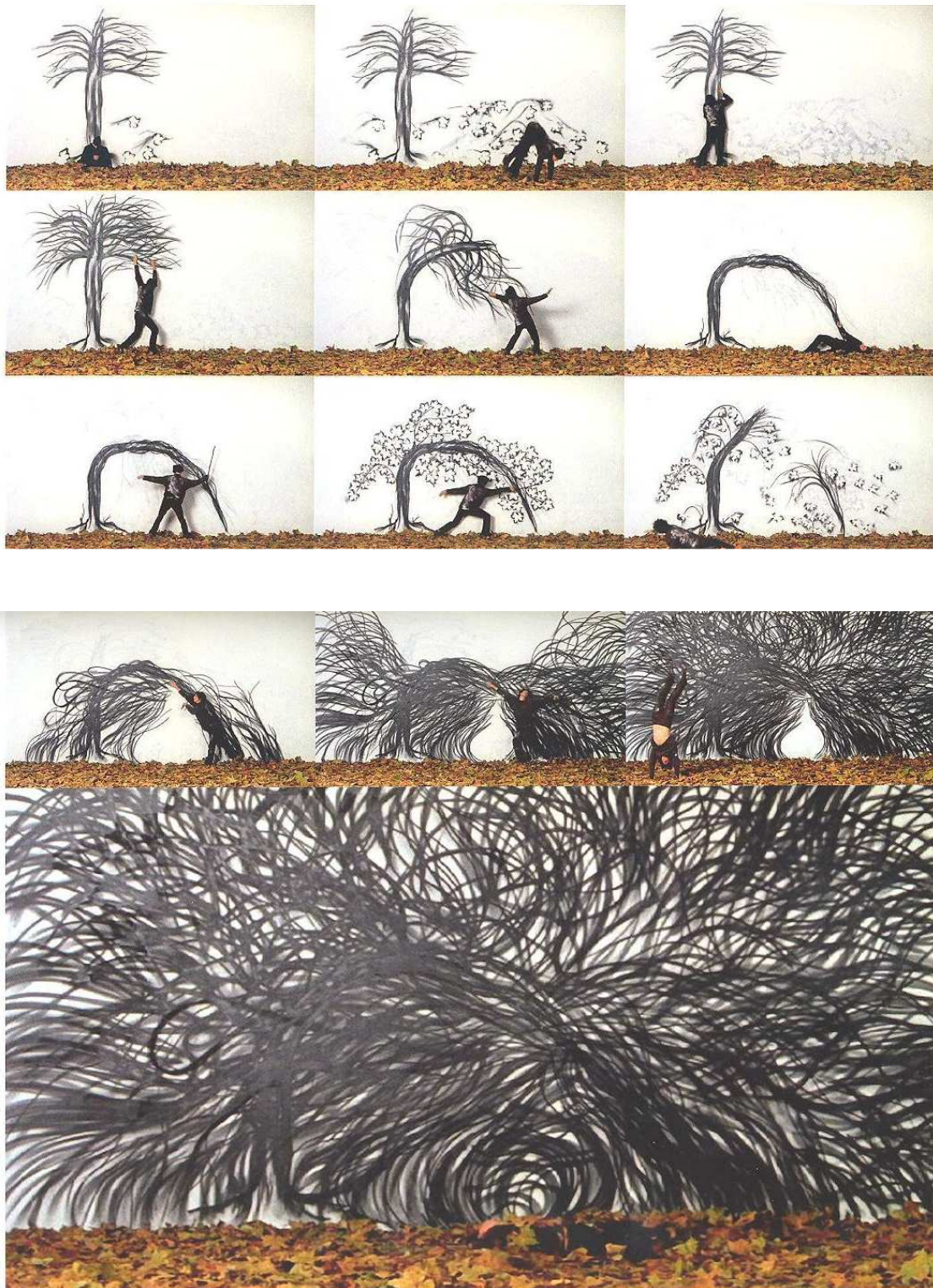


Figure 56: Robin Rhode, *The Storyteller*



Figure 57: Kudzanai Chiurai, *Sometimes*



Figure 58: Kudzanai Chiurai, *Black Alter Ego*



Figure 59: Kudzanai Chiurai, *Press Freedom*



Figure 60: Robin Rhode, *Untitled (Skipping Rope)*



Figure 61: Kudzanai Chiurai, *Y-Propaganda*

Conclusion

Although “globalisation” provides avenues for both emergent and established cultural practitioners to expose larger numbers of people to their ‘commodities’, the process is still very problematic. In the previous chapter I touched on Tony Mitchell’s (2003: 6) observation that “the flow and consumption of rap music within the popular music industry continues to proceed hegemonically, from the USA to the rest of the world, with little or no flow in the opposite direction”. This, in a sense, indicates the problems that face an increasingly ‘globalized’ world. One needs, in fact, to question in which direction the ‘globalisation’ actually flows. Although this statement may seem to be somewhat of a paradox, as I have already stated, the concept of globalisation is far from the incorporative multi-directional idea that many perceive it to be.

Gerardo Mosquera (1994: 133) sums up the situation quite aptly when he writes:

Every time the word ‘globalisation’ is mentioned, one tends to imagine a planet in which all points are interconnected in a reticular network. In fact, connections only happen inside a radical and hegemonic pattern around the centres of power, where the peripheral countries (most of the world) remain disconnected from one another, or are only connected indirectly via – and under the control of – the centres.

This observation applies to all spheres concerned in globalization, whether they are economic, cultural, or political. However, with particular focus on art, Mosquera (1994: 135) notes that, “the world is practically divided between curating cultures and curated cultures”. Although I have stated in previous chapters that artists from the so-called peripheries, now have more access to international mechanisms of exhibition and so forth, Mosquera’s views (written in 1994) still hold true in many respects. A

key problem is that western values and traditions are continually imposed onto artists in order to classify and group them into exhibitions or shows under a certain theme so that people will find it easier to ‘understand’ their work. This has become apparent in recent years with a number of “theme-less survey exhibitions such as *African Art Now*, *Africa Remix* and *Flow*” (Simbao 2008: 59). The primary problem with such exhibitions is that Africa, as Mbembe points out, is a continent in continual flux. It is a continent where, as I explained in Chapter 1, migrants drift across borders in all directions taking customs and traditions with them, and cross-pollinating cultures wherever they go. Therefore, to try to group artists from all over under one encompassing theme that proposes to identify some unifying characteristics that define what is African, “reveals a reluctance to sufficiently unpack the largely American and European label ‘Contemporary African Art’” (Simbao 2008: 59).

Simon Njami (2007: 20) highlights another way in which western institutions attempt to organise cultural production from Africa, when he writes in the *Africa Remix* catalogue that:

We need to avoid reproducing western classifications that have split creativity into distinct disciplines. To show the contemporaneity of Africa without including music, film or literature would be like looking at a global phenomenon through tunnel vision.

Various disciplines such as music, literature and art have been intertwined throughout history in African artists’ work, and as I have pointed out in the section on “The Technologies of Production” in Chapter 3, continue to be linked through the work of artists such as Rhode and Chiurai. Mosquera (1994: 139) points out that the only way to move towards a truly inter-cultural circulation of art is to “change formats, cultural extension, work within schools and communities, the use of the press and media, and

the development of many other ways emerging from local characteristics, interests and inventiveness". He continues that this must "become a part of the responsibility of every curator of the 'Third World', as well as elsewhere, who aspires to a true plurality in the diffusion of art" (ibid.). Haupt (2003: 11) brings to light an illustration of how media and education can be used to provide such 'plurality of diffusion' in the case of hip-hop in his discussion with Shaheen Ariefdien, a member of the Cape Town hip-hop crew Profits of da City (POC). He notes how the internet and chat rooms provide hip-hop heads from across the globe with a way to "mobilise around projects of similar concern". He goes on to highlight a documentary by Big Noise Film Media, which tracks the production of music where people record in different destinations such as Palestine or Tanzania and send it via the internet to other locations such as Holland to be mixed. Ariefdien applauds the efforts of such individuals and talks about having, "a summer school for kids of fucked up areas [such as] kids from Sao Paolo, from Dar as Salaam, you know, like from Papua New Guinea and Cape Flats" (Haupt 2003: 12). Ariefdien does not see this as a simple solution but is instead "aware that the relationships that are established in cyberspace actually need to translate into real action as grassroots level" (ibid.).

I think it is this kind of idea, where artists, curators, and critics from regions other than Europe and America get linked up and mobilised together, that Mosquera is trying to get across. However, as with hip-hop, grassroots change is needed. Haupt (2003: 12) gives reasons why this is imperative:

This is particularly important, given the considerable size of the digital divide in Africa and many other Third World contexts. Until this key issue is solved, the internet is but one tool in the hands of activists and interest groups who wish to strengthen civil society and provide greater access to public space.

He goes on to illustrate that in the case of hip-hop “more conventional avenues such as community radio, the print media, the informal exchange of mix tapes and CDs as well as word of mouth continue to be powerful tools in the hands of the hip-hop movement”. He therefore implies that a mobilisation of people on a local level needs to be achieved in order to set the platform for more globally significant changes in power structures to take place. In fact Mosquera (1994: 138) discusses this need to become more independent of western influence when he writes:

Rather than limiting ourselves to a help-claiming mentality, which reinforces dependency by blaming it for everything, we need to encourage action towards internal solutions to our problems. A more aggressive attitude is needed, as well as a better use of indigenous resources and possibilities, especially in the pursuit of alternatives in civilian society.

It is not just for art’s sake that local artists, curators and critics need to take a more hands-on role and become more aggressive in the organisation of international circuits of exhibition, but particularly in the case of South Africa it is essential in many more respects so that civil society can be kept in check. What I am trying to indicate is laid out by Chiurai in an interview he had with Percy Zvomuya recently. While discussing African politics Zvomuya posed the question to Chiurai of what he thinks should be done with the dictum from an Achebe novel “writers don’t give prescriptions, they give headaches”, to which Chiurai replied: “If artists don’t prescribe solutions then politicians are the leaders” (2009: page unknown). Zvomuya muses over this as he suggests that “the uncontested cult of leadership hasn’t exactly served the continent well” and wonders whether Chiurai has managed to “unsettle the monoliths of power” as he puts it (2009: page unknown).

This need to question such monoliths of power is essential for South African art to foster a more inclusive aesthetic and therefore be able to achieve Mosquera’s idea of

‘true plurality in the diffusion of art’. However, in order for South African artists to play a role in deconstructing the current hierarchy in global Fine Art practice they need to begin to break through barriers that have for so long limited the growth of a truly inclusive society. As I have tried to illustrate in both Chapter 1 (the section on race) and Chapter 2 (the section on politics and resistance), racial relations have been the major restricting factor opposing such society in South Africa, and both artists actively work to question perceptions, stereotypes, and stigmas in order to foster inclusive philosophies and attitudes in the public. Simbao notes, however, what is going wrong when curating exhibitions that include African artists writing that: “The commonality can no longer satisfactorily be race, nor can it be geography. We all know that the nation-state is in theory dead (or at least dead enough to be politically incorrect)” (Simbao 2008: 60). Although both Rhode and Chiurai tackle racial themes in their art, it is the way that they do it which makes them so successful and relevant to contemporary global audiences.

Simbao goes on to highlight a possible success story in the form of an exhibition entitled *Street Level: Mark Bradford, William Cordova and Robin Rhode* which was curated for the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University and exhibited at the Institute for Contemporary Art in Boston (2008: 62). She notes that the key aspect of the exhibition is that it “successfully grows out of the artworks themselves” (ibid). It becomes apparent that what linked the artworks and created a discourse between them was the common theme of the street. She notes how “without being explicitly framed by ‘South-Africanness’, Rhode’s nuances of the street as location, culture and performance space were able to resonate with the work of other artists, creating cultural bridges” (ibid.).

I have tried to illustrate in the sections on city spaces and crime in Chapter 2 via a comparison of the issues drawn out in hip-hop songs and Rhode and Chiurai's work, locations and cultures across the globe can be linked through their focus on urban spaces. One finds that the issues that face city dwellers across the globe are becoming increasingly similar and parallels can be drawn between different spaces and contexts, for example inner city degradation and rising gang violence in post-civil rights America and post Apartheid South Africa.

With the size of cities across the globe increasing rapidly everyday and evermore people relocating from rural to urban surroundings, more and more of us find ourselves becoming part of these city-spaces. However, as I have shown, these cities are becoming increasingly cross pollinated with cultures from across the globe. The same streets that Chiurai observes in Johannesburg in which different groups constantly struggle to coexist with both the foreign and the familiar, begin to reflect streets across the globe. It therefore is possible for such conversations to be set up as those between the artworks in the *Street Level* exhibition Simbao discusses. With people running out of ways to define or classify themselves with regard to race or nationality, experiences of street culture are becoming a universal link by means of which young people in particular, identify with each other. The increase in migrational movement globally means that people are leaving behind the "post-" that they once belonged to and finding themselves in a different location without the stigma that comes with that all-to-familiar prefix. Rhode is a prime example, leaving "post-"apartheid South Africa, and finding that issues which concern urban South Africans also concern urbanites across the globe somehow making the "post-" seem

rather irrelevant. I believe that it is hip-hop's recognition of such universal experiences of the street that allows it to debunk the notions of a 'post-' fad, and like Chiurai and Rhode's art, attempt to defy outdated classifications in order to create a more inclusive aesthetic. However, as much as hip-hop claims to transcend boundaries of race, geography, nationality, gender and the like, and as much as artists like Rhode and Chiurai successfully employ hip-hop strategies or philosophies in their visual art, it still faces inevitable criticism. In order to illustrate this I return to Michael Eric Dyson's (2005: xi) view that:

There are some who dismiss hip-hop as the dead letter of brazen stereotype-mongering among the severely undereducated and their gaggle of learned and over-interpreting defenders. Other critics claim that the deficits of hip-hop are amplified because they blare beyond the borders of ugly art to inspire youth to even uglier behaviour. And others protest that stripped of politics, history, and racial conscience, hip-hop is little more than sonic pathology that blasts away all the achievements of the civil rites struggle.

As is seen in the last two sections of chapter 3 on issues of authenticity and globalisation, and discussions of gangsta rap, it cannot be contested that through the influence of capitalism, hip-hop stereotypes have been created which do no more than create fantastical characters to sell records. However, I believe that I have shown that hip-hop goes much deeper to appeal to the sensibilities of young people such as Rhode and Chiurai who have a drive to promote significant social change. This appeal has endured over three decades, to continue to manifest itself in different forms, through different mediums in different locations across the globe. It is apparent that Rhode and Chiurai are anything but "severely undereducated". If anything their art has the ability to inspire people from any background to look more closely at their surroundings and begin to question how the ubiquitous "yellow lines" might direct the flow of life in their immediate environment.

Although, as Chiurai points out, young South African's are all too ready to adhere to the "bling dictates of corporatised hip-hop", if they instead began to focus on the abilities of more conscious hip-hop to create discourse between marginalised societies across the globe, perhaps problems such as xenophobia would not have such a devastating effect. South Africans need to embrace Africa's history of cultural flux and recognise its unique environment to foster diverse, positive attitudes of sharing, and ideas that could inspire generations across the globe. People need to step beyond the past and break free of the "post-" in order to become truly contemporary, for as Njami (2007: 22) writes:

Contemporaneity is and always has been history on the move, a history that we witness, or engender perhaps, but whose finality we cannot ponder ... a history that makes us rethink ourselves, not in reference to one fixed, outmoded identity, but as protean beings with multiple, changeable identities.

Bibliography

- Anon, 2005. *Charcoal Revolution* [Online]. Available at: http://www.obertcontemporary.com/artist_press.aspx?ar=5 [Accessed 22 May 2008].
- Ards, A., 2004. Organizing the Hip-Hop Generation. In M. Forman & M.A. Neal, Eds. *That's the Joint: The Hip-Hop Studies Reader*. New York: Routledge, pp. 311-323.
- Bartlett, A., 2004. Airshafts, Loudspeakers, and the Hip-Hop Sample: Contexts and African American Musical Aesthetics. In M. Forman & M.A. Neal, Eds. *That's the Joint: The Hip-Hop Studies Reader*. New York: Routledge, pp. 393-406.
- Bellini, A., 2005. Robin Rhode: the Dimension of Desire. *Flash Art*, 244, pp.91.
- Blair, M.E., 2004. Commercialization of the Rap Music Youth Subculture. In M. Forman & M.A. Neal, Eds. *That's the Joint: The Hip-Hop Studies Reader*. New York: Routledge, pp. 497-504.
- Blither, P., 2002. Content, Context, and Cultural Commitment: Curating the Performing Arts. In P. Vergne, Ed. *How Latitudes Become Forms: Art in a Global Age*. Minneapolis: Walker Art Centre. Available at: http://latitudes.walkerart.org/images/text/pb_conversation.pdf [Accessed 13 April 2009].
- Boutoux, T., 2007. Wait a Minute, This Is Heineken, This Should Be Black Label... In S. Rosenthal, Ed. *Walk Off: Robin Rhode*. Ostfildern, Germany: Hatje Cantz Verlag, pp. 27-35.
- Bremner, L., 1998. Crime and the Emerging Landscape of Post-Apartheid Johannesburg. In H. Judin & I. Vladislavic, Eds. *Blank: Architecture, Apartheid and After*. Cape Town: David Philip, pp. 49-63.
- Chang, J. 2005. *Can't Stop Won't Stop: A History of the Hip Hop Generation*. London: Ebury.
- De Vries, F., 2007. Urban Guerilla of Afro Pop Art. *The Weekender*, 3 Feb. (page number unknown). Available at: http://www.obertcontemporary.com/artist_press.aspx?ar=5 [Accessed 22 May 2008].
- De Souza, A., 2003. Name Calling. In D. Frankel, Ed. *Looking Both Ways* Catalogue. Curated by Laurie Ann Farrell. New York: Snoeck Publishers, pp. 18-21.
- Dyson, M.E., 2004. Foreward. In M. Forman & M.A. Neal, Eds. *That's the Joint: The Hip-Hop Studies Reader*. New York: Routledge, pp. xi-xiv.

- Erasmus, Z. 2001. *Coloured by History, Shaped by Place: Perspectives on Coloured identities in the Cape*. Cape Town: Kwela Books.
- Farrell, L., 2004. Robin Rhode: Artists Space, New York. *ArtSouthAfrica*, (Volume Unknown), pp. 68.
- Ferguson, L., 1995. Reflections on the Question: Why a Johannesburg Biennale? in *Africus: Johannesburg Biennale 1995*. Johannesburg : Greater Johannesburg Transitional Metropolitan Council, pp. 9-11.
- Forman, M. 2004. Looking for the Perfect Beat: Hip-Hop Aesthetics and Technologies of Production. In M. Forman & M.A. Neal, Eds. *That's the Joint: The Hip-Hop Studies Reader*. New York: Routledge, pp. 389-392.
- Forman, M., 2004. "Represent": Race, Space, and Place in Rap Music. In M. Forman & M.A. Neal, Eds. *That's the Joint: The Hip-Hop Studies Reader*. New York: Routledge, pp. 201-221.
- Goldberg, R., 2004. Robin Rhode. *Artforum International*, 43(4), page unknown.
- Green, C., 2007. Kudzanai Chiurai at the Obert Contemporary. *ArtSouthAfrica*, [Online]. 6 (2), Available at: http://www.obertcontemporary.com/artist_press.aspx?ar=5 [Accessed 22 May 2008].
- Green, C., 2008. Robin Rhode's Homecoming. *Mail & Guardian*, 7 Mar, p.4.
- Gruben, P., 2008. Talking 'bout a Revolution. *Live Out Loud* [Online]. Available at: http://www.obertcontemporary.com/artist_press.aspx?ar=5 [Accessed 24 November 2008].
- Gule, K., 2004. Robin Rhode. In S. Perryer, Ed. *10 Years 100 Artists: Art in a Democratic South Africa*. Cape Town: Bell Roberts.
- Zondi, M., 2005. At the Centre's Edge. *ArtSouthAfrica*, [Online]. 4 (1), Available at: <http://www.artsouthafrica.com/?article=257> [Accessed 26 February 2008].
- Halbreich, K., 2003. Overview. In P. Vergne, Ed. *How Latitudes Become Forms: Art in a Global Age*. Minneapolis: Walker Art Centre. Available at: <http://latitudes.walkerart.org/overview/> [Accessed 13 April 2009].
- Haupt, A., 2003. Hip-Hop in the age of empire: Cape flats style. In K. McKenzie, E. Pieterse, A. Simone, D. Wooldridge, Eds. *Dark Roast Occasional Paper Series*. Cape Town: Isandla Institute. Available at: www.isandla.org.za [Accessed 28 May 2008].
- Haupt, A., 2008. *Stealing Empire*. Cape Town: HSRC Press. Available at: www.hsrcpress.ac.za [Accessed 21 May 2008].

- Hlongwane, N., 2008. Portrait of the Artist as a Revolutionary. In M. Soga, Ed. *Yellow Lines Catalogue*. s.n.: Johannesburg. Pp. 27-28.
- Ilesanmi, O. 2004. *Robin Rhode*. [Online] Available at: <http://latitudes.walkerart.org/artists/index3ebc.html> [Accessed 16 December 2009].
- Kahn, R., 2005. Propogandist. *SL magazine*, June 2005, (Page number unknown). Available at: http://www.obertcontemporary.com/artist_press.aspx?ar=5 [Accessed 22 May 2008].
- Kino, C., 2007. Something There Is That Loves A Wall. *The New York Times*, 13 May. (Page unknown).
- Kirk, P., 2000. Suffering Sleazy Hotel Syndrome. *Mail & Guardian*, 4 July. (Page unknown). Available at: www.queensu.ca/samp/sampresources/migrationdocuments/commentaries/2000/hotel.htm [Accessed 28 January 2009].
- Klopper, S., 2000. Hip-hop Graffiti Art. In S. Nuttall & C. Michael, Eds. *Senses of Culture: South African Cultural Studies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Pp. 178-196
- Lepecki, A., 2008. Smudger. In S. Rosenthal, Ed. *Walk Off: Robin Rhode*. Ostfildern, Germany: Hatje Cantz Verlag, pp. 19-25.
- Madondo, B., 2005. Pop Goes the Easel – Zimbabwean Artist Kudzi Chiurai is About to Explode onto the Local Scene. *The Sunday times*, 1 May. (Page unknown). Available at: http://www.obertcontemporary.com/artist_press.aspx?ar=5 [Accessed 22nd May 2008].
- Mbembe, A., 2004. Aesthetics of Superfluity. *Public Culture*, 16(3), pp. 373-405.
- Mbembe, A., 2007. Afropolitanism. In S. Njami, Ed. *Africa Remix: Contemporary Art of a Continent Catalogue*. Curated by Simon Njami. London: Hayward Gallery, pp. 26-29.
- McKenzie, R., 2008. *We Need To Address Xenophobia* [Online]. Available at: www.news24.com/News24/South_Africa/News/0,,2-7-1442_2323858,00.html [Accessed 28 May 2009].
- Mkefa, Z., 2004. Child of the Zimbabwean Revolution. *This Day Newspaper*, 3 Aug, (Page unknown).
- Mosquera, G., 1994. Some Problems in Transcultural Curating. In J. Fischer, Ed. *Global Visions: Towards a New Internationalism in the Visual Arts*. London: Kala Press, pp. 133-139.

- Neal, M.A., 2004. I Used to Love H.E.R.: Hip-Hop in/and the Culture Industries. In M. Forman & M.A. Neal, Eds. *That's the Joint: The Hip-Hop Studies Reader*. New York: Routledge, pp. 493-495.
- Neal, M.A., 2004. The Message: Rap, Politics, and Resistance. In M. Forman & M.A. Neal, Eds. *That's the Joint: The Hip-Hop Studies Reader*. New York: Routledge, pp. 307-309.
- Nemiroff, D., 1998. Crossings. In D. Nemiroff, Ed. *Crossings*. Ottawa : National Gallery of Canada, pp. 13-41.
- Njami, S., 2007. Chaos and Metamorphosis. In S. Njami, Ed. *Africa Remix: Contemporary Art of a Continent Catalogue*. London: Hayward Gallery, pp. 13-23.
- O'Toole, S., 2005. Robin Rhode at Perry Rubenstein. *Art in America*, Feb 2005, pp. 131.
- Papastergiadis, N., 2000. *The Turbulence of Migration: Globalization, Deterritorialization, and Hybridity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Pepper, J., 2003. The Diaspora as Object. In D. Frankel, Ed. *Looking Both Ways Catalogue*. Curated by Laurie Ann Farrell. New York: Snoeck publishers, pp. 18-21.
- Perry, I., 2004. *Prophets of the Hood: Politics and Poetics in Hip Hop*. U.S.A: Duke University Press.
- Phelan, P., 1993. *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*. London: Routledge.
- Ratner, M., 2005. Robin Rhode. *Frieze Magazine* [Online], Issue 88, Feb 2005, Accessed at: http://www.frieze.com/issue/review/robin_rhode/ [Accessed 19 February 2008].
- Robecchi, M., 2008. Handwriting on the Wall. In C. Wetherilt & G. Osborne, Eds. *Who Saw Who Catalogue*. Curated by Stephanie Rosenthal. London: Hayward Publishing, pp. 84-93.
- Rosenthal, S., 2007. Walk Off. In P. Dander & S. Rosenthal, Eds. *Robin Rhode: Walk Off Catalogue*. Germany: Hatje Cantz Verlag, pp. 7-17.
- Rosenthal, S., 2008. Introduction. In C. Wetherilt & G. Osborne, Eds. *Who Saw Who Catalogue*. Curated by Stephanie Rosenthal. London: Hayward Publishing, pp. 10-11.
- Rosenthal, S., 2008. Conversation with Robin Rhode. In C. Wetherilt & G. Osborne, Eds. *Who Saw Who Catalogue*. Curated by Stephanie Rosenthal. London: Hayward Publishing, pp. 46-54.
- Rupare, N., 2008. Afrika, Xenophobia and the Illusion of Freedom. In M. Soga, Ed. *Yellow Lines Catalogue*. s.n.: Johannesburg. Pp. 43-44.

- Sassen, R., 2004. *Calling a Spade a Spade: Youth, Audacity and Bravery in the Work of Zim Painter Kudzanai Chiurai*. [Online] Available at: <http://www.artthrob.co.za/04aug/reviews/zuva.html> [Accessed 26 December 2009].
- Schusterman, R., 2004. Challenging Conventions in the Fine Art of Rap. In M. Forman & M.A. Neal, Eds. *That's the Joint: The Hip-Hop Studies Reader*. New York: Routledge, pp. 459-479.
- Sele, B., 2002. Content, Context, and Cultural Commitment: Curating the Performing Arts. In P. Vergne, Ed. *How Latitudes Become Forms: Art in a Global Age*. Minneapolis: Walker Art Centre. Available at: http://latitudes.walkerart.org/images/text/pb_conversation.pdf [Accessed 13 April 2009].
- Sey, J., 2008. Jozi Juice. In C. Wetherilt & G. Osborne, Eds. *Who Saw Who* Catalogue. Curated by Stephanie Rosenthal. London: Hayward Publishing, pp. 14-25.
- Silber, G., 2007. Paranoia Comes up Against Acclaim. *Business Day*, 1 June, (Page unknown). Available at: http://www.obertcontemporary.com/artist_press.aspx?ar=5 [Accessed 22 May 2008].
- Simbao [Kerkham], R., 2003. Coexistence: Contemporary Cultural Production in South Africa. *NKA: Journal of Contemporary African Art*, 18, pp. 92-93.
- Simbao, R., 2008. Afri thing is not what it seems. *ArtSouthAfrica*, 7(1), pp. 58-63.
- Simone, A., 2000. Going South: African Immigrants in Johannesburg. In C.A. Michael & S. Nuttall, Eds. *Senses of Culture: South African Culture Studies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 426-442.
- Smith, K., 1999. *Robin Rhode* [Online] Available at: <http://www.artthrob.co.za/99nov/artbio.html> [Accessed 12 February 2008].
- Smith, M., 2008. The Month it Stopped Making Sense. *Art South Africa*, 7(1), page unknown.
- Smith, R., 2004. Art in Review. *The New York Times*, 29 Oct, (Page unknown). Available at: <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9E03E3D9133DF93AA15753C1A9629C8B63> [Accessed 30 March 2009].
- Soga, M., 2008. Ed's Note. In M. Soga, Ed. *Yellow Lines* Catalogue. s.n.: Johannesburg. Pp. 6.
- Swedenburg, T., 2004. Homies in The 'Hood: Rap's Commodification of Insubordination. In M. Forman & M.A. Neal, Eds. *That's the Joint: The Hip-Hop Studies Reader*. New York: Routledge, pp. 579-591.

- Tancons, C., 2003. Fugitive: Robin Rhode, Drawings and Performances. *NKA: Journal of Contemporary African Art*, 18, pp. 66-71.
- Werner, C. 1999. *A Change is Gonna Come: Music Race & the Soul of America*. New York: Penguin Group.
- Zvomuya, P., 2009. The Grime Sublime. *Mail & Guardian Online*, [internet] 15 October. Available at: <http://www.mg.co.za/article/2009-10-15-the-grime-sublime> [Accessed 4 January 2010].