IMAGINE|NATION: MEDIATING 'XENOPHOBIA' THROUGH VISUAL AND PERFORMANCE ART

By

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ABSTRACT

This half-thesis has developed as a supporting document to an exhibition titled *Vabvakure, people from far away*, which responds to the growing trends of violence perpetrated against African foreign nationals living in South Africa. This violence which has generally been termed as 'xenophobia' has been framed within this discourse as 'afrophobia', as it is fraught with complexities of race, ethnicity and class. Evidently, not all foreign nationals are at risk but selective targeting of working class black African foreign nationals seems to be the modus operandi. Fanning these flames of prejudice are stereotypes and negative perceptions of Africa and African immigrants that have permeated into the national consciousness of South Africa, which the mainstream media has been complicit in cultivating. My practice is concerned with challenging this politic of representation in relation to the image of the African foreign national within South African society, who have been presented negatively and labelled as the 'Makwerekwere,' the 'bogeymen' that have been blamed for the country's current woes. In response to this, my research adopts the premise that forms of cultural mediation such as visual and performance art can offer further insights and possibly yield solutions that can be used to address these sentiments. As globalisation and neoliberal ideologies reshape the world, there is a growing need in the post-colonial state to revisit and re-construct notions of individual and collective identity, especially that of the nation. Nations, nationalisms and citizenry can no longer be defined solely through indigeneity, for as a result of radical shifts in the flow of migration and immigration policies that allow for naturalisation of aliens and foreign nationals, we are now faced with burgeoning levels of social diversity to the extent that constructions of nationhood that are based on the concept of autochthony have resulted in the persecution of the 'other'.

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I declare that this thesis is my own work and that all the sources I have used have been acknowledged by complete bibliographic references. This thesis is being submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for Master of Fine Art at Rhodes University. I declare that it has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at another university.

Gerald Ralph Tawanda Machona

Date

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

INTRODUCTION

This half-thesis complements the fine art exhibition titled *Vabvakure*, a word used by the Shona people of Zimbabwe. When translated into English the word means '*people from far away*' and is used to describe 'foreigners'. Together this thesis and exhibition identify the global phenomenon of 'xenophobia'[1] and attempt to understand its manifestation in South African society and the growing trends of violence exhibited towards African foreign nationals living in the country. Although this prejudicial attitude in post-Apartheid South Africa dates to at least 1994[2], this study's main emphasis is on its occurrence during the month of May in 2008, largely because of the levels of selective xenophobic violence associated with the events of that month. What emerged at this time was a violence that targeted a particular demographic group among foreign nationals residing in the country, more specifically black foreigners from other parts of Africa.

Having migrated to South Africa from Zimbabwe in 2006 in order to study, the somewhat traumatic events of May 2008 forced me to ask some really tough questions about myself-image. This experience made me question how I am perceived and whether I could do anything to change any negative perceptions or stereotypes that accompanied my precarious Identity as an 'alien' in this social space? It also made me question how the global phenomenon of 'xenophobia' is defined and what its complexities are in relation to South Africa? These questions are addressed in the first section of chapter 1, titled *Localising 'xenophobia' as 'afrophobia' in disguise*, in which I attempt to understand the phenomenon's escalation into violence within South African society. The aim of clearly defining this form of intolerance is to find constructive and meaningful ways of responding to not only this problem, but also the trauma, social fragmentation and current identity crisis it has left behind.

[1] ***Xenophobia*** is a strong feeling of dislike or fear of people from other countries (Hornby 2005: 1708)

[2] Violence against foreign nationals did not begin with the May 2008 attacks. Since 1994, hundreds of people have been harassed, attacked, or killed because of their status as outsiders or non-nationals. For many within and outside of government, previous attacks were an unfortunate but largely insignificant by-product of South Africa's rapid social transformation and integration into the global economy.

Throughout this research a single unanswered question lingered in my mind: Can the visual or performance arts play any meaningful role or provide any significant solutions to the discourse of 'xenophobia' in the context of South African society? Conclusive scholarly responses to xenophobia in general have been generated within the social sciences, the media, civil society and government, explaining the root and immediate causes of this violence, as well as appropriate strategies for short, medium and long-term interventions. While responses to the phenomenon have been well documented and textually analysed in other academic fields, it became vital that this thesis should scrutinise the importance of visual culture, and document the responses of the arts community to this social problem in the hope of finding arts related contributions to this discourse.

O'Toole and Heidenreich-Seleme eloquently suggest what role the arts can play during and after such a period of turbulence. They argue that

> Social traumas caused by wars, mass killings, xenophobia or racial doctrines such as Apartheid can have far reaching consequences on people's lives, often for much longer than the initial cause - their effects may, in fact, last for generations. Dealing with such trauma is often a painful process in which the verbal approach - analysis, explanation and rationalization - may come to a dead end. In such cases, artistic interventions offer the possibility of yielding new insights and perspectives, largely because they work in different ways and formats in addressing the unspoken (O'Toole and Heidenreich-Seleme 2012:17).

Based on O'Toole's and Heidenreich-Seleme's (2012:17) assertion, this thesis argues that art related forms of cultural mediation such as visual and performance art, can indeed offer further insights and possibly yield solutions that can be used to address 'xenophobia' in our societies. Three approaches to visual cultural production will form the basis of this argument. The first area of mediation focuses on visual art exhibitions, secondly the visual culture of television commercial advertisements and lastly public performance art.

When scrutinizing visual art exhibitions I make reference to; Rory Bester's exhibition *Kwerekwere: journeys into strangeness* which appears in Chapter 1*;* as well as the *'Us'* exhibition which features in Chapter 2. In exploring these exhibitions I mainly focus on their curatorial strategies and critique artworks from these shows that deal with the subject matter of 'xenophobia', 'afrophobia' and the 'alien's' relationship to the nation.

The second space of cultural mediation which falls within the realm of the media studies appears in a section titled *Real Diversity* in Chapter 2. In this segment I scrutinize the visual culture of advertisements and its

contribution to mass public opinion through an iconographic analysis of a television commercial by Nando's restaurant called *Pro-diversity*. This advert was banned for supposedly having 'xenophobic' undertones. However, if critically viewed, I argue that the commercial's message is indeed against 'xenophobia', and instead I suggest it promotes a much needed, thought-provoking way of reinterpreting the possible meaning of 'diversity' in contemporary South Africa.

The last site of cultural mediation is found in Chapter 3, where l turn my attention to public performance art with specific reference to the Nyau[3] spectacle of the Chewa people, who originated in Malawi but immigrated to Zimbabwe and other parts of Southern Africa. The Chewa used this cultural institution to negotiate a sense of identity in the face of xenophobic attitudes from a Zimbabwean populous, for this reason Nyau has become the impetus of my approach to performance art, which I further explain in this chapter.

However, before I address these issues it is important that I contextualize my artistic practice through providing a background of the practical research and how this exhibition *Vabvakure, People from far away* has developed.

BACKGROUND OF RESEARCH

As a departure point I relay an incident I had growing up in my early teens. During the colonial and pre-independence era of Zimbabwe's history, then Rhodesia, migrant labour was commonly used on European owned farms, factories and mines. The country was known throughout the world as the 'bread basket of Africa', and attracted immigrants[4] from all over Africa and the world. As a result, growing up in that country I was surrounded by 'foreigners', for the mine close to where I lived employed migrant workers from Zambia, Mozambique, Malawi, South Africa, India and China.

I have many childhood memories of the mining town called Buchwa, located in the Matabeleland Province of Zimbabwe; the most memorable being an encounter with the 'strange' and 'foreign' figure of a Nyau masquerader (1997: Fig. 1) when I was eight years old.

This masquerade figure, associated with Chewa male initiation rituals that originate from Malawi, wore a mask that fully concealed his face. He moved to the rhythm of a drum and provocatively kicked dust into the air. I remember feeling bewildered by this strange cultural practice, but my curiosity lead me to seek consolation

[3]Nyau is a Chewa word meaning Mask, but is also used to describe the masked spectacle of the Chewa ethnic group found in Sothern and central Africa but synonymous to Malawi (Chikuta, Guhrs and Mtonga, 2007: 179)

[4]Immigration is the movement of people into a country or region which they are not native in order to settle there.

from my mother who explained that the masqueraders where `Chigure'[5]; and were to be revered as they possessed spiritual powers that were not to be tampered with. Little did I know then that this experience would shape the way I related to and with people from far away - with a strange allure, respect and interest. My mother further explained that the spectacle was a part of a tradition performed by the Chewa immigrant population and was considered a foreign cultural practice to Zimbabwe.

One of the employees, who regularly maintained our garden when I was young, was a descendent of a Malawian immigrant. It seemed quite extraordinary to me as a child, to imagine he could have been behind that mask that day wielding such a captivating performance. However, due to the spectacle's secrecy around disclosing the identity of the man behind the mask, till this day, I have never been able to prove whether or not he was the performer behind the mask. Nonetheless, this first encounter sensitized me to the 'strangers' amongst us and debunked the falsehood that to be a Zimbabwean one had to belong to either the Shona, Ndebele, or English social-linguistic group. Notwithstanding, the Chewa were for a long time, and are in some parts of the country still perceived as 'alien' and non-indigenous to the nation. They are often met with xenophobic attitudes in the form of derogatory name calling and ethnic slurs[6] but rarely with violence.

In response to this, the Chewa skilfully used their public cultural spectacle of Nyau to challenge local derogatory perceptions of them as foreigners and this helped in the reconstruction or re-imagination of Chewa identity in Zimbabwean society. Scholars such as Damion (2007:1) have supported this by arguing that through public spectacles like Nyau, the Chewa people of Zimbabwe were able to carve a niche for African immigrant identity on the Zimbabwean landscape since the pre-colonial times to present, in effect negating the effects of 'xenophobia' and the negative perceptions projected on them as alien to Zimbabwean society.

At present it seems that the tables have turned and now South Africa has become the popular destination to immigrate to, and as a result Zimbabwean and 'other' foreign nationals have become the 'aliens' struggling to carve an identity in the South African social landscape.

In the years of 2000 to 2009, Zimbabwe underwent one of the greatest economic collapses in the history of the world. Eyler (2010:14) records that the "country's unemployment rate sky-rocketed to over 80% by 2007", resulting in a mass exodus of Zimbabwean forced economic migrants, seasonal migrant workers, special skills labour, students and refugees to neighbouring SADC countries and abroad. South Africa hosts the largest

[5]Chigure is a shona word used to describe a Nyau masqurader and their performance of Gule Wamkulu (the Big Dance)
[6]Mabwidi, Mablantyre

population of these Zimbabwean nationals living in the diaspora, and this number is estimated to be well over 1.5 million (Crush and Tevera 2010:5).

In the month of May in 2008, a series of violent service delivery protests erupted in the township of Alexanda, located in the Gauteng province of South Africa. This wave of protests was particularly violent and was labelled by the media as 'xenophobia'. The violence soon spread to neighbouring townships and informal settlements[7] across the country, leaving in its wake 62, deaths including, 21 South Africans; at least 670 wounded; dozens of women raped; and close to 100 000 people displaced and their property worth millions of rand looted (Misago, Landau and Monson, 2009: 7). While 'xenophobia' is usually defined as the intense or irrational dislike, hatred or fear of people from other countries (Harris 2002: 160-171), in South Africa it has taken a violence form that is layered in complexities of race, ethnicity, class struggles and distorted notions of who is considered an insider and outsider in the processes of nation-building. This point is substantiated by the fact that 21 of the deceased victims where South African citizens who were mistaken as foreigners and targeted based on their skin complexion and failure to conform to a fraught notion of an authentic South African identity.

My art practice thus became strongly influenced by these events and drawing parallels between the Chewa people's experience of 'foreignness' in Zimbabwe and my own position as an 'alien' living in South Africa; it seemed appropriate to adopt the performance strategies used in the Nyau in addressing the xenophobic tension present in South African society. My art practice at the time of the attacks was invested in documenting and narrating the collapse of the Zimbabwean economy that preceded the large diasporic exodus of Zimbabwean nationals during 2007. Zimbabwean currency quickly became my medium of choice, which I used to produce artworks that translated the economic statistics into tangible artworks.

One such artwork is the *Book* series 2009 (Fig. 2), which comprised of 15 books. This series documents the birth and death of the Zimbabwean Dollar (ZWD), which was issued in 1979 and abandoned in 2009 after hyper-inflation, rendered the currency dysfunctional. Each book represents a year and is equivalent to one American US dollar. The pages of each book are comprised of facsimiles of Zimbabwean dollars which equated to the exchange rate with the United States Dollar (USD) in the given year (e.g. in 1980 1 USD = 1 ZWD, in 2001 1 USD = 400 ZWD etc). This meant that the books would get thicker as the years increased from 1980 to 2008 due to the hyperinflationary nature of the ZWD currency. Other works such as the print series titled *A loaf of bread* (2009: Fig. 3), calculated the prices of a loaf of bread from 1980 to 2008 and attempted to translate the

[7] The term 'township' refers to densely populated areas that were reserved for non-white populations during Apartheid. Informal settlements refer to unplanned residential areas, usually filled with self-built housing or shacks.

economic statistics into a tangible form, a visual language that portrays the difficulties of living in such a unstable economic environment where a loaf of bread in 1980 was priced at 1 ZWD and escalated to a price of 100 Trillion ZWD in 2008.

These earlier artworks told the story of the grind and hustle of living in a country experiencing a hyper-inflationary economy, but when it came to addressing the new concerns I was grappling with – alienation and prejudices towards my 'foreignness' in South Africa – the medium of sculpture and the gallery space alone felt inadequate in critiquing and addressing these new issues. As a result I began to investigate performance art and the possibilities offered by public cultural spectacles in the hope of generating new discourse pertaining to the dilemma of 'xenophobia'. My interests quickly turned towards the Nyau masquerade because of my earlier association with the practice and its use by the immigrant Chewa population of Zimbabwe to challenge 'xenophobia'.

I appropriated Nyau as a performance art strategy and adopted its use of masking to conceal the identity of the performer. I constructed the masks out of decommissioned Zimbabwean currency instead of using the traditional materials of feather, grass and wood used by the Chewa. The choice to construct the masks out of ZWD was a conscious effort to draw parallels between my previous works of art (2009: Fig. 2-3), that documented the birth and death of the ZWD. These masks not only served as a signifier of Zimbabwean economic migrants and their exodus from the economic hardships of their native lands but also testified to the growing global trends of migration on and off the African continent. With each mask that I constructed, I developed a character based on the popular occupations Zimbabweans and other African foreign nationals would typically occupy whilst living in South Africa. These characters or personas would then be performed and would either incorporate song or dance or other similar Nyau approaches to performance. Each masquerader was titled using the Shona prefix, '*Ndiri*', which translates to *'I am'*. This led to the creation of a number of performance work and characters that were performed and documented through film and photography. Namely *Ndiri cross border trader*, *Ndiri barman*, *Ndiri Dj*, *Ndiri barber*, *Ndiri garderner*, *Ndiri cleaner*, and *Ndiri bouncer* (2010-2013: Fig 4 – 8).

This process of sculpting objects out of decommissioned currency and using them in performances that are documented through film and photography became an artistic motif I developed a number of times in my work, subsequently leading to the production of this MFA exhibition titled *Vabvakure, People from far away.* An exhibition which relays my personal experiences of alienation and prejudice as an African foreign national living in South Africa through a character titled *Ndiri Afronaut* (2012-2013: Fig. 9); I will further analyse this aspect of my practice in Chapter 3

This way of working allowed me to access a variety of audiences through the gallery space, public space and mass media (in the form of film screenings and a digital online presence on social networking websites). Through these platforms I was able to challenge, reconstruct and re-imagine the negative perceptions associated with my foreignness in South Africa. Through this process I believe I am able to carve a niche or identity that challenges 'afrophobia' for African and Zimbabwean nationals living in South Africa. This work aims to subvert the negative perceptions and stereotypes that fuelled the xenophobic violence of 2008. I will begin with a detailed exploration of the definitions of 'xenophobia' in Chapter 1.

Fig. 1. Artist unknown, *Kapoli* (1997), Feather Nyau mask, no dimensions, not in collection (Reproduction taken from Douglas Curran. 1999 'Nyau Masks and Ritual', *African Arts*, vol. 32, no. 3, Autumn, pp. 68-77.)

Fig. 2. Gerald Machona, *Book series* (2009), Facsimile of decommissioned Zimbabwean Dollars on bond paper bound into 15 leather books, dimensions vary, courtesy of the artist.

Fig. 3, Gerald Machona, *A loaf of bread* (2009), mixed medium decommissioned Zimbabwean dollars, Dimensions vary, courtesy of the artist.

Fig. 4, Gerald Machona, *Ndiri cross border trader performance* (2010) Mask made of decommissioned Zimbabwean dollars, Dimensions vary, courtesy of the artist.

Fig. 5, Gerald Machona, *Ndiri barman performance* (2010) Mask made of decommissioned Zimbabwean dollars, Dimensions vary, courtesy of the artist.

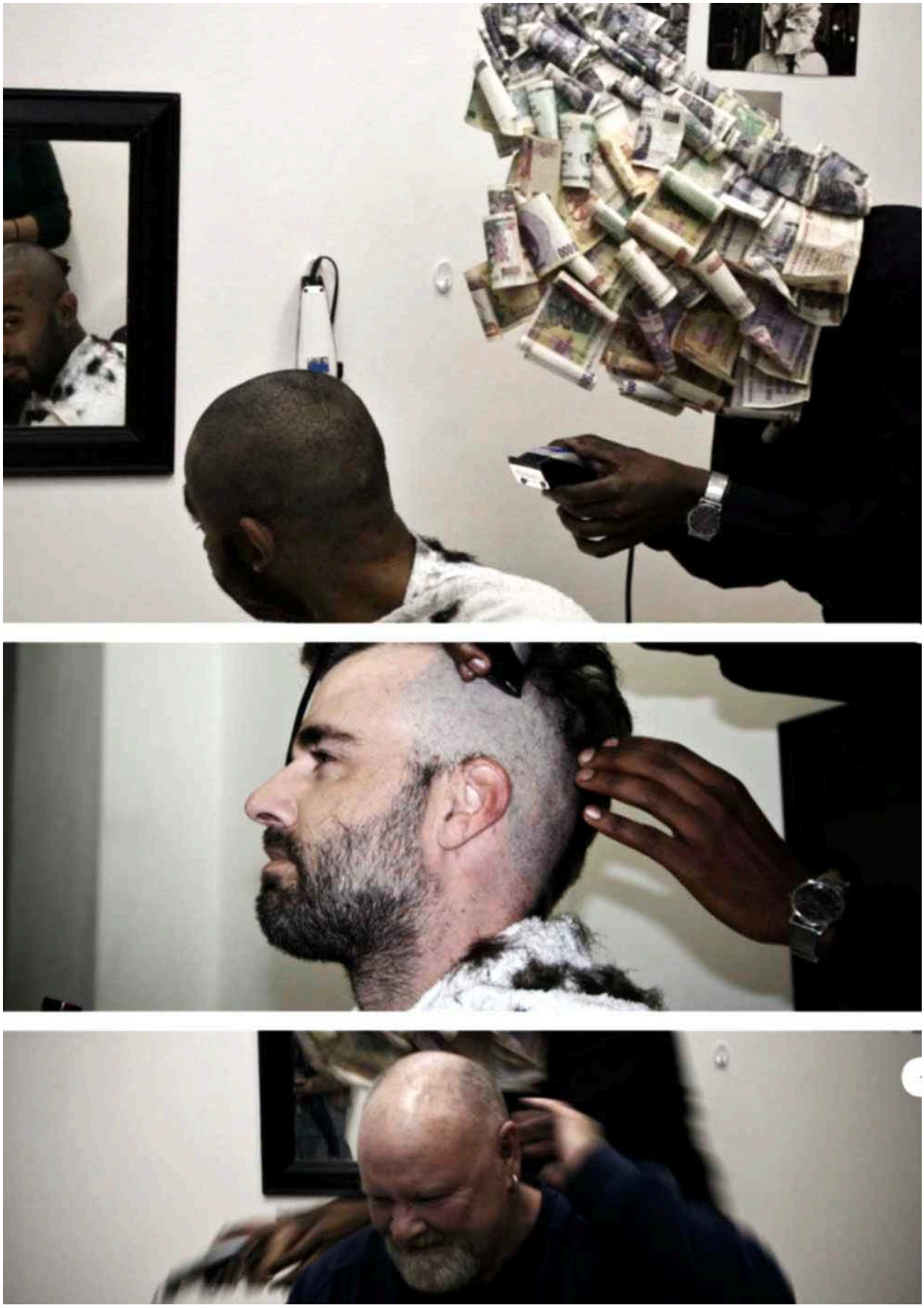

Fig. 6, Gerald Machona, *Ndiri barber performance* (2010) Mask made of decommissioned Zimbabwean dollars, Dimensions vary, courtesy of the artist.

Fig. 7, Gerald Machona, Ndiri *Dj performance* (2010), Mask made of decommissioned Zimbabwean dollars, Dimensions vary, courtesy of the artist.

Fig. 8. Gerald Machona, *Ndiri Bouncer performance* (2011) Mask made of decommissioned Zimbabwean dollars, Dimensions vary, courtesy of the artist.

Fig. 9. Gerald Machona, *Ndiri Afronaut performance* (2012-2013) suit as mask made of decommissioned Zimbabwean dollars, Dimensions vary, courtesy of the artist.

CHAPTER 1: 'XENOPHOBIA'

INTRODUCTION

This chapter begins by broadly defining 'xenophobia' in a global context and then discusses more comprehensively its occurrence in South African society. In most definitions 'xenophobia' is generally framed as a negative attitude towards 'foreigners', but in this chapter, with the support of several academic scholars I argue that these dictionary definitions fail to comment on the abuse and violent retribution that often accompanies these attitudes. This section argues that there is a need to re-evaluate these definitions especially with regards to the phenomenon's occurrence in South African society. Furthermore I examine an idea that suggests the violence of May 2008 was specifically 'afrophobia' rather than just 'xenophobia'. Fanning these flames of prejudice are stereotypes and negative perceptions of Africa and African immigrants that have permeated into the national consciousness of South African society, which the mainstream media has been complicit in cultivating. Upon identifying these social ills I then present a visual art exhibition by Rory Bester titled *Kwerekwere: journeys into Strangeness* that emerged as a response to growing trends of 'afrophobia' within South African society and challenged these prejudices by drawing parallels between the dehumanisation of Black South African citizens as migrants under the discriminatory policies of Apartheid and the gross violation of human rights perpetrated on Black African foreign nationals in present day South African society.

1.1 LOCALISING 'XENOPHOBIA' AS 'AFROPHOBIA' IN DISGUISE

1.1.1 GLOBAL > LOCAL

'Xenophobia' is not found exclusively in South Africa or African societies, but is in fact a phenomenon that spans the globe. The simple fact of belonging to a nation automatically makes us all foreigners to someone else. We are all strangers somewhere, at a given time and point, and travelling outside our native national

borders leaves us vulnerable to the possibility of facing those who are intolerant or prejudice towards our nationality or socio-linguistic group. Kristeva supports these sentiments by arguing that:

> Strangely, the foreigner lives within us: he is the hidden face of our identity, the space that wrecks our abode, the time in which understanding and affinity founder. By recognizing him within ourselves; we are spared detesting him in himself. A symptom that precisely turns "we" into a problem perhaps makes it impossible. The foreigner comes in when the conscious of my difference arises, and he disappears when we all acknowledge ourselves as foreigners, unamenable to bonds and communities (Kristeva 1991: 1).

In order to grasp the complexities of 'xenophobia' as a prejudicial attitude that can manifest into a violent form of discrimination, it is important to understand the phenomenon as a global occurrence with links to the processes of globalisation and its current ideological framework. Thus it is helpful to establish a definition of globalisation.

Globalisation is generally viewed as a process of primarily economic, but also cultural, social and political change that encompasses the globe (O'Riordan 2001: 26) - resulting in the closer integration of countries and peoples of the world. The advent of new technologies[8] have rapidly broken down artificial barriers allowing the free flow of goods, services, capital, knowledge and most importantly people - across national borders and continents (Peng 2011: 17).

Retrospectively, Alarape (2008: 73) argues that despite the many benefits of globalization, there are growing sentiments that its current economic policies of neoliberal global capitalism[9] have not ushered in the promised economic prosperity for all, but rather widened the already enormous gap between the rich and poor, plunging some aspects of society into dire poverty. Such Anti-globalist[10] sentiments have emerged out off this concern and have often argued that globalization is the promotion and domination of Western culture

[8] These processes are driven by technological advancements such as telecommunications infrastructural development, the growth of the information sector, international cooperation, processes of structural adjustment to a new global capitalist economic and political order headed by multinational cooperations and international governmental institutions (O'Riordan, 2001: 26).

[9] "Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices. The state has to guarantee, for example, the quality and integrity of money. It must also set up those military, defence, police and legal structures and functions required to secure private property rights and to guarantee, by force if need be, the proper functioning of markets. Furthermore, if markets do not exist (in areas such as land, water, education, health care, social security, or environmental pollution) then they must be created, by state action if necessary. But beyond these tasks the state should not venture. State interventions in markets (once created) must be kept to a bare minimum because, according to the theory, the state cannot possibly possess enough information to second-guess market signals (prices) and because powerful interest groups will inevitably distort and bias state interventions (particularly in democracies) for their own benefit" (Harvey 2005: 2)

[10] Globalisation has also been argued as a new form of colonialism and imperialism referred to as Neo-colonialism (Nkrumah, 1965)

and capitalism to the exclusion of all other economic systems, a loss of local social diversity and the displacement of local distinctiveness and community in favour of a homogeneous global culture and society. For many people in the post-colonial states and developing world these ideas carry with them a sense of loss of control by the individual over their lives, the inability of national governments to act in the best interests of its citizen, a fear of blandness and a society based on consumption rather than collective good (O'Riordan 2001: 26).

Conversely, for those who have benefited from the free flow of goods, services, capital, knowledge and people, the world has become an oyster, but for the growing majority who feel they have been disadvantaged by globalization and its promotion of neoliberal economics, the disadvantaged have become increasingly protective over the little they have that exists within their local context. In the book *After theory*, Terry Eagleton argues

> The problem at the moment is that the rich have mobility while the poor have locality. Or rather, the poor have locality until the rich get their hands on it. The rich are global and the poor are local - though just as poverty is a global fact, so the rich are coming to appreciate the benefits of locality (Eagleton 2003: 21-22).

If the use of the term mobility is in reference to the movement of people, from one social group, class, or level to another, then Eagleton's assumption is not only applicable to the rich but to the immigrant or foreigner. While I would argue that not all immigrants are rich in the monetary terms, rather their wealth can be considered in their ability to traverse borders and shift between multiple localities. Consequently, it is possible to understand how for the poor or those reliant on a singular locality, an intense mistrust and intolerance of outsiders and foreigners can begin to fester. An attitude that identifies foreigners as beneficiaries of a global process of migration, and would see them branded as scapegoats[11] and co-conspirators of their unfortunate misery giving rise to xenophobic attitudes (Alarape 2008: 73).

Most dictionary definitions describe, 'xenophobia' as a dislike, distrust, hatred or fear of foreigners, and characterise the practice as a negative attitude towards foreigners. Harris (2002: 170) argues that definitions that frame 'xenophobia' only as an attitude, that do not comment on this mind-sets link to abuse and violent retribution towards foreigners are misleading. In this light scholars such as Harris (2002: 170) and Kollapan (1999: 1-4) have called for a revision of dictionary definitions of 'xenophobia', warning that the discriminatory

[11]An Scapegoat is a person who is blamed for something bad that somebody else has done or for some failure (Hornby, 2005)

attitude can no longer be separated from acts of violence and physical abuse - especially when critiquing its occurrence in South Africa society.

1.1.2 'XENOPHOBIA' IN SOUTH AFRICA

In relation to contemporary South African society three hypotheses have emerged as explanations for the violence of May 2008, described by Harris (2002: 170) as, 'the scapegoat hypothesis', 'the isolation hypothesis', and 'the bio-cultural hypothesis'.

The scapegoat hypothesis is rooted within sociological theory, and discusses 'xenophobia' within the context of social transition and change. Hostility towards foreigners is explained in relation to limited resources, such as housing, education, health care and employment, coupled with high expectations during transition (Harris 2002:170). It is suggested that in the post-Apartheid epoch, while people's expectations have been heightened, a realisation that delivery is not immediate has meant that discontent and indignation are at a peak. People are more conscious of their deprivation than ever before (Harris 2002: 170), and as such this creates the ideal situation for a phenomenon like 'xenophobia' to take root and flourish. South Africa's political transition to democracy has exposed the unequal distribution of resources and wealth in the country (Harris 2002: 170).

The isolation hypothesis understands 'xenophobia' as a consequence of Apartheid South Africa's internal segregation and external seclusion from the international community. Morris (1998: 1124-1125) argues that Apartheid insulated South African citizens from other nationalities beyond its bounder's. In this hypothesis, foreigners represent the unknown to South Africans. With the political transition, however, South Africa's borders have opened up and the country has, to some degree, become integrated into the international community. This has brought South Africans into direct contact with the unknown, and with foreigners. According to this hypothesis, the interface between previously isolated South Africans and unknown foreigners creates a space for hostility to develop: "When a group has no history of incorporating strangers it may find it difficult to be welcoming" (Morris 1998: 1125).

The isolation and scapegoat hypotheses of 'xenophobia' provide a general explanation for the phenomenon. In the latter, foreigners are scapegoats for social ills, and the difference (or foreignness) engendered by foreigners accounts for the violence and hostility. In both theories, the foreigner is treated as a homogeneous category, and there is no scope for differentiation between various types of foreigners. However, 'xenophobia'

in South Africa is not applied equally to all foreigners. Some foreigners are at greater risk than others. African foreigners seem to be particularly vulnerable to violence and hostility (Harris 2002: 171-173). Thus a third hypothesis, the biocultural hypothesis of 'xenophobia' offers an explanation for the irregular targeting of African foreigners by South Africans. This hypothesis locates 'xenophobia' at the level of visible difference, or otherness, through physical biological factors and cultural differences exhibited by African foreigners in the country. Morris (1998: 1125) argues that this hypothesis would account for the racial or ethnic cleansing nature of the events of May 2008, Morris presents an example by suggesting that

> Nigerians and Congolese, are easily identifiable as the 'Other'. Due to their physical features, their bearing, their clothing style and their inability to speak one of the indigenous languages, they are in general clearly distinct and local residents are easily able to pick them out and scapegoat them (Morris 1998: 1125)

1.1.3 'AFROPHOBIA' IN DISGUISE

While all three hypotheses equally apply as possible explanations of the causes of the violence of May 2008, when put together as a singular theory a disturbing pattern emerges. A particular group of foreigners was targeted based on a process of racial, ethnic and class profiling. If definitions of 'xenophobia' argue that xenophobic people would dislike all foreigners equally, as it is their 'foreignness' that makes them objectionable, then the patterns that emerge of the targets involved in these incidents of violence in South Africa suggests a prejudice towards working class black African foreign nationals living in impoverished communities. As a result, some social commentators (Mngxitama, 2010: Online) argue that the violence we have so quickly termed 'xenophobia' can also be understood as 'afrophobia' in disguise, "'xenophobia' is the hatred and fear of foreigners, but in South Africa we don't harm white foreigners. All the whites are seen as legal and those from outside are welcomed as tourists". Matsinhe suggests that this anxiety towards black African nationals has its links to colonial and Apartheid race politics:

> Fanon wrote of the 'black man' as 'a phobogenic object, a stimulus to anxiety' among whites. Today it is fair assessment to suggest that Africans are phobogenic unto themselves, that Africa is a stimulus to its own anxiety. Africa's fear of itself is exemplified by the loathing of black foreign nationals in South Africa—peculiarly by the nation's ex-victims of Apartheid— which is increasingly becoming a fundamental component of South Africa's collective identification and public culture. Since the collapse of Apartheid, the phantom of Makwerekwere has been constructed and deployed in and through public discourse to render Africans from outside the borders orderable as the nation's bogeyman (Matsinhe 2011: 296).

According to Matsinhe (2011:296) this anxiety and negative construction of the african immigrant is relient on stereotypic mistruths reminicent of Apartheid race ideology that argue the supremacy of white foriegner over black foriegners. He substanciates this through a study conducted at the University of Johannesburg where

> A Turkish student notes that both black and white South Africans equate the word 'foreigner' with 'black foreigner', which in turn is given 'all different negative connotations'. A Dutch student agrees, pointing out that not only do black South Africans loathe 'black nationalities' but also 'show a lot of respect to white people, because to them they are the creators of wealth' [and black foreign nationals are associated with criminality]. A recent study found that in South Africa's tourism industry 'tourist' is a 'whites only' category; African foreign nationals are *personae non gratae*[12] (Matsinhe 2011:296).

According to Blieden (2008: Onlline) this is a misleading stereotype because statistically the larger percentage of tourists who visit South Africa are actually from Africa:

> 67% of 9 million international tourists to South Africa in 2007 were from other African countries. 30% of international tourism revenue comes from tourists from other African countries. 1.2 million South Africans are employed in the tourism sector. Most of the international tourists for the Soccer World Cup in 2010 were expected to come from Africa (Blieden 2008: Onlline).

This is enough cause to scrutinise the violence of May 2008 as having a racial, perhaps ethnic element and not just a fear of foreigners, which I shall call 'afrophobia' from here on. This intolerance towards black foreigners from other African countries has been documented from as early as 1994, as illustrated by a report conducted by the IOM[13] (Misago, Landau and Monson 2009: 23) which chronologically lists 16 separate xenophobic incidences[14] in 16 different informal settlements and townships across the country, that date to before the

[12] Personae non gratae is a Latin phrase that means an unacceptable or unwelcome person.
[13] IOM is an abbreviation for the Institute of Migration
[14] Dec 1994 **Alexandra (Gauteng):** armed youth gangs destroy foreign-owned homes and property and demand that foreigners be removed from the area.
Sept 1998 **Johannesburg (Gauteng):** Two Senegalese and a Mozambican are thrown from a moving train by a group of individuals returning from a rally at which migrants and refugees were blamed for the levels of unemployment, crime and AIDS in South Africa.
Oct 2000 **Zandspruit (Gauteng):** Fighting breaks out between South African and Zimbabwean residents.
Aug 2005 **Bothaville (Free State):** Zimbabwean and Somali refugees are beaten.

events of May 2008. One possible way of understanding why black foreigners are targets of violence is to situate 'afrophobia' within South Africa's transition from a past of racism under Apartheid to a future of democratic nationalism. At a most basic level, this involves looking at the role of broad social institutions, such as the media, in generating specific images of African foreigners in the country that inform public culture and collective consciousness. More theoretically, this involves looking at the mechanisms of nationalism and the ways in which the image of the African foreign national has been stereotypically represented (Harris 2002: 174-175).

1.1.4 'FORTRESS SOUTH AFRICA', FROM A RACIAL TO A XENOPHOBIC SOCIETY

Most prejudice[15] like 'xenophobia' can be based on negative evaluations that are a result of emotional associations, the need to justify behaviour, or negative beliefs known as stereotypes. What is viewed as stereotypical behaviour is thus a process of generalising. Such generalisations can have some truth to them,

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Dec 2005 **Olievenhoutbosch (Gauteng):** Groups of South Africans chase foreign Africans living in the township's Choba informal settlement from their shacks, shops and businesses.
July 2006 **Knysna (Western Cape):** Somali shop owners in a township outside Knysna are chased out of the area and at least 30 spaza shops are damaged.
Aug 2006 **Cape Town (Western Cape):** During a period of just over a month, between 20 and 30 Somalis are killed in townships surrounding Cape Town.
Feb 2007 **Motherwell (Eastern Cape):** Violence triggered by the accidental shooting of a young South African man (by a Somali shop owner) results in the looting of over one-hundred Somali-owned shops in a 24 hour period.
May 2007 **Ipelegeng Township (North West):** Shops owned by Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Somali and Ethiopian nationals are attacked, looted and in some cases torched.
Sep 2007 **Delmas (Mpumalanga):** After a service-delivery protest by residents, 41 shops owned and staffed by non-nationals are attacked and looted. One death and two serious injuries are reported, and 40 non-nationals take refuge at mosques and with friends.
Oct 2007 **Mooiplaas (Gauteng):** After a clash between a Zimbabwean and a South African family went awry, the local population retaliated by attacking the migrant community, killing two people, brutally injuring 18 and looting 111 shops.
Jan 2008 **Duncan Village (Eastern Cape):** Two Somalis are found burned to death in their shop. Police later arrest seven people in connection with the incident after finding them in possession of property belonging to the deceased.
Jan 2008 **Jeffrey's Bay (Eastern Cape):** After a Somali shop owner allegedly shoots dead a suspected thief, a crowd of residents attack Somali-owned shops, and many Somali nationals seek shelter at the police station.
Jan 2008 **Soshanguve (Gauteng):** One foreign national is burned to death, three others killed, 10 seriously injured and 60 shops looted after residents apprehend the suspects and attack foreign residents in retaliation for the alleged robbery of a local store by four non-nationals. Subsequently, residents call for foreigners to leave, and many non-nationals flee the area.
Jan 2008 **Albert Park (KwaZulu-Natal):** The community forum holds a meeting to address the issue of non-nationals living amongst them, during which the community indicated that they wanted foreign nationals living in the area to leave.
Feb 2008 **Laudium (Gauteng):** At a community meeting in the informal settlement of Itireleng some members encourage residents to chase non-nationals out of the area. Violent clashes take place. Shacks and shops belonging to non-nationals are burned and looted.
Feb 2008 **Valhalla Park (Western Cape):** Residents of Valhalla Park forcefully evict at least five Somali shop owners from the area, injuring three people after having apparently 'warned' the shop owners to leave three months before.

[15]A prejudicial attitude is a distinct combination of feelings, inclination to act, and beliefs. A prejudiced person may therefore dislike a particular group or person and behave in a discriminatory manner towards them, believing they are ignorant or dangerous. (Alarape, 2008: 73-74)

but the problem with stereotypes arises when they are over generalised or just plain inaccurate (Bar-Tal 1989:5), resulting in the construction of negative perceptions that fuel flames of prejudices like 'afrophobia'.

Perhaps the most silent but dangerous way in which these stereotypes occur is through "the mass media, which has over the decades portrayed this continent as a homogenous undifferential place" (Harris 2002: 7) and its people in the negative. Harris (2002: 7) illustrates this through these short newspaper headliners and extracts;

- Illegal immigrants from war-torn and poverty-stricken parts of Africa are flooding into most SA cities (Natal Witness, 94/11);
- Foreign influx: citizens fear for their job prospects after hordes descend on the country from the troubled north (Sowetan, 93/07/29);
- 'xenophobia' rife as Africans flood SA … (Sunday Times, 94/08/28);
- Illegals are helping to turn SA into a banana republic … I want to say that even under the most oppressive conditions we endured under Apartheid, our economic conditions were never as bad as in the rest of Africa (Weekend Star, 95/02/19, letter: S. Modise).

What Harris (2002: 7) points out through these public comments is the stereotypical nature in which Africa is portrayed as this homogenous troubled place with no recognition that this is a large continent comprised of many different interests and nations, including South Africa. Rather, it is represented as 'the troubled north', a vague space marked by wars, woes and poverty. Harris' argument suggests that these stereotypical comments create notions that South Africa is superior in some way and not a part of the rest of the continent (Harris 2002: 7).

Matsinhe (2011: 298) argues that this complex has been inherited from the Apartheid government's supremacist policies

> which ruralised and devalued black lives, on the one hand, whilst urbanising and valuing white lives, on the other. The post-Apartheid state simply shifted this rural/urban binary opposition to Africa/South Africa, such that Africa is perceived as rural and backward and South Africa as urban and modern (Matsinhe 2011: 298).

These are sentiments that Crush (1999: 1-4) has described as "a new discourse that borders, at times, on the xenophobic". In a journal article titled, "Fortress South Africa and the deconstruction of Apartheid's migration

regime", Crush (1999: 1-4) argues that at the heart of this mindset is a set of images about the negative impact of African foreign nationals to the country. An image that pictures foreign nationals from the rest of the continent in a homogenous fashion as "illegal aliens" flooding into the country to cause crime, bring disease, take jobs from South Africans, depress wages, consume social services and exacerbate unemployment. The falsity found in this stereotype is that not all African migrants in the country are 'illegal aliens' or more correctly undocumented migrants. The larger percentage of these migrants are valuable contributors to South Africa's economy as tourists[16], students[17], employers[18], migrant labourers and special skills workers[19] that have supplied South Africa's labour market and economy with resources and skilled labour during a time when loss of skilled labour due to a national brain drain has been high (THE SOUTH AFRICAN INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS 1999: 1-2). Although a percentage of migrants are refugees and asylum seeker who at times can burden state resources and the social welfare system, to imply that these individuals are criminal elements that are the cause of the country's woes is a grave generalisation that ignores the role that African states played in supporting South African refugees and asylum seekers during its difficulties with Apartheid.

It is fair to say that Southern African countries then referred to as the 'front-line states', opposed the Apartheid regime. Although many of these countries were economically dependent on South Africa, in 1980, they proceeded to form the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC), the aim of which was to promote economic development in the region and hence reduce dependence on South Africa and its Apartheid government. Furthermore, many members of SADCC (which later became SADC—the Southern African Development Community) also allowed the exiled ANC and Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) to establish bases in their countries (Schoeman 2002: 2), which played a significant role in contributing to the end of Apartheid.

[16]67% of 9 million international tourists to South Africa in 2007, were from other African countries. 30% of international tourism revenue, comes from tourists from other African countries. 1.2 million South Africans are employed in the tourism sector. Most of the international tourists for the Soccer World Cup in 2010 were expected to come from Africa.(Blieden, 2008: Onlline)

[17]In 2007 the government counted some 60,000 international students at South Africa's 23 public universities, nearly 8% of a total student population of 746,000, Around 85% of international students are from elsewhere in Africa, including in 2007 some 71% (more than 43,000) from other Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries. Zimbabwe is the major 'source' country, with about a quarter of all international students - especially since political and economic crises hit that neighbouring state. The next biggest sending countries are Namibia, with more than 10,000 students in South Africa in 2007, and Botswana (nearly 5,000).(MacGregor, 2010: online)

[18]From the hawker's stall to the boardroom - most immigrants make a positive contribution to South Africa's economy, sometimes against daunting odds. Foreigners create jobs. Immigrants employ almost half their total number, almost half again being South Africans. In other words, on average, one direct job is created for a local for every four immigrants. In addition, it is likely that a significant number of jobs in retail and services depend indirectly on migrant traders and the presence of foreign-born people in the city (Schlemmer, 2008: online).

[19] Highly skilled workers, including medical doctors, engineers and academics come to South Africa, either to reap better financial rewards for their employment (in the case of numerous immigrants from Nigeria), or to work in universities or non-governmental organisation (THE SOUTH AFRICAN INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS 1999:1-2).

In the following section I consider these issues of stereotyping and 'xenophobia', and question to what degree the visual arts can address these social problems.

1.2 VISUAL ART EXHIBITIONS AND CHALLENGING XENOPHOBIC STEREOTYPES

1.2.1 KWEREKWERE: JOURNEYS INTO STRANGENESS

Within the South African visual arts arena one of the earliest attempts to address stereotypical and negative perceptions of African foreign nationals and the occurrences of 'xenophobia' in South African society was in an exhibition titled *Kwerekwere: journeys into strangeness,* which was curated by Rory Bester as a three part exhibition from 2000 to 2003. This curatorial endeavour critiques the history of migration and identity in South Africa through the exploration of ideas surrounding borders, journeys, displacement and home. The show was born out of a concern to point out the rising trends of 'xenophobia', violence and abuse against foreigners in the country (Bester 2003: 3-5), many of whom are citizens, immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers. On show where works from Malcom Payne, Paul Weinberg, Gideon Mendel, Santu Mofokeng, Zola Maseko, Ernest Cole, Henion Han, Randolph Hartzenberg, Themba Hadebe, Berni Searle, David Goldblatt, Jacqueline Maingard, Sheila Meintjies, Heather Thompson, Jo Ractliffe, Harold Shaw, Penny Siopis, Mohamoud Abdi, Jean de DieuKayinamu, Martha Kubwimana, Clemence Mugaragu, Anita Ntakarutimana, Cherinet Olgira, and Fatima Yusuf; As well as select archival footage from press, news and documentary imagery. In order to substantiate a few crucial points that the exhibition raised, I will focus on select works on the show.

Bester's (2003: 3-5) main approach in curating this exhibition was to draw parallels between the crisis of identity faced during Apartheid and present day identity problems in South Africa, arguing that the latter are linked to that past:

> …[T]hat the work on display traced the impact of colonial and Apartheid racial practices on contemporary attitudes of the migrants. The exhibition critiqued Apartheid's oppressive and exclusive policies of banishment, Bantustans, ethnicity, forced removals, migrant labour and pass laws, and drew parallels with present day [refugee camps,] detention, deportation and harassment of refugees, asylum seekers and African immigrant populations (Bester 2003: 3-5).

Most importantly, the exhibition exposed how the criminalisation of African migrants in terms of their political and economic status as an attitude that is inherited and repeated from the past. This was evident in how Bester drew parallels between the documentary photographic work of Ernest Cole and news clips from a police raid on African immigrants living in Hillbrow. Ernest Cole was a black South African documentary photographer, who during the Apartheid era, was responsible for documenting the social evils and effects of Apartheid on the black population in the early 1950s and 1960s. As a result of the critical nature of his study on the Apartheid regime, Cole took up exile in America where he publish his work as a photographic essay in a book title *The House of Bondage* (Cole and Flaherty 1967: 192). One of these images (1967:Fig.10) was on show in the exhibition and portrayed a routine police inspection of a black citizen sanctioned under the oppressive pass laws of Apartheid which systematically dehumanised and criminalised black identity during the era. Bester likens this mistreatment of black South Africans to the contemporary criminalisation of African foreign nationals harassment by SAPS[20] through presenting this imagery alongside a news clips from an SABC[21] report. The report titled *extract from SABC3 NEWS* (:Fig.11), is a 1 minute 30 second news clip, with the caption

> "A swoop on notorious Hilbrow has led to the arrest of over 600 illegal immigrants and drug dealers. Several hundred police officers, accompanied by home affairs officials, lead the massive operation into what's been identified as a priority crime spot…" (Bester, 2003).

Bester suggests that it is not only the SAPS that are responsible for the defamation of African immigrants, but some liability can be placed on the media's insensitive style of reporting.

> ...[M]edia [again] is found complicit, as direct association of undocumented immigrants is termed and associated with criminality [in its reporting of the police raid]. Such reporting on 'illegal' immigrants is fuelling the fire of 'xenophobia' in South Africa and perpetuating the all too familiar social stereotyping of Apartheid: aliens, outsides, strangers (Bester, 2003).

Furthermore Bester's exhibition borrows its title from a derogatory word *Kwerekwere* which is popularly used by some South African citizens to identify black African foreigners in South Africa. Matsinhe (2011: 296) argues that "the phantom of Makwerekwere has been constructed and deployed in and through public discourse to

[20] The South African Police Services (SAPS) is the name of the contemporary policing force in South Africa
[21] South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) is the main national public broadcaster

render Africans from outside the borders orderable as the nation's bogeyman" (Matsinhe 2011: 296) and thus scapgoated for problems the country faces that are largely attributed to the lines of division we have inherited from Apartheid's legacy. Although Bester's exhibition contrasts Apartheid and post-Apartheid society, I believe that his efforts are not aimed at squarely placing blame on that history for the current state of affairs. Rather the show attempts to illustrate how the nation and its identity are constantly under multiple processes and ideological constructions. He reiterates that

> South Africa, understandably, is in the process of constructing a national identity out of a violet and fractured past and parallel to this construction, is the vision of our President's African Renaissance ideal. Multiple processes, nation-building, African-building and globalization, operate simultaneously; but are producing tensions and contradictions on the ground. The debate for those involved in culture is where it locates itself in these processes of re-identification and reconstruction (Bester, 2003:13).

For Malcolm Payne this re-identification and reconstruction is expressed through a work titled *Abandon Your Identity – Ukutyeshela Ubuni Bankho.* This video shows a blackened glass through which, a performer attempts to scratch a picture of himself; but as a portrait begins to emerges a point is reached where the image becomes less and disappears as more is done (Bester, 2003:13). As the performer continues to clean away the remnants of this portrait, he unknowingly reveals his own face to us. Payne's video beckons us to re-examine ourselves – to critically sift through the many layered constructs that claim to represent our identities – and in reconstruction wipe away that which might impede us from truly seeing one another.

On the other hand, the act of abandoning ones identity has cultural and socio-political implications; what parts of ourselves do we erase, and what aspects of our identity do we cling to? Bester explores this through the work, *Back to the land* (1994-96) a series of black and white photographs by Paul Weinberg. These images document the first tentative steps towards restoration of land to people dispossessed after the 1913 land act. For dispossessed peoples and their descendents this layered history forms a crucial aspect of their identity – to abandon such identification is to erase an unresolved historic injustice. To further complicate this discourse bester juxtaposes Weinberg's photography with Gideon Mendel's photographic work, *Beloofde Land* (1989). Mendel's series of colour photographs captured various celebrations marking the 150th anniversary of the Great Trek; the work was sponsored by the left wing Afrikaans newspaper, Vrye Weekblad and entitled *Belootde Land* (or 'Promise Land'). Mendel's photo essay was criticized for being ambiguous in its point of

view and had most viewers questioning whether the artist was in support of the right or the left. When contrasting Weinberg and Mendel's photographic essays it appears that Bester is acknowledging the importance of history, tradition and value of cultural expression; although these two photographic essays are in sharp contrast, this curator challenges the viewer to see beyond culture and history and make a human connection with the subjects in the imagery. As an exhibition *Kwerekwere, journey into strangeness* is an attempt to remove borders of inclusion and exclusion; and reconciles fractured relations. This is palpable in Randolph Hartzenberg's video titled *Breadline / Waterline [The First Haptic String]* (2000:Fig. 12) which grapples with these lines of division that displace and dislocate peoples. He argues that these divisive lines serve as indicators of a deeply fragmented and wounded social fabric, and suggests that this

> …[P]sychic damage that results from the application of dysfunctional ideological absolutes, which excludes the individual, most often, in the name of nationalism. The dislocated individual needs to belong, but faces the pain of denial instead. This is the beginning of the great suffering of the excluded. Borderlines are drawn and re-drawn, re-shaping the regions they divide. Zones of attrition have developed where betrayal, vulnerability, futility rub shoulders with anger, hatred, sacrifice and survival. The manipulation of these lines of division represents our failure to acknowledge the common threads of our humanity" (Bester, 2003).

To conclude I draw from the exhibitions opening address written by Jenny Parsely's, who in it quotes the nostalgic sentiments uttered by a Somalian refugee.

> Once upon a time humanity used to roam the planet unhindered. There were no borders to prevent him from making contact with other cultures. The only obstacles were flooded rivers. Until colonialism and racism came, humanity did not have fears in making contact with people from other culture. Then borders where drawn and racism became the human quality. I expect civilisation where humanity will not see each other in terms of which country they come from (Bester, 2003).

it is important to critically look at the national ethos that emerged post-Apartheid, this scrutiny will help in confronting any dysfunctional ideological absolutes that are being used to justify or perpetrate the dehumanizing of the 'other' or 'aliens' in our midst . Chapter 2 shall address these concerns.

Fig. 10. Ernest Cole, *The House of Bondage* (1967), Black white and white photographs, Unspecified, Hasselblad Foundation collection (Reproduction from Rory Bester .2003. *Kwerekwere: Journey into strangeness a multi media exhibition on migration and identity in South Africa*, Johannesburg: Barry & bester catalogue).

Fig. 11. *Extract from SABC3 NEWS* (Reproduction from Rory Bester .2003. Kwerekwere: Journey into strangeness a multi media exhibition on migration and identity in South Africa, Johannesburg: Barry & bester catalogue).

Fig. 12. Randolph Hartzenberg, *Breadline / Waterline [THE FIRST HAPTIC]* (2000), Film still, 4:40 mins, courtesy of the artist (Reproduction from Rory Bester .2003. *Kwerekwere: Journey into strangeness a multi media exhibition on migration and identity in South Africa*, Johannesburg: Barry & bester catalogue).

CHAPTER 2: IMAGINE|NATION

INTRODUCTION

This Chapter responds to some of the problems identified in Chapter 1, pertaining to 'xenophobia', 'afrophobia' and the crisis of identity that post-Apartheid South Africa is now faced with. If xenophobia is a symptom of social fragmentation and a failure to imagine multicultural forms of collective identity in an era of globalisation, then this chapter proposes possible theoretic solutions through analyzing visual and cultural responses to this phenomenon. As globalisation and neoliberal ideologies reshape the world, there is a growing need in the post-colonial state to revisit and re-construction notions of individual and collective identity, especially that of the nation. Notions of Nationhood, nationalism and citizenry can no longer be defined solely through indigeneity - as a result of radical shifts in the flow of migration and immigration policies that allow for the naturalisation of aliens and foreign nationals. What we are now faced with is an unimaginably diverse nation that rejects autochthonous constructions of nationhood.

2.1: THE RAINBOW NATION AND THE 'ALIENS' AMONG)US(

2.1.1 SYMBOLS OF THE NATION

In Benedict Anderson's (2006: 6) seminal work titled *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, the author defines a nation as "an imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign". Such a definition implies that a nation is a constructed community and differs from an actual community, because it is not, for practical reasons, cannot be, based on everyday face-to-face interaction between its members (Anderson 2006: 6). In fact, members hold in their minds a mental image of their communion in order for the nation to materialise. An example of this is the imagined sense of nationhood felt with other members of your nation when your "imagined community" wins an event at the Olympics, and the anthem is sung and the flag of your nation is raised as the Olympian is awarded his or her medal (Anderson 2006: 6). Accompanying this mental image are symbols of the nation, such as the flag, the anthem, and the national flower that act as visual aids that reminds us of our common communion.

Therefore if a nation "is imagined, and once imagined, modelled, adapted and transformed" (Anderson 2006: 145), the idea of a nation is an ongoing collective construct. However, like most progressive post-colonial nations, South Africa is faced with a predicament in terms of how to deal with the influx of immigrants into its midst in a time of neoliberal global capitalism. 'People from far away' have shifted relations among citizens; they have diversified cultures as well as communities and have ruptured imagined constructs of nationhood and belonging (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001: 627). Consequentially, in the post-colony and across much of the globe, this issue has resulted in an identity crisis, both on a collective and individual level. John and Jean Comaroff (2001: 627-628) explain this as an explosion of identity politics that is currently reshaping societies across the globe:

> …[T]he changing face of nationhood in the neoliberal age, especially after 1989, has been an explosion of identity politics. Not just of ethnic politics, but also of the politics of gender, sexuality, age, race, religiosity, life-style, and yes, social class. As a result imagining the nation rarely presumes a deep horizontal fraternity anymore…In short, homogeneity as a 'national fantacy' is giving way to a recognition of the irreducibility of difference; so much so that even countries known for their lack of diversity – Botswana for example – are now sites of identity struggles (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001: 634)

In the exhibition *'Vabvakure', 'people from far away'* I have attempted to show this disruption of a homogenous national fantacy in a work titled *Flagging the Nation* (2012-2013:Fig.13). The flag shown in this image is fictional and is not representative of a particular country. Rather, it has elements that are familiar but also alien; it is a hybrid flag. The flag consists of horizontal lines of gold material and decommisioned ZWD, as well as a triangle of gold that parts the flag a third from its flagpole. I introduce three stars made of old South African Rands, and within those stars,various other African currencies have been subtly added. If currency in this instance is understood as another symbol that represents the nation, then the act of transplanting and crosspolinating various currencies onto a single flag is an act of rupturing and of diversifiying.

These days it is farily commonplace for nations to subscribe to national identies that promote diversity in a bid to contain this new identity crisis. Moreover, these "States… have always had to conjure up 'a definition of public interests over and above… class and sectarian' concerns" (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001: 635). In the case of South Africa the national identity that emerged was that of the Rainbow nation[22], a non-racial utopian

[22] The term Rainbow nation was Initially coined by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the phrase was elaborated upon by President Mandela in his first month of office, when he proclaimed: "[E]ach of us is as intimately attached to the soil of this beautiful country

ethos that invested more interests in attempting to wipe away the history of Apartheid rather than confront and resolve its legacy. Cronin (1999:20) ensues with a warning on the pitfalls of taking the easy route to 'national unity', and argues that we should not allow,

> ourselves to sink into a smug rainbowism [as this] will prove to be a terrible betrayal of the possibilities for real transformation, real reconciliation, and real national unity that are still at play in our contemporary South African reality

Furthermore, Valji (2003:26) argues that this

> myth of the 'rainbow nation' and its performative intention have served to discursively create a national identity that has been top-down in its constitution and implementation. As a result, true reconciliation has been foregone in place of a simplified and somewhat candy-coated myth of peace that has served to reconcile those on the inside whilst pitting them against those on the outside.

'Smug rainbowism', or 'candy coated myth'— both these sentiments seem to suggest that the Rainbow Nation ethos has only served to paint over the cracks and problems within society and not really solve them. Thus it is not surprising that some citizens who are affected by these cracks begin to subscribe to another form of nationalism, one that does not place diversity as its primary interest but reverts to elevating autochthony [23] as first-principle of national identity, at the exclusion and persecution of some citizens and foriegners alike. Commaroff and Commaroff (2001:635) argue that national ideologies that promote multiculturalism are being challenged by another national ethos that,

> …has come to lie in autochthony: in elevating to a first-principle the ineffable interests and connections, at once material and moral, the flow from 'native' rootedness, and special rights, in place of birth. Nor is this merely a strategic solution that appeals to those caught up in the business of governments; it resonates with deeply felt populist fears – and with the proclivity of citizens of all strips to deflect shared anxieties onto outsiders.

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as are the famous jacaranda trees of Pretoria and the mimosa trees of the bushveld … a rainbow nation at peace with itself and the world"

[23] Autochthony in social science refers to indigenousness: nativeness by virtue of originating or occurring naturally, and is used in this text to argue forms of identity construction and ownership of place by birth right, or first claim.

What Comaroff and Comaroff (2001: 635) are effectively pointing out is the potential dysfuntional nature of collective constructions such as autochtonism[24], constructions that perpetuate a imperfect doctrine of 'othering', a dogma responsible for the persecution and oppression of 'others' based on their difference or non-rootedness to the collective. Moreover, if Aparthied harboured this outdated doctrine of 'othering' which was drawn along racial and ethnic lines, evidently found in the segregative policies of the era that excluded the black South African from full citizenry, then a similar comparison can be made of post-Apartheid South Africa which has fallen prey to autochthonism and the similar tenets of 'othering' that exclude the new comers from citizenship. In this case the 'other' is the black African foreign national and the evidence is in the bouts of afrophobic violence of May 2008.

Another work that forms part of the *'Vabvakure', 'People from far away'* exhibition is titled *The Protea* (2012-2013:fig.14). Protea is the botanical name for a flowering species of plant found in the natural shrubland called fynbos that occurs in parts of the Western Cape of South Africa (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001: 638). The Protea flower, as well as "fynbos has come to stand for a 'traditional' heritage of national, natural rootedness" (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001: 638) and are "associated primarily with autochtonous identity" (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001: 637). In 1976 the King Protea was officially proclaimed the national flower of South Africa (Matthews 1993: 196). This artwork titled *The Protea* (2012-2013:Fig.14) is constructed mainly out of decommisioned old South African Rands, which form the pettles of the flower, the outer leaves are made of ZWD and other African currencies but are not as prominent as the pettles. This sculpture attempts to disrupt this national symbol's (Protea) association with autochtonous identity, and I suggest this is archived by subtly inserting other African currencies into this sculpture that appears to be only made of old Rands. However, according to the Comaroffs (2001: 638), this national symbol was not always considered native to the land, for in "1953, an authority on the subject actually described *fynbos* as an *invader* whose expansion threatened the mixed grassveld of South Western Cape. What is now said of aliens was being said, not long ago, of this 'natural treasure'" (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001: 638).

In an age where immigration and naturalization of aliens to citizen is now a common occurrence, our constructions of nationhood and definitions of an 'us' and 'them' have increasing become complicated. We need to move away from constructing these kinds of collective identities that are binary in nature, that now pit 'native' against 'alien'. How then must we define ourselves collectively? An answer can be located by repositioning our approach to collective identity.

[24]Autochthonism otherwise known as Indigenism, Native nationalism, or Indigenous nationalism is a kind of ethnic nationalism emphasizing the group's indigeneity to their homeland as a first principle to nation building.

Ashraf Jamal (2010: 55) explains this relocation as movement from an 'us' to an)US(, with open brackets, an approach that abandons a binary notion of an 'us' and a them'. Eagleton (2003: 21) explains this conundrum and the need to re-imagine collective association in an era of globalism:

> Human history is now for the most part both post-collectivist and post-individualist; and if this feels like a vacuum, it may also present an opportunity. We need to imagine new forms of belonging, which in our kind of world are bound to be multiple rather than monolithic. Some of those forms will have something of the intimacy of tribal or community relations, while others will be more abstract, mediated and indirect. There is no single ideal size of society to belong to, no Cinderella's slipper of a space. The ideal size of community used to be known as the nation-state, but even some nationalists no longer see this as the only desirable terrain.

In this next sections I explore forms of belonging that are bound to the multiple through another visual art exhibition called 'Us'.

2.1.2 THE 'US' EXHIBITION

'*Us*' was a group show that appeared in 2 parts, firstly, at the Johannesburg Art Gallery (JAG) in 2009, and again in 2010 at the Iziko South African National Gallery. Its curatorial strategies were designed to critique forms of belonging and open the brackets on a contained exclusive notion of 'us', be it a nation, society or any particular grouping; Malcomess (2010: 61) explains that,

> *'Us'* emerged out of a conversation between myself and Simon Njami in Johannesburg, about a month after the spectacular xenophobic violence of 18 May 2008. We had talked about how you could curate an exhibition that responded to what had happened, where the country was still reeling from the shock. Simon proposed that the show should be called, *Us,* an 'empty placeholder', a pronoun referring not necessarily to a nation, or to any particular group, ethnicity or class, meant an open field in which the question: What is happening in South Africa at present?" The exhibitions attempt to break away from a singular monolithic notion of an 'us', hence escaping any essentialised notion of 'them' and simultaneously allowing a multitude of voices to emerge (Malcomess 2010: 61).

On exhibit was a photographic print by Daniel Halter's titled *Space Invader* (Fig.15). In this imagery Halter uses cheap nylon "China bags", commonly used by refugees worldwide. Using this as a motif, Halter created an 8-bit alien sculpture from the video game Space Invaders. This was photographed at a Johannesburg taxi rank, a

space that is frequented by foreigners from other African countries as a point of entry into South Africa. The juxtaposition is unsettling because in the game (Space Invaders) the objective is to shoot the aliens before they land, but Halter is not inviting us to play the game – rather consider the perilous nature of travel for most migrants or refugees. Furthermore Halter's imagery utilizes the motif of the cheap nylon bags to connect local trends of migrancy to other global trends of movement; because the bags have become globally synonymous with immigrants and are often named after an alien population. For example in the Caribbean they are known as "Guyanese Samsonite", in Nigeria they are called "Ghana Must Go"; and in the UK "Bangladeshi Bag". This artwork wittingly unravels the vulnerability of migrant and refugee populations to experiences of xenophobia, which the artist cleverly contextualizes within a global context. Moreover he positions the viewer into the gamer's vantage point, and precariously plays with our moral sensibilities – do we play or not play this game?

A reoccurring theme seemed to echo throughout this exhibition, calling the viewer to travel through a mental labyrinth filled with moral quandary and complex questions of who 'we' are now. '*Us*' as an exhibition picks up where *Kwerekwere: journerys into strangeness* left off – the latter identifies the lines and social divisions that plague us and beckons us to reinvent old notions of collective association – where as the former attempts to chart a way through the quagmire presenting us with strategies in order to escape our social division. Malcomess reiterates that in its second offering at the Iziko national gallery:

> …the curatorial approach of *Us* became clearer: to evoke the complexities and contradictions of the construction of collective identity by exploring the *'Us'* through the 'I', through the making of the 'self- image'. The idea was to stay away from work that was directly documentary or that portrayed any kind of group as an 'Other', rather selecting work that understood ethnicity, nationhood, culture, sexuality, class or religion as constituted by individuals (Malcomess and Njami 2010:61-63).

Justin Brett's installation titled *Passage* is one such work that explores sexuality through memory, myth and physical architecture of the now-demolished Graaf's Pool in Greenpoint. Depending on whom you asked – the history of Graaf's Pool is best described as contested. It was originally built by the father of the United Party leader, Sir De Villiers Graaff. Later it became a gentleman's club, a gathering point for men and a legendary cruising spot – often at the same time – a space behind one of its walls became associated with acts of prostitution, paedophilia and crime. So in 2005 the city council proceeded to demolish the wall and had the pool removed. A space that Neville Dubow once described as "a three-dimensional manifestation of our social history" was destroyed. The installation straddles a contentious fine line, but Brett takes Graaff's pool as a point of intersection for issues pertaining to desire, homosexuality and sexual freedom. Which in the context

of South Africa's on going episodes of homophobic and gender based discriminatory violence (particularly corrective rape). *Passage* as a work of art is a subtle, yet seductive representation of the gay body and does well to bring to the fore the repressed and hidden desire and aspirations of our society.

While at the Iziko South African National Gallery, *'Us'* was presented as an independent show alongside the exhibition *1910-2010: From Pierneef to Gugulective,* which was curated by the Director of the National Gallery, Riason Naidoo. It became important during the exhibition to constantly reconfigure and add new work as a way of alluding to the constant need to redefine ideas of the individual and his place in the group (Malcomess and Njami 2010:61-62). Malcomess argues that

> It felt central to the concept of the exhibition that 'Us' should shift and change over time, reflecting the continual process of adjustment, conversation and re-invention that defines the place of the individual within a group (Malcomess and Njami 2010:61-63).

This strategy was most effectively realised in the work of Andrew Lamprecht, who was asked to curate actual traditional objects from the museum's collection, and combining them with contemporary everyday objects. These objects shifted and changed over the course of the exhibition. A similar chord was struck by Zen Marie's *Republic of An Us*, another installation that turned a section of the gallery into an embassy of a fictional country. Marie's installation interrogated the politics of emigration, by constructing a small enclosed cubical that housed an interview room with its own desk, two chairs and decorative pot plant and world map. He then employed a security guard as well as a performer to interview potential émigrés from the members of the audience. By turning the interview process into a spectacle or performance Marie critically questions the politic of immigration and its processes of inclusion and exclusion. Another artwork of similar critic is a collaborative artwork by Dorothee Kreutzfeldt and Bettina Malcomess under the collective group name Deadheat, title *Ucikicane, Indololwane, Inzonzwane* (2010:Fig.16) The artwork involved the installation of the Zulu word for elbow 'indolowane' - which was stencilled in sign language symbols on the arch above the door of the entrance to the gallery space. During the violence of May 2008 this word was used to differentiate Black foreign nationals from black South Africans. Ndlovu (2008: Onlline) explains:

> As attacks on foreigners intensified and spread across Johannesburg, mobs began pulling people out of shopping queues and forcing them to take "tests" to establish their nationality. A language test is first, where one is asked to label certain body parts in isiZulu. Certain words in the Zulu language are no longer used on a daily basis...While speaking to displaced victims of the violence in Alexandra, one of our reporters was

> warned by a woman to find out what an elbow is called in isiZulu, or he might find himself under attack if stopped by the mob and unable to give the correct answer.

The consequences of failing to pronounce this Zulu word rendered many non-Zulu speaking inhabitants of Johannesburg 'outsiders'. Certainly this selection criterion can account for why 21 South African nationals were killed during these attacks. What is further disturbing is the assumption that in order to qualify as an authentic black South Africans one has to be proficient in isiZulu. *Ucikicane, Indololwane, Inzonzwane* as a work of art exposes these layers of complexity, but most significantly this installation challenges warped notions of nation-building that reignite old Apartheid ethnic tensions rooted in autochthony and indigeneity.

What this exhibition attempts to do is critique our constructs of collective identity and point out how at times these constructs contradict the reality of what our social spaces really are comprised of—a diverse space of diverse individuals amongst diverse collective groups rather than being homogeneous and monolithic.

What then is diversity and does it have a place for that which is alien? In the following section I will look at this question through the vantage point of mass media, more specifically an advertisement by Nando's that attempts to answer this question.

Fig. 13. Gerald Machona, *Flagging the Nation* (2013), Sculpture, varied, courtesy of the artist.

Fig. 14. Gerald Machona, *The Protea* (2012-2013), sculpture, varied, courtesy of the artist.

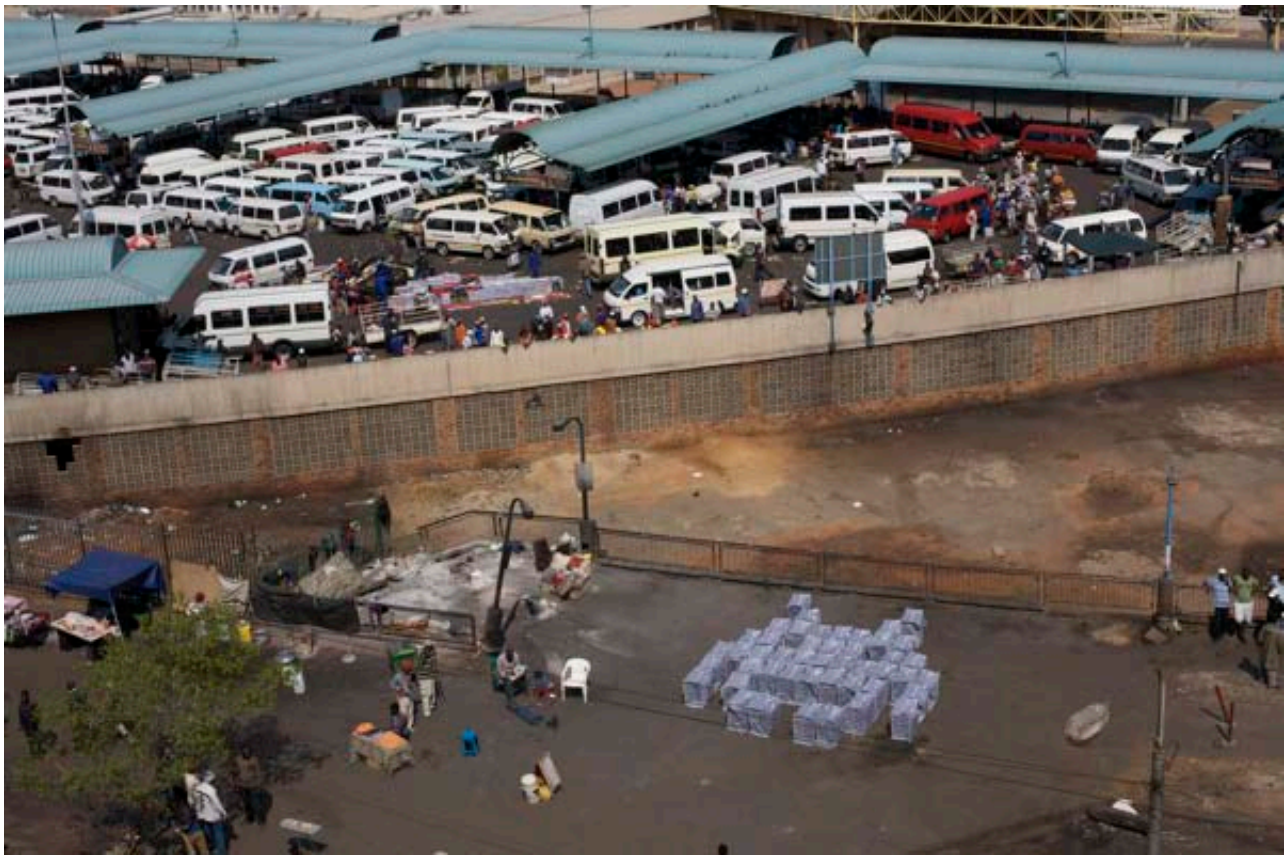

Fig. 15. Daniel Halter *Space invader (*2009), Lambda Print, 125cm x 80cm, courtesy of the artist and whatiftheworld Gallery (Reproduction taken from Malcomess, B. and Njami, S. 2010. *US*, Cape Town: Us exhibition catalogue).

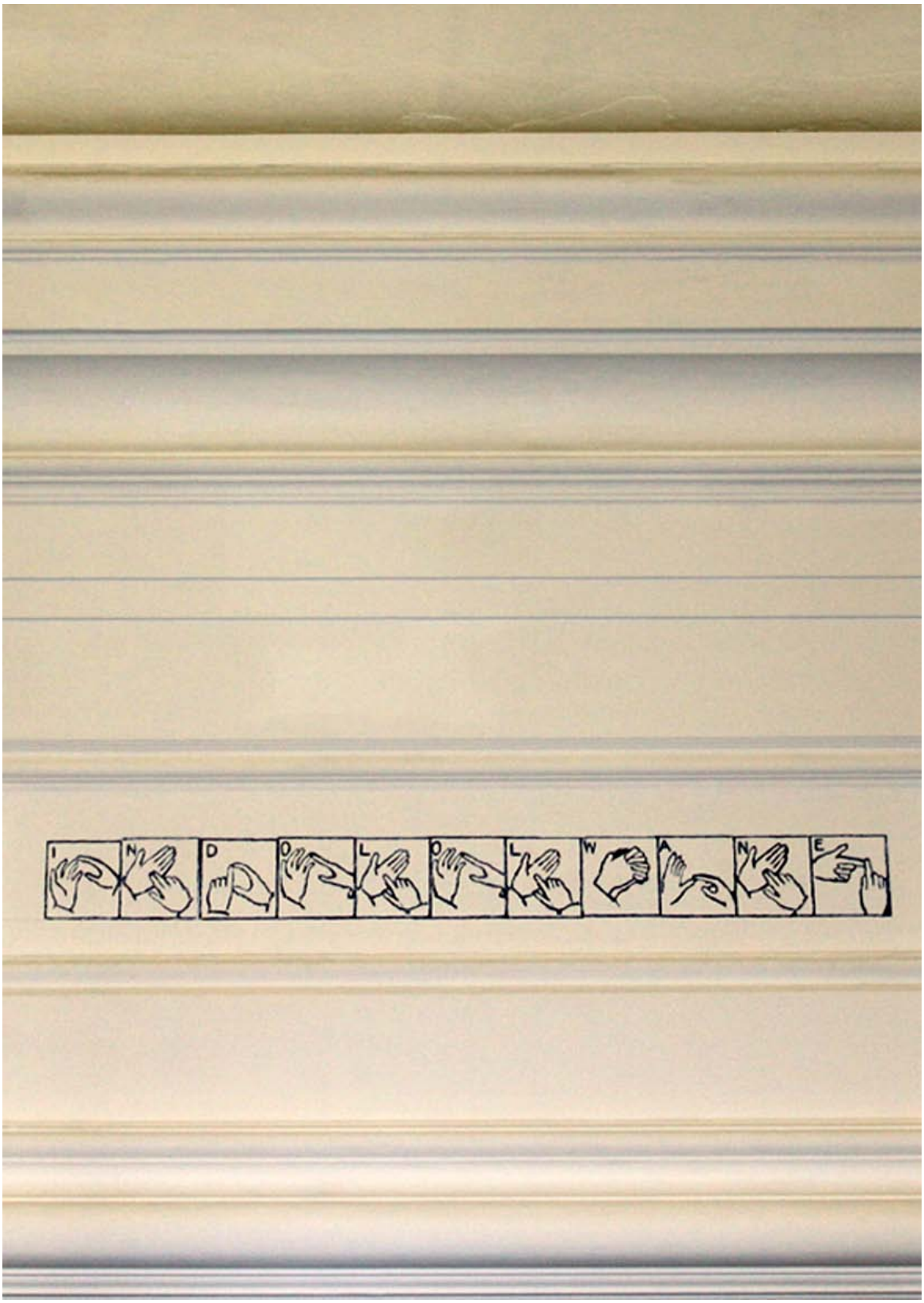

Fig. 16. Dorothee Kreutzfeldt (deadheat) 2010. *Ucikicane, Indololwane, Inzonzwane*. Pencil, carbon paper. (dimensions variable) courtesy of the artist (Reproduction taken from Malcomess, B. and Njami, S. 2010. *US*, Cape Town: Us exhibition catalogue).

2.2: REAL DIVERSITY

2.2.1 NANDO'S DIVERSITY ADVERT

In 2012 Nando's[25] launched its pro-diversity campaign through a television commercial titled '*diversity*', it was met with a great deal of criticism and subsequently banned[26] from television for having xenophobic undertones. The advert was accused of trivialising a volatile issue of xenophobia, that is still rife in South African society today (Neethling, 2012: online).

Nevertheless, the restaurant brand has gained some notoriety in the past for its use of satire in its adverts to make social commentary[27]. As a response to having their advert banned from mainstream television and public sight, Nando's proceeded to produce a print version of the advert which was circulated on the internet and printed in newspapers. For the press version the advert was split up into 18 frames with supporting text that read like a storyboard which I will now scrutinise.

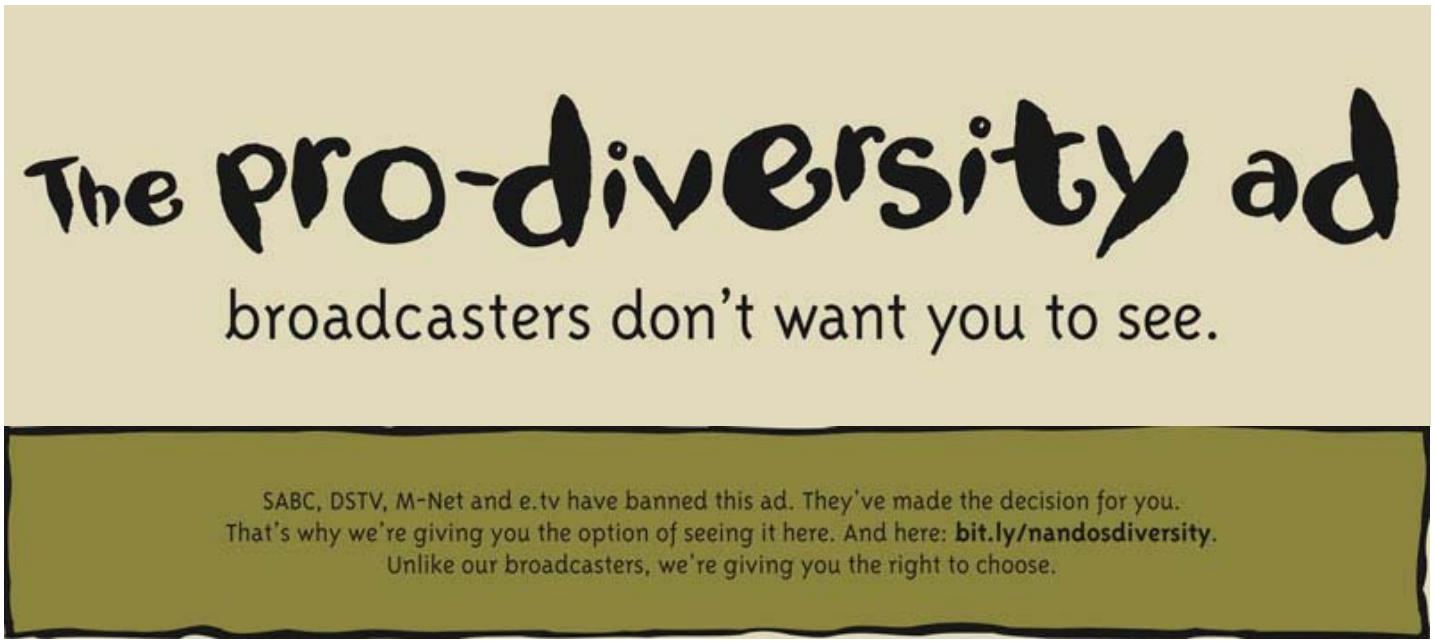

Fig. 17. Ahmed Tilly (Black river FC Agency), *Nando's diversity advert* [Frame 1 & 2] (2012), Newspaper advert, courtesy of the artist, (Reproduction

[25]Founded in 1987, Nando's is a South African restaurant and fast-food group that originates from the Mozambique-Portuguese community and operates in thirty countries on five continents. (Nando's, 2010: Online)

[26]The SABC (South African Broadcasting Corporation) refused to play the advert outright and proceeded to ban it from airing on the national public broadcaster. DSTV, Mnet and e-TV soon followed suit even after having aired the ad several times eventually pulled it from their programming, citing similar concerns that the ad trivialised xenophobia, which remains a sensitive and volatile issue in South Africa (Neethling, 2012: Online)

[27] In 2011 the company launched an advert called *the last dictator standing* which depicted Robert Mugabe president of Zimbabwe dining alone at Christmas, his empty table set for departed dictators, including Muammar Gaddafi. The ad was also banned and pulled from television

taken from Adforum (1999) *Diversity 2012 Nando's*, [Online], Available: http://www.adforum.com/agency/6645705/creative-work/campaign/6715563/diversity-2012/nandos-nandos-south-africa [29 August 2012]).

In this print version the title of the advert was rebranded as "*the pro-diversity ad*". The first slide of the commercial blatantly challenged the SABC, DSTV, M-NET and E-tv's refusal to broadcast this commercial.

Fig. 18. Ahmed Tilly (Black river FC Agency), *Nando's diversity advert* [Frame 3 & 4] (2012), Newspaper advert, courtesy of the artist, (Reproduction taken from Adforum (1999) *Diversity 2012 Nando's*, [Online], Available: http://www.adforum.com/agency/6645705/creative-work/campaign/6715563/diversity-2012/nandos-nandos-south-africa [29 August 2012]).

The first scene presents the viewer with a fence in the middle of nowhere, and a xenophobic caption that reads, "You know what's wrong with South Africa? All you foreigners." A man carrying a suitcase climbs through the hole in the fence, and the text then reads, "You must all go back where you came from."

Fig. 19. Ahmed Tilly (Black river FC Agency), *Nando's diversity advert* [Frame 5 & 6] (2012), Newspaper advert, courtesy of the artist, (Reproduction taken from Adforum (1999) *Diversity 2012 Nando's*, [Online], Available: http://www.adforum.com/agency/6645705/creative-work/campaign/6715563/diversity-2012/nandos-nandos-south-africa [29 August 2012]).

He disappears in a puff of smoke. The viewer then sees a long queue of immigrants and the accompanying text reads, “You Cameroonians, Congolese, Pakistanis, Somalis, Ghanaians, and Kenyans”

Fig. 20. Ahmed Tilly (Black river FC Agency), *Nando's diversity advert* [Frame 7 & 8] (2012), Newspaper advert, courtesy of the artist, (Reproduction taken from Adforum (1999) *Diversity 2012 Nando's*, [Online], Available: http://www.adforum.com/agency/6645705/creative-work/campaign/6715563/diversity-2012/nandos-nandos-south-africa [29 August 2012]).

With every nationality the narrator mentions, a person disappears in a puff of smoke. We then see a Nigerian man on a street corner in Hillbrow talking to a young white couple in a car. The text then reads, “And of course you Nigerians and you Europeans.” The Nigerian and the European couple disappear.

Fig. 21. Ahmed Tilly (Black river FC Agency), *Nando's diversity advert* [Frame 9 & 10] (2012), Newspaper advert, courtesy of the artist, (Reproduction taken from Adforum (1999) *Diversity 2012 Nando's*, [Online], Available: http://www.adforum.com/agency/6645705/creative-work/campaign/6715563/diversity-2012/nandos-nandos-south-africa [29 August 2012]).

Plumes of white smoke escape from the Plaza. “Let’s not forget all you Indians...”

Fig. 22. Ahmed Tilly (Black river FC Agency), *Nando's diversity advert* [Frame 11 & 12] (2012), Newspaper advert, courtesy of the artist, (Reproduction taken from Adforum (1999) *Diversity 2012 Nando's*, [Online], Available: http://www.adforum.com/agency/6645705/creative-work/campaign/6715563/diversity-2012/nandos-nandos-south-africa [29 August 2012]).

We see a Chinese men offloading a truck in an alleyway. The captions continue, "... and Chinese." Poof! They're gone. We see a farmer driving a bakkie. The supporting text reads, "Even you Afrikaners."

Fig. 23.. Ahmed Tilly (Black river FC Agency), *Nando's diversity advert* [Frame 13 & 14] (2012), Newspaper advert, courtesy of the artist, (Reproduction taken from Adforum (1999) *Diversity 2012 Nando's*, [Online], Available: http://www.adforum.com/agency/6645705/creative-work/campaign/6715563/diversity-2012/nandos-nandos-south-africa [29 August 2012]).

The narrator writes: "And it's back to Swaziland for Swatis, Lesotho for you Sothos, Tswanas, Vendas, Zulus, everybody." The now empty bakkie passes a lone Khoisan man standing in a field.

Fig. 24. Ahmed Tilly (Black river FC Agency), *Nando's diversity advert* [Frame 15 & 16] (2012), Newspaper advert, courtesy of the artist, (Reproduction taken from Adforum (1999) *Diversity 2012 Nando's*, [Online], Available: http://www.adforum.com/agency/6645705/creative-work/campaign/6715563/diversity-2012/nandos-nandos-south-africa [29 August 2012]).

He says, "I'm not going anywhere. You *$&!@#* found me here." A text from Nando's then appears says, "Real South Africans Love diversity."

Fig. 25. Ahmed Tilly (Black river FC Agency), *Nando's diversity advert* [Frame 17 & 18] (2012), Newspaper advert, courtesy of the artist, (Reproduction taken from Adforum (1999) *Diversity 2012 Nando's*, [Online], Available: http://www.adforum.com/agency/6645705/creative-work/campaign/6715563/diversity-2012/nandos-nandos-south-africa [29 August 2012]).

"That's why we've introduced two more items to our menu delicious Peri-crusted wings for R19.90..." The meal also disappears in a puff of smoke.

As offensive as this advertisement might seem to some individuals, the greatest concern that resulted in it being removed from the mainstream media was the fear that the advert might be misunderstood and unintentionally re-ignite further violence against foreign nationals living in South Africa (Neethling, 2012: Online). In many ways this is a valid concern that broadcasters have had to take seriously following the events of May 2008 and the reports that followed citing the media's contribution (Harris 2002: 7) to fueling negative

public perceptions towards migrants from the other African countries. On the contrary, though, I submit that this advert does the opposite. If we moved away from a literal reading of this advert and scrutinise the commercials use of satire to tackle the contentious issue of xenophobic attitudes, we can interpret this advert as having a very important message. If satire is a genre of literature, and creative expression, in which social evils and shortcomings are held up to ridicule, ideally with the intention of shaming individuals, and society, into improvement (Connery and Combe 1995: 9), then one could argue that this Nando's advert cleverly employs satire in critiquing the subject matter of 'afrophobia' and should be broadcast on all media platforms with no restrictions.

Beyond the satire is a historic lesson of the various waves of migration that established the diversity we now celebrate in South Africa. Going as far back as the Bantu people's migration[28] from West Africa to Southern Africa, between 1000 BCE and 400 BCE, which resulted in the established of various Kingdoms in Sub-Saharan Africa (Adler and Pouwels 2008: 169) such as the Zulu, Sotho, Tswana, Venda to name a few. To the more recent arrival of settlers[29] from Europe in the early 1600s and more recently migrants from other parts of the world (Legassick 2013: Online). What the advert boldly promotes, is this idea that South Africa, historically is a nation of foreigners or descendents of foreigners; and it suggests that if the viewer believes that foreigners are the cause of all the problems in South Africa and if they all go back to where they came from, then only Khoisan and first nation people would remain, and diversity would cease to exist. Simbao (2012:18) argues that in this advert 'foreignness' as a concept is extended to all who are non-autochthons[30] and "ranges from Cameroonians, Kenyans and Nigerians, to Europeans, Indians and Chinese, and more controversially to Swatis, Sothos, Twanas, Venda's and Zulus".

This commercials use of popular culture and imagery challenges our sensitivities. It disarmingly employs the use of satire, while delivering a much needed powerful critic of what 'real diversity' entails. More importantly

[28]The Bantu speakers, a large group of distantly related peoples, profited from their mastery of yam agriculture to begin a steady expansion south and east from the general region of present-day Nigeria and Cameroon in West Africa through the rainforest some time well before 1000 BCE. To accomplish this, they appear to have used canoes to navigate the waters of the Congo River and its many tributaries, and polished, stone axes to clear the forest for farming. Around 1000 BCE, they emerged from forest and reached the drier savanna to the west of Lake Victoria. They acquired iron technology and learned to breed livestock and grow the grain crops that did better than yams in the grasslands. These innovations helped them enlarge their numbers primarily through natural increase and the absorption of other people, by these means, they established a series of small kingdoms, stretching across eastern, central and southern Africa, and by 400 BCE they had reached the southern tip of the continent in present day South Africa. The bulk of the Bantu-speaking inhabitants of central, eastern and southern Africa are thought to be the descendants of these migrants (Adler and Pouwels 2008: 169)

[29] White settlement of South Africa began in 1652, when the Dutch East India Company established a station at Cape Town and soon introduced European settlers and black slaves. By the time Britain annexed the Cape Colony in 1814, white farmers had occupied much of the present-day Western and Eastern Cape. During the 19th century white settlement spread unevenly over much of present-day South Africa and beyond (Legassick 2013: Online).

[30]Autochton;the earliest known inhabitants of a region, country, an aboriginal

this satirical communiqué offers an escape out of the current quagmire, this crisis of national identity that we are now faced with in Contemporary South African society. Kristeva (1991: 1) charts this escape in her writing:

> Strangely, the foreigner lives within us: he is the hidden face of our identity, the space that wrecks our abode, the time in which understanding and affinity founder. By recognizing him within ourselves; we are spared detesting him in himself. A symptom that precisely turns “we” into a problem perhaps makes it impossible. The foreigner comes in when the conscious of my difference arises, and he disappears when we all acknowledge ourselves as foreigners, unamenable to bonds and communities.

CHAPTER 3: PERFORMANCE ART IN RESPONSE TO 'AFROPHOBIA'

INTRODUCTION

This chapter adopts the premise that forms of cultural mediation such as public performance art can offer further insights and possibly yield solutions that can be used to address the intolerance, misconceptions, social trauma and violence associated with Afrophobia in South African society. Nyau, a masked spectacle originating from Malawi, is arguably one such form of performance, that in its migratory form was used by the Chewa people to challenge xenophobic attitudes and actions directed at them due to their 'foreignness' while living in Zimbabwe. In this section I briefly contextualise this practice's history and explain how I have appropriated this practice as a performance strategy in my own work in an attempt to re-imagine my identity as a 'foreigner' in South African social space, challenging stereotypes and negative perceptions that have fuelled 'afrophobia'. This follows with an analysis of the exhibition *Vabvakure: people from far away*, including an explanation of the narrative of the short film, the objects on display, and the new characters I have created, namely *Ndiri Afronaut* (2012-2013:Fig.9) and *Uri Afronaut* (2012-2013:Fig. 26).

3.1 NYAU: MEDIATION THROUGH PERFORMANCE ART

3.1.1 MEDIATION THROUGH PERFORMANCE ART

The inclusion of performance art as a genre within the visual and fine arts space has often been questioned, and over the last few decades performance has had to fight for its place as a medium of representation, among traditional and established genres (Searle 2012: Online).

Kapchan (1995: 479) establishes that,

> Insofar as performances are based upon repetitions, whether lines learned, gestures imitated, or discourses reiterated, they are the generic means of tradition making. Indeed, performance

> genres play an essential (and often essentializing) role in the mediation and creation of social communities, whether organized around bonds of nationalism, ethnicity, class status, or gender.

In framing performance[31] as a tool for mediation Deborah Kapchan initiates a discussion on the possible roles performance art and other public interventions can play in the creation of a social community (Kapchan 1995: 479).

Hill and Paris (2001: 136) elucidate that performance art can be any circumstance that involves these basic "elements: time, space, the performer's body, or presence in a medium, and a relationship between performer and audience" (Hill and Paris 2001: 136). Not only does this definition imply the unbound potential of performance as a form of artistic expression, but it alludes to the way that performance art has contributed in blurring the line between art and life. Performance art has been the contemporary site where art imitates life which in turn imitates art (Tureche, 2010: 106).

RoseLee Goldberg (1993:8) further illustrates the parameters of performance by arguing that

> Performance manifestos, from the futurists to present, have been the expression of dissidents who have attempted to find other means to evaluate art experience in everyday life. Performance has been a way of appealing directly to a larger public, as well as shocking audiences into reassessing their own notions of art [as well as life] and its relation to culture. The work may be presented as a solo or with a group, with lighting, music or visuals made by the performance artist him or herself, or in collaboration, and performed in places ranging from an art gallery or museum, to an 'alternative space', a theatre, cafe, bar or street corner. Unlike theatre the performer is an artist, seldom a character like an actor and the content rarely follows a traditional plot or narrative. The performance might be a series of intimate gestures or large-scale visual theatre, lasting from a view [sic] minutes to many hours; it might be performed only once or repeated several times, with or without a prepared script, spontaneously improvised, or rehearsed over many months.

[31] "Insofar as performances are based upon repetitions, whether lines learned, gestures imitated, or discourses reiterated, they are the generic means of tradition making. Indeed, performance genres play an essential (and often essentializing) role in the mediation and creation of social communities, whether organized around bonds of nationalism, ethnicity, class status, or gender (Kapchan 1995: 479)

Ultimately through performance art, the performer is able to astound audiences, forcing them to think in new and unconventional ways, and break down traditional and conventional ideas about the nature of art and life. Aull (2010: 5) argues that the Dadaists were trying to bring art into the daily life, turning life into art. This approach continues in performance art which dissolves the separation between life, art, artist, and audience. The performance art parameters I have used in the production of the Ndiri performance series can be best understood and found in the Chewa cultural spectacle of Nyau, more specifically their tradition of Gule Wamkulu which I shall explain in this next section

3.1.1 NYAU, GULE WAMKULU AND THE COLONIAL GAZE

The word Nyau is a Chewa word meaning mask, but is also used to describe the masked association of the Chewa ethnic group found in Southern and Central Africa but is most closely associated with Malawi, where this tradition originates (Chikuta, Guhrs and Mtonga 2007: 179). Although this society and its masked dance are usually called Nyau in scholarly literature, the term Gule Wamkulu (the great dance) is used by the members themselves. In this study, both terms are used — Nyau is a general term for the masking society and *Gule Wamkulu* refers to the performance of the masked characters (Korpela, n.d.: 121).

Nyau (mask) or Gule Wamkulu (the great dance) is also called *pemphero lalikulu* (the great prayer), and according to Birch de Aguilar (1996: 9) "Nyau societies are often likened by their members to Christian churches or Islamic congregations…". This is perhaps the reason why when the early colonial settlers arrived with missionaries, they were quick to label Nyau with suspicion, subsequently banning[32] its practice (Guhrs, 1999: ii) with little understanding of its social relevance and significance to the Chewa community.

Guhrs (1999: ii) further substantiates this point by stating that:

> Nyau [masked] performances have been affected by Colonial processes in varied ways. They were banned by the former government of Northern Rhodesia and severely censored by Catholic Mission teachings in the former Nyasaland. Other forms of vilification have been more subtle. Information about performance in Africa has often been collected and arranged in ways which limit the understanding of these genres. Images of Africa which cluster around the notion

[32]"Nyau performances have been affected by Colonial processes in varied ways. They were banned by the former government of Northern Rhodesia and severely censored by Catholic Mission teachings in the former Nyasaland. Other forms of vilification have been more subtle. Information about performance in Africa has often been collected and arranged in ways which limit the understanding of these genres. Images of Africa which cluster around the notion of the 'Primitive Other' have enabled a representation of Nyau masking as a superstitious and outdated practice with no relevance for contemporary Africa"(Guhrs, 1999:ii).

> of the 'Primitive Other' have enabled a representation of Nyau masking as a superstitious and outdated practice with no relevance for contemporary Africa".

According to (Chikuta, Guhrs and Mtonga 2007: 179) it was only,

> In 2006, that the *Gule wamkulu* was accorded official recognition by UNESCO as a masterpiece of oral and intangible heritage of humanity – something to be preserved, documented and nurtured. 50 years ago, this cultural treasure was demonised by the British administration and the mission churches as an abomination. The tradition thrived, despite being pushed underground, and became a powerful weapon for criticism and expression. The Gule Wamkulu is a fascinating example of the power of art in sustaining communities.

Nonetheless, there are still ongoing attempts to vilify and represent Nyau masking as a 'Primitive Other' or an outdated practice with no relevance to African contemporary life (Guhrs 1999: ii). This has spurred scholars such as Smith (2001), Mtonga (n.d.), Birch de Aguilar (1996), Yoshida (1993), Chikuta, Guhrs and Mtonga (2007) to conduct studies that re-contextualized the practices social relevance to the continent today, beyond the gaze of the colonial establishment.

Smith (2001:188) argues that the ongoing representation of Nyau as foremost a secret society[33] is misleading. He argues that "Nyau is more properly described as a closed association" (Smith 2001: 188), and the development and use of secrecy and masking has a unique significance to Chewa society. Chikuta, Guhrs and Mtonga (2007: 179) explain that, because Chewa society is largely matrilineal in kinship, Nyau and its performance art of Gule Wamkulu possibly developed as a response to the female dominance within their society. They go on to explain that

> When a man married he moved to the village of his wife, where she had her domestic allies, while he was a stranger in a new village. The Nyangu, or Queen mother was highly powerful, producer of the heirs to leadership. The secret knowledge that women guarded and maintained related to all the mysteries and powers of child-bearing, and these were considered magical, as were the powers of Chauta princesses who called rain and ensured successful crops. Men therefore developed some secret practices in order to gain some mystery and power of their own and to express the frustration of the married man politically weak position (Chikuta, Guhrs and Mtonga 2007: 179).

[33]Compared to Occidental secret societies and brotherhoods that have been accused of conspiracies of world domination and the new world order

Thus masking and secrecy serve as a performance strategy through which anonymity is attained. This anonymity provides the Nyau performer with a powerful tool through which social commentary and criticism can be expressed without censorship or fear of reprisal. In the context of Nyau's occurrence in Chewa societies found in Malawi the social commentary was concerned with gender identity politics and challenging matriarchal[34] dominance. Nyau served as a way of mediating this dominance and uplifting the Chewa manhood from a politically weak position to a state of equilibrium with the female gender. Damion (2007:2-4) further argues that the Nyau performance of Gule Wamkulu is not just a closed association but a rite of passage used to initiate young men into a "exalted status of adulthood as well as entertaining the audience". Furthermore it is mandatory for nearly every Chewa boy between the ages of 12 and 15 to be initiated into a masked association, and males are not considered to be adults until they join (Yoshida 1993: 35). Although historically Chewa social system was based on matrilineal kinship, the effects of western influences and urbanisation have resulted in the adoption of some patriarchal practices being adopted and this has affected the role that Nyau plays in gender construction within the Chewa community (Yoshida 1993: 35). However, the role and function of Nyau has always been diverse, Korpel (n.d.: 39) argues that the "masquerade is more than just a tribal dance or a community performance. It is a unique phenomenon that combines politics, education and entertainment into a ritual that is core to the traditional culture of Malawi" (Korpel n.d.: 39), thus the practice has always been able to adapt to the changes in society and find new concerns to address. With colonialism came a new hierarchy of power which the practice focused its attention on, and, Mtonga (Simbao 2012: 22) explains "Nyau masquaredes often commented on strangers both visitors who came as traders , or invaders who came in the form of colonialists". Simbao (2012: 22) adds to this by arguing that Nyau became a way of mediating and "negotiating the distance between the insiders and outsiders, between the familiar people and strangers within Chewa society". She gives examples of how this mediation was conducted:

> In this first layer of negotiating distance, *nyau* masks and costumes explore differences and at times subvert belief systems, such as Christianity, that were not only imposed onto Chewa people but also drove Gule Wamkulu masquaredes underground during colonialism. The Maria or Malia, figure is a well-known female masked figure that is gentle in her demeanour but subtly references the nyau tradition's battle with Christianity. The mulungu, or muzungu Caucasian settler was potrayed with a long narrow face eyes, and the Arab trader was potrayed

[34] Matriarchy is a society in which females, especially mothers, have the central roles of political leadership, moral authority, and control of property. The word matriarchy is often interpreted to mean the opposite of patriarchy.

> with a long narrow face and sometimes wore stilts to reflect the tall impression created by the long flowing robes worn by muslims (Simbao 2012: 22).

The Illustrations of these masks can be found in (2012:Fig. 28). As such the Gule Wamkulu became an expression of 'foreigness' and provided a platform for mediating the tensions between people from far away and the native people of Malawian society. Similarly when the Chewa migrated to other parts of Southern Africa this institution of Nyau also worked to negotiate their 'foreigness' to other natives in countries such as Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Simabo (2012:22) suggests that

> when Chewa people migrated to Zimbabwe and worked as 'aliens' on mines and farms in the country that was predominantly Ndebele and Shona. As such the Gule Wamkulu performances became a signifier of 'Chewa-ness' for people residing in Zimbabwe who at the times faced xenophobic name-calling such as *mabwidi*.

3.1.2 THE MIGRATORY CULTURAL PRACTICE OF NYAU

During the 15th to the 17th century Maravi Invasions and 20th century labour migrations in Southern Africa the Chewa people of Malawi brought the tradition of Gule Wamkulu to Zimbabwe (Simbao 2012: 22). According to Damion (2007:2-4), in a Zimbabwean context the *Nyau* masked spectacle and it's confrontational 'strangeness' was used by the Chewa to construct and imagine forms of identity that subverted stereotypical and derogatory labels projected on them as foreigners in Zimbabwean society. Damion believes that because the Nyau performance of Gule Wamkulu dances aimed to transform its members into "an exalted status of adulthood" (Damion 2007:2) It became a powerful mode of expression in which the Chewa could challenge xenophobia and negative stereotypes associated with their identity as foreigners to Zimbabwe. Damion (2007:2) further explains that

> ...'the dances and rites that are conducted among Chewa amongst others are done to signify a change of status in society as well as to preserve their identity'. In this light, identity refers to the self image which members of any social group construct on the basis of identification and stereotyping both among the members and the outsiders. It is a sense of self hood and is not necessarily ethnic but can be based on gender, religion, profession, class, age, locality or political persuasion. Hence the identities can be real, constructed or imagined. The dances have thus, acted as a tag in differentiating the Chewa against other ethnic identities, in particular the

dominant autochthonous Shona and Ndebele groups. Therefore, the dances have evolved through generations and have gone a long way in defining their identity and in carving a niche for this ethnic entity in Zimbabwe .

This ability for the performer to reconstruct self-image through Nyau became the inspiration behind the *Ndiri* series, or *I am* series. The 'Ndiri' series transplants the Chewa performance strategies and appropriates them into my practice's concern with the self image of the African migrant in South Africa. This performance work attempts to engage a local South African audience on issues relating to 'afrophobia' and connects negotiations of 'strangeness' in the historical Chewa diaspora from Malawi to Zimbabwe and Zambia, to issues of 'foreignness' in the contemporary diaspora from Zimbabwe to South Africa.

I have used several performance approaches that I have appropriated from the Nyau closed association and used them in my work. Firstly I use the process of masking and secrecy to retain the anonymity of the figure behind the mask. This anonymity provides the performer with a powerful tool through which social commentary and criticism can be expressed without censorship or fear of reprisal. This process of masking also creates a risky, unpredictable and at times confrontational tension between the performer and the viewer, which I attempt to underscore through the use of satirical humour. This confrontational 'strangeness' is very essential for the Nyau as it allows them to contravene and disrupt the order of things (Simbao 2012: 47), and just like most forms of performance art Nyau shocks audiences into reassessing their own notions of art, life and culture (Goldberg 1993: 8). Simbao (2012:22) argues that "the masquerade dancers are famous for kicking up dust both literary and figuratively". Together the masking, secrecy and anonymity have served the performance of *Gule Wamkulu* well in becoming one of the most influential mediation tools for identity negotiation and social construction among the Chewa people of Southern Africa.

Other strategies used in the masked association that I have incorporated in my work involve the use of metaphor, gesture, sophisticated reverse role-playing, proverbs, mimicking and most importantly satire.

3.2 'VABVAKURE' PEOPLE FROM FAR AWAY: THE EXHIBITION

3.2.1 THE CHEWA CREATION MYTH

Vabvakure[35]*, People from Far away* is an exhibition that utilises sculpture, performance and film. Through these visual artistic mediums the show invites the viewer on a journey as he or she follows an 'alien' who falls from the sky and has found itself stranded in a foreign landscape. The narrative of this short film borrows its ideas from the Chewa 'creation myth'[36]. Birch de Aguilar (1996:10) best explains this myth by stating that

> ...one day Chiuta-God sent a man and a woman down from the sky with a hoe, a grain mortar, and a winnowing basket. With them came pairs of animals as well as Chiuta ("Great Bow") himself, who was accompanied by the first rains. They all alighted on a flat-topped hill by the name of Kaphirintiwa. Because of the rain, the earth, which until then had lain barren, sprang to life, and man began to cultivate his gardens. During this initial period Chiuta, men and animals lived together in peace. That situation, however, was changed when man invented fire by rubbing two sticks, one soft, the other hard. This set the grass ablaze and made the animals flee, full of rage against man. Chiuta, being too old to run, was rescued by spider, who spun a thread along which Chiuta climbed back to the sky, whence he had come. Thus driven away by the wickedness of man, God proclaimed that man would die and join him in the sky, where he would have to make rain clouds in order to quench the fires he had invented

The significance of this story to my work is partly its moral implications: how "man's" misuse of fire resulted in the destruction of all that was good. My interpretation of this tale perceives the fire as a metaphor for knowledge. In the Greek myth of Prometheus, fire is represented as both a gift and curse and draws attention to the metaphor of fire as knowledge or the point at which human civilization began (Matthewman 2011: 11). Fire as a metaphor thus represents a moral dilemma of knowledge's ability to create both good and bad things. Civilization in this case, is the imagined communities which we have constructed, which are capable of being utopian and or spaces of dystopia. This exhibition is also a critic of nationhood as an imagined community, as character journeys through geographic space he comes into contact with various national

[35]is a word used by the Shona people of Zimbabwe, when translated into English the word means 'people from far away' and is used to descibe 'foreigners'

[36]A creation myth is a symbolic narrative of how the world began and how people first came to inhabit it.

symbols such as a nation flower or a flag. What become increasing overt to this alien is the propensity that all these ideological constructs have towards fracture or failure if they are not nurtured.

Although the two characters found in the short film are derived from the man and woman found in the Chewa myth, they are presented as androgynous beings – by emphasis is not on their gender, but on their unexpected relation, of having similar alien traits. A relationship that acknowledges that, they are able to find solace in the fact that they are both strangers to one another. The first character is titled *Ndiri Afronaut (I am an Afronaut)* (2012-2013:Fig. 9) and the second *Uri Afronaut (You are an Afronaut)* (2012-2013:Fig.26). They are mirror images of you and I. So for me the first character represents the African foreign national in South Africa and the second character represents the South African citizen. Both these characters are 'alien' to each 'other' but it is within that 'foreignness' that they find communion. Kristeva reiterates these sentiments by arguing that:

> Strangely, the foreigner lives within us: he is the hidden face of our identity, the space that wrecks our abode, the time in which understanding and affinity founder. By recognizing him within ourselves; we are spared detesting him in himself. A symptom that precisely turns "we" into a problem perhaps makes it impossible. The foreigner comes in when the conscious of my difference arises, and he disappears when we all acknowledge ourselves as foreigners, unamenable to bonds and communities (Kristeva 1991: 1)

In this light I have utilized the space suit as a universal metaphor, to visually illustrate the very moment at which the foreigner disappears, and the resultant new bond and community that is created. A bond that transcends traditional relations of culture, race, gender, kinship, nationhood or religion.

With this realization it became important that for the work to truly realize Kristeva's setiments, the conclusion of this film had to embody this act, of the protagonist spectacularly disappearing. Therefore the exhibition was thus staged in a theater, an arena where I could combine cinema, performance and sculptural installations as display. The Guy Butler theater was thus converted into a cinema by installing a large projector screen between the audience's seating area and the stage. The stage was then utilized as the exhibition space where all the sculptural objects in the film were put on display, but concealed behind the veil of the projector screen. The audience was invited to the exhibition under the pretext of coming to see a short film and as they watched this screening the narrative builds up to a climatic conclusion where the two alien characters meet for the first time on screen. As they locate themselves in relation to each other, the film abruptly stops and the auditorium fades to pitch black. After a short wait the sound of the projector screen slowly being raised

can be heard and what was concealed behind the curtain is revealed – see *People from Far Away Theater performance* (2013: Fig.30). Firstly Ndiri Afronaut is spot lit alone then he is spot lit with the other objects on stage, a flag, a protea, a great big door, and the other alien, Uri Afronaut. As the theatrical lighting of the objects on stage occurs it becomes apparent that the protagonist Ndiri Afronaut becomes animated, suddenly the lights fade to black again and loud raffling sounds can be heard coming from the stage, these a proceeded with a series of thumping footsteps that race across the stage towards one of the stair case leading to the seating area. When the lights a turned back on Ndiri Afronaut has vanished, all that remains of him is his outer shell, a space suit that lies discarded on the stage floor.

Importantly, the space suit, within popular culture is reminiscent of the Cold War era. It was a time, when the world's superpowers were jostling for the bragging right of having sent the first man into space, into the final frontier and onto the foreign terrain of the moon. When the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) finally succeeded, Neil Armstrong's famous firsts words from a distant planet would forever reverberate through space and time as a living testament of having broken through a celestial threshold and barrier. "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind" (Donkin 2010: 113). On a functional level the space suit is understood as an extra-vehicular suit that is designed with life support and other essential protective gear that enable its host to traverse foreign terrain with a hostile atmosphere to one's physiology; it is a cocoon of some sort. For one to venture off to the moon, this adaptive technology of a space suit is required in order to survive. In comparison the act of crossing a geographic threshold or boundary such as a national boarder often similarly presents a risk, in the form of intolerance towards ones 'foreignness'. In relation to the discourse around 'afrophobia', this metaphor of a space suit becomes a powerful vehicle to perform the ways in which the African foreign national to South Africa experiences alienation and foreignness and in order to survive any hostility, he/she often find ways of adapting to the environment. I remember going through such a process of adaptation: after the events of 2008 I started changing my dress code and selectively wore clothes that had a local distinctiveness. I picked up words and phrases from various local languages, and if asked by a 'stranger' where I was from I would reply with a local geographic place such as Cape Town or Limpopo. In respect of the exhibition, what becomes evident as the audience is ushered onto the stage to explore the sculptures, is that the space suit as a structure is now presented as a discarded cocoon, and whatever this creature that embodied it was, it has now disappeared and lives among 'us'. At which point the alien has become an element of 'us' and no longer exists on the fringe of our society.

Another noteworthy metaphor which I utilised in this exhibition is drawn from Science fiction, a large door like structure titled, *The Monolith* (2012-2013: Fig.31.). This artwork borrows its name from a famous object found

in a book by Arthur Clarke titled *Space Odyssey,* which was also turned into a film. In this film this monolith – a large rectangular black structure – strangely appears, whenever there is a human evolutionary leap. *Space odyssey* leads the viewer to the conclusion, that this extraterrestrial structure is somehow responsible for nudging along human evolution. Titling this doorlike structure is an attempt to illustrate a shift in consciousness. As Ndiri Afronaut travels from a desolate landscape to a crowded metropolis he is transported through this door, in effect the door compresses geographic space and time. It represents a shift in how we relate place and space, as the bridge that connects these point removes all traditional boarders and boundaries and reduces the journey into a mere opening and closing of a door. *The monolith* presents a world that is not structured around thresholds and boundaries, spaces that are no longer geographically segmented. A space where migrant or travellers are not restricted, and are granted legitimate access to any space.

3.2.2 THE IMAGE OF THE AFRONAUT

The image of the African space person has appeared a few times in contemporary art history but perhaps the most relevant to my exhibition is the works of Yonka Shonibare and Christina De Middel. Shonibare is a British-born Nigerian artist who is renowned for his use of factory – printed cloth made in Europe for the African market.Mullen Kreamer (2012: 310) argues that this material that is now often associated with being an African textile has a more complicated history, for the

> African cloth serves as an apt metaphor for the entangled relationship between Africa and Europe and how the two continents have invented each other. The artist's remarkable body of work has critiqued the wealth, and privilege, and frivolity of European aristocracy, the social and political ambitions of the Victorian era elite, and eighteenth century Enlightenment philosophy that, for some, ushered in the modern era through its promotion of reason and science.

While a number of Shonibare's works have been partially inspired by the Victorian era of Enlightenment and its ramifications, some of his other work such as *Cloud 9* (1999-2000:Fig. 27) appear to be influenced by Afrofuturisim. "Afrofuturism is an emergent literary and cultural aesthetic that has strong association with African American literature; it combines elements of science fiction, historical fiction, fantasy, Afrocentricity, and magic realism", and explores technologies effects on black culture (Juang and Morrissette 2008:72-73). According to Mullen Kreamer (2012: 310), *Cloud 9*

> juxtaposes ideas about history, technology, and the American dream, taking as its point of departure the iconic image of an astronaut planting a flag on the moon, the "postcolonial twist"

being that the figure is wearing an" African' fabric space suit, and the flag is not a national flag but a flag of suburbia a textile printed with the motif of cars and box houses.

It is important to note, that I am acutely aware of the similarities in objects and curatorial strategies found in Yinka Shonibare's work and my own practice. This is not an attempt to copy or emulate his work but rather – it is an attempt to pick up where he left off – to add to the discourse of cultural identity, colonialism and post-colonialism, within the contemporary context of globalisation.

Another Artist who has worked with this kind of fictional futuristic concern is Cristina De Middel. Upon completing her MA degree in Fine Arts at the Universitat Politécnica de Valencia in Spain, De Middel chose to pursue a career in photojournalism. De Middel admits that she "didn't find it a good platform for the way I thought. So to amuse myself I began exploring a way of telling stories in which I deliberately played with fiction" (Davies, 2013: Online).

This cross pollination between photojournalism and fine art photography resulted in Cristina's first project, a fictional portrayal of the people who send spam emails about unclaimed millions, *POLY-SPAM* which was exhibited at Photo España festival in Madrid in 2009 and garnered quite a bit of attention. However current notoriety emerges from work titled *The Afronauts* (2010:Fig.29) which she produced while researching psychological experiments. Davies (2013: Online) explains how De Middel "found a list tucked away in a file of the 10 craziest experiments in history. Top of the list was the Zambian space mission."

De Middel explains how this story made it to the top of that list:

> In 1964, still living the dream of their recently gained independence, Zambia started a space program that would put the first [A]frican on the moon catching up the USA and the Soviet Union in the space race. Only a few optimists supported the project by Edward Makuka, the school teacher in charge of presenting the ambitious program and getting its necessary funding. But the financial aid never came, as the United Nations declined their support, and one of the astronauts, a 16 year old girl, got pregnant and had to quit. That is how the heroic initiative turned into an exotic episode of the African history, surrounded by wars, violence, droughts and hunger (De Middel 2011: Online).

The works of both Shonibare and De Middel resonate with my exhibition in terms of their approach towards Afrofuturism and fictional accounts that challenge reality, truth and historic misconception.

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CONCLUSION

In concluding this thesis, I have defined 'xenophobia' and unearthed the complexities of its occurrences in South African Society. There is a need to re-evaluated definitions that frame this intolerance only as an attitude, and that do not comment on this mind-set's link to abuse and violent retribution towards foreigners, as they are misleading especially in relation to the phenomenon's occurrence in South Africa. Furthermore, in South Africa, not all foreigners are targets of this intolerance but Black working class African immigrants appear to be the most vulnerable to its violence, through a process of racial, ethnic and class profiling. This process of profiling also victimised local citizens and promoted a problematic form of nationalism that assumes an authentic South African identity is only rooted in autochthony, further complicating who is considered an 'insider' and 'outsider' in South African society. Pitting 'native' against 'alien' and perpetuating an exclusive sense of belonging that is reminiscent of the racial doctrine of Apartheid, The occurrence of this phenomenon has only testified to the identity crisis' within post-Apartheid South African society and questions whether the multicultural ethos of the Rainbow Nation has succeeded in unifying the diverse people of this nation. If we are to imagine multicultural forms of nationhood that truly unify the nation, they must not be at the expense of socio-economic concerns that the nation has inherited from Apartheid's legacy. For if we do not address this legacy fully then we are bound to re-enact the mistakes and injustices of the past, and the Rainbow Nation ethos becomes just another superficial imagined community that exists in our minds and not a lived experience.

In relation to this discourse, the visual and performance art community has played an important mediating role in further understanding, scrutinizing and in offering possible solutions to the trauma and social fragmentation that South African Identity is currently facing. The discourse that has emerged from these spaces now offers various path ways towards imagining identity and collective communities in an era of neoliberal capitalism. Some of those pathways are found within performance art and have informed my approach to my art production. Namely, Nyau, which I have used as a performance strategy, has allowed me to deal with experiences of alienation and foreignness and the trauma I experienced as a result of 'afrophobia' in South Africa. In concluding the exhibition 'Vabvakure', 'People from far away', I have used visual and

performance art to address the unspoken, through these artistic interventions I have offered new insights and perspectives to the discourse of ‘afrophobia’.

Fig. 26. Gerald Machona, *Uri Afronaut* (2012-2013), sculpture, varied , courtesy of the artist.

Fig 27Yinka Shonibare MBE *Cloud 9* (1999-2000) Life-size mannequin, Dutch wax printed cotton, flag Reproduction taken from Yinka Shonibare. (2002) Yinkashonibarembe.com, [Online], Available: http://www.yinkashonibarembe.com/artwork/sculpture/?image_id=23

Fig. 28.Ruth Simbao, *Chewa Nyau masquerade masks* (2005), photographs, Dimensions vary (Reproduction taken from Simbao, R. (2012) Making way : Contemporary art from South Africa and China, Grahamstown: Visual and Performing arts of africa : Rhodes University.]).

Fig. 29. Cristina De Middel, *The Afronauts* (2012), photographic print series, dimension vary, courtesy of the artist (Reproduction taken from Cristina De Middel. 2010. *lamiddel.com*, [Online], Available: http://www.lademiddel.com/eng/ldmeng.html [10 Dec 2012])

Fig 30. Gerald Machona, *People from Far Away Theater performance* (2013), Performance, 12mins, Guy butler theater Grahamstown, courtesy of the artist.

Fig. 31. Gerald Machona, *The monolith* (2012-2013), Sculpture, 210 x 91x 100cm, courtesy of the artist.

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