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The Search For Transcendence

The creative and intellectual treatment of the experiences, conditions, and aspirations of black people never fit quiet neatly within the paradigms of 'established' disciplines and institutions. These paradigmatic negations form part of the fastidious exclusions and denials of the reality and totality of the black perspective and politics of any given moment. In order to fully appreciate the potentialities of invoking the fantastic in thinking about aspects of lived experience that Joseph Roach described as falling within the "disparities between history as it is discursively transmitted and meaning as it is publicly enacted by the bodies that bear its consequences,"[1] the exploration of the ideological space that the "fantastic" occupies in the popular imagination is necessary in interpreting the complexities of representing our decolonised reality. Magical realism[2] can also provide a way to fill in the gaps of cultural representation in a postcolonial context by recovering the fragments and voices of forgotten histories from the point of view of the colonized.[3]

If we think of the fantastic as a genre that destabilizes, at least momentarily, our understanding of the distinctions between the reasonable and the unreasonable, and reason itself, the proper and improper, and propriety itself, by bringing into the field of play those potentials we have forgotten, or did not believe accessible or feasible, […] its effects are not at all that dissimilar from those of blackness.[4]

Iton links here the aspects of the fantastic with that of blackness in order to describe the particular temporalities latent in the conflation of race, existential philosophy and with the fashioning of reality. Our conception of the fantastic is unsentimental about race and does not attach any expectations of representing an authentic black subject, nor in positive or negative portrayals of blackness. His description is useful to me in considering how a range of visual practices contribute to the enactment of "the fantastic" through the malleable technologies associated with cinema and photography to produce dystopian, illusionary, magical and contradictory images of a substantive postcolonial imaginary and politics.

The fantastic is useful to us in thinking about how social transformation relates to the search for transcendence and the exhibition goes some part in offering critical contemplation and questioning of the transcendental as inescapable. The metaphorical function of mysticism are cast as material elements for speaking about the real issues in which people struggle with institutions and their prejudicial categories of race, gender, and sexuality.

1 Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1996, p 26.

2 Magical realism is a literary genre far more than anything and its application to and implications for African literature in general

3 *The Silent Cry: Mysticism and Resistance*. By Dorothee Soelle. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001. vii+325

4 Ibid., 289–290. Richard Iton, In Search of the Black Fantastic (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 6. Shana Redmond, "In Search of the Black Fantastic (Book Review)," Journal of Popular Culture 42, no. 3 (June 2009): 579. pp.

The works are not and do not provide any truth or untruth, but rather are critical conceptualizations of certain aspects of self as presented in phenomenological experiences rooted in a collective postcolonial consciousness of being. An existence and being which is itself "increasingly hyper-visible in the global market of multicultural commodity fetishism."[5] Thus making it difficult to accept 'the fantastic' itself as part of any intellectual thought and curtailed its possibilities for reimagining the experience of everyday living. This apparent distrust of the fantastic stems from the suspicion that it functions as commodifying kind of primitivism that relegates subjects with colonial histories and "their traditions[6] to the role of exotic psychological fantasies,"[7] as opposed to being a compelling post-colonial imaginary emerging as a deliberate response to the crises in black futurity. Applying postcolonial terminology, realism represents the hegemonic discourse of the colonizer while magic refers to the strategy of opposition and resistance used by the colonized. This former perception serves to invalidate any sort of intellectual investigation of this theme, and relegated productions by black artists as regressive and irrational.

The works are directly critical or generally evocative offerings of 'personal reality' in which mysticism is aestheticized as corruptive when everything is shrouded in a cloth of omnipresent mystery, either through the 'invisible hands of god' and government.

Through the various works we are see *how* 'mystical' change is enacted. We are privy in Zina Saro-Wiwa's *Deliverance of Comfort* to the machinations of the 'miracle' and its consequences. As the viewers we have the dual perspective on the presence of two opposing discursive systems of the magical and real as they reflect the existing tensions in discourses in generating meaning and understanding of our postcolonial context. From our privileged position we see how the perpetual efficacy of the mysterious as a point where history, politics, and religion converge and live.

The rapturous, religious ecstasy seen in Andrew Esiebo's photographs demonstrates suggestions of exposing the miraculous as a fraudulent in the social and ecological webs of zealous global Evangelism. The fantastic, as offered in both Esiebo's photographs and Zina Saro-Wiwa's short film is a cautionary note for those seeking to enact divine instructions. Esiebo opens up the possibility for horror that is the manipulation of the religious into atool of self-aggrandizement and pure narcissism.

5 Kobena Mercer, 'Ethnicity and Internationality: New British Art and Diaspora- based Blackness', *Third Text*, no 49, Winter 1999, p 56.

6 Pre-colonial histories is my take on this explicative

7 Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1996, p 26.

Mysticism becomes a trope to underrate or completely overlook practical difficulties, unpleasant facts, and dangers and becomes a self-serving "escape" in the hands of television Evangelists who rely on mystical traditions to legitimate the spiritual power of collective consciousness by identifying it with the ecstasy and rapture of religious mysticism.

8 *The Silent Cry: Mysticism and Resistance*. By Dorothee Soelle. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001. vii+325 pp

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How and to what degree do these works succeed to convince us of the reality they represent? The mysticism we encounter in Terence Nance's *You and I and You* is not about extraordinary phenomena like ecstasies and visions, the mythological is here only evoked to personify life processes in order deal with the loss of a child, and the subsequent withdrawal of the parents from each other. In other words, the fantastic may serve as the transformative decolonizing project of imaging alternative histories. because the mysticism is not primarily, its shifts the position of the fantastic to one employable within multicultural normalisation that makes space for the acknowledge that 'we all speak from a particular place, out of a particular history, out of a particular experience, a particular culture, without being constrained by the position as "ethnic artists."'[8]

Milumbe Haimbe explicitly articulates otherness through the lens of the post-human, apocalyptic language of the corporation takeovers and the obliteration of black female bodies replaced by android that have reduced women to their biological essence, in order to convey a world without 'real' women. In the unfolding of the colonial discourse, the black body became an icon for sexuality in general and sexuality became a metaphor for domination.[9] The extermination of this body and its elimination give evidence of an especial sense of alienation from politics when politics engagement remains hinged to "questions of ethnicity, identity, and both their relationship to senses of place and notions of authenticity and origins."

The artworks are critical of the relations of power through parody, excess and complicity, and the viewer is left with the baton of responsibility, to resolve for himself why and how the ideas that provide a basis for these disparate elements produces the 'fantastic' force that will see black people through the future challenges.

Nomusa Makhubu

Fantastic Defiance

Recently, I saw a black worker falling on his head from the back of a pick-up truck after the driver hit the brakes at an intersection. The possibility of brutal death had the cars following the van not stopped in time was real. Even more troubling was the utter commonplace-ness, or ordinariness of this incident. It is not unusual to see black casual workers loaded on the back of a pick-up truck for construction or domestic work. How does this tolerated violence make any sense? Historical and contemporary processes that congeal this moment seem to be all too omnipresent that to locate this moment in past colonialism, apartheid, capitalism, neoliberalism and racism appears almost banal. This is the point at which our *Fantastic* exhibition arises, reflecting on the normalization and banalization of various forms of violence against the African body. It seeks to re-ignite critical thought about the fantastic as a concept, considering it to be one of the crucial ways of comprehending contemporary complexity in which uneven international economic and cultural relations brutal histories contribute to the surreal qualities of the everyday.

Although the fantastic is a literary genre, which defines relations between the writer, the reader and the text, we think of it as a *language of subversion* that delegitimises historical narratives that flatten the depth of lived experience. In *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, Tzvetan Todorov suggests that the fantastic is defined by "hesitation" that is experienced by the character and reader (the latter through the character) while discerning between what is real and what is preternatural. For Todorov, the fantastic is characterised by "the brutal intrusion of mystery into the context of real life" where "the fantastic narrative generally describes [people] like ourselves, inhabiting the real world, [who are] suddenly confronted by the inexplicable."[1] Todorov argues that the fantastic constitutes "the dividing line between the uncanny and marvellous" where the uncanny is presented by situations that seem strange, supernatural or extraordinary but can be explained rationally (illusions), and the marvellous is defined as narratives in which the supernatural "remains unexplained, unrationalised" and is accepted as such.[2]

For us, the fantastic is not only about being suspended in disbelief while overwhelming events unfold in front of our eyes. The fantastic is a confrontation with the power of imagination in its abstract and material manifestations, and it is an intervention in socio-political dynamics are often fuelled through image/ image-making. We use the term to destabilize dichotomous discourses which ignore the historical processes that continue to make it difficult to tap into the potency of imagination (or understanding the power that lies in the production of images and the imaginary) in African contexts.

In art history, terms such as "'fetish', 'magic' and 'custom'" have been used to "construct [the] cultural otherness" of African art.[3] Blier illuminates critical issues regarding the ways in which African art seems embedded in belief systems that are based on 'magic' as "the basis for the separation of Africa and its arts from Europe and the movement of Africa into taxonomic proximity with the Pacific Islands and Native America."[4] The uses of the fantastic in the cultural production of America and Europe are not seen in the same exoticizing manner. That is, rather than being backward, the fantastic remains a potent way in which collective imaginary is mobilized.

The works of international artists such as Jelili Atiku (Nigeria), DIneo Seshee Bopape (South Africa), Kudzanai Chiurai (Zimbabwe), Andrew Esiebo (Nigeria), Milumbe Haimbe (Zambia), Aida Muluneh (Ethiopia), Terence Nance (USA), Tracey Rose (South Africa), Zina Saro-Wiwa (Nigeria) and Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum (Botswana), re-open questions about the fantastic as a site for critical debate about bio-power and bio-politics. The selected photographic and video works take up many troubling contemporary issues related "technologies of power."[5] These works show that there is value in re-igniting critical thought about the concept of the fantastic.

The exhibition location, the University of Cape Town, in Cape Town, is significant in understanding the exhibition. The overwhelmingly grotesque economically-driven racisms in this particular context produce surreal juxtapositions of ostentatious myth-like utopias with devastating dystopias; a landscape that operates on forms of revealing (through the spectacle of nature, leisure and magical wealth) and through concealing (dispossession).

Dissimulating Technologies

Fantastic is primarily an exhibition of photography, video and performance art. It is a project that grew from an interest in video-film, Nollywood particularly. As a "medium of the people," Nollywood democratizes artistic and cultural production. Zack Orji, a filmmaker, argues that Nollywood is indeed a medium that decolonizes the frame.[6] Photography, however, was instrumental for scientific racism to justify colonisation. The lens has had a remarkable veneer of reality about it and yet it has produced such marvellous fictions. In contrast, bell hooks finds that photographs can also be used to empower and to produce images that are "central to that aspect of decolonization that calls us back to the past and offers a way to reclaim and renew life-affirming bonds."[7] Similarly, the mediums of video art and performance art became particularly significant for engaging with race, gender and sexuality politics. Performance and video art coincided with "idealism about cultural change and social pluralism."[8] We chose particularly video and photography because of the complex relations these technologies have in the construction of global politics. In this exhibition, the camera is a powerful means of writing, gesturing, articulating, and recuperating.

One medium, in the exhibition, that radically transforms visual narratives is Milumbe Haimbe's cunning use of digital illustration. Once popular for generating the construct of a white superhuman hero, digital illustration in America during the inter-war years promoted war and the purchase of war bonds[9]. It reinforced conservatism. In *Ananiya – The Revolutionist*, Haimbe goes against the typically sexist and racist content in the comic strip or graphic novel format. The protagonist, Ananiya, is a member of an underground revolution, the Army for the Restoration of Womanhood that seeks to infiltrate the totalitarian ONE Consciousness Corporation. Run by three white male emperors, the corporation has produced generations of robotic perfect women whose existence will lead to the obsolescence of 'biological' women. From the fifth generation, humans could marry robots. Ananiya, who joined the revolution as a teenager, takes on an undercover operation to stop generation eight from being mass produced. She sneaks into the lab and accidentally activates the prototype. Having seen the prototype, Ananiya returns to the headquarters to report but runs into a protest taking place. This moment at the end of the sequence, marked by a whiteout that is caused by an explosion, is also the beginning.

Technology, in this narrative, is destructive. The futuristic sub-city symbolises social decay resulting from tyranny of the corporation who control resources and rule through the appropriation of biological and technological processes. These "strategies for the governing of life"[10] are a form of bio-power. The corporation is depicted as having power over the "relation between letting die (*laissez mourir*) and making live (*faire vivre*)."[11] In this case, women are tyrannized into the underground. The subcity is a particularly masculine space where there are posters of missing women. In the presence of robotic women, the lives of 'biological' women are less valued. In *A Cyborg's Manifesto*, Donna Haraway asserts that the cyborg "gives us our politics," it is "a condensed image of both imagination and material reality" and "a creature in a post-gender world."[12] Haimbe's work reminds us that the cyborg, "a creature of social reality,"[13] arises from relations of violence. The control over sex, reproduction/ replication is rooted in violence. This violence then becomes the apt response when the masses rise against the corporation. In defiance, they protest.

Throughout the graphic novel one is aware of the dystopian architecture of the city, Arcanarc (supposedly a portmanteau of arch and anarchy), as the ultimate expression of power. Haimbe describes it as "the steely grip" through which "power, greed and lust" are systematically used to oppress. Haimbe's narrative is reminiscent of what Brian Larkin refers to as the colonial sublime: the "use of technology to represent an overwhelming sense of grandeur and awe in the service of colonial power."[14] The colonial sublime plays an important role in the "representation of technology and technology as representation."[15] Colonial power was expressed through the technology that pervades political and cultural life for the fantasies desires of the empire. The construction of massive bridges, dams and monuments by colonial administration in colonies is part of the colonial sublime. Moreover, the co-option of "science" in the exercise of power systematically produced "surplus people who no longer had a stable place in society, and who thus lost all natural connections with their fellow men."[16] Haimbe's reference to the threat of the obsolescence of women can be seen as the threat of the "obsolescence" of oppressed races whose life or death becomes meaningless under totalitarian rule.

Fantastical Histories, Intersecting Trajectories

The conventionalised associations of superstition and naivety with Africa and, with its proletariat and the constructs of ethnic "traditions"[17] make it difficult to discuss the fantastic as a mode of reading and seeing. As Birgit Meyer illustrates, the "colonial discourse constructed those beliefs (indigenous) as superstition to be left behind with the gradual increase of education."[18] The conflation of "traditional beliefs" (ancestors as well as divinities) and popular fantastical imaginaries (ghosts, ghouls, witches or zombies) is bigoted and ignores the ghoulishness of capitalism. Rather than rejecting the fantastic, we see it as a framework that enables us to interpret social breakdown, as well as the extraordinary, strange and inexplicable in the everyday as the enigma of history distorts the present.

Jelile Atiku's *Eleniyan* for example, the reference to *egungun* methods in relation to the human skeleton that he carries in the performance does not exoticize his work but rather poses direct questions about mortality and violence in the perpetual colony. For Atiku, *egungun* is "a principle of (a) personal de-colonization process."[19] Bandaged in red cloth, Atiku uses public streets as "stage," highlighting them as thaumaturgic spaces haunted by colonial ghosts. The *egungun apidan*[20] (magic-performing masquerade) were meant to "cleanse Yorùbá communities from physical and psychological disorders." The use of *egungun* here is not just about drawing from "traditions" but about understanding the "weight" of history. The skeleton that Atiku carries is a metaphor for the elements of conventional history: unnecessary death, crisis and the perpetuation of violence.

In a speech made in 2012 at the University of Cape Town for the thirteenth Steve Biko Annual Memorial Lecture, Ben Okri states that

> History is like a nightmare we wake up from after a struggle and blink in stupefaction at the strangeness of daylight. With awakening a great energy is freed; a new question is posed: the nightmare is over but what do we do with the day? We do not have enough psychologists of history. Everyone seems to treat history as if our reaction to it should be logical. The people have emerged from a mutual nightmare, what should they do upon awakening? What should anyone do after a long trauma? What can anyone do?[21]

For Atiku, history is not a record of the past but an unfathomable creature assembled in the present. In a similar vein, Gcina Mhlophe describes history as "a heavy matter" and "a strange animal."

UMLANDO YINTO ENZIMA

Umlando into enzima
Isilo esimakhanda khanda
Usikhumba simibalabala eminingi
Ecishe ingabaleki
Imibalabala evusa usinga
Ijabulise inhliziyo ngaphakathi
Neminye ethi ivuse umunyu nosizi
Lapho sesikhumbula
Izehlakalo ezashiya okhokho nokhokhose
Bebambe ongezansi

HISTORY IS A HEAVY MATTER

History is a heavy matter
It is a strange animal with multiple heads
Colours too many to ever count
The creature's unique colours have a way
Of awakening the most indescribable pride
But others bring back such sad memories
The very worst memories
Of events that left our ancestors
perplexed, speechless[22]

The *Fantastic* exhibition asks us to re-open the difficult questions about the historical processes that have produced disproportion, partisanship and conflict.

There is, arguably, a conversation between Jelili Atiku's *Eleniyan* and Terence Nance's *You and I and You.* In this film, a couple with child walks down a street where they encounter masked dancers. The dancers take and offer the child to a royal couple seated in the middle of the road. The masked dancer in red looks back at the couple through eyes embedded in his palms. The couple is split and as they wander through the forest, various Caucasian characters surface from underground. When the couple reunites, the man's stomach glows as though impregnated. The representation of life: birth and death situated in a typical urban street (both in Atiku's and Nance's work) in proximity to trees or forest shuns simplistic readings of "modernity vs tradition" where repressed narratives in history locate the reproductive heteronormative family within broader colonial ideological systems.

Often described as a magic-realist film, Nance's *You and I and You*, is fantastic in that it intimates a confrontation with the incoherence of history, representing the multiplicity of time and space simultaneously. The term magic realism is notorious for its theoretical problems, making it impossible to find a definition that distinguishes it from categories such as fantasy and surrealism. Nevertheless, a useful characterisation of magic realism stresses co-dependence of the fantastic and the real that creates historic narratives. The concept takes on an anthropological perspective that "now comes to be understood as a kind of narrative raw material derived essentially from peasant society, drawing in sophisticated ways on the world of village or even tribal myth."[23] Furthermore, it has now come to be located in the post-colonial cross-culture to "express mythological and cultural tradition."[24] Magic realism can be seen as an antithesis in which social structures render moral principles fluctuant and incalculable – the semiosis of the irrational that modifies concrete realities.

The road, in Nance's film, as a trajectory can therefore be seen as a portrayal of time not as coherent and chronological but as a mode of framing inter-generational narratives, and perceiving a maze of events, both real and imagined. Frank Ukadike points out that Africa's history emerged from what Clyde Taylor calls "existential distress."[25] A history of slavery, colonialism, neo-colonialism, civil war and economic exploitation is a traumatic history through which myth provides a different and remedial mode of perceiving and constructing events. Such a condition is contingent on a visual vocabulary that, I propose, presents labyrinthine time (in performing fantastic concepts of past, current and future time simultaneously). The representation of time through allegorical technology (teleportation, time compression, telekinesis, etc.) can be seen as advancing a visual vocabulary for cultural knowledge of cosmological structures.

For Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum, there is a wealth of knowledge embedded in cosmological systems. In *Observatory* and *To the Moon*, the distinction between a technological scientific fantastic and a religious, mythical fantastic seems nonsensical. In Phatsimo's work it is as if science is religion, and religion is science. Her work is reminiscent of a statement made by filmmaker, Tunde Kelani, that cosmologies, *Ifá* particularly, are "compendium(s) of Yorùbá history, literature, and science."[26] Although Sunstrum's work does not refer specifically to *Ifá*, she fuses cosmological knowledges with narrative to interrogate nuanced propositions of space-time experience in contemporary life.

Whose Magic?

"The Wizard of the Crow is a modern sorcerer," I told him. "He dresses in suits. Besides, he uses only a mirror for his divinations."

- Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o[27]

One of the themes that makes talk of cosmology difficult is the problematic conflation with witchcraft.. But this is because it has now been relegated to the "developing" world and is barely thought of in terms of its broader global dimensions. Zina Saro-Wiwa reminds us of the real dangers of symbolic power and charisma. She locates this in international Pentecostalism and the "forces" of the (global) marketplace. *The Deliverance of Comfort* is the satirical video that depicts a young girl who is regarded as a "witch" and goes to church to get "deliverance." A group of men dressed as pastors pray for her and eventually kill her, but her spirit returns to cause mischief, steal and trick people in the streets. The film begins with a scene where the young girl is seated in a room and a male voice-over declares:

> Well, they are solitary creatures, strange in appearance, thin, sometimes too small for their age – I have seen when they have a young body but old face. They are quiet and mysterious, untidy and disobedient and you can tell for sure if they convulse with foam at their mouth. You sometimes call it epilepsy, we call it possession by the devil. The child witch is creative and full of initiative, mad and curious. Do not listen to a child witch, they are liars and hypocrites, too open, too wise, too clever and sometimes too nice and worst of all, they want to be superior at all times. You see, this is because they inhabit a second world. A world where they are in charge. They steal from this world oh, wreak havoc in our world in order to rule in their world. It is therefore vital to break their spirit.[28]

In subsequent scenes, a wooden broom and magic wand suddenly appear in her hands. Her clothes change and she finds herself in a black costume-party style dress, witch-hat and star-shaped glasses. She walks around knocking on people's doors and the first adult gives her a bottle of *Squadron* whiskey and the second adult gives a smoking pipe. She then knocks on the door of a church but a pastor aggressively grabs her by the hand and leads her to a place where a cluster of pastors pray for her and utter invocations. They force her to drink bleach, a chlorine household chemical, and drive a nail into her head using a rock. The male voice continues:

> There are many tried and tested ways to get a child witch to confess. To extract the evil out of them. I command that the devil in you comes out. Devil I cast you out! Get out! Get out! Every backwardness, unemployment, poverty, illness, I break them loose, I cast out this devil. Out in the name of Jesus! Out in the name of Jesus! Get out of there! Devil come out![29]

Having been exorcised, the little girl dies but her spirit awakes with one eye painted black, her face painted red and with red plastic devil horns planted on her head. She becomes mischievous; she runs to the market where she steals, destroys food and tricks people. She announces:

> I must thank you gentlemen you have released me back into your cosmos. The bleach you made me drink tasted like rainwater. The ground you buried me in nourished my bones and the nail you drove into my skull gave me my sense of humour. Yes, I must thank you gentlemen for setting me free. But now, I must return to the womb and await my rebirth.[30]

Having said this, she returns to the church.

The title of this short-film, *The Deliverance of Comfort*, has double meaning: it refers to the exorcism or 'deliverance' of the little girl named Comfort and Christian the process of scapegoating or deliverance from evil. Saro-Wiwa's use of the name, Comfort, parodies the English names used in some Christianised African contexts such as Patience, Innocence, Obvious, Saviour, Simple and Comfort. Christianization during colonisation demoted traditions as 'the past'. Due to this, many African parents gave their children 'Christian' names or both African and English names. Saro-Wiwa's video does not only critique the violent witch-hunting by some Christian organisations but also the broader post-colonial conditions that arguably produce situations in which nothing can be rational.

Saro-Wiwa makes references to Western imports (costume party dress and fantastic visuals of a 'witch'). There is also, arguably, a link to *Abiku* or *Ogbanje*. The Yorùbá word *Abiku* refers to the belief that *Abiku* children die and are born again to torment their parents. When the little girl in Saro-Wiwa's film says she must return to the womb and await her re-birth, she makes references to this belief. The notion that children inhabit a second world where 'they are in charge' but come to earth to 'wreak havoc' is close to the belief that *Abiku* children inhabit two different worlds and possess or abuse power against their parents. In a conversation with Jane Wilkinson, Wole Soyinka states that *Abiku* is:

> not just a metaphor, but a very physical expression of the link between the living, the unborn, the ancestral world and so on. *Abiku* was real, not just a figment of literary analysis. Some of my siblings were *Abiku*, the anxieties involved in their existence, their survival, illnesses and so on, were *Abiku*. And then of course, I keep emphasising the cruelty of the *Abiku* once they realize their own power on their parents, with their elders, and how they use and abuse their power and at the same time the kind of loyalty to their own group, almost like children versus the adult world. So it became a metaphor for some of the diversities of experience and society, it became a symbol for cyclic cruelty, cyclic evil, and also an expression for some, of the enigma of existence, some of the insoluble aspects of existence… a symbol for the unwished but recurring. *Abiku* is not something you totally kill off. You mark it, you scar it – you know how people scar the child, like the *Ogbanje* of the Igbo, it's a theory people swear to (and it's not just a theory, that if you scar the *Abiku*, when the next child is born it will have those scars.[31]

This echoes the way 'child witches' are believed to possess malevolent power and occupy different worlds. Without conflating *Abiku* with the child-witch killings, it is necessary to see how witchcraft is often inaccurately linked to local beliefs and is a consequence of certain political situations that victimize children and the women who give birth to them. As Soyinka points out, a longing for "continuity, guarantee, reassurance and consolation"[32] arises if a new child is born with the scars of *Abiku*. He argues that "it's the same way, as for instance, in politics: there's an untenable situation and you're longing for change, you're participating in the process of change, you're looking for a re-born society, but when it eventually emerges, it's got the same ugly scars on it… as the last one."[33] These phenomena (witch-hunting in which victims are women and children or *Abiku*[34]) operate in a fantastic world ruled by children who bring disorder into this world. The break with the past is also evident in the notion that youth are disappointed with adults, who symbolize tradition and the descent of Africans through colonization, as well as the exclusive appropriation of wealth.[35]

Witchcraft accusations are not only representative of a crisis in gender roles and sexual relations but also of a crisis in familial roles between adults and youth that is caused by the rupture of colonialism where "continuity, guarantee, reassurance and consolation" were lost.[36] Peter Pels sees witchcraft as "an expression of a modern social crisis when 'witch finders' responded to the shattering of indigenous institutions by colonial rule."[37] The concept of the fantastic comes across as a cycle of fateful scapegoating in which victims of political and socio-economic dispossession persecute each other rather than face the sublimely daunting power that creates those situations.

Daniel Smith refers to Peter Geschiere's notion of "the modernity of witchcraft," where magic is not "the antithesis of modernity" and espouses the idea that occultism, witchcraft and magic "are not archaic or exotic phenomena, somehow isolated or disjointed from historical processes of global political and economic transformation… [rather], these are moral discourses alive to the basic coordinates of experience, highly sensitive to contradictions in economy and society."[38] The argument is that the discourse about occultism or 'black magic'[39] is the essence of modernity.

Magic, Birgit Meyer argues, is associated with the Occidental world that is discussed within the "the anthropological 'witchcraft' paradigm."[40] She argues that modern discourses position magic as an antithesis, reinventing it in the process that "distinguishes 'savage' or 'primitive' logic from a modern, Western one."[41] For Meyer, "the temporal distancing of magic by classifying it as pre-modern could only take place in the anthropologists' own time and language; anthropologists contributed much to the re-invention of the discourses in which Europeans dealt with the occult."[42] Discourses around witchcraft in sub-Saharan Africa are materially developed around colonial politics and post-colonial neo-liberal capitalism[43]. Witchcraft and "black magic" are then used to explain the severity of living conditions and the contradictions (excessive wealth alongside poverty) that exist.

Exacerbating the predicament herein, religious fanaticism reinforces prejudiced witchcraft accusations. Andrew Esiebo's photographic series reveals the hold of pestecostal churches on masses of people. Christian video-films depend on images of evil and occultism and function to 'show' symbolic transformation from good to evil through 'magic' or divine miracles. Pentecostalism is characterised by spectacle and the display of miracles where the poor are 'turned' rich or the evil are 'turned' good. This theoconomy[44] consists of exchanges of symbols that are facilitated by constructions of public fear and desire. Furthermore, these exchanges capitalise on failures of the state where the church creates livelihoods and associational life. The rhetoric of war (between good and evil) and crisis necessitates the display of 'miracles' which are framed as a way to deal with contemporary predicaments. Dispossession, social instability and insecurity are some of the contemporary problems that seem to have no resolution or can only be resolved through magic or miracles that churches claim to provide.

The Marxist concept, in which relations between people are defined through the exchange of commodities, may illuminate dyadic interpretations of the money fantasy as magical or wealth as a result of (maleficent) magic. Marx observes that there is "a definite social relation between men that assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things… similar to the most-enveloped regions of the religious world."[45] In this argument, objects are personified and abstract ideas are objectified. For Marx "the whole mystery of commodities, all the magic and necromancy that surrounds the products of labour as long as they take the form of commodities, vanishes therefore, so soon as we come to other forms of production."[46] The high numbers of unemployment, or exclusive labour-less wealth gain, accentuate the idea of magic.

Capturing these themes brilliantly is Tracey Rose's *Maqueii*. The ghost-like figure hovering over South African Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) houses, is performed by Rose. In one hand, she holds a slice of cake with a knife stuck in it. In the other, she holds a mask. In white-face makeup, Rose wears a blonde wig. As part of the video *Ciao Bella*, Rose plays different roles. The role in *Maqueii* alludes to Marie Antoinette attributed statement: "Let them eat cake." Rose parodies the gluttony and ignorance of the bourgeoisie. The mask and wig symbolise the illusions, the deceptions, and the ruses (or witchcraft) of capital.

Another conversation is one between Rose's *Maqueii* and Saro-Wiwa's *Phyllis*. Phyllis lives in a cramped apartment and, as a street hawker, has psychological and economic dependence on wigs. Similar to Rose's characters, the wigs enable Phyllis to take on different roles. As soon as she takes the wig off, her eyes roll back and become plain white as if possessed by a supernatural force. When she puts on a wig, she takes on the personality of the woman who last tried it on. Furthermore, the international traffic of wigs and other "plastic goods" present in this work confronts the effects of systemic power where neoliberalism reinforces class and racial difference. One can think about Zina Saro-Wiwa's use of the wig as a way of "tricking" established orders. This is what De Certeau calls "styles of social exchange, technical invention and moral resistance" which is also referred to as *La perruque* or wearing the wig.[47]

Excess is also portrayed in Dineo Seshee Bopape's *dreamwearr*. In this video, Bopape wears a costume made out of filled plastic bags, underpants, an artificial beard and carries an umbrella. The plastic bags tied to her body invoke commodity fetishism. As she is walking, she shines a single source of light on herself making parts of her body visible while others are invisible. In this way, the androgynous character she portrays appears both real and mystical. Through her performance and cunning use of light, she "tricks" the eye. The skewed perceptions about magic and the African continent have obscured the "magic" of systematic power and make it difficult to write about magic and Africa on the same page. Yet, there is the very magical, fantastic character of defiance.

Perpetual Conflict

Although defiance seeks, primarily, to negate oppression, the antagonisms seem to perpetuate. Aida Muluneh's series of photographs entitled the wolf we feed is based on the story of an elderly Cherokee who tells his grandson about a battle that goes on inside people. One wolf has negative attributes such as greed, superiority, envy and anger. While the other has positive ones such as peace, love, hope, serenity and benevolence. When the grandson asks which one wins, the Cherokee replies "the one that you feed."[48] This work shares conversations with many others in the *Fantastic exhibition*. The brightly coloured portraits of these characteristics, such as sloth and revenge, reflect the human individual qualities of the various abstract concepts such as "the state" or "global capital." When one looks at Muluneh's work in relation to other works in the exhibition, war in relation to revenge, greed or anger gives texture to otherwise diplomatic justifications for conflict.

Kudzanai's *Moyo* and *Creation* stage the effects of conflict. The triptych *Iyeza*, *Moyo* and *Creation* (date) use biblical themes such as the Pieta, the Last Supper, and The Garden of Eden. The theatrical renditions of dream-like Edenic spaces where in *Moyo*, a woman stands over a dead body and in *Creation*, a woman creates life from mud. The pain of women is central in the triptych. War is masculine and destructive and overshadows the different roles that women often take on because of war. The loss of life is contrasted to the creation of life. In some ways, this work brings us back to the conversation with Haimbe's graphic novel in which women fight the oppression of a male-run totalitarian corporation that seeks to destroy biological women in favour for constructed robotic women. Furthermore, this work relates the thesis of bio-power in relation to post-colonial civil wars. For Chiurai, conflict and resolution are in a state of perpetual negotiation.

Here again, is the perplexing image of black life: the black worker who could have died evokes images of the countless brutal deaths through colonization, civil war, and the everyday dehumanizing violations that have necessitated the Black Lives Matter movement. The *Fantastic* exhibition is a response to the inconceivable perpetuation of these forms of antagonisms and undeniably fantastic defiance.

Endnotes

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2 Todorov, T. 1973. *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, trans. Richard Howard. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, pg. 27, 44

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39 'Black magic', as counterpart to 'white magic', is characterized as primitive. The attribution of 'black magic' to Africa, generally, is problematic.

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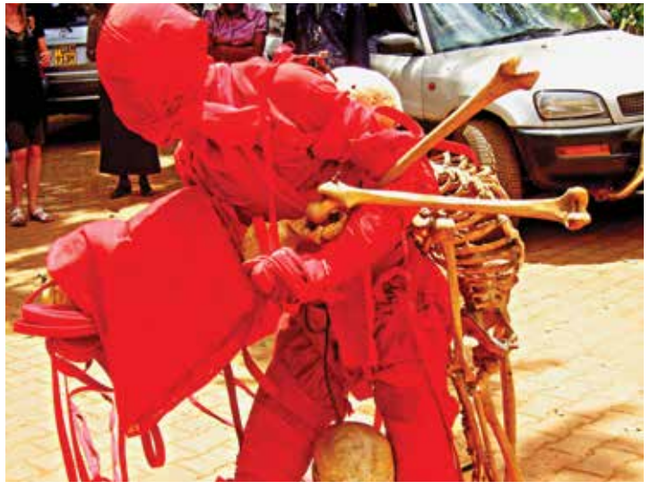
Jelili Atiku

Eleniyan, 2012
From In the Red Series
Documentation of Performance at Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda, Actual Duration of the performance was 02’ 30’’












SCULPTURE
DEPARTMENT





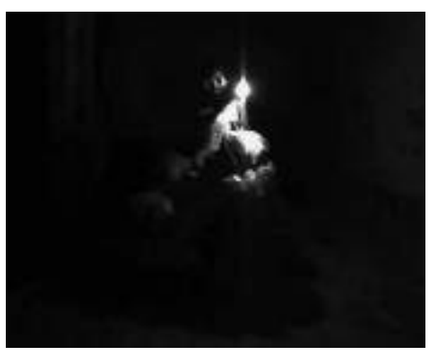





Dineo Seshee Bopape

dreamweaverr, 2008
SD digital video Duration
07’ 54”












Kudzanai Chiurai

Creation (from Conflict Resolution), 2012
Single-channel digital video
5‘ 16’’ seconds
Courtesy of the artist and Goodman Gallery

Moyo III, 2013
Pigment inks on fiber-based paper
100 x 150 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Goodman Gallery

Andrew Esiebo

God is Alive, 2011
Archival print
120 x 80 cm
Courtesy of the artist

God is Alive, 2006
Archival print
120 x 80 cm
Courtesy of the artist

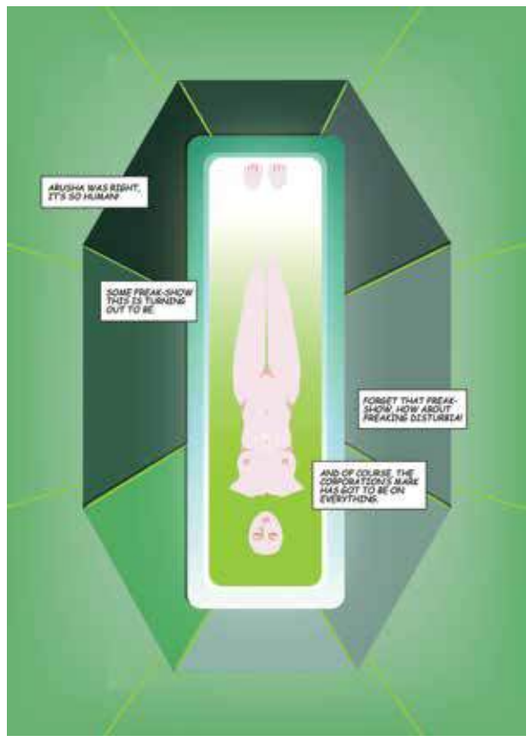
God is Alive, 2011
Archival print
120 x 80 cm
Courtesy of the artist


MOUNTAIN OF FIRE & MIRACLES MI

Milumbe Haimbe

The Revolutionist, 2015,
Archival Print
30 x 42 cm (23 parts)
Courtesy of the artist


A GIANT CORPORATION RUNS THE WORLD. RESOURCES ARE PLENTY BUT IT GRASPS NINTY FIVE PERCENT OF THIS COMMON WEALTH IN ITS STEELY GRIP.

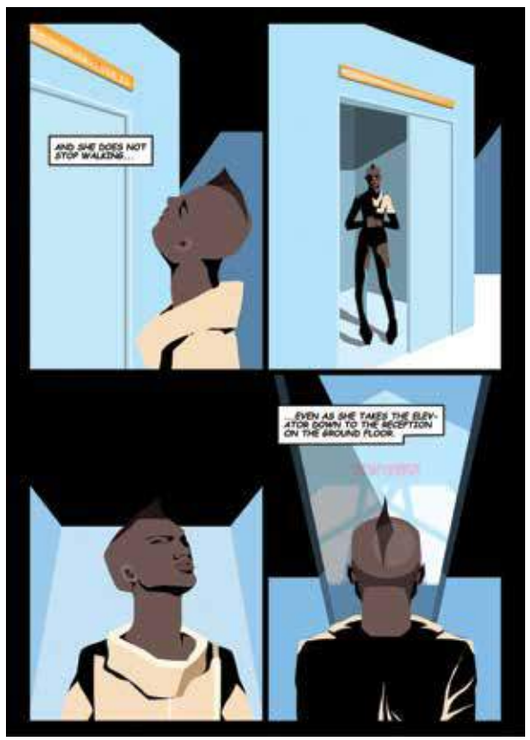

ABUSHA WAS RIGHT. IT'S SO HUMAN!
SOME FREAK-SHOW THIS IS TURNING OUT TO BE.
FORGET THAT FREAK-SHOW. HOW ABOUT FREAKING DISTURBIA!
AND OF COURSE. THE CORPORATECRATS MARK HAS GOT TO BE ON EVERYTHING.


I'M GUESSING THAT THIS IS NOT JUST A MARK THOUGH. IT'S GOT TO HAVE SOME SORT OF FUNCTIONAL PURPOSE...
...TRACKING DEVICE ANYONE? LIKE THAT'S RIGHT UP THE CORPORATION'S ALLEY.
OH, SHIT! SHOULD THIS BE GLOWING RIGHT NOW?


OH, SHIT!
CLICK! TWIST! TWIST!
OH NO, NO, NO...WHY IS IT WAKING UP? SHUT DOWN...


...JUST SHUT DOWN!!!

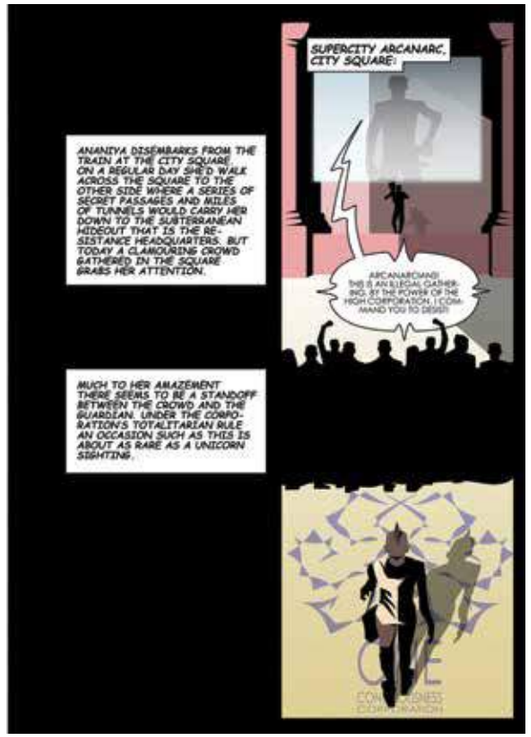

ANANIYA HALF EXPECTED THE PROTOTYPE TO CLIMB OUT OF ITS INCUBATOR AND WALK RIGHT OUT THE DOOR. BUT JUST AS SUDDENLY AS IT ACTIVATED SO IT DE-ACTIVATES BACK INTO STANDBY MODE.
IT IS A CLOSE CALL THAT HAS ANANIYA FREAKING OUT OF HER MIND AND HURRYING FROM THE LABORATORY.

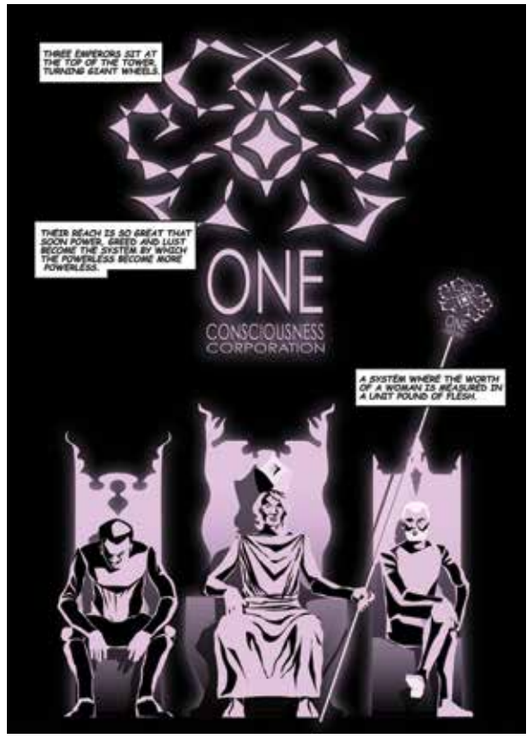

AND SHE DOES NOT STOP WALKING...
...EVEN AS SHE TAKES THE ELEVATOR DOWN TO THE RECEPTION ON THE GROUND FLOOR.


SHE FEELS THE URGENCY TO REPORT BACK TO THE RESISTANCE HEADQUARTERS WHILE THE GROTESQUE DISCOVERY IN THE LABORATORY IS STILL FRESH IN HER HEAD.
IF SHE SLIPS OUT NOW SHE WILL BE BACK BEFORE LUNCH BREAK IS OVER.
IT'LL BE LIKE SHE NEVER LEFT THE BUILDING.
TRAIN STATION


MISSING
MISSING


CITY SQUARE!
CITY SQUARE


ANANIYA DISEMBARKS FROM THE TRAIN AT THE CITY SQUARE ON A REGULAR DAY SHE'D WALK ACROSS THE SQUARE TO THE OTHER SIDE WHERE A SERIES OF SECRET PASSAGES AND MILES OF TUNNELS WOULD CARRY HER DOWN TO THE SUBTERRANEAN HIDEOUT THAT IS THE RESISTANCE HEADQUARTERS. BUT TODAY A CLAMOURING CROWD GATHERED IN THE SQUARE GRABS HER ATTENTION.
SUPERCITY ARCANARC. CITY SQUARE:
ARCANAROMA!! THIS IS AN ILLEGAL GATHERING. BY THE POWER OF THE HIGH CORPORATION, I COMMAND YOU TO DISPERSE!
MUCH TO HER AMAZEMENT THERE SEEMS TO BE A STANDOFF BETWEEN THE CROWD AND THE GUARDIAN. UNDER THE CORPORATION'S TOTALITARIAN RULE AN OCCASION SUCH AS THIS IS ABOUT AS RARE AS A UNICORN SIGHTING.


THREE EMPERORS SIT AT THE TOP OF THE TOWER, TURNING GIANT WHEELS.
THEIR REACH IS SO GREAT THAT SOON POWER, GREED AND LUST BECOME THE SYSTEM BY WHICH THE POWERLESS BECOME MORE POWERLESS.
ONE
CONSCIOUSNESS CORPORATION
A SYSTEM WHERE THE WORTH OF A WOMAN IS MEASURED IN A UNIT POUND OF FLESH.


THIS IS THE FINAL WARNING! CEASE AND DESIST. DISBAND NOW!
SPOTTING A FAMILIAR FACE LINGERING ON THE FRINGES OF THE VOCIFEROUS CROWD, ANANIYA APPROACHES.

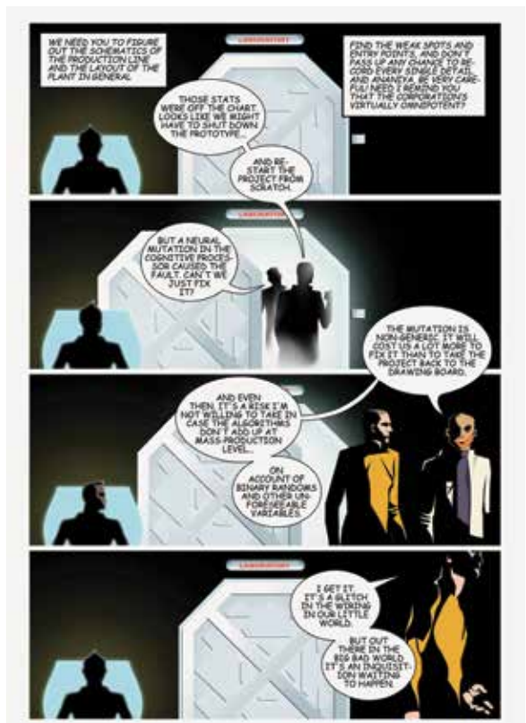

ARAKA! WHAT'S GOING ON?
HEY, ANANIYA HEARD ABOUT THE GIRL THAT WENT MISSING A COUPLE OF WEEKS AGO?
WELL, SHE WAS FINALLY RESCUED FROM SOME GUTTER IN SOME BACK STREET ALLEY, BUT NOT BEFORE SHE'D BEEN BRUTALIZED, YOU KNOW, THE KIND OF SICK STUFF PEOPLE DO TO ROBOTS, BUT THIS IS ABSURD, COZ IT'S A HUMAN GIRL WE'RE TALKING ABOUT HERE.
SOMEHOW THE PERV THAT DID THAT TO HER WAS WHEEDED OUT, WOBBED AND THEN DRAGGED BEFORE THE HIGH COUNCIL, AND WHAT DOES IT DO? IT SLAPS THE BASTARD WITH A FINE AND LETS HIM GO!
WE DEMAND JUSTICE FOR OUR GIRL!
THIS PROTEST IS US HOLLERING THAT WE'RE NOT GOING AWAY UNTIL JUSTICE.
WHAT THE HELL?
ARGHHH!


THE GUARDIAN'S MISSILE FLARES UP AND THEN SUDDENLY A BLINDING WHITE LIGHT ENGULFS EVERYTHING..
...SCATTERING THE PROTESTORS IN EVERY DIRECTION...


THE WHITE LIGHT QUICKLY DISSIPATES, LEAVING BEHIND POISONOUS FUMES THAT FILL ANANIYA'S NOSTRILS AND COMBUST HER LUNGS.

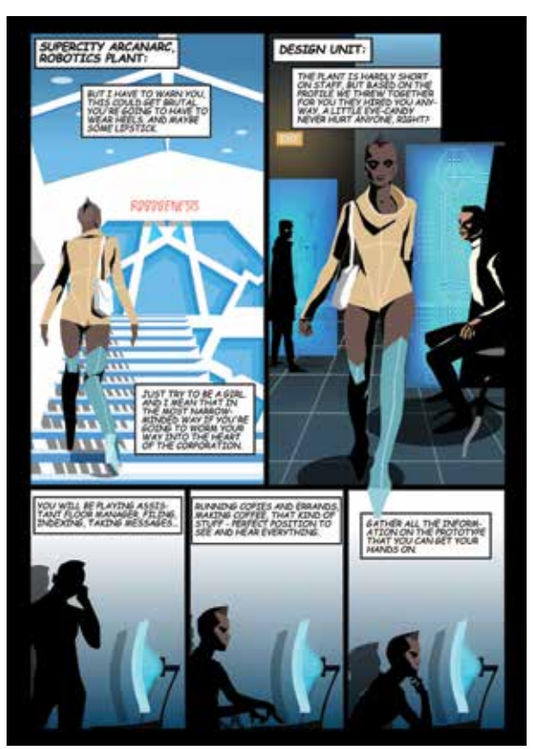

BUT NOT EVEN NATURE COULD FORGE THE KIND OF BEAUTY THAT THOSE MEN DESIRED SO THEY TURNED TO SCIENCE TO CREATE THE PERFECT WOMAN.
THE FIRST GENERATION OF ROBOTS WAS CONCEIVED TO THE SATISFACTION OF THEIR DESIRES.
BY GENERATION 5, THE CORPORATION ENACTED A LAW THAT ENABLED HUMANS TO MARRY ROBOTS.
IN THIS NEW WORLD ORDER WOMEN WERE DEEMED TO BE OBSOLETE.

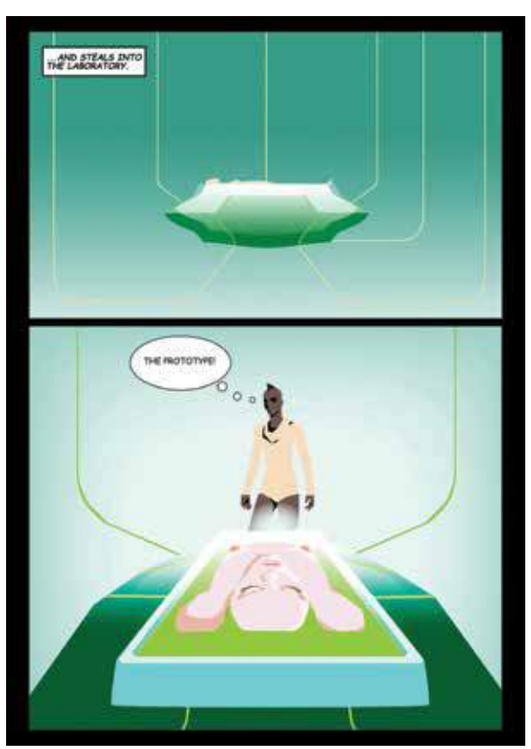

SOME DISSIDENTS GALVANISED INTO THE RESISTANCE, CALLING THEMSELVES ARMY FOR THE RESTORATION OF WOMANHOOD.
THEIR AGENDA WAS TO CHALLENGE THE VERY EXISTENCE OF THE ROBOTS. TACTICS INCLUDED ESPIONAGE AND INFORMATION DISSEMINATION.
ANANDYA WAS ONLY THIRTEEN YEARS OLD WHEN SHE JOINED THE RESISTANCE.
SUBCITY ARACHNIDA, RESISTANCE HEADQUARTERS:
NOW AT 17, SHE HAS RECENTLY BEEN APPOINTED AS AN AGENT IN THE COVERT OPERATIONS DIVISON.


WE NEED YOU TO FIGURE OUT THE SCHEMATICS OF THE PRODUCTION LINE AND THE LAYOUT OF THE PLANT IN GENERAL.
FIND THE WEAK SPOTS AND ENTRY POINTS, AND DON'T MESS UP ANY CHANCE TO RECORD EVERY SINGLE DETAIL AND ANANDYA, BE VERY CAREFUL! NEED I REMIND YOU THAT THE CORPORATION IS VIRTUALLY OMNIPOTENT?
THOSE STATS WERE OFF THE CHART! LOOKS LIKE WE MIGHT HAVE TO SHUT DOWN THE PROTOTYPE.
AND RESTART THE PROJECT FROM SCRATCH.
BUT A NEURAL MUTATION IN THE COGNITIVE PROCESSOR CAUSED THE FAULT. CAN'T WE JUST FIX IT?
THE MUTATION IS NON-GENERIC. IT WILL COST US A LOT MORE TO FIX IT THAN TO TAKE THE PROJECT BACK TO THE DRAWING BOARD.
AND EVEN THEN, IT'S A RISK I'M NOT WILLING TO TAKE IN CASE THE ALGORITHMS DON'T ADD UP AT MASS-PRODUCTION LEVEL.
ON ACCOUNT OF BINARY RANDOMS AND OTHER UNFORESEABLE VARIABLES.
I GET IT. IT'S A GLITCH IN THE WIRING IN OUR LITTLE WORLD.
BUT OUT THERE IN THE BIG BAD WORLD, IT'S AN INQUISITION WAITING TO HAPPEN.


COULDN'T HAVE SAID IT BETTER.
OUR CLIENTS DON'T DO BAD ROBOTS. ESPECIALLY WHEN THE MALFUNCTION MANIFESTS AS SELF WILL.
WE'RE RUNNING INTO LUNCHTIME BY MY WATCH. HOW ABOUT WE PICK THIS UP FROM HERE AFTER THE BREAK?
ANANDYA SEIZES THE FIRST OPPORTUNITY TO SLEUTH...
CHIEF TECHNICIAN JUNG
ACCESS TO THE LABORATORY GRANTED! WELCOME CHIEF TECH JUNG.


HEY ARUSHA! WHAT'S UP?
THIS COULD TAKE A WHILE. WHY DON'T YOU SIT DOWN?
HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT GOING ON YOUR FIRST ASSIGNMENT AS COVERT AGENT?
I'M COOL. YOU'RE THE LEADER. ASSIGN AWAY.
WE HAVE JUST RECEIVED INFORMATION THAT THE CORPORATION IS DEVELOPING A GENERATION 8 PROTOTYPE ROBOT ACCORDING TO THE INFORMANT...
THE PROTOTYPE'S SO SOPHISTICATED THAT YOU CAN'T TELL IT APART FROM THE REAL THING. IT'S EVEN BEEN GENERICALLY NAMED FREJA.
WE'VE GOT TO STOP THIS MODEL FROM GOING INTO MASS-PRODUCTION. THAT MEANS SABOTAGING THE WHOLE OPERATION BEFORE THE PROTOTYPE'S COMPLETE.
YOUR MISSION, CODE-NAMED OPERATION FREJA, IS TO INFILTRATE THE CORPORATION'S ROBOTICS PLANT.
OUR INSIDER HAS ALREADY CREATED THE PERFECT COVER FOR YOU - INTERN, DESIGN UNIT.


SUPERCITY ARCANARC, ROBOTICS PLANT:
BUT I HAVE TO WARN YOU. THIS COULD GET BRUTAL. YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO WEAR HEELS, AND MAYBE SOME LIPSTICK.
JUST TRY TO BE A GIRL AND I MEAN THAT IN THE MOST NARROW-MINDED WAY IF YOU'RE GOING TO WORM YOUR WAY INTO THE HEART OF THE CORPORATION.
DESIGN UNIT:
THE PLANT IS HARDLY SHORT ON STAFF. BUT BASED ON THE PROFILE WE THREW TOGETHER FOR YOU THEY HIRED YOU ANYWAY. A LITTLE EYE-CANDY NEVER HURT ANYONE, RIGHT?
YOU WILL BE PLAYING ASSISTANT FLOOR MANAGER, FILING, INDEXING, TAKING MESSAGES...
RUNNING COPIES AND ERRANDS, MAKING COFFEE. THAT KIND OF STUFF - PERFECT POSITION TO SEE AND HEAR EVERYTHING.
GATHER ALL THE INFORMATION ON THE PROTOTYPE THAT YOU CAN GET YOUR HANDS ON.


AND STEALS INTO THE LABORATORY.
THE PROTOTYPE!

Aida Muluneh

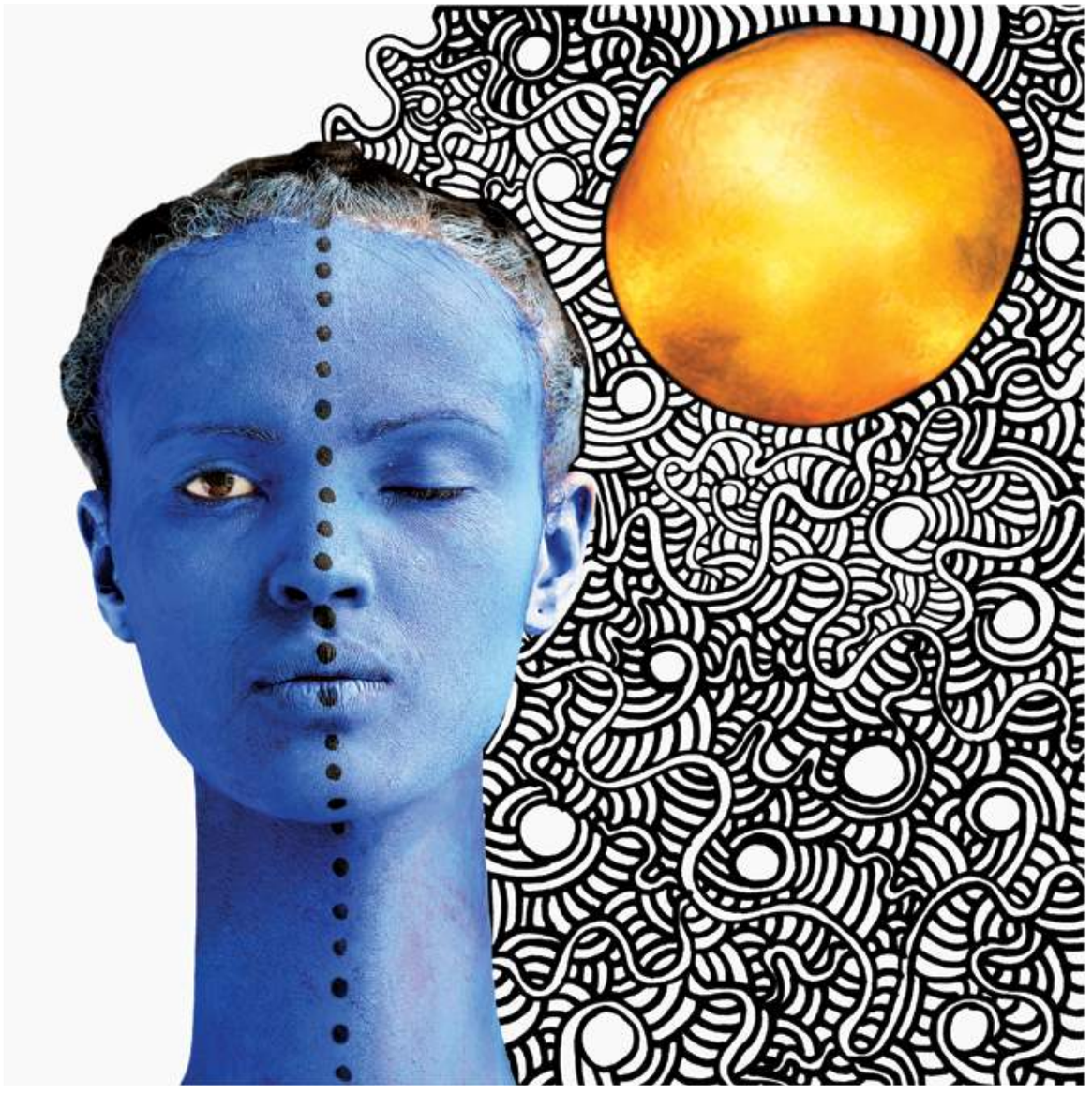
Song of David, 2014
Photographic print
80 x 80 cm

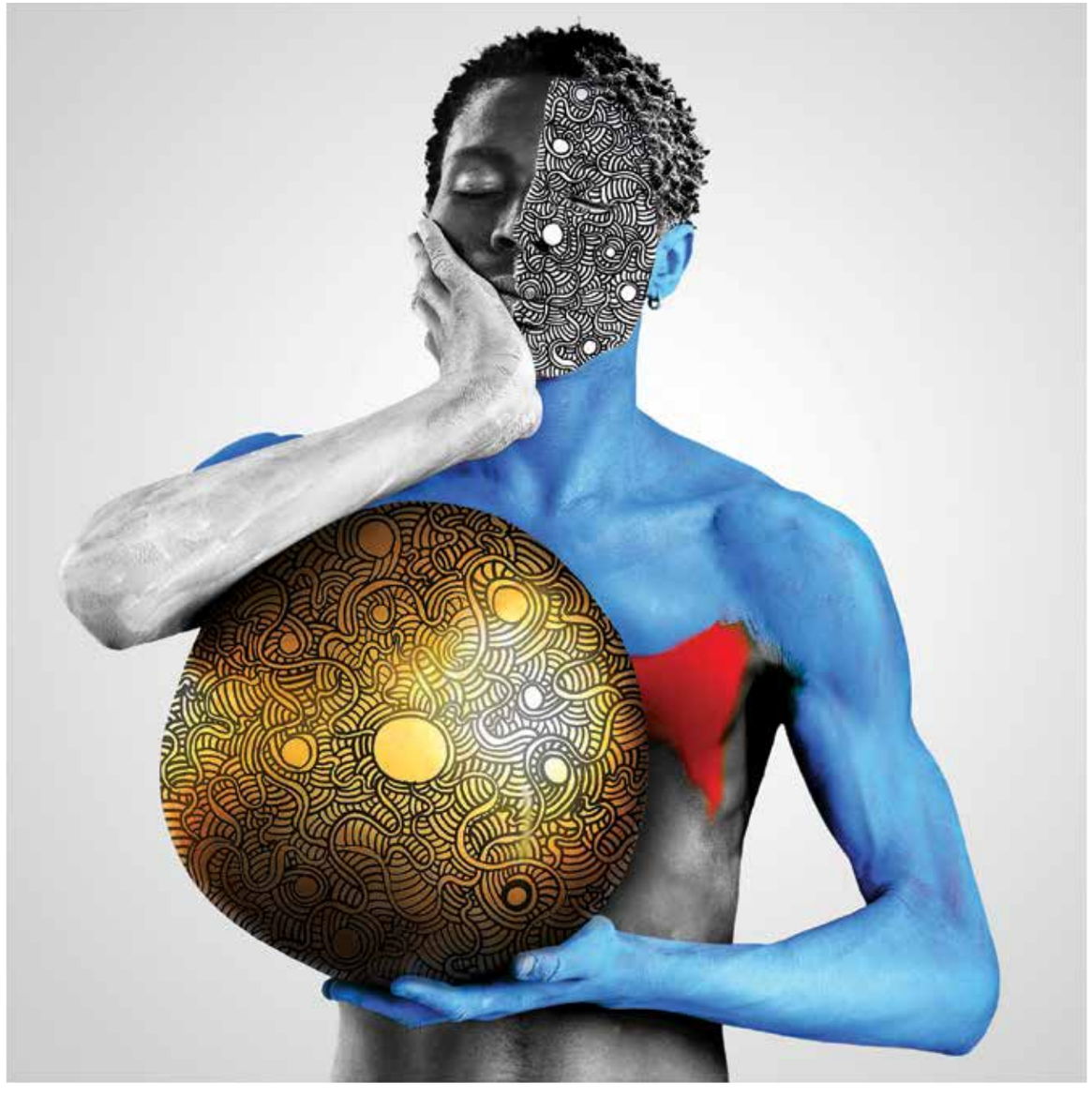
Revenge, 2014
Photographic print
80 x 80 cm

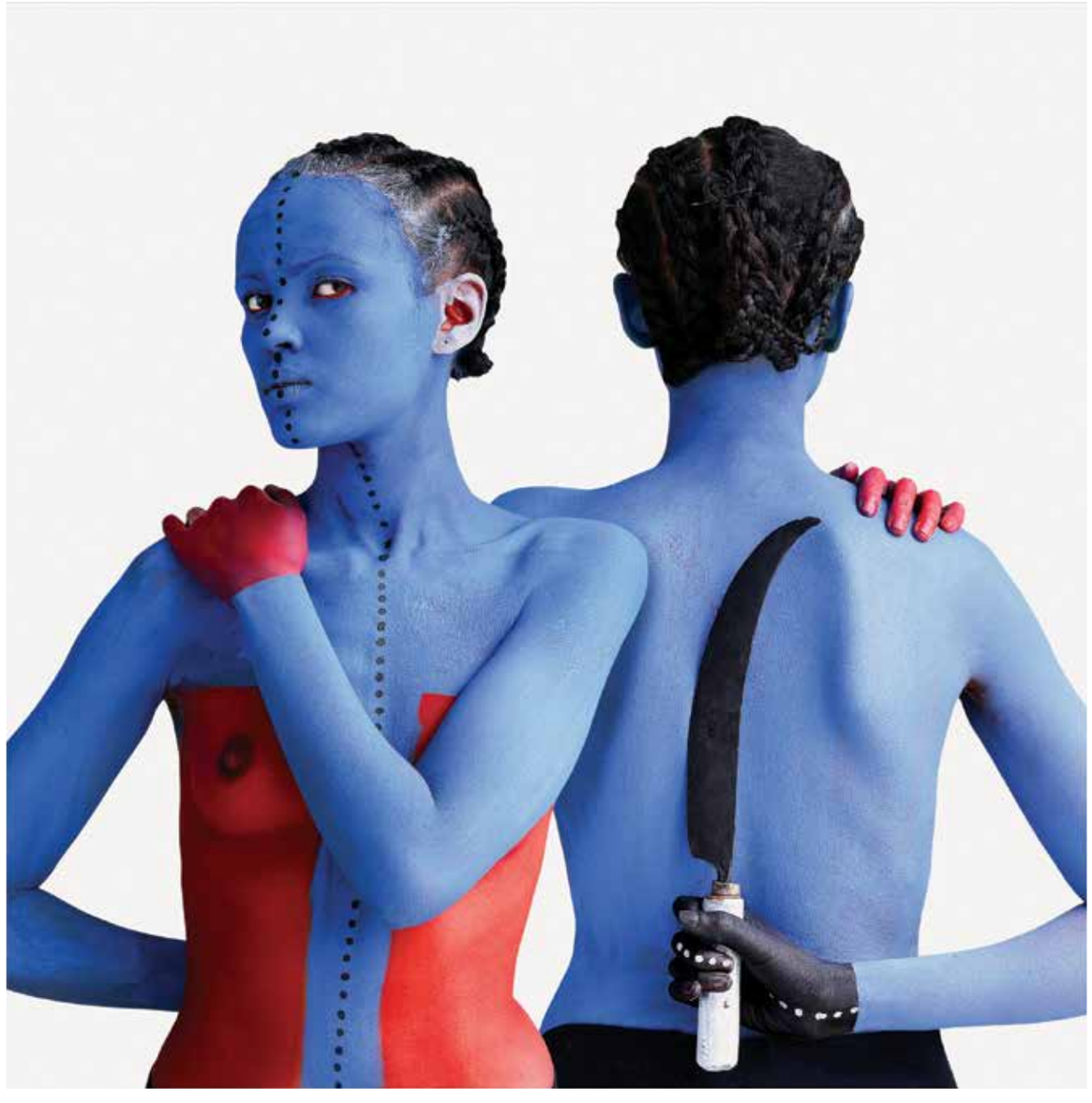
Sloth, 2014
Photographic print
80 x 80 cm

The Sacrifice, 2014
Photographic print
80 x 80 cm

An Idle Mind, 2014
Photographic print
80 x 80 cm







Terence Nance

You and I and You, 2015
Art Direction by Joanne Petit Frere
















Tracey Rose

Ciao Bella: Ms Cast, MAQEII, 2002
Lambda print
124 x 124 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Goodman Gallery

Zina Saro-Wiwa

The Deliverance of Comfort, 2010
07’21’’ (video)
Courtesy of Zina Saro-Wiwa

Phyllis: Phyllis, 2010,
Archival Print
67 x101 cm
Courtesy of Zina Saro-Wiwa

Phyllis: I Am not Alone, 2010
Archival Print
67 x101 cm
Courtesy of Zina Saro-Wiwa

Phyllis: Street Hawker, 2010
Archival Print
67 x101 cm
Courtesy of Zina Saro-Wiwa

















11
12
1
10
2
9
3
8
4
7
6
5

Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum

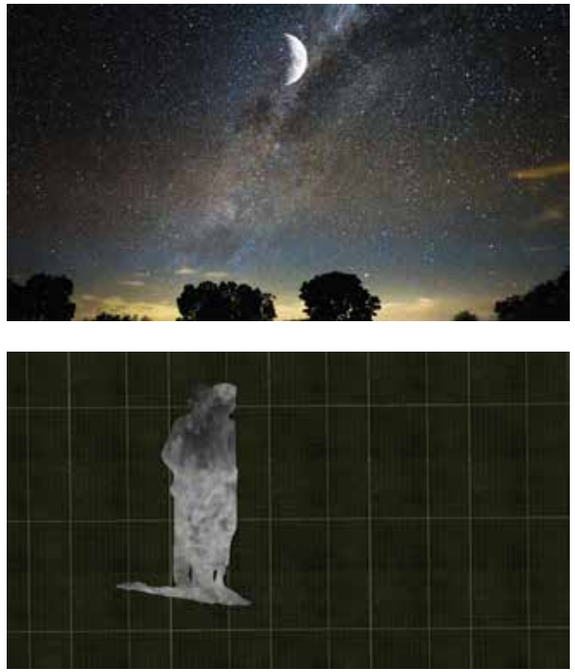
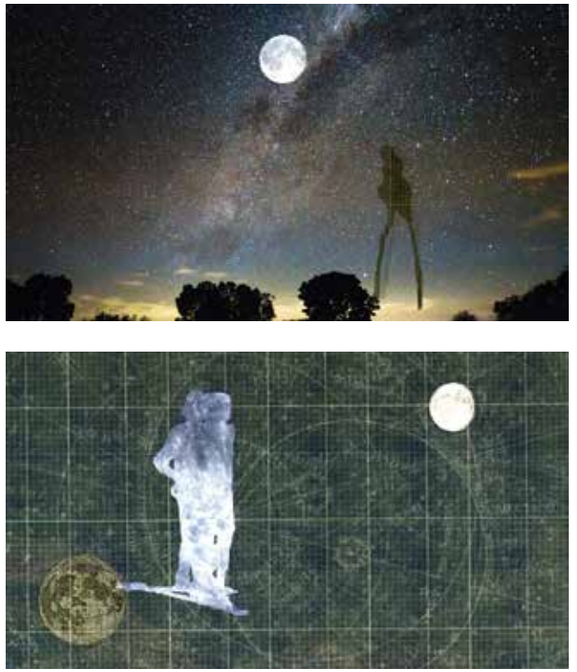
Observatory, 2013
drawing
50 x 20 cm
Courtesy of the artist

The Moon, 2014
02'02'' (animation)
Courtesy of the artist









Jelili Atiku

is a Nigerian multimedia artist with political concerns for human rights and justice. Through drawing, installation sculpture, photography, video and performance (live art); he strives to help viewers understand the world and expanding their understanding and experiences, so that they can activate and renew their lives and environments. For over decade, Jelili has put his art at service of the prevailing concerns of our times; especially those issues that threatening our collective existence and the sustenance of our universe. The contents of these concerns ranging from psychosocial and emotional effects of the traumatic events such violence, war, poverty, corruption, climate change, etc., that associated with our warring world have dominate his artistic forms. Born on Friday 27th September, 1968 in Ejigbo (Lagos), Nigeria, Jelili was trained at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria and University of Lagos, Nigeria – Where he was awarded Bachelor of Arts (Fine Arts) and Master of Arts (Visual Arts) respectively. He presently teaches sculpture in Department of Art and Industrial Design, Lagos State Polytechnic, Lagos, Nigeria.

He is presently the artistic Director of AFiRIperFOMA – a collective of performance artists in Africa; and Chief Coordinator of Advocate for Human Rights Through Art (AHRA).

Dineo Seshee Bopape

Dineo Seshee Bopape was born in 1981 on a Sunday. If she were Ghanaian, her name would be Akosua/Akos for short. In the year of her birth, the Brixton riots took place; two people were injured when a bomb exploded in a Durban shopping centre. Bobby Sands dies, MTV is launched, the Boeing 767 makes its first air flight, Umkhonto we Sizwe performs numerous underground assault operations against the apartheid state. There was an earthquake in China that killed maybe 50 people. Hosni Mubarak was elected president of Egypt, there was a coup d'etat in Ghana. Princess Diana of Britain married Charles. Bob Marley dies. Apartheid SA invaded Angola. AIDS is identified/created/named. Salman Rushdie releases Midnight's Children. In the region of her birth: Her paternal grandmother died. Julius Malema is born. Millions of people cried. Millions of people laughed! The world's population was apparently at around 4,529-billion.

Bopape spent her youth in Limpopo in varying social situations. At 12 years of age she began to follow a hunger for an elsewhere, beginning with Durban where she spent some years and studied painting and sculpture. She is a 2007 graduate of De Ateliers in Amsterdam and in 2010 completed an MFA at Columbia University, New York. She was the winner of the 2008 MTN New Contemporaries Award, and the recipient of a 2010 Columbia University Toby Fund Award. She has shown her work in major and minor national and international exhibitions ... Other events of the year of her birth and of her lifetime are perhaps too many to fully know.

Kudzanai Chiurai

Kudzanai Chiurai is an internationally acclaimed young artist born in Zimbabwe. He was the first black student to graduate with a BA Fine Art from the University of Pretoria. Born one year after Zimbawe's emergence from white-ruled Rhodesia – Chiurai's early work focused on the political, economic and social strife in his homeland.

Chiurai has held numerous solo exhibitions since 2003 and has participated in various local and international exhibitions, including Figures & Fictions: Contemporary South African Photography at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and Impressions from South Africa, 1965 to Now at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, which acquired Chiurai's work for their collection.

His Conflict Resolution series was included in dOCUMENTA (13) in Kassel in 2012. His film Iyeza was one of the few African films to be included in the New Frontier shorts programme at the Sundance Film Festival in 2013.

Chiurai has held numerous solo exhibitions with the Goodman Gallery and has edited three publications with contributions by leading African creatives.

Andrew Esiebo

Andrew Esiebo started out in photography by chronicling the rapid development of urban Nigeria as well as the country's rich culture and heritage. As his work began to gain international recognition, Andrew's started to explore new creative territory, integrating multimedia practice with the investigation of themes such as sexuality, gender politics, football, popular culture and migration.

In 2010, he was selected for the Road to twenty ten project to form an All-Africa Dream Team of 16 journalists / Photographers to provide alternative stories from the World Cup in South Africa. His work has been exhibited at the Havana and Sao Paulo biennials, the Guangzhou Triennial in Beijing, the Chobi Mela V Photo Festival in Bangladesh, the Noorderlitch Photo Festival in The Netherlands, African Photography Encounters in Mali and the Lagos Photo Festival among others. His works have been published in books, magazine and websites such as guardian.co.uk, Marie Claire Italia, Time Out Nigeria, Mail & Guardian online, Laia Books, Geo-Lino, KIT and African style magazine Arise.

Andrew has completed a number of artistic residencies including a five-month stay in Paris under Cultures France's Visa Pour Creation, a three-month residency at the Gasworks in London as part of the Africa Beyond programme and a three-month residency at the Gyeonggi Creation Center in South Korea from December 2011. He is the initiator and co-organizer of "My Eye, My World", a participatory photography workshop for socially-excluded children in Nigeria.

Milumbe Haimbe

(b. Lusaka, Zambia 1974) has a Bachelor's Degree in Architecture (Copperbelt University), and a Master's in Fine Arts (Oslo National Academy of the Arts). Haimbe is interested in the idea of the collective psyche, its associated social trajectories and current psycho-socio trends and systems. Drawing on a background of painting, her current art practices are based in digital illustration, including sequential art as an intermedial process that combines and integrates illustrations and written texts into narratives. Milumbe asserts that these intermedial concerns are related to intercultural issues, with a focus on the forms of representation of cultural minorities within the context of popular media. She has exhibited her work in numerous shows both locally and internationally, including FOCUS 10 – Art Basel in Switzerland, and is an alumnus of the Art Omi International Artist's Residency in New York. In 2014, at the 11the edition of Dak'Art biennale of contemporary African art she received the Blachère Foundation Prize.

Aida Muluneh

Born in Ethiopia in 1974, Aïda left the country at a young age and spent an itinerant childhood between Yemen and England. After several years in a boarding school in Cyprus, she finally settled in Canada in 1985. In 2000, she graduated with a degree from the Communication Department with a major in Film from Howard University in Washington, D.C. After graduation she worked as a photojournalist at the Washington Post, however her work can be found in several publications. Also as an exhibiting artist, a collection of her images can be found in the permanent collection at the Smithsonian's National Museum of African Art and the Museum of Biblical Art in the United State. She is the 2007 recipient of the European Union Prize in the Rencontres Africaines de la Photographie, in Bamako, Mali. As well as the 2010 winner of the CRAF International Award of Photography in Spilimbergo,Italy. She also has a book published by Africlia in Brussels, Belgium, titled "Ethiopia: Past/Forward" which is a coffee table book that reflects her vision on reconnecting to Ethiopia through memory and nostalgia. She is also the founder and director of the first international photography festival the Addis Foto Fest as well as Fana Wogi a yearly open call supporting contemporary artists in Ethiopia. Aida continues to curate and develop cultural projects with local and international institutions through her company DESTA (Developing and Educating Society Through Art) For Africa Creative Consulting PLC (DFA) in Addis Ababa.

Terence Nance

Nance is an artist born and raised in Dallas, Texas. Each of his siblings are artists:. Norvis Jr. Djore, and Classi. Terence makes films, installations, performances, and music. Terence makes music under the name Terence Etc. His first feature film, An Oversimplification of Her Beauty, premiered in the New Frontier section of the 2012 Sundance Film Festival. The album of the same title will be released this year. The film has garnered Terence recognition from Filmmaker magazine, where he was selected as one of the 25 new faces of independent film. Oversimplification… also won the 2012 Gotham Award for "Best Film Not Playing at a Theater Near You." The film has since been released theatrically in the US, UK, France, and South Africa. It is currently available on DVD and Digitally through Cinema Guild. In addition to his personal work, Terence is also an accomplished music video director having collaborated on short films and music videos with Blitz the Ambassador, Cody ChesnuTT, and Pharoahe Monch to name a few. Terence currently resides in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn – along with the rest of The Swarm and is currently developing his next feature film.

Tracey Rose

Tracey Rose was born in 1974 in Durban, and currently lives and works between Durban and Berlin. She received her B.A. in Fine Arts from the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in 1996, and earned a Masters of Fine Arts from Goldsmiths College, University of London, UK, in 2007. In 2006, she was named one of the 50 greatest cultural figures coming out of Africa by The Independent newspaper in London, UK. Rose has had solo presentations in South Africa, as well as in Europe and the Americas, has been featured in major international events such as the Venice Biennale in 2001 and her work has been included in seminal exhibitions such as Snap Judgments: New Positions in Contemporary African Photography and Africa Remix . Tracey Rose: Waiting for God , the artist's mid-career retrospective, was recently held at the Johannesburg Art Gallery. The exhibition was co-produced with Bildmuseet, Umeå University, Sweden, where it was presented in September 2011.

Zina Saro-Wiwa

Zina Saro-Wiwa is a video artist and filmmaker. She makes video installations, documentaries, photographs, experimental films and curates exhibitions. Her work, inspired frequently though not exclusively by Nigerian life, often explores the relationship between performance and documentary, emotional landscapes. She often explores highly personal experiences, carefully recording their choreography, making tangible the space between internal experience and outward performance as well as bringing cross-cultural and environmental/geographic considerations to bear on these articulations. The slippery dynamics between "truth" , "reality" and "performance" lie at the heart of her video performance work.

Saro-Wiwa's work has been featured in many group exhibitions, including Disguise: Masks and Global African Art (Seattle Art Museum, 2015) and The Progress of Love (Menil Collection and Pulitzer Arts Foundation, 2012–13) and her first solo museum exhibition Did You Know We Taught Them How To Dance? debuted at Blaffer Art Museum in Houston Texas in September 2015. In 2016 her work screened at Tate Britain in the UK. In 2014, Saro-Wiwa founded Boys' Quarters Project Space, a contemporary art gallery in Port Harcourt, Nigeria for which she curates up to three shows a year.

Her award-winning documentary, This Is My Africa (2009), which features interviewees Lupita Nyong'o, Chiwetel Ejiofor, Colin Firth, John Akomfrah, and Yinka Shonibare MBE, among others, was shown on HBO and was screened at Stevenson Gallery in Cape Town, October Gallery in London, the Newark Museum, the Brooklyn Museum, and many international film festivals. In 2010, for Location One Gallery in New York, Saro-Wiwa produced and co-curated the group exhibition Sharon Stone in Abuja, which explored the narrative and visual conventions of the Nigerian "Nollywood" video-film industry through Saro-Wiwa's video installations and included works by Wangechi Mutu, Mickalene Thomas, Andrew Esiebo, and Pieter Hugo.

Saro-Wiwa's work is in the collections of Museusm and private collections in the US, UK and the Carribean..

Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum

Pamela was born in Mochudi, Botswana and grew up living in different parts of Africa, Asia and North America. she received a Bachelor of Arts in International Studies & Trans-national Cultures from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a Masters of Fine Arts from the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) in the United States. Since graduating she has been a faculty instructor at MICA and have taught in the Foundation Department, the Drawing Department and have also been a resident critic for the graduate programme. She recently completed a 3-year artist residency at the Creative Alliance in Baltimore, USA. Pamela is presently working with WAM (Wits University Art Museum).

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