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WASTE: DISPOSABILITY, DECAY AND DEPLETION

Recycling Discarded Histories to Chronicle Identities: Making Art from Waste in Mozambique

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Contemporary Mozambican artists who utilize recycled materials as media create artworks that chronicle their society through bits and pieces of its discarded histories. Creating quintessentially Mozambican art, symbolic materials become potent signifiers of this developing nation. This article explores multivalent themes including object materiality, recycling, art making in Africa, and post-conflict resolution to determine why and how Mozambican artists utilize post-consumer waste. Factors including past wars, poverty, and a quest for creative expansion have contributed to widespread use of recycling as an artistic practice in Mozambique, despite artists' varied economic, social, and educational levels. Mozambican artists who recycle their nation's pre-used remnants not only connect to past cultural and artistic practices; they continue these traditions within contemporary contexts. By creating artwork from cast-off materials, artists illustrate how recycling permeates all levels of society, including its broad expansion into art making, and how the use of reprocessed materials both inspires and instills a sense of pride in artistic practices. Themes addressed in artwork made from recycled materials include politics, social commentary, and cultural heritage. Artists include Fiel, who transforms destroyed weapons of Mozambique's past wars into powerful tools for peacebuilding and post-conflict resolution; Cármen, who uses her old dresses to create hanging fabric pieces that capture shadows creating dissonance between light and dark; João, who calls for donations of jeans on Facebook that he will patch together and use as a variegated background supports for painting; and Pekiwa, who critiques Mozambican society through his use of recycled boats, windows, and doors.

Fiel transforms destroyed weapons of Mozambique's past wars into powerful tools for peacebuilding and post-conflict resolution; Cármen uses her old dresses to create hanging fabric pieces that capture shadows creating dissonance between light and dark; João calls for donations of jeans on Facebook that he will patch together and use as a variegated background supports for painting; and Pekiwa presents social critiques of Mozambican society through his use of recycled boats, windows, and doors.

These are but a sampling of the many contemporary Mozambican artists who use *recyclia* (recycled materials/found objects) to create artworks, chronicling their society through its discarded histories. Addressed through the words and images of the artists presented here, investigations are founded on such interrelated themes as object materiality, recycling, art making in urban Africa, and post-conflict resolution.¹ Chronicling the transformation of these recycled materials, this research reflects a nexus of environmental, economic, and cultural issues to determine how and why artists utilize *recyclia* to create distinctly Mozambican art. Simply put, this research demonstrates the ways in which these contemporary artists utilize discarded objects that both reflects and chronicles complex Mozambican histories, focused on themes inherent within its protracted wars and artists' ongoing social critiques of their country.

Mozambican artists who recycle their nation's pre-used materials not only connect to past cultural and artistic practices, they continue these traditions within contemporary contexts. Many creative, environmental, and financial factors, including the impact of past wars, the development of the *Transforming Arms into Plowshares/ Transformação de Armas em Enxadas* (TAE) project, and poverty illustrate how *recyclia* provides an advantageous art medium. Each of the artists addressed in this analysis come from vastly different economic, social, and educational backgrounds, yet all use recycled materials. Mozambican artists utilize natural and urban detritus to produce art, continuing recycling traditions, pervasive throughout Africa. While artists in Mozambique utilize many different types of media, this investigation addresses these artists and their varied motivations, defining a widespread preference for recycling as a primary technique used by artists in Mozambique. This focused study of artists

¹ This article builds on material previously presented in a short article, Schwartzott (2014).

reveals the implications of recycling as a tool to explore larger themes related to Mozambican contemporary art and its meanings.

Recycling

An understanding of activities related to recycling is crucial for determining how artists obtain pre-used objects. Recycling is generally understood as the reprocessing of waste. The United Nations Environmental Statistics Division (2011) defines recycling as:

waste (garbage, trash, rubbish, refuse, or litter) material that is not a prime product (produced for the market) for which the generator has no further use in terms of his/her own purposes of production, transformation or consumption and of which he/she wants to dispose.

Recycling is not new in the context of African cultures, yet its recent surge as a popular medium is illustrated by its widespread use in contemporary Mozambican art specifically. Within the last few decades, there has been a recognizable increase in global practical and scholarly interest in recycling. Motives fueling this appeal include diverse economic, political, financial, and philosophical concerns.

Scholars identify four primary categories of informal recycling: itinerant waste buyers, street waste, municipal waste collection, and dumps (Wilson, Velis, and Cheeseman, 2006). The desire to create a contextual framework for recycled materials led the author to study the varied waste streams of garbage to determine its different paths before it is selected to become media for art. In order to understand such contact points of detritus, interviews were conducted with: municipal directors, administrators, and consultants of solid waste management; public and private garbage collectors; owners, operators, and workers at recycling facilities; and workers and independent entrepreneurs in the informal sector who buy and sell recycled materials. And finally, visits to solid waste containers and dump sites also contributed to an analysis of this history of the objects considered in this article. Object recycling facilities in Maputo visited for this research include *Recicla*, Saaner, and *Associação Mocambiçana de Reciclagem*/Mozambican Association of Recycling

(AMOR). Each of these non-profit, local, and international organizations relies upon market values that determine preference for one object (metal) over another (plastic). Not only are these facilities promoting sustainability, but they have connections to social causes as well. For example, *Recicla* hires former garbage pickers (primarily from the nearby Hulene Dump) to provide them with greater financial stability. AMOR hires women from *Xidzuki*, an organization of HIV-positive women, which runs the eco-points that serve as satellite drop-offs for community recycled goods.

Object Materiality

This investigation of recyclia as artistic media is underpinned by object materiality. Consideration of objects' physicality as well as their uses prior to selection as media is essential for determining the meanings of these objects within artworks. Several authors have focused on the concept of objecthood in extremely varied contexts, including the contemplation of street debris to more theoretical conceptions (Seitz, 1961; Kopytoff, 1986; Edensor, 2005; Strasser, 1999; Bennett, 2010; Davis, 2006, 2011; Strasser, 1999; Calvino, 1993; Thompson, 1979; Rubin, 1993; Coole and Frost, 2010; Cohen, 2012).

In his 1961 Museum of Modern Art exhibition, *The Art of Assemblage*, curator William Seitz probed into objects' pasts. Recycling the words of English art critic Lawrence Alloway in his catalog essay, he quoted, 'objects have a history: first they are brand new goods; then they are possessions, accessible to few, subjected, often, to intimate and repeated use; then, as waste, they are scarred by use but available again' (Seitz, 1961: 73). Although Alloway's words directly focus on western sculptural assemblage arts outside the African context, he and Seitz demonstrate a keen understanding of object materiality comparable to my own view of pre-used things as they are transformed into artworks. Similarly, in his definition of 'junk culture', Alloway's comprehension of the compositional origins of sculptures continues to be relevant today: 'junk culture is city art. Its source is obsolescence, the throwaway material of cities, as it collects in [...] city dumps' (Seitz, 1961: 75). These observations suggest similar ways of looking, and each provides a framework for better viewing and understanding contemporary artworks that form the basis of this analysis.

Theoretical Frames

The theoretical frames underpinning this investigation draw from Igor Kopytoff's seminal essay 'The Cultural Biography of Things', which focuses on understanding commodities through an investigation of an object's transformation from its initial use through its many lives. Whereas an important question of Kopytoff's, 'How does the thing's use change with age and what happens to it when it reaches the end of its usefulness' (1986: 33), relates directly to issues of commodification, it informs this analysis based on object materiality and the potential to intensify past meanings as recycled objects are transformed into art.

Diverging from Kopytoff, this research argues that the life of an object does not effectively end when it is deemed no longer useful, but in its reincarnation as a recycled material it gains more expressive power as it is transformed into art. As recycled objects are selected as media for artworks, they are extracted from the context of their former lives. Within the framework of their new lives, as part of an artwork, the identity of recycled objects is enhanced, as it gains expressive power. The recycled object no longer exists where it once belonged. But, in its employment within the artist's construction, its new task is now inextricably linked to, and based upon, its own state of being or materiality.

In addition to focused inquiry of the objects' lives, it is productive to also consider the lives of the artists in relationship to the lives of the objects with which they intersect (Cerny and Seriff, 1996: 11). Adapting Kopytoff's 'lives', this research considers the notion of the 'histories' of past uses of recycled objects in conjunction with their meaning as it is translated into an artwork. Finally, Kopytoff's concept of object biographies is supplemented here to include ideas based on Arnold Rubin's examination of historical African assemblage arts (1993).

More recent scholarship addressing the uses of recycling and assemblage in African visual culture include Suzanne Blier's editorial in *African Arts*. In 'Nine Contradictions in the New Golden Age of African Art', Blier affirmed the ancient traditions within these artistic techniques:

Western art critics often ostracize African works that incorporate visual abstraction, assemblage, jarring juxtapositions, salvage materials, and recycling, saying they are derivative of Euro-American modernist movements. Yet these approaches are firmly rooted in Africa's art historical past; they were appropriated and reframed from the African aesthetic wellspring by artists in the West (2002: 4).

Similarly, Joanna Grabski defines the most ubiquitous form of art within Dakar as recuperation, 'a category of expressive production relying on materials culled from the urban environment' (2003, 11). In *Africa Explores*, Susan Vogel links art and artists, stating, 'urban art is the only strain of African art to portray the artists who make it, it is subject to their daily existence' (1991: 31). Allen F. Roberts and Polly Nooter Roberts' *A Saint in the City: Sufi Arts of Urban Senegal* presents the city of Dakar as a microcosm of artistic production, including several artists who rely on detritus (newspaper, wood, metal, cloth scraps) from the city to construct their art. The larger point of Roberts and Roberts investigation expands upon the basic concept of recycling to include visual hagiography surrounding Sheikh Amadou Bamba (Roberts and Roberts, 2003).

And in 'Quelle Liberté: Art, Beauty and the Grammars of Resistance in Douala', Dominique Malaquais (2006) presents a public mixed media sculpture made of recycled materials as a discursive site. In her critical analysis of Joseph-Francis Sumégné's *Quelle Liberté*, she addresses issues raised by heated debates surrounding the sculpture, such as political resistance, contested ethnic identities, economics, and conflicts within social classes. As a result of these types of investigations by scholars and exhibits alike, African art has become increasingly identified with and represented by mixed media constructions of recycled materials. In fact, the majority of artworks in the exhibitions described here may be defined as created from recyclia. Recently, some scholars have begun to examine contemporary Mozambican artists using weapons as art media (Spring, 2005; Elmquist, 2007; Fonseca, 2012). Most recently, Maria Emília Fonseca presented a contextual analysis of *Tree of Life*, a weapons-based artwork in the British Museum, in *Touching Art: The Poetics and Potency of Exhibiting the Tree of Life*.

My research takes a different approach, analyzing many artists' use of diverse recycled materials and making connections to recyclia in art making and art as a tool in post-conflict resolution.

Research Methodology

Foundations of this investigation emerge from previous research on recycling in art, developing carefully focused and specific case studies concentrated on diverse artists, materials, and the interconnected meanings of these artworks created in Mozambique. Based on 11 years of intermittent fieldwork, most of this research was completed in the country's capital, Maputo, where important arts organizations, cultural centers, embassies, galleries, and artists' studios are located. Many artists work in Maputo, but often their homes are located in Matola, an industrial suburb situated 30 minutes from the capital. Further journeys included those to outlying neighborhoods, districts, and provinces (Gaza, Inhambane, and Sofala). The longest uninterrupted research trip took place from August 2010 – November 2011. Time spent in Mozambique preceding and following this has contributed to my investigation, most recently from December 2018 – January 2019; earlier travel, including a trip to Senegal for five weeks in 2007, introduced the author to artists' widespread use of recycling and inspired subsequent investigations.

The primary goal in selecting artists for inclusion in this article is to provide a representative sample of artists who use recycled materials, presenting a concise overview of contemporary Mozambican artists working today and demonstrating the diversity among the large number of these artists who use recyclia. As stated in the introduction, overall the use of recycled materials has become the medium of choice for a large majority of contemporary Mozambican artists. Individual artists selected for inclusion here illustrate diverse motivations for using different types of objects. Research methodologies include direct engagement with individuals through recorded, transcribed, and videotaped formal, informal, and group interviews. Artists' processes and techniques were further captured through photography and video. Although interviews were highly effective, I found that artists tended to be more candid expressing themselves in the evenings at the largest (and oldest) artists'

cooperative in Mozambique, *A Associação Núcleo de Arte*, and the nearby *Museu barracas* (shanty bars and restaurants), which many of the artists regularly frequent.

Throughout this article, the voices of artists (who often adopt a pseudonym as an artist name), including Fiel dos Santos (Fiel), Cármen Maria Muianga (Cármen), João Paul Bias (João), and Nelson Augusto Carlos Ferreira (Pekiwa) are foregrounded, in order to create a rich ethnographic narrative that is fundamental for understanding the complexities of their individual artworks, wherein a more self-reflexive, personalized introduction to individual artworks and artistic practices in contemporary Mozambique is presented.

The Artists

Fiel: Now it's my time to do something for society

Fiel was one of the first artists who started working for the *Transforming Arms into Plowshares/Transformação de Armas em Enxadas* (TAE) project. Bishop Dom Dinis Sengulane initially approached *A Associação Núcleo de Arte* in 1997 to solicit artists to create artwork from the recognizable remains of recycled weapons of Mozambique's past wars that had been collected under the auspices of the TAE project. Unlike many of the other artists in TAE, Fiel had previous experience welding. He participated in a workshop for sculptors that took place in Durban, South Africa, in 1997. Fiel has maintained his connections with TAE, continuing to create works of art from weapons. As with all of the artists who work with TAE I have interviewed, Fiel's relationship to the project is personal. He explained that when he was 12 or 13 years old, his brother was kidnapped into service as a child soldier for six years (dos Santos, 2010). While one of Fiel's brothers was forcibly recruited to fight on the side of The Mozambican National Resistance (in Portuguese, 'Resistência Nacional Moçambicana': RENAMO), another brother chose to enlist on the government side of the Mozambique Liberation Front (in Portuguese: 'Frente de Libertação de Moçambique': FRELIMO) to fight in the same war. Fiel's situation was not unusual: many Mozambican families were divided as members served on opposing sides during the country's last war. Further elaborating on his personal connection to TAE, Fiel stated:

I grew up during the fighting. Now it's my time to do something for society.

I want to volunteer to work on this project. I'm working here for my soul.

Sometimes I want to weld ALL the guns to finish them. I start to get tired. [After] ten years they keep bringing more weapons. The TAE project would be more powerful. When we started there were fourteen, now four, maybe three [artists involved with TAE]. [I am] teaching people from outside who want to be involved – Brazil, Denmark. There are funding problems. They continue to collect guns. Exchange is the good part and education, but the artist part doesn't develop. If they destroy two [weapons], fifty more come (dos Santos, 2009).

Fiel's forms evoke his curiosity about nature. He is interested in the relationship of the part to the whole, often revealing the intricacy of individual weapons in the overall construction. In his sculptures, Fiel focuses on carefully connecting bits of the recycled weapons to create the larger forms in representations of plant, animal, and human figures. Sensitive in his treatment of forms and their placement, his focus on the objecthood of the weapons is revealed as he carefully positions the weapons. His meticulous organization of arms transformed forces viewers to intimately connect to the meaning of the weapons and the intrinsic power of violence within each (See **Figure 1**).



Figure 1: Fiel dos Santos. *Animal*. mixed media (recycled weapons), 2011.

Fiel has continued to create artworks for TAE, expanding beyond Mozambique. Since 2009 he has been working with Russian-American documentary filmmaker Irina Patkanian and American Chris Langer on a stop animation short film, *Little Fiel* (2009). *Little Fiel* tells the story of how as a young boy, Fiel was left alone to fend for himself, and of the experiences he dealt with as a result of the war. The principal characters of the film, Fiel and his family, are represented as animated TAE sculptures. Patkanian and Langer's film literally brings to life the weapons used by TAE artists as a powerful remembrance of Mozambique's last war and its far-reaching impact on Mozambicans and a global audience.

Cármén: 'People don't have artists' eyes. They don't see good garbage in the streets'

Unlike many self-taught artists working in Mozambique, Cármén received a formal education in the arts. She studied a course of graphic design at the *Escola Nacional de Artes Visuais* (ENAV) (National School of Visual Arts) in Maputo, where she currently teaches printmaking. Studying at ENAV until grade twelve, she continued her education at the National School of Plastic Arts of Havana, where she remained for five years. In addition to her current position at ENAV, she also was a professor at the School of Visual Arts Lopes Penha in Cuba and an instructor at the School Gallery Eugenio Lemos in Maputo.

When I arrived at Cármén's home, the first thing she did was point to a pile of rubbish in the corner of the living room and proclaim, 'these are my materials. People ask me why I don't burn them outside' (Muianga, 2010). Cármén explained that she began to use recycled materials at ENAV. Her instructors, Mozambican artist Victor Sousa, as well as teachers from Cuba, Poland, Canada, and Portugal, directed her towards using recycled materials. She described how at that time most of her teachers were from outside Mozambique.²

Cármén contended, 'Most people don't have artists' eyes. People don't see good garbage in the streets' (Muianga, 2010). Cármén named Pablo Picasso and German

² In a paper presented at the International Association of Art Critics Meeting, Harun (2007) explains that in the early years of ENAV most of the art teachers were from outside Mozambique.

Renaissance artist Albrecht Dürer as artistic influences. She explained that Dürer introduced her to European printmaking techniques and that she had seen drawings by Picasso at the *Centro Cultural Franco Moçambicano* (French-Mozambican Cultural Center) in Maputo and Cuba, and in books (Muianga, 2010). Picasso's influence is clearly seen in artworks by Cármen, where not only does she mimic the collage, but the image of his guitar as well. In these constructions, Cármen utilizes scraps of paper she has recycled to create fragmented images representing guitars and other forms. Drawing on Picasso's collages, she revisits his guitars in her new interpretations of these abstract forms. Experimenting with painted imagery and diverse paper products including different types of paper and cardboard, Cármen creates vibrant artworks linking distinct patterns and designs in her art constructed of mixed recycled materials.

When Cármen returned from Cuba and started teaching printmaking at ENAV she began making matrices from recycled materials. She linked diverse objects to create textural effects from both manmade and natural materials she recycles. Cármen explained her decision for choosing pre-used objects: 'I had media materials, but for me, using recycled materials was more expressive. I feel good using my mind when I use these materials' (Muianga, 2010). Since 2010, Cármen has begun to experiment with fabric. In these artworks she uses fabric scraps, particularly her own discarded dresses. She commented:

These clothes are my old ones and I thought I would burn them but I decided to make them into something. Better to do something else with them – so I take the cloth and make a piece of art. My idea is to do the same types. No need for a budget. I will explore this kind of material more (Muianga, 2010).

These hanging fabric pieces utilize light and capture shadows creating dissonance between radiance and darkness. The dresses' outlines further develop in their silhouettes as they flow back and forth with the movement of air. I look forward to seeing more of these works made from dresses when she begins to devote more time to this project (See **Figure 2**).

Cármén began to speak about culture and the arts in Mozambique:

[There are] more recycled materials in sculptures. But our public is still ignorant – even the rich ignore it. Our hope for selling as artists is the international audience. Contemporary art takes more power to show. So the first art that is selected for purchase is by artists using (western) media materials unfortunately. I think with time it can change – I think a lot of kids know Malangatana and his pieces. Now the idea is to give them opportunities to know about other artists. The books they get, some refer to old artists. It would be better to reference artists using recycled materials and talk about contemporary art in Mozambique. Attitudes are changing for the better. Where I teach at ENAV, I remember using recycled materials, student made artwork with recycled materials, and going to the rubbish to look for materials (Muianga, 2010).

The message Cármén wishes to impart upon viewers is evocative in her diverse artworks:



Figure 2: Carmen. *Untitled Dress Piece*. mixed media (recycled fabric), n.d.

My hope is with the youth – because I want them to get inspiration to make other things. Another goal is that I want to give more incentive for people to like it [recycled materials] and love art. Most people want to start creating art but they have fear. More people think art is all about (western) media materials. I want them to learn more (Muianga, 2010).

Cármen's use of recycled paper and fabric products is directly tied to expanding her creativity, based on the greater options she believes these objects provide. Influenced by the art of western artist Picasso, Cármen focuses on creating artworks out of unexpected objects as she strives to illustrate the creative power these materials possess.

João: 'I ask people on Facebook to bring jeans for me to use'

João participated in the *The Life of a Dress* exhibition organized by Swedish designer Amanda Ericsson.³ Held at *A Associação Núcleo de Arte* in early December 2010, this exhibition was part of a continuing global project exploring second-hand clothing markets and focused on teaching local people about ecology and sustainability. Ericsson dedicated one room of the exhibition to an ongoing workshop inviting visitors to create new fashions from pre-used clothing. João created a book bag for himself. The book bag João created inspired him to create art from recycled materials. João's bag was distinct among the designs because instead of utilizing pre-used clothing, he substituted discarded remnants of artist's canvas. He explained his motivations for participating in *The Life of a Dress* project:

I wanted to do something for me. It was the weekend and I wanted to create a bag to put my books in – I needed one – I wanted to get involved in this project. They showed me the scraps of available fabrics but the colors didn't fascinate me. I decided to come out of the *Núcleo* gallery and go over to the artists' workshop and I found one canvas. I felt like I wanted to do something that day so I decided to use my canvas (Bias, 2010).

³ Amanda Ericsson is a researcher at the Swedish School of Textiles and founder of the fashion brand *Dreamandawake*.

João created a bag from a canvas he previously abandoned. He selected a vividly painted canvas depicting acacia seedpods to construct the front and top flap of the bag. A monochrome green section comprised the rear of the bag. João used his own canvas to create this bag, but he subsequently has begun to use other artists' canvases in his continuation of this technique. João explained how he acquires them:

Sometimes I clean the workshop at *Núcleo de Arte* one or two times a week. I come and clean. When I find old canvases, I ask artists whether I can use them. That's how I did the bags. I wanted to make my own bags. I decided to reuse my own canvas. Many times it happens that artists are not happy with their works and I am known as a recycler and so it's good (Bias, 2011).

João's response to why he specifically selects recycled materials in his art illustrates his desire for expanding his creativity and his concerns about ecological sustainability:

Using recycled materials is a good means for learning – it's a space for interaction between artists and the public. People don't have to go to exhibitions or see magazines. One good thing about this art made from recycled materials – Maputo's full of rubbish [...] I really hope to be able to work with these different materials [...] I don't throw them away. I keep them to re-originate and to give more quality [...] the mixed media mixture of paper, jeans, and canvas, old paintings from other artists and mine too for example. So – whatever I do [...] I will always end up reusing it in a good way (Bias, 2010).

The next time I met João, who is currently studying marketing and publicity at Universidade Eduardo Mondlane/University of Edward Mondlane in Maputo, he was at *A Associação Núcleo de Arte*, working on a painting incorporating jeans as an alternative painting surface. He explained that jeans were the first recycled material he integrated into his art practice in 2004:

My first work using recycling was to transfer trousers – jeans – into canvas. I was in Catembe – at the other side of the bay. I went out and didn't have a canvas to paint on and I was looking in the rubbish for some material to

paint on. I found the trousers. My creativity started to talk – how could I express myself using that material? I did a collage – I fragmented them. That was without anything behind to join them (Bias, 2010).

As João treats jeans as a substitute for canvas, he directly applies gesso as a base for oil or acrylic paint. Describing his motivation for using jeans in this way, João stated:

Everybody is original and I didn't do much with these recycled jeans but I feel like it's my tool. I feel a little bit proud because as an artist maybe I seek to find an identity. And I see this recycling work as an open window [...] By recycling it's an open window because you can join things – put them together and you could have them talk to each other. Because I've been putting some oil colors on paper and was not successful. I found a simple way of reusing paper but there is not a lot of color. Jeans have a lot of colors. Using jeans will bring different effects and expression. When I use mixed media I have new options and suggestions apart from the canvas (Bias, 2011).

João's method to obtain jeans utilizes social media as well as merely recycling on his own – '[I use] my own and I ask people on Facebook to bring jeans here to *Núcleo* for me to use, in addition from the jeans I obtain in the street and from my friends' (Bias, 2011).

Whereas João's paintings were originally composed solely of jeans, recently he has begun adding scraps of recycled canvas. João varies between these two different styles. In the first, he overlaps sections of jeans patched together with canvas pieces to create a variegated background. Each distinct part of the jeans is emphasized, forcing the viewer to interrogate individual elements such as pocket, waistband, and crotch, as shown more closely in detail. Painted outlines of individual sections accentuate specific parts. The haphazard organization of jeans defines the painting's fragmented composition, an overall quilt-like surface. João's second style creates a clear distinction between the jeans and the bits of canvas, emphasizing the jeans as a pictorial element through his placement of intact legs outlined with wide strokes of paint. The mostly unpainted jeans reveal tears amid varying shades of

faded denim. The jeans appear as an object, commodified and displayed, rather than a mere support for paint. Both of these painting styles illustrate how João relies upon recycled materials in the creation of his art. In both styles, he foregrounds the materiality of the jeans, used both as support and a pictorial element using different techniques (see **Figure 3**).

Similarly, João's bags illustrate an innovative repurposing of unwanted canvases. In the transformation of his own and other artists' rejected canvases into new objects, João provides a new life for the artworks. Reconfigured into new objects (school bags), Joao gives the discarded canvases a new identity and purpose. Additionally, Joao views jeans as *his* tool as an artist, in which he has forged a singular identity from using this recycled material in his artwork.

Pekiwa: 'I give life to an object that doesn't have life'

Pekiwa's artworks are constructed from wooden objects that include windows, doors, and boats. He described this initial awareness:

I got interested in these kinds of objects when I went to the Island of Mozambique. I saw a lot of houses – broken; some old ones, and the windows

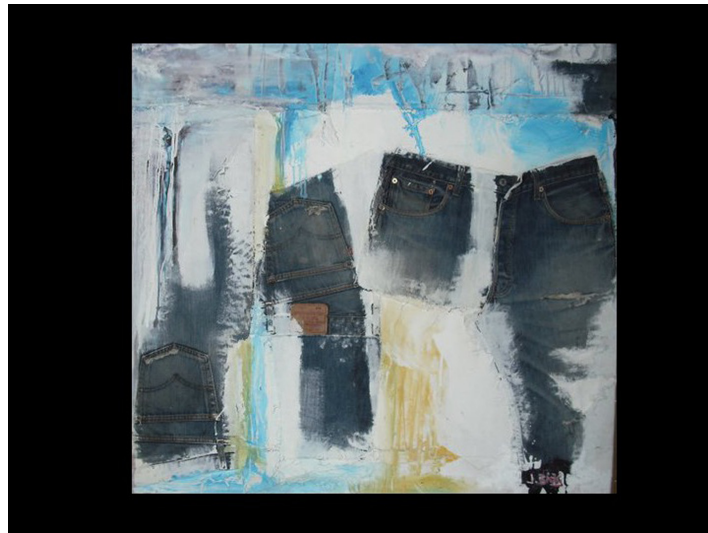


Figure 3: João. *Jeans Painting (Second Style)*, mixed media (recycled jeans, acrylic/canvas), December 2010.

and doors reflected their identity as being connected to a house because we can see the windows and the doors (symbolizing a house). My first idea when I saw these things was to give life to something that died and to protect the windows and the doors. When I say to protect it is not specifically for the actual broken doors and windows – but if we have something broken we can give it another life. That is my first message that I want to give people. Then I went to the Mozambican highlands to collect materials. This was my project. I went and stayed there two months. [...] I collected materials in urban areas where poor people live [...] I [also] went to the houses where people were making renovations on their houses and I asked them for materials they didn't want to use – they gave me materials which I bring here to my studio to use (Pekiwa, 2011).

Pekiwa's style developed as a result of his desire to create an individual identity for himself as a sculptor, by choosing to work with specific materials. After traveling to the Mozambican Highlands and the Island of Mozambique off the country's northern coast, he witnessed both the poverty and the surplus of the inhabitants, by viewing dilapidated houses and homes undergoing renovations. Windows and doors became linked, not only to houses they belonged to but also to the lives of the people who inhabited the homes and lived among these objects. Pekiwa began encountering deteriorating boats on the historic Island of Mozambique, which had served as both a port and a thriving boat building industry since the 15th century. He began to incorporate boats that had fallen into disrepair into his artwork.

As Pekiwa stated above, his view of protecting these objects was limited to his ability to provide new life through their transformation. In reality however, his protection of the objects extends to how he maintains the integrity of their original forms. Elements of Pekiwa's artistic process focus directly on preserving the physicality of many of the objects he acquires through his innovative artistic techniques of conservation. Techniques Pekiwa utilizes are not restricted to preservation of objects he has scavenged, bartered, or bought however. In fact, in several instances Pekiwa's methods do not repair these objects at all. Pekiwa utilizes specific techniques and

materials to underscore his transformative process, which draws attention to worn and damaged areas under his careful *repair*. Using both new and recycled metal wire, hinges, and rivets, Pekiwa carefully stitches together cracks, encloses gaps, and draws attention to holes by embellishing them. In this way, Pekiwa focuses attention on the materiality of these objects' previous uses. Pekiwa's embrace of these objects' past lives both engages and challenges his transformation of the forms (see **Figure 4**).

Specific examples illustrate how Pekiwa painstakingly mends the ruptures in the physical forms both to fortify and embellish their structures. One of Pekiwa's largest artworks illustrates both forms of his object conservation. *Sem Titolo/Untitled*, an extremely imposing structure, is a canoe that is at least 20 feet tall. Lacking a single visual narrative, the hull's surface incorporates Pekiwa's carved, gouged, and sculpted figural imagery and decorative patterns. Different figures appear throughout its surface and its most imposing figure is carved into the bow. These figures balance the canoe and are interspersed with floral and fluid curvilinear designs that punctuate as well as puncture the surfaces of the wood. Viewing the sculpture overall, it is clear where Pekiwa has relied upon the extant cracks of the canoe's surface to guide him in his placement of imagery. For example, gaping holes are altered into geometric eyes,



Figure 4: Pekiwa. Detail. *Sem Titolo/Untitled*, mixed media (recycled canoe, metal hardware), 2010.

or transformed into toothy screaming mouths. Pekiwa's inclusion of a row of rusted hinges creates a winding suture that climbs up the surface of the canoe, and instead of actually repairing it, draws further attention to this old canoe's disrepair. Attended to with more rusted hinges and equally rusted metal reinforcement bar (rebar), the fragile state of the canoe's overall form is revealed. Pekiwa uses these metal braces as a necessary conservation, to prevent the canoe from collapsing upon itself. Providing his view of these repairs Pekiwa stated:

I'm trying to bring some context with the recycling [...] the part of the door hinges I put there [on the canoe] because my idea was to fix where it was broken. At the end I see it is good to use these materials because I'm recycling too (Pekiwa, 2010).

Pekiwa enjoys working with different surfaces of the boat to create multiple views, and this is particularly true of figural representations. In this case, the frontal view reveals a carved figure near the base, where negative space opens above its head. In contrast, viewing the boat from the side, a winged, carved form appears. In another example, a completely deteriorated canoe, where the entire beam has disintegrated reveals whatever is behind it, serves solely as a framing device. Intrinsically, Pekiwa maintains the materiality of the form's original use, or history of the objects, in the creation of his artworks as he integrates his designs to their recognizable forms. In order to provide a context, he focuses on connections to the social aspects of these materials. Pekiwa commented on these ideas:

I'm enjoying materials that were used before – domestic objects - materials that have some story. When I'm working with these pieces I'm not going to give up its meaning from before. So I respect the meaning, and its functions. But if I transform it, I keep its meaning – I give the art texture [...] Well even now I try to preserve [its meaning] because it has a social context. This is why it's important for me is to try to preserve the object. If I find a doorframe is broken – I try to keep it the same in my art [...] its original function was to close something (Pekiwa, 2008).

Each of the wooden materials Pekiwa obtains to recycle into his art becomes associated with their former use, creating a connection between these objects and the social history of Mozambique.

One of Pekiwa's central goals as an artist is to educate people about Mozambican culture: 'Well I hope the people can see it in the same way. Art is to educate people. What I'm doing is trying to give my opinion and view to contribute to [their] education' (Pekiwa, 2010). As Pekiwa and I discussed his goals to educate through his recyclia, Pekiwa's artwork, incorporating pre-used windows, doors, and boats he scavenges, barter, and trades to obtain, creates a visual dialogue for viewers dealing with social issues in Mozambique.

Conclusion: welding, hanging, patching, and carving

Artists discussed in this article are intrinsically linked together in their preferences for using recycled materials as media that are welded, hung, patched, and carved to create their individual artworks. For example, Fiel selects recognizable gun parts to evoke memories of war to remind viewers of what should never happen again. In his linking of horrific reminders of war, he creates peacekeeping memorials to underscore notions surrounding post-conflict resolution for Mozambique, and beyond. João uses two types of fabric: pre-used artists' painted canvases to create book bags inspired him to begin to use jeans to create a support for paintings. In his use of these materials, he focuses not on their meaning or previous use per se. João selects these materials to serve a function in the construction of his new forms. In this case, João relies on the recyclia as a tool, focusing on the utility of their forms in his creative process.

Cármen utilizes cardboard and other diverse recyclia in her printmaking processes. Drawn to an exploration of creativity, through expanded elements of shapes, forms, and textures, Cármen also relies principally on her recycled materials' utility, which she constructs into abstract and figural forms. Fascinated by her transformation of recyclia into a sculptural tool, Cármen is most interested in the utility of the pre-used materials and how she is able to develop them into something new. Pekiwa, in his use of recycled wooden objects that include doors, windows, and boats, links these recognizable forms to everyday life in Mozambique. While he uses the deteriorating surface of these specific

forms as a base for his permutations, he most closely focuses his attention on maintaining the integrity of the identity of the objects he scavenges, barter, and trades to obtain, creating a visual dialogue for viewers as he deals with social issues in Mozambique.

Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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