

The Performance of Masculinity by the 'Artist'

Explored In Selected Works by Peet Pienaar and
Robin Rhode

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I declare that this is my own unaided work. It is submitted in the partial fulfillment for the degree of Master of Arts in Fine Arts at the University of The Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted for any other degree or examination at any other university.

Signature

Date

Abstract

This body of research centres around the notion of masculinity as performed and socially constructed. The study of masculinity is an ever broadening field and highly relevant to South African social discourse as patriarchy and masculinity are often problematised in relation to the country's social challenges - specifically violence, rape and abuse which are for the most part perpetrated by men. I have chosen the work of two South African artists with which to engage with the performance and construction of masculinity.

The artists I have selected are Peet Pienaar and Robin Rhode. They are from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds and were selected to give scope to the research as well as for the nature of their work. Both Pienaar and Rhode use their art to negotiate and play their masculine identities and in doing so offer new ways to interpret and engage masculinity as a construct and a part of male identity. Because of the so called 'crisis of masculinity' that is said to be occurring in contemporary society, many South African scholars have taken up the cause to explore male identity and masculinity, hoping to inform men about the roles they play within society. In this body of research I intend to add to the discourse by exploring the importance of art as a means with which to navigate this complex social landscape.

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Chapter One – *Aim and Introduction*

In my research I will investigate how masculine personae are performed in selected works by Robin Rhode and Peet Pienaar. My focus is specifically on ‘self presentation’ through use of the artists own bodies and attributes of their identity through their personal histories. Self-presentation will be viewed as a conscious form of visual display. This paper incorporates primary research, spending time in both Cape Town and Berlin, interviewing Pienaar and Rhode at their respective studio spaces and creative environment.

I do not intend to assign any theory to masculinity, rather to engage with masculine performance. Through selected works I will explore how the artist’s perform and present this part of their identity. The theoretical point of departure is Amelia Jones’ text, *Clothes Make the Man: The Male Artist as a Performative Function* (Jones 1995).

Jones (1995:19) cites J. C. Flügel (1930), stating “the uses and effects of bodily adornment defines the crucial role of clothing in interpersonal articulations of identity among subjects.” Though Jones’ research is my departure point, this research diverges in that I will focus on masculine self-presentation related to personal histories and physical attributes of the artists, while she focuses on self-presentation specifically related to clothing, to critically analyse the ‘male artist’.

Jones’ paper expands by critically analysing selected white male artists throughout the 19th and 20th century. Her analysis begins with a portrait of the Romantic painter Eugene Delacroix by Nadar (1858) and ends with a more contemporary example, in Jeff Koons’ advertisement for his exhibition at the Sonnanbend Gallery (1988).

From her analysis Jones (1995:30) concludes that:

Not only do clothes ‘make, not the man, but the image of man ...’,
they are mutable signifiers that can be contextualized within different

historical moments to subvert or reinforce Anglo middle-class masculinity's hegemonic claims to unified and empowered creative subjectivity and to the production of culture itself.

Jones purports that for male artists specifically, there is an inextricable link to normative constructed notions of masculinity, whether these constructs are opposed or reinforced. It is this that I will use as the starting point for my research, rather than 'clothing' as an articulation of a masculine identity. Clothing will still make up part of my analysis.

I will explore one key selected work from each artist in depth and will use other selected works by those artists to motivate my discussion and analysis. The key works to be discussed are Rhode's work *He Got Game* (2002) and Pienaar's circumcision piece, entitled *I Want to Tell You Something* (2000).

In *He Got Game*, Rhode uses photography; a drawn image on an urban surface, a street in this case and his own body, to perform a seemingly gravity defying slam-dunk. In this work Rhode pastiches the subculture he grew up in through a reference to basketball, graffiti and hip-hop, which are avenues of masculine American street subculture that involve performativity (Rosenthal 2008).

As a youth, Rhode (in Rosenthal 2008) describes his role in the American influenced street subculture in Johannesburg as that of the 'artist,' while other youths might have been rappers or sportsmen. In *He Got Game*, Rhode continues the performed role of the 'artist', creating a work that is the expression of his desire to perform the impossibly masculine act of a "double front-flip slam-dunk" (Rhode in Rosenthal 2008).

While Rhode's work is playful, Pienaar's 'public' circumcision is confrontational in its visuals and motivation. *I Want to Tell You Something* was to be part of an eight man show entitled *Men and Masculinity* at the AVA Gallery. However, conflicts arose with other artist's that were part of the exhibit, most notably with Thembinkosi Goniwe, which led to Pienaar's exclusion from the AVA exhibit.

The reason for the conflict was due mainly to Pienaar's proposal that a black female doctor perform the circumcision on him as a type of urban ritual related to the loss

of power white Afrikaans males have experienced post-Apartheid. As a result of the conflict, Pienaar exhibited the work in a solo exhibition at the Brendon Bell-Roberts Gallery instead. The circumcision was eventually not performed by a black female doctor but rather by a white male doctor.

Pienaar's circumcision piece deals directly with masculinity and masculine ritual as culture and race specific as Afrikaans men are not ritually circumcised. Pienaar's desire to have himself circumcised was in many ways related specifically to the Xhosa circumcision ritual initiating boys into manhood. Constructs of race, sex and sexuality are dealt with in potent and very real ways because it is Pienaar's own body that the surgery is performed on.

Both Rhode and Pienaar's work will be explored as examples of important instances of masculinity, as performed and constructed within specific social-cultural contexts. Rhode draws from his ethnic and geographic background as a coloured youth growing up in the Johannesburg street culture, while Pienaar draws on his conservative Afrikaans "boer" culture upbringing. Sport is also important to my exploration of these two artists in relation to masculinity and Pienaar, like Rhode, will be referenced for his use of sport.

Sport is not directly referenced in *I Want to Tell You Something*, but it is prevalent in Pienaar's oeuvre. The sport Pienaar focuses on is rugby, explored as a prominently Afrikaans socially ingrained practice. Pienaar is of Afrikaans descent and was born on a farm called Tierfontein, thirty kilometres south of Potchefstroom, where his parents still own and run a farm. He was also a provincial rugby player for a time and had a controversial homosexual relationship with a Springbok rugby player. He draws from these personal histories to inform his work. I intend to analyse both Rhode and Pienaar's work as self-aware articulations of identity.

My research will also include an engagement of selected works of my own as instances of masculine self-presentation to unpack and explore my own identity, which includes my being a Jew as well as being born into a middle class Johannesburg family. I also engage with the topical societal phenomenon of the 'metro-sexual' which is relevant to my personal history in the world of acting and modelling. I am part of a talent agency called *Talent Etc.* and in selected works I use the promotional photos taken of my

person for this agency, blown up on large Photostats, disrupted with paint, collage and mixed media techniques.

A 'metro-sexual', as I understand it, is a young man that is conscious of his looks and outward appearance, with a desire to express qualities normally associated with females, such as emotional sensitivity and body consciousness. The 'metro-sexual' must also exude masculine qualities and this includes an active and physical lifestyle displayed in a good physique and an interest in sports and athleticism. The prime example here is the footballer David Beckham, who has championed the movement and is the icon for an entire generation of young men.

Masculinities, as all constructs, are formed according to culture, socialisation, ethnographic disposition and personal histories. Masculinity, specifically, is inextricably linked to patriarchal structures. South Africa has many diverse cultures, histories and regions and therefore has both varied and specific formations of masculinity.

I have intentionally selected to explore the work of South African artists; artists who originate from different racial, cultural and sexual backgrounds to offer a diverse view on masculinity as a social construct. Furthermore, art will be viewed in the light that it can offer opportunities to unpack masculine ideologies that may otherwise be suppressive and instead allow for an authorship over one's own masculine identity.

In South Africa and Africa at large, masculinity is a challenging area of study, but a necessary one. In the introduction to *Men and Masculinities in Modern Africa* (2003:1) co-authored by Stephan F. Miescher and Lisa A. Lindsay, they explain the importance of studies in masculinity in Africa as follows:

[T]he major transformations in African history in the last hundred years (and presumably before) profoundly affected male status and opportunities as well as relationships between men and women, men and men, and women and women. But while gender has become a major research focus in African studies over the last twenty years, men have rarely been the subject of research on gender in Africa ... Africanist scholars interested in gender issues have only recently begun to address how shifting meanings

of gender have affected African men and how understandings and practices of masculinity have been contested and transformed during the colonial and postcolonial eras.

In light of the text above, it is pivotal for South African scholars and academics to look into masculinity on the African continent. A key text that explores South Africa's masculine practice is Shefer's (et al, 2007) *From Boys to Men: Social Constructions of Masculinity in Contemporary Society* which analyses the construction of masculine identities of youth in Africa specifically. This text suggests that patriarchal structures within South Africa are inextricably linked to violence, promiscuity, risk-taking and criminality.

From Boys to Men (Shefer 2007), gives accounts of boys and young men from different parts of the continent, their understanding of masculinity, as well as the different types of masculinities that exist outside of Western and African hetero-normative constructs. This is of interest to my study as a whole, because both Pienaar and Rhode grew up performing personally within the parameters of socio-culturally defined masculine roles within the South African context. This expression is apparent both in their work and explained in their own words.

Shefer (2007) claims that masculinity is a construct formed through socio-normative modes of hyper-sexuality and machismo which leads to male violence, gender-based violence, risk-taking. These points are reiterated in Winlow's (2001) *Badfellas: Crime, Tradition and New Masculinities*. Both Rhode and Pienaar embody or represent certain aspects of masculinity as defined by Shefer (2007) and Winlow (2001).

In Rhode's earlier work his risk taking and violence were exemplified in what he describes as *Bushie Agitae* art, a term he coined. 'Bushie' is a derogatory term for a person of coloured descent, while 'Agitae' is taken from the word agitate. Rhode's early intentions as an artist were to articulate his cultural identity while causing disruption within the artworld. He describes this desire as inspired by the stance Kendel Geers adopted during and after Apartheid with his artistic terrorism. Rhode's *Bushie Agitae* does not necessarily describe a literal violence, rather a violence performed through the role of the artist as an act of deviance and defiance against the establishment.

Two early instances of Rhode's performances of masculinity were located within galleries. In the one he drew a urinal on the wall and urinated onto it and walked out. In the other he drew a Volkswagen Citi Golf, said to be the easiest car to break into, and attempted to do so using a coat hanger, a tennis ball and eventually a brick. Through his work, Pienaar is no stranger to risk taking or violence either. Pienaar's use of Rugby as a symbol of Afrikaner masculinity caused genuine violent reactions from the Afrikaans community. He describes having bricks thrown at him by Afrikaans men when he dressed up in Springbok rugby uniform and posed outside a shopping mall in Pretoria (Pienaar 2009).

Rhode embraces the criminality and danger stereotypically assigned to non-white inner-city youths by performing and photographing his works outside of the gallery structure, at night on Johannesburg's streets. Rhode intentionally uses the sub-cultural language of graffiti and its associations to comment on his personal history.

Both Pienaar and Rhode use their own bodies in the works selected for this research. They both consciously and meticulously articulate their identities in, as Jones (1995:18) puts it, "sartorial display". Shefer (2007:3) says there is a gaze on men and boys as exists with women and girls while also stating men and boys have particular vulnerabilities. This is a relevant point in relation to Pienaar's circumcision piece, whereby he desired to display the vulnerabilities and loss of power of the white Afrikaans male. Pienaar (2009) explains that he intended to express this culturally specific loss of male power quite literally. He did this by having a black female controlling the safety of his manhood by holding a surgical steel blade to his phallus.

Mieshcer & Lindsay (2003:2) state that a specific shift has occurred in sub-Saharan Africa from the colonial to post-colonial in gendered identities and gender relationships. They state that "gender constructions are embedded in a dialectic - How men and women see and represent themselves, and how gender relations are organised and promoted and are shaped by larger socio-economic, cultural, and religious transformations" (Mieshcer & Lindsay 2003:2). Pienaar and Rhode are important exemplars of two specific and different communities where masculine roles and performance have shifted since South Africa has become a democratic and post-colonial society.

I conducted an interview with Pienaar in December 2009, in which he stated he had close ties with Rhode while he still lived and worked in South Africa. Pienaar (2009) states he and Rhode worked in a similar manner, both articulating their cultural identities and personal histories with the desire to radically affect peoples' opinions.

Interestingly, Pienaar has moved out of the artworld and has changed his title from artist to designer while Rhode has seemingly moved from the more confrontational aspects of his earlier work to a more placated method of performance. Pienaar (2009), claims his move into design was due to his tiring of the expectations of the artworld to push the 'boundaries' and increase the risk in his performances. Rhode (2008) has almost the opposite view of the South African artworld by stating Europe is more sedate and restricted than South Africa and there is not inherent danger or 'grittiness' to give his work the same intensity it once had.

Both artists' reasoning for their respective decisions in the development of their work certainly reflects on the state of masculinity within South Africa in complex ways. In my interview with Pienaar (2009), he stated that although his performances and the use of his own body had come to represent an engagement with Afrikaans masculine culture, he could no longer push himself to take further risks.

Rhode (2008), on the other hand, explains that the engagement with dangerous Johannesburg streets was no longer a possibility for him as he had moved his base for artistic engagement to Europe. Rhode (2010) says he moved to Berlin because of feeling under-appreciated in the South African art scene. He states that although his new home is Berlin, he returns to South Africa regularly, but anonymously, to create works on the Johannesburg streets, which are essential to his practice. Rhode explains that Berlin is 'boring' and too safe and controlled an environment to create his street art pieces.

In relation to Rhode's claim that he desires a grittier Johannesburg streets I was reminded of Winlow (2001:7) exploration of the changing working-class masculinities of north east England, and found that young men have adapted to new roles that allow them to fulfil certain expectations others place on them and they place on themselves regarding masculinity. England is an interesting comparison to changes regarding South

Africa after Apartheid and questions relevant to both his and my studies may be asked, such as: How has ideal of masculinity changed? How has Broad Based Economic Empowerment, feminism, postmodernism, metro-sexuality and homosexuality affected traditional masculinities?

Winlow (2001:8) describes his study as not dissimilar from Liebow's studies of the lower class 'negro', of the son replicating the father's practice (1967:223). Winlow (2001:8) states, "We can no longer prognosticate that working-class sons will go out and experience the same realities as their fathers". The changing and organic nature of social constructions, such as masculinity, will change according to the ever-changing nature of society.

Winlow's study centres on the working class north-eastern [English] subculture (2001:9). Subculture is an important term, as well as Winlow's technique for making subculture relevant to broader studies of masculinity. Pienaar and Rhode are/were both involved in subcultures with powerful ideologies and social structuralisation in the development of young South African males.

Beyond being part of a subculture, masculinity is defined in relation to and against femaleness and femininity. Women and girls play a large role in the formation of masculinity in the coloured communities as is articulated in Chapter 9 of *From Boys to Men*, entitled *Social construction of masculinity on the racial and gendered margins of Cape Town* (Salo 2007:168). In this study of coloured male youths the role of the *ordentilike moeder's* or respectable mothers are shown to play a large part in these young men's lives. Salo (2007) writes that coloured fathers are on the periphery of raising the child, a point reinforced by Rhode (2010). The mother or *moeder* is the one responsible for seeing the boy grows up into a man or an *ouen*.

Specific impressions of coloured males have been formed in stereotypical ethnographic photography, South African media and the art world. Coloured males are often represented as criminal, tattooed, drunken, working class; a culture unto themselves – neither black nor white. Essentially the coloured male is not associated with established notions of the 'self' and is 'othered' (Rhode 2010 & Breitz 2010). Cited examples could be found in photography by Adam Broomberg, Mikhael Sobotsky and Pieter Hugo.

Rhode plays strongly with the impression of coloured males in ways that are at once playful and dreamlike, but poignantly thought provoking. His use of his own body as signifier of coloured masculine culture in the 'Coon' in his Vaudevillesque characterisations, as well as his performances of criminality are attached to these preconceived notions, and empower his articulation of a personal history intended to combat stereotypical representation, commanding the gaze, rather than being subject to it.

In reference to othered males, Sathiparsad (2010:183) in *From Boys to Men*, cites the impressions of Zulu men as associated with risk taking and rampant sexuality and AIDS/HIV. Academics need to "replace stereotypes of masculinity, particularly of African men as being irresponsible, with notions of reliability and dependability." Expanding on this the editor writes:

For African men in the liberation struggles of South Africa, the assertion of manhood was a claim for freedom, and the struggle for freedom was a claim for masculinity. In reading African assertions of manhood, Raymond Suttner argues, there is a need to understand it as a challenge not only to a childlike status but also as symbolising wider rejection of overlordship.

This claim seems not dissimilar from Winslow's claim of North Eastern working class Englishman taking jobs as bouncers and becoming criminals as a way not to fall victim to overlordship by asserting an independent identity. Pienaar and Rhode articulate their identity and assert independence from social conformity by artworks that use their own ethnographic social constructions as things to be played with and mutated, not something that controls who they are directly.

Chapter 11 of *From Boys to Men* entitled *Masculinities in the ANC-led liberation movement* (Suttner 2007) "seeks to uncover the precise elements of the formation and manifestations of masculinities within the ANC, elements which – though they bear resemblances to those found in other contexts – have specificities that need to be brought into the foreground, specificities that relate to a past that is in some respects a warrior tradition." – The editor furthers this point by relating to Zulu masculinities. There have been many fears voiced in the South African media that patriarchy is as much

enforced under the current ANC leadership as it was under the Apartheid regime. An example of ANC patriarchy is the current president of South Africa, Jacob Zuma who is a Zulu patriarch and has many wives while still engaging in unprotected sex with women he is not married to and this has caused alarm as displayed in the South African media.

Shefer (2007:12) does “not necessarily [offer] any new theoretical insights, but rather new conceptual modes – rather, different chapters hold valuable ethnographic information.” Included are narratives of young men and boys intended to give information on gaps in our understanding of “ways in which masculinities are performed in diversities of place and space.” Shefer (2007:12) also claims the book “foregrounds areas of similarity across the globe and historically and also clearly sketch[es] the salience and richness of localities in framing masculine identities and the practices of being a boy and a man”.

In light of Shefer’s statement it is interesting to attempt to engage with Pienaar’s ‘initiation’ ritual and the similarities and diversities that lies at the heart of masculinity. South Africa has a complicated history of masculine identity, and one might extend the comparative similarities of various masculinities as stated by Shefer (2007) to the National Government patriarchy and ANC patriarchy. I would offer that the switch in power that took place after democracy was established in South Africa, has led to patriarchal governmental roles of black men in a mere replication of and not a progression away from the domineering and problematic areas of the old Nationalist Government.

The notion of an ideological link between white and black masculinities in South Africa has also been drawn in complex examples by theorists such as by Keith Shear (2003), author of chapter six in *Men and Masculinities in Modern Africa*, entitled “*Taken as Boys*”: *The Politics of Black Police Employment in Early Twentieth-Century South Africa*. Shear (2003) explains how the white South African patriarchy was dependent on a native work force, specifically in stereotypically masculine vocations such as in policing, soldiering, construction or mining. Shear (2003:109) expands on this by writing:

[White] South African officials well understood [their] contradictory imperatives [that black intermediaries would provide the control and

specialised knowledge of Africans that a vast settler project entailed]...That a reliance on black police qualified white power [and] Officials also clearly perceived...black intermediaries were indispensable in the surveillance of the African for majority white and power was limited without them.

Both Pienaar and Rhode make some claim to the authorship of their ethnographic and personal histories through their performance of masculinity as 'artist' but also deal with the contradictory and complex nature of South African masculinities. The two men are able to play with a social construct steeped in the seemingly immutable recesses of patriarchy, and display masculinity as something malleable and not fixed. This is a positive use of art as a medium for social change where the potentially damaging possibilities of masculinity and patriarchal modes may be challenged through creative means.

Chapter Two - *Peet Pienaar: Rugby, Homo-Eroticism and Afrikaans Masculinities in the New South Africa*

Peet Pienaar's performance art work began gaining prominence in the local art scene at a pivotal time in the "new" South Africa's history. Soon after democracy had been established in South Africa, Pienaar began presenting what was soon to become a problematised subculture in South Africa's social landscape; that subculture being White Afrikaans masculinities.

For Pienaar Afrikaans masculinity is engaged with and references Rugby culture specifically. Pienaar uses his own body as a signifier of that area of Afrikaans subculture. His various performance works include the role of the Afrikaans man and his body as a negotiated space in the 'new' South Africa with allusions to homoeroticism and homosexuality in Rugby culture.

Peet Pienaar grew up in a small town on a farm just outside Potchefstroom known as Tierfontein. His parents still own the farm from his childhood. He has two brothers, who Pienaar (2009) describes as "normal guys with a wife and kids". Pienaar (2009) describes his upbringing was quite ordinary and in line with the status quo of the day. He says that in his youth "It was compulsory to play rugby, [to] have to behave in a certain way, have to behave like a boy and have to behave like a man. Pienaar (2009) reflects on the constraints by recalling 'Don't worry; whoever goes to the army, [it] will make him a man.' What is masculine? I can't tell you".

Pienaar, stating that he does not understand masculinity, is somewhat a conceit, because to place your penis as a central object of an art piece is the most pointed masculine object there can possibly be when dealing with masculinity as subject matter. When speaking about his art Pienaar would often deflect a questions about the his work and therefore retain a certain engima around his practice, in much the same way as American artist Jeff Koons is renound for doing in interviews (Jones 1995). This approach to answering questions about a one's practice does two things; firstly it enticing own to know more and secondly allows for an open reading that the viewer is never quite certain is correct or not.

By not readily standing behind the presence of the masculine in his works, Pienaar allows for meaning to be constantly renegotiated and fluid rather than being fixed. His giving up art for design could be seen in the same light as Duchamp purportedly giving up art for chess (philamuseum.org 2010), when in reality it was all part of a broader plan to leave an artistic legacy.

Both Duchamp and Koons have deflated sexual taboos in art in works that are overtly sexual, but do not allow the viewer to make that reading due to the authoritative voice of the artist. In the final painting of Duchamp's career, soon before his death, he constructed an installation entitled *Étant donnés*, which included a startling representation of a woman or young girl with her legs astride lying in a field, inactive, frozen almost dead. The work seems to reference rape or some type of sexual violation, but the artist does not allow a specific decoding of the work by the viewer being forced into a restrictive voyeuristic position due to the keyhole view point, thereby removing an authoritative voice (philamuseum.org 2010)

Koons picks up on the sexual as the banal in provocative pornographic stills of him and his ex-wife Chiichalina in images of the act intercourse, baring all. When explaining the works, however, he focuses only on the technical aspects but never the blatantly sexual content (Jones 1995).

In small farm Afrikaans farming communities, men are 'real men' who work the land, serve in the army or play rugby. Homosexuality in areas such as Tierfontein, particularly under the Nationalist government, was virtually unknown. The urban phenomena of the cosmopolitan city enabled people to be 'who' and 'how' they are – a place without the small town sensibility, and attitude towards sexuality. Pienaar's move to Cape Town to pursue a life as an artist, particularly a performance artist dealing with his masculinity and homosexuality, can be seen as nothing less than a reaction against the hetero-normative Afrikaans small town community in which he was raised.

Pienaar consistently tested the cultural sensibilities of his own community and then moved onto to test those of other local cultures which came to a head in *I Want To Tell You Something* (2000) where he proposed being publicly circumcised by a black female

doctor and then selling the foreskin on eBay, an internet auction website. Thembinkosi Goniwe (in *Art South Africa* 2000) felt Pienaar was not showing proper respect to circumcision as ritual and culturally specific and that his proposal bordered on racism and ethnographic spectacle by not respecting the Xhosa circumcision ritual as sacred and private.

In Goniwe's (2000) writings on the subject he seemingly expressed his anger at Pienaar as an embodiment of Apartheid era domineering behaviour of Afrikaans masculinity. Pienaar (2009) states his decision to have a black woman circumcise his penis was not a 'sexual thing' or abusive of her, but a metaphor for the loss of white male power, and for him as a homosexual it was hardly possible to read her as being positioned as a sex object, although Goniwe (2000) had accused him of doing in his writings.

The conflict between Pienaar and Goniwe brings up interesting questions as to the nature of ownership of masculine rituals and the meaning men's bodies play in a socio-cultural context. Regardless of the fact that Pienaar is homosexual, Goniwe still viewed him as a domineering white Afrikaans masculine subject intending to sexually exploit a black female.

Circumcision itself is practiced by many faiths and cultures and is also a popular choice with men for aesthetic or hygienic reasons and therefore it is not monopolised by the Xhosa male. Men protecting rituals that they themselves have gone through and so find precious, is in a way culturally territorial and masculine in itself - By projecting his own Xhosa values on the act Goniwe attempted to disallow Pienaar from taking ownership over his own body in a public space.

The territory of masculine ritual in relation to culture is something covered in the book *Marked in Your Flesh* (2005), Leonard B. Glick traces the roots of circumcision from ancient Judea to modern America, asking questions about the socio-cultural validity of removing sensitive genital tissue from a man's penis. Glick (2005) comes to the conclusion that circumcision as enforced by socio-cultural norms, constructs or ritual is wrong. It is damaging to the sensitivity of the penis, reducing sexual pleasure and is a form of amputation.

What Glick (2005) explains is that the genital tissue around the penis prior to circumcision is incredibly sensitive, with nerves endings and skin that protect the head of the penis. Glick (2005:4) continues: “But equally important, the surgery is not so simple, it’s an extensive reductive procedure – and, whether the “patient” later approves or not, the result is irreversible” (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Pienaar, *Untitled Video Still from I Want to Tell You Something* (2000)
<http://www.artthrob.co.za/00dec/artbio.html>

Glick (2005) states that circumcision is not a simple ‘snip’, as it is commonly referred to, and so Pienaar’s being circumcised shows a commitment dedication to his art that is quite extraordinary. The phallus is a central locus of masculinity and putting one’s manhood on the chopping block, as it were, is no mean feat. I questioned Pienaar (2009) as to why he would put himself through such a procedure and he explained that it was an important statement about how Afrikaans men are no longer in power and in control of their masculinity.

Pienaar’s intention of using a black female doctor to apply a knife to his manhood was intended to be a statement of a loss of power to the political antithesis or ‘other’ of the Apartheid era Afrikaans male; the black female. Black woman are now ideal candidates

for employment according to Black Economic Empowerment scales, and Pienaar, like many other Afrikaans males, feels this meant Afrikaans men suddenly found themselves “disenfranchised”.

Pienaar (2009) explains that having the circumcision is more complex than a question of power, it also shows a willingness or desire to be part of the ‘New’ South Africa, if in a somewhat brutal way. It is not simply the genital reductive surgery that concerns Pienaar, it shows a wish to engage with the ‘other’ or ‘othered’ constructs of masculinity, showing a genesis of masculine socio-cultural ideals by performing an otherwise secluded ritual for public display.

Pienaar’s work *I Want to Tell You Something* (2000) poses serious questions around circumcision and is highly relevant in a country where many young boys die from their wounds or their penis is maimed from the Xhosa ritual. Pienaar’s work was not ‘politically correct’; it was confrontational if not a little crass, but the question it posed around masculine cultural ritual and power is an important one, especially in South Africa.

The Xhosa circumcision ritual is one where young men and boys of the Xhosa tribe return to an ancestral homeland where a secret ritual is performed and where the young men are expected to perform rituals and tasks before being initiated into manhood. The secretive circumcision ritual has been publicised over the years because of the deaths and maiming that occur, but also for the debate over cultural rites versus a modernisation of the democratic South Africa.

Who owns or has the right to perform a ritually masculine act? What are the restrictions placed on that act by socio-cultural constructs and beliefs? And to what extent are these “restrictions through constructs” valid in the art world and society at large? Whether Pienaar’s proposal and eventual exhibition of his circumcision and foreskin was right or just is a matter of opinion. What it does do is open up the proverbial can of worms that allows research like mine to have validity in an ever changing and conflicted South Africa, where masculinity and age old patriarchal constructs are still very much alive and the source of much conflict.

Although Pienaar's desire to use a black female doctor to perform the circumcision spoke of a political agenda, Pienaar states he was not aware at the time of the controversy it was going to cause. In his defence of the validity of the piece Pienaar (2009) states:

For me personally, you get your penis cut by a black female doctor, get your penis cut by a black woman as an Afrikaans man was the way a lot of people [Afrikaans men] were feeling at the time. Their power is being handed over, relevant from an Afrikaans perspective. And for me the doctor has a powerful position, so it is not a degrading position. And for me it was a bit far fetched to see her as playing the role of a sex object. It wasn't necessarily something to do about sex [per se].

Related to this one must ask the question: How did Pienaar's sexuality relate to his expression of masculinity? Pienaar (2009) states: "If you're gay, masculinity is always an issue and something you have to work out from a very young age. It's like a given but it will always be there. Now it's a little bit different but it's still there."

Soon after the conflict about the public circumcision with Goniwe died down, and *I Want to Tell You Something* (2000) was exhibited at the Brendon-Bell Roberts Gallery, Pienaar decided to remove himself from the South African art scene and focus on a new vocation; design. Pienaar is currently making a name for himself in the world of design heading a company known as *The President*. The name of his company is provocative in its relationship to the notion of a 'president' as leader or ruler, typically a patriarch. Pienaar's offices are wittingly located next door to the South African parliamentary building.

Although Pienaar is no longer directly involved with the South African art community, the effect of his work is still felt today. At the University of Pretoria, a predominantly white Afrikaans University where I completed my undergraduate studies, I was introduced to Pienaar's work for the first time. What interested me about his work was that a man who was a former provincial rugby player would choose to make art. In this case my own socially influenced constructions of masculinity influenced my views on Pienaar's practice.

In the series of lectures on Pienaar's work at the University of Pretoria, there was little or no mention of his homosexuality. Pienaar was represented as a large Afrikaans male rugby player; with blue eyes and blonde hair and a strong physique - The archetype of 'Old' South African masculinity. Pienaar, as the 'archetype' chose to perform such subversive acts as posing for a photograph showing his impressive physique while pulling his penis between his legs, in which his genitals replicated a vagina. In this performative photograph, Pienaar removes his phallus from view and thereby plays with the notion that homosexuals are feminine (Figure 2).



Figure 2: Peet Pienaar, *Formstance* (1999)
www.artthrob.co.za/00aug/news.html

Homosexuality was viewed in an extremely negative light under the Apartheid regime and this is explained in an article in chapter two of *Defiant Desire* written by Glen Retief and titled *Keeping Sodom out of the laager: State repression of homosexuality in apartheid South Africa*. A quote by Justice Minister PC Pelser, speaking in Parliament on 21 April 1967 explains Retief's title:

And who can deny that this was also the canker that afflicted the Biblical Sodom? No, Sir, history has given us a clear warning and we should not allow ourselves to be deceived into thinking that we may casually dispose of this viper in our midst by regarding it as innocent fun. It is a proven fact that sooner or later homosexual instincts make their effects felt on a community if they are permitted to run riot...Therefore we should be on the alert and do what there is to do lest we be saddled later with a problem which will be the utter ruin of our spiritual and moral fibre.

This is an extremist and exclusionist view of homosexuality in Apartheid South Africa and gives us a view of the prejudice Pienaar would have experienced. I am unaware if Pienaar was openly gay during his childhood and adolescent development, but one can assume that it was difficult for him to be openly gay while a youth or playing provincial rugby. As Retief (1995:99) states "There is a long history that remains as yet unwritten of the repression and regulation of sexuality by the apartheid state during its 40-year hold on power".

Pienaar (2009) recalls that the view within the Afrikaans community that "whoever went to the army, it would make him a man". The army and conscription was a large part of reinforcing Afrikaans hetero-normative masculine modes. The relationship between the military and homosexuality has always been a conflictual one.

In *Homosexuality*, a collection of writings edited by Robert M. Baird and M. Katherine Baird, part four, dedicated to *Homosexuality and the Military*, deals with this very issue. The text is related to American socio-cultural military structures but speaks of a larger bias that affects all world militaries. Les Aspin (in *Homosexuality*, 1993:155) writes: "The Department of Defence has long held that, as a general rule, homosexuality is

incompatible with military service because it interferes with the factors critical to combat effectiveness, including unit morale, unit cohesion, and individual privacy”.

This fear, or ‘erotophobia’ as described in Retief’s text (1995:106) expresses that gay conduct was viewed as a public nuisance in Apartheid South Africa and that a “strategy pursued by police to justify repressive measures directed at lesbian, gay and bisexual people has been to treat homosexual activity in public places as nuisance and to charge transgressors with sexual offences ranging from public indecency to sexual assault to immoral soliciting.”

It makes Pienaar’s work all the more reactionary, in light of the above statement, that he chose performance, often in public spaces that were not involved in the fine arts, such as rugby stadiums or shopping malls. Pienaar (2009) says his desire to perform instead of paint, for example, was due to the immediate effect of performance art on an audience.

Pienaar would also dress up as a Springbok Rugby player and pose as a human monument outside shopping malls in Afrikaans areas such as Pretoria. Afrikaans woman would rub his thighs attempting to sexually arouse him and feel his leg muscles, states Pienaar (2009). Many Afrikaans men witness to this, found it disrespectful to Afrikaans masculine rugby culture and according to Pienaar (2009), his assailants responded by throwing bricks at him.

Pienaar’s desire to play with Afrikaans masculinities and subsequently aggravate viewers to the point where he had ‘bricks’ thrown at him continued throughout his career. However, at times the ‘bricks’ were verbal assaults from those within the art fraternity. In my interview with Pienaar in 2009, I found it hard to access true reasons for his being involved in radical performances and then just as radically removing himself from the art world entirely.

Pienaar seemed to me to be a conversational tactician and I found myself during the interviews at times being verbally buffeted from getting the responses I desired for my research. As with many artists, Pienaar is a master at concealing the truth or presenting a truth as a lie or vice versa, as the infamous quote by Pablo Picasso stating “We all

know that art is not truth. Art is a lie that makes us realize truth, at least the truth that is given us to understand. The artist must know the manner whereby to convince others of the truthfulness of his lies.” (*The Arts, Picasso Speaks* 1923 in goodart.org 2010) that tells the truth” - this in itself speaks volumes about Pienaar’s method and practice.

Contradiction, confusion and double meanings are all at play in Pienaar’s oeuvre, as well as his person. Pienaar has a strong physical presence, due to his size - He stands well over six foot and very broad and he seems, as previously mentioned, to be the masculine Afrikaans ideal. On the day of my interview with Pienaar he wore shorts, a buttoned-up short sleeved shirt and boots with socks - This would be the stereotypical outfit of the ‘Boer’ or Afrikaans farmer if the colour of his outfit was khaki, however, Pienaar’s outfit was all black with red shoelaces – a possible reference to the Anarchist as well as Fascist dress code found commonly in parts of Europe.

Pienaar has consciously used clothing to aid his performance of masculinity, as he recalls dressing up in a rugby uniform, lying on a mattress in an art gallery (Pienaar 2009). This particular work was inspired by Pienaar’s relationship with a then Springbok rugby player, whose name has been excluded from this research to respect the privacy of this particular ex-Springbok. Pienaar underpinned the homoerotic element of this particular performance by giving love bites to the audience and also creating homoerotic South African rugby souvenirs (Figure 3 & Figure 4).



Figure 3: Pienaar, *Rugby Souvenirs - Jersey*
www.artthrob.co.za/00dec/artbio.html



Figure 4: Pienaar, *Rugby Souvenirs - Photographic Caps*
www.artthrob.co.za/00dec/artbio.html

Pienaar used clothing once again in a green sequined suit, inspired by the Springbok Rugby uniform that he wore at South African rugby stadia. This sequined suit was once again referential to homoeroticism and rugby and poses questions about the institutionalised hetero-normativity within Afrikaans and South African rugby culture. If Pienaar is homosexual and he was a provincial rugby player, what statement does that make about Afrikaans masculinities? Pienaar (2009) explains his work was always 'personal' and his expressions were therefore an expression of his personal experiences as a small town 'boer seun' or farm boy, who performed all the necessary requirements of hetero-normative masculinity and still turned out as a homosexual.

A contradiction or a subversive play seems apparent in Pienaar's person and this prompted me to ask him how he understands the term masculinity and how it has been relevant to his body of work? Pienaar (2009) answered; "My work is so personally based; I just do things that I feel so personal to me it is difficult to say I am doing a work about masculinity, and it was deemed as masculine." A noticeable character trait of Pienaar that impressed itself upon me was his apparent gentle demeanour and soft if not somewhat effeminate voice. When Pienaar speaks one gets the first indication of his otherwise 'hidden' homosexuality.

I asked Pienaar if he felt that with a different upbringing, i.e. not being brought up in a conservative Afrikaans farming community, would he have turned out differently? Pienaar (2009) states "No, but I think if I had been straight I would have turned out differently...I think I wouldn't have been that interested in masculinity or male stuff or maybe I don't know, you never know."

My own engagement with masculinity is something that Pienaar found interesting. He felt that the current so called "crisis of masculinity" has prompted heterosexual males to take a look at their own 'performance of masculinity' in a way that confronts the supposed immutable constructs of patriarchy.

I explained to Pienaar that my engagement with masculinity in my work has quite a lot to do with my development as an artist and my confrontation with postmodern theories, particularly feminism and post-colonialism, both of which seemed to have critical positions in relation to artists I had idealised since my youth - artists such as Picasso,

van Gogh or Pollock.

When I studied art in Pretoria, it was with mostly female students, as art or 'kuns' in a traditional Afrikaans setting is seen more as a feminine discourse. Furthermore, I explained to Pienaar that my reaction to this (if somewhat subconsciously) was to make masculine artwork in either content and/or technique. This would include my paintings being brash, impersonating the abstract expressionists or the content of my work dealing with my father or younger brother or shaving as ritual.

I also played rugby at Pretoria University in the intra-varsity league. I had not been interested in playing rugby at high school as the school was more focused on the arts and academics. The other young men who were part of the varsity league Rugby team had asked what I was studying. When I told them 'kuns' or art, they thought that was odd as most of them were studying more typically masculine degrees, such as engineering or business. After explaining this to Pienaar, he stated "Ja, that is a big thing...I think its a double thing, you're male and you have to do male things, but you're doing art and is that because you're gay or not? Or is that because you're just doing that, so where do you fit in, because you not straight...how are you supposed to act with people?" (Pienaar 2009).

Pienaar engaged with the concept of the 'male art student' in his collaborative project with then art student, Craig Johnson in 2000. Johnson, a heterosexual, had an extended emotional relationship with Pienaar as an artwork whereby the two would talk on the phone every night and Pienaar had Johnson's name tattooed on his shoulder. The two would act as if they were a couple, without engaging in any homosexual activity such as kissing, hugging or having sex. The only physical contact they had was a rough schoolboy game known as 'bloody knuckles', whereby two participants punch each other's knuckles until the one concedes defeat, hence the name of the game (Figure 5).



Figure 5: Pienaar with *Craig Johnson Forever* tattoo (2000)
www.artthrob.co.za/00dec/artbio.html

The interaction did not play out well in the end, eventually leading to an estrangement due to the intensity of the collaborative project. The two men no longer have any contact and Pienaar seemed hurt that the interaction played out in such a negative way (Pienaar 2009). When I questioned Pienaar (2009) about the interaction, asking if it was destructive, he states:

Ja, it was really destructive in the end. I just don't think he took it seriously. But it was very serious, we were on the phone every day, it was a like a full on relationship, but it was never physical it was just a mental thing, [a] sort of game. I think he just did it as a project, and he didn't put emotion into it.

(Pienaar 2009). This comment by Pienaar is once again ambiguous, and expresses a possible expectation and naivety that the relationship could indeed have turned into something 'real', as Pienaar (2009) states he felt genuinely in love with Johnson.

The work was intended to show the limits of a heterosexual/homosexual relationship and explained the limits through 'play', in this case violent play. Violent play is obviously something Pienaar is no stranger to, as he played the full contact sport of rugby for many years and links to his romantic relationship with a Springbok rugby player for some time (Pienaar 2009). When the two ended their affair it was publicised in the papers, but then kept quiet, according to Pienaar (2009).

As mentioned previously Pienaar alluded to this relationship in the performance piece where he lay on a mattress in a rugby outfit and gave the viewers gentle love bites. Homoeroticism and a normally severely masculine performance of rugby becomes subverted and 'queer' in Pienaar's performance and at once destabilises the preconceptions around the nature of the national sport.

Pienaar continued his collaborative work with male artists such as Barend de Wet, in both a game of chess, pastiching Duchamp's famous chess playing performance, on the one hand as well as engaging in a bodybuilding project on the other, where he had a dramatic weight loss of 30kg. In one of Pienaar's infamous quotes he says he is "Using art to live an interesting life - If you go to the gym it's boring, but if you go the gym as an artwork then it becomes interesting." Pienaar (2009) states, "It was a big motto for me for a long time, and it was a motivation for me to do cool things that you would not normally do. Like getting circumcised or whatever, delve into stuff that a 'normal' person would never dream of doing and that for me was really nice."

The chess game is important in the context of art historical discourse, because it was originally a performance between Marcel Duchamp and a female performer. Duchamp is very relevant to development of the male artist and performances and presentations of masculinity as he created a female alter-ego known as Rose Selvy. In this role, as Amelia Jones (1995) states, Duchamp plays with the identity of the male artist, to the point of transgender, playing with the construct of what the male artist is expected to perform and present to society.

In Pienaar's chess piece with De Wet, he replaces the original female performer. De Wet now sat naked with what seems to be a female wig and a prosthetic breast plate while Pienaar was clothed in a suit speaking once again to the play between hetero/homosexual relationships as "prescribed" to men.

Pienaar's bodybuilding collaboration relates directly to the new culture of sculpted male body beauty – whereby men sculpt their bodies for aesthetic purposes driven by a range of supplementation and/or cosmetic methods to keep them looking desirable. Of this Pienaar (2009) states: "Men used to exercise to be fucking strong," implying that now it is more about looking good.

I myself fell prey to the aesthetics of bodybuilding as a student at the University of Pretoria's student gym. I bought supplements and frequented the student gym in the hope of looking bigger, stronger, better, sexier. This is in part a response to the ever burgeoning pressures of new performances of masculinities in an age where the intervention of medicine and science is fast replacing genetics as the key marker of superiority.

The body and identity have been central themes to performance art whereby 'othered' individuals can make themselves publicly known, visible and understood. The element of risk, both physically and emotionally, has often made performance art to be associated with bravery or the pushing of boundaries. Bravery and risk taking are more typically associated with masculine practice within patriarchy, where women, gay men or 'the other' are intended to be subjugated and more passive around their own identity. This is shown by Pienaar (2009) when he explains how he was attacked during his performances as a Springbok rugby player and garnered violent reactions from the male Afrikaans community (Pienaar 2009). I feel this related directly to the articulation of his ambiguous 'otherness' in a patriarchal and hetero-normative masculine system.

Pienaar (2009) explains: "I think for me it was always hectic afterwards, after a performance artwork, for months I would be seriously depressed and I would be at home, I felt exposed to people – It was really, really hectic. And it took like a really long time to get over it." One may ask why engage in performances of that nature if it caused such emotionally damaging and even dangerous reactions? Pienaar (2009) explains "At

that stage it was in the art world, ‘what’s next, what’s next, what’s next? Until it was at the stage when there was nothing I wanted to do still”.

Pienaar (2009) explains specifically this in relation to his circumcision piece, whereby he was pushed to his physical and emotional limit, stating “I have completely disengaged after the circumcision piece” leading to Pienaar radically changing his practice; changing his title from ‘artist’ to ‘designer’. Although the design and art world are more closely linked in Cape Town, Pienaar makes an effort to avoid the latter, not attending gallery openings or visiting art galleries too often. Pienaar is now more concerned with pop culture as he feels he can reach a larger audience (Pienaar 2009).

I questioned Pienaar as to why he had disengaged from the art world, when many people enjoy and respect it and are attempting to be a part of it – myself included. Pienaar (2009) explains:

I found it quite empty, there’s so much fighting and there’s not a lot of resources, especially for performance work. And you have to be in a very close circle of people and go do stuff internationally. And for me it was like forcing myself to go [to] things to be in that circle and for me it wasn’t important anymore. And then I find design really, really interesting, [art] just didn’t satisfy me at all anymore.

Although Pienaar has decided to disengage with the art world, his new industry still provides a relationship to masculinity and new masculinities. Pienaar is very much involved in the South African music scene and the Hip Hop and Rock music scene within South Africa have provided many interesting examples of the performance of distilled and questioned sub-cultural expressions of masculinity.

One particular example that I discussed with Pienaar was South African rock icon, Francois van Coke, the lead singer of iconic South African rock group Fokofpolisiekar. Pienaar is very much involved in the identity and promotion of the band. Their identity has shifted from their original ‘baggy skater clothing’ based on Punk-Americana to a more Euro-chic androgynous look, with ‘skinny jeans’ and undersized shirts.

Within the Afrikaans community, Fokofpolisiekar, or Fokof as they are commonly known, are signifiers of an alternative contemporary male Afrikaanderdom. When discussing this subject with Pienaar we spoke about how young Afrikaans men violently dance or 'mosh' to Fokof's music or stand solemnly and sing their ballads as if they were anthems.

What is interesting is that Pienaar explains that van Coke is open about physical relationships with both men and woman. Although he does not have sex with men and does not consider himself homosexual, if he "loves someone, he will kiss them" (Pienaar 2009). This speaks of a more liberated masculinity where an Afrikaans rock superstar does not see himself bound by patriarchal norms.

To conclude, if one looks at the particular selected works of Pienaar in relation to the norms of Afrikaans masculinity and patriarchy, one can see the many contradictions and multiple meanings hidden or overt within the work. This leads to an interesting challenge to typical notions of masculinity in Afrikanerdom, where Pienaar was able to articulate some of the personal challenges he faced in being homosexual through his work in relation to his traditional patriarchal upbringing.

Beyond Pienaar's homosexuality, Afrikaans men have faced challenges to their previously dominant position as leaders of South Africa to now being subject to a power shift, where they are now in some cases a disenfranchised minority. Whether the disenfranchisement is felt or real it is a concern in Pienaar's work and more widely within the state of Afrikaans patriarchy as a whole.

In the news of late, South African's have witnessed reports of the death of AWB leader Eugene Terreblanche, the man that came to stand for Afrikaans conservative masculinity and patriarchy, characterised by his many verbal and sometimes physical battles with the fellow South Africans. Terreblanche is allegedly said to have been killed by two young black men over a wage dispute on his farm.

Over the years South Africa has seen three thousand farm killings, said to be caused by racial tension in South Africa. It has come as a shock to many South Africans that a man with as high a public profile as Terreblanche could be killed. Another controversy

that has emerged is Terreblanche's sexual habits and questions over semen found on his trousers and the accusation of the accused that he was sexually molesting them (later discounted). Red herring or not this high profile case again destabilises the expected masculine mind set.

Whatever the outcome of the case, it is clear that a power shift has taken place, where black men are now in power and leaders such as African National Congress youth leader Julius Malema is inciting certain levels of animosity between Afrikaner and African men. Pienaar's circumcision piece seems all the more relevant now as he states "it described the power being taken away from the Afrikaans man and given to what would be seen as the opposing force, black people." In the case of Pienaar's proposed work he would be doubly compromised by being circumcised, not just by a black doctor, but a female, to add insult to injury.

A black woman, therefore, is seen as the ideal candidate for a job within the Black Economic Empowerment climate where many white men are feeling the 'pinch' as it were – Pienaar's circumcision piece speaks of this social concern and was further highlighted in the disagreements he had with other fellow artists, notably black artists and particularly Goniwe in leading to the proposal being turned into a work of art.

Although Pienaar has subsequently withdrawn from the art scene, his work still poses interesting and highly relevant questions about the state of masculinity in the new South Africa, where masculinity is constantly fore fronted in the media and contentious, as culturally diverse held values are affirmed or challenged. What should not be forgotten is that the new governmental structures, specifically run by the current president, Jacob Zuma, have also come under fire for its strong patriarchal ideological stream. Zuma himself controversially has many wives, engages in unprotected sex and is a traditional Zulu man (Gqola 2010).

In many ways the 'Zulus' and 'the Afrikaners' are similar in their pride for their warfaring history and their masculine war heroes (Sathiparsad 2007). The 'Zulu's' have leaders such as Dingaan, Shaka and Buthelezi while the 'Afrikaner's' have leaders such as Retief, Schickling and Terreblanche.

In attempting to understand these layers and multiple meanings of masculine performance and ideologies, through the challenges of Pienaar's art or other cultural examples, it is possible to expose, highlight, dissect and therefore understand the many layers of cultural patriarchy and what it means to be a 'man', therefore challenging and rectifying the problems caused by such ideologies.

Pienaar's confrontational attitude presented in these selected works problematises conventional masculinity and although some may criticise his approach, specifically for the lack of sensitivity shown in his proposal to create an urban circumcision ritual, and then to controversially sell the foreskin on eBay as art, one must be aware of the role of the artist as zealot or trouble maker, holding a mirror up to our own unchallenged and naturalised values within a complex society.

Chapter Three - *Robin Rhode: Clowning Around, Jozi Streets, Well Dressed Vandals and 'Bushie' Masculinities*

Robin Rhode is a successful and young South African artist who has come to international acclaim for his playful, sometimes dark and often humorous performative photographs whereby a story unfolds much like a movie story board. Rhode now lives and works in Berlin, while exhibiting internationally and returning to South Africa where he creates his pieces on South African walls.

His work has been associated with graffiti, hip hop and street culture while still presented and focussed within a fine art or high art framework. Rhode was born in a coloured area of Cape Town and when he was still young moved to Johannesburg. Although he attended a predominantly coloured school and lived in a largely coloured area he was mocked for his Cape or 'Kaapie' accent. Rhode (2010) describes his upbringing from Cape Town to Johannesburg stating, where he found it difficult to integrate in school because of his Capetonian roots:

...I grew up in what was an area called Landsdowne, I'm not exactly sure where it is on the map, obviously it's in the Western Cape. We lived there until I was about eight years old before we moved to Johannesburg – The transition from Cape Town to Johannesburg was quite difficult because...I found it extremely taxing to be integrated into the new primary School – There was a serious amount of bullying which took place. Um, also my accent was really strong, I had this Capetonian accent and you know the 'Transvaaler's' hated this kind of accent so it became very, very difficult for me to fully integrate myself and I was always somehow, I felt as if I was cast aside. I was never really participating or a participant in the social situation in the primary school. Um, maybe this led to my interest in drawing, I don't know? We didn't have any art education but I had a serious interest in drawing, so I pursued that.

Rhode (2010) explains that as a youth he was forced to ride a drawn bicycle or blow out a candle drawn on the wall of the boy's bathroom, along with the other young boys as a

type of sub-cultural initiation rite at his high school. Rhode replicates this situation over again in his works, where he plays not only with the memory of this boyhood initiation but also extends its capacity to deal with other aspects of masculine youthful coloured and inner city identities (Figure 6).

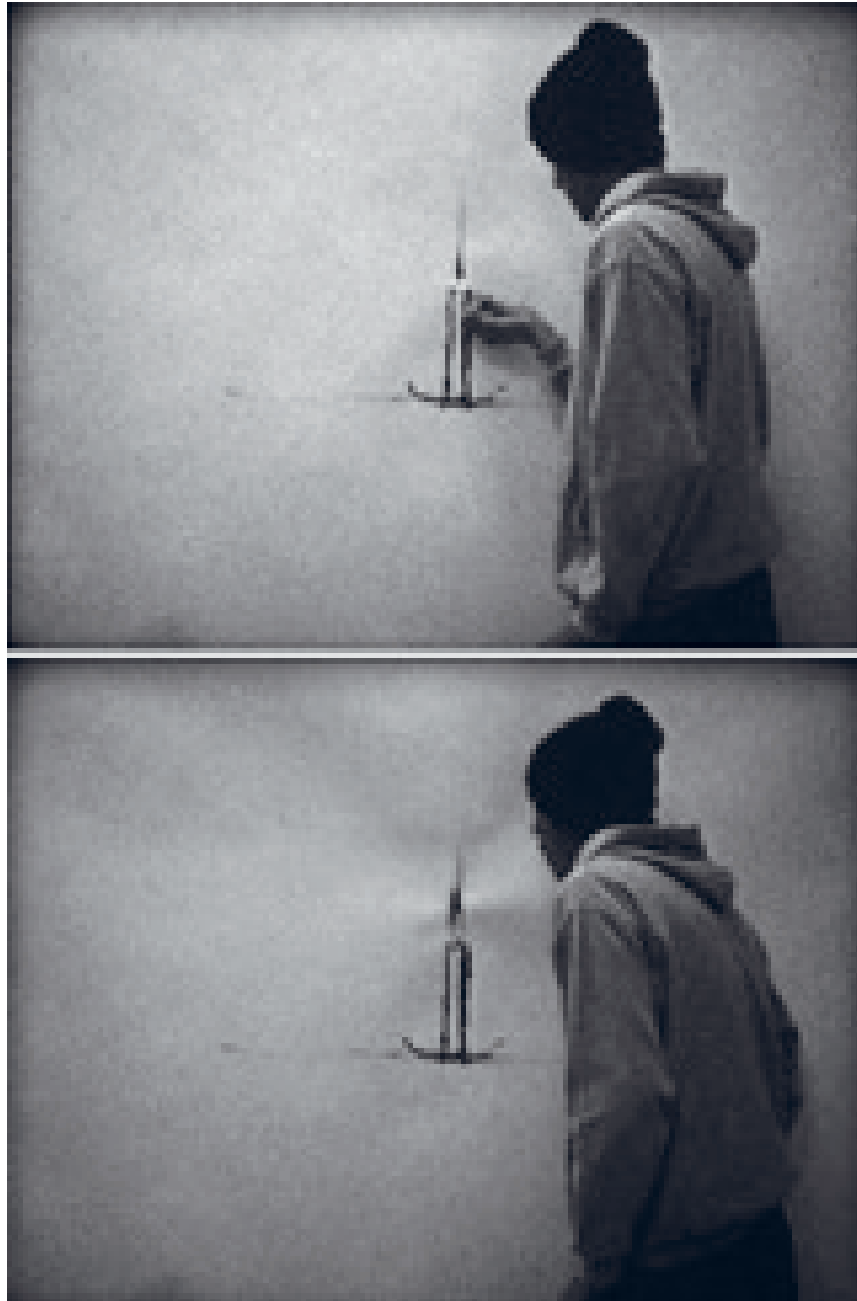


Figure 6: Rhode, *Candle* (2007)
Who Saw Who, Hayward Gallery Catalogue

The boys bathroom continued to be a place where he and his fellow initiates would:

Hang out, smoke a cigarette, do some graffiti, do some wall drawings. It's almost a place where the marginalised congregate or the kind of peripheral figures of the school, the mischievous and naughty students, pupil's of the school hang out –And cause trouble. So it's about mischief, it's about that kind of...not naughty, but ja, mischievous or playful characters...I think we can associate all this kind of...you know?

And this continued to inspire his practice (Rhode 2010).

Rhode (2010) says that it was during high school that the masculine urban hip hop culture become an influential part of his development both as a person and an artist:

It was during high school that I played a lot of basketball and got very much involved in hip hop culture – Go to hip hop clubs on Saturday afternoons, listen to a lot of hip hop and wearing the hip hop attire which comes with the Hip Hop movement. I was really captivated by this whole scene. It was almost as if Hip Hop was the new language of the post-Apartheid kid. Which was something, the coloured community, I also felt could assimilate, you know into our culture because we never had a traditional culture. So in assimilating Hip Hop culture, you get a very interesting way to find a sub-cultural identity. I was really taken up by this idea of this group formation coming through Hip Hop. Which I think probably inspired my piece called *He Got Game*, from the Spike Lee film which I did in 2000 in Cape Town.

Subjects of Rhode's work include 'street' sports such as basketball and skateboarding or masculine dominated sports such as boxing and cricket and anti-social activities such as crime, vandalism, public urination or violent behaviour such firing a gun. Although typically youthful male or masculine themes are present in many of Rhode's work, 'domesticity', which would be considered typically feminine is also featured as a theme in certain works.

Rhode (2010) explains it was in high school that he became interested in art as a way to engage with the other pupils and find his place:

High school was the same. High school was interesting in that I was really then finding my artistic flair which kind of separated me from the rest of the class. I became this kind of stand out individual, more like a kind of clown, class clown or art figure and I kind of liked the respect that came along with that. We also didn't have any formal art education at high school but I always made sure I was part of any cultural event even if I was a kind of bystander or onlooker. I always wanted to participate, but I didn't need to be the main attraction.

He says that art gave him his “swagger”, from the hip hop usage of the term, allowing him to create an identity for himself in relation to the other kids. What is ironic is that it was his being bullied and singled out that developed his artistic identity which eventually brought him esteem and financial success. Rhode (2010) unpacks his use of the hip hop inspired term ‘swagger’ and its relevance to his practice:

Suddenly I felt that I could...What does the term ‘swagger’ mean? It means kind of like an air of self-confidence and it is very much related to your idea of masculinity or the emphasis on your paper which is this kind of, all of a sudden you feel as if you are in a dominant role in the process of art. And that's the swagger which is so much part of Hip Hop, of the Hip Hop mentality which I then brought across into process of contemporary art or of trying to realise my art ideas. I wanted to add that same swagger and in a way the swagger could become a mechanism to reject other kind of dominant models, dominant discourses which are placed on me politically or socially. So I guess the swagger was a way of rejecting or a way of, you know, rejection. Of rejecting the other issues – whether it is political or social.

Rhode (2010) explains that domesticity is important to him because of the role his family, in particular his mother, had in his upbringing. Rhode (2010) states that as a term of endearment, a friend may be referred to as ‘Ma se kind’ or mother's child, while if someone says ‘Ma se poes’ or your ‘mother's pussy’ then it is like a declaration of war;

“somebody must die”.

Rhode links his work *Soap and Water* (2007) to the role of the mother, through a metal bucket and Sunlight soap, which is what he uses to cast a life size bicycle. Sunlight soap, Rhode explains, is an all purpose soap used for washing clothing and one’s body and hair or even to clean dishes or windows (Figure 7).



Figure 7: Rhode, *Soap and Water* (2007)
Perry Rubenstein Gallery, New York

Rhode's expressions of masculinity are less overt than Pienaar's and this harks back to Pienaar stating that if he was heterosexual he probably would not have been as concerned with masculinity as a subject (Pienaar 2009).

The main work to be explored in this dissertation is *He Got Game* (2000). This is one of Rhode's seminal pieces and one of his first major works to be bought by international collectors. It put him on the world stage. To give a small insight into Rhode's technique: he photographs or has a photographer photograph either himself or a doppelgänger (German word for double or twin) in a number of athletic, thought provoking, humorous or dream like poses and situations, interacting with drawn objects either on a floor or wall surface, generally in public spaces.

In *He Got Game* (2000) we see Rhode performing the physically impossible and athletically impressive feat of a double front flip slam dunk (Figure 8). This work, states Rhode (2008/2010) is inspired by the non-white or black heroes he grew up admiring as a coloured youth in South Africa, due to the influx of global culture. The specific example referenced is Michael Jordan. Jordan's influence on non-white youth internationally, states Rhode (2010), was due to new role models appearing in new sports, creating with it the possibility of new masculine ideals.

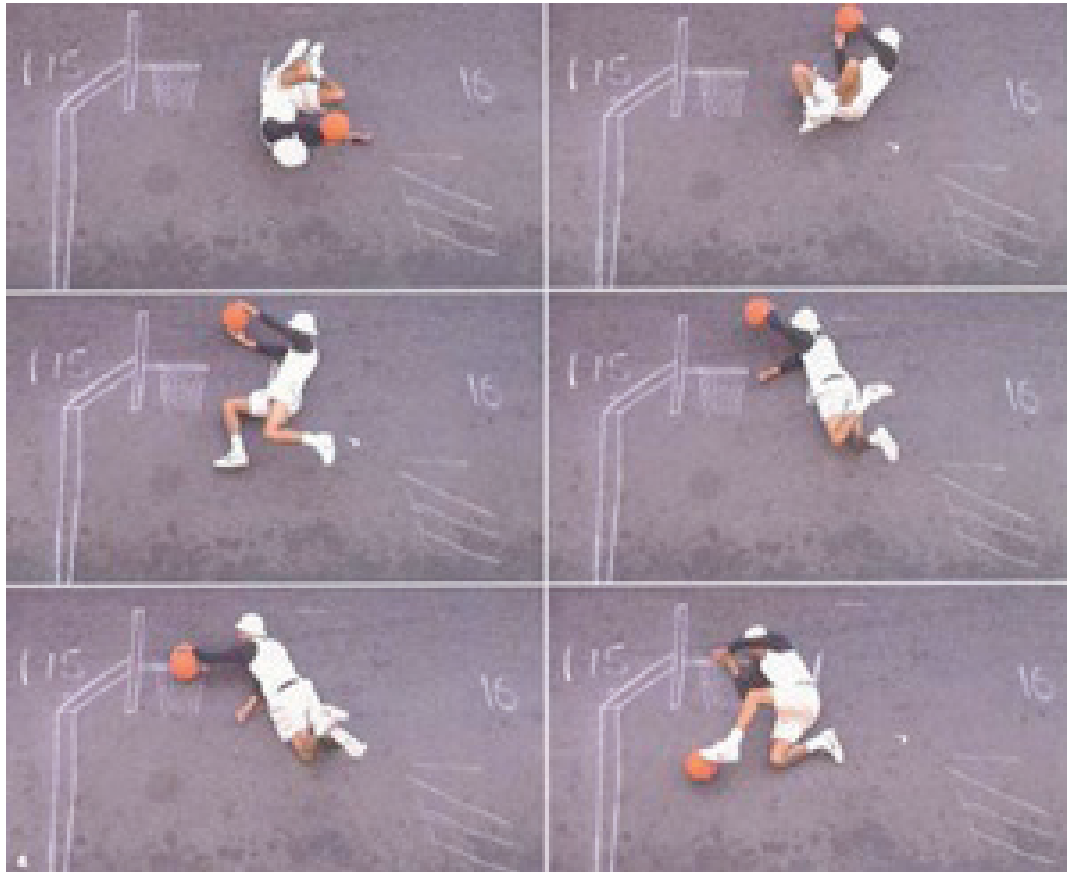


Figure 8: Rhode, *He Got Game* (2000)
Robin Rhode: *Walkoff Catalogue*

South African black male youths in the inner city faced similar struggles for masculine role models with which to identify to create their personal identities, not dissimilar to the issues faced in the United States or Great Britain (Rhode 2010). Characters such as Michael Jordan allowed black male youths to articulate a new masculine identity outside of Western patriarchal ideals. When Rhode (2010) speaks of ‘swagger’, a term he is fond of using to describe confidence, he is referencing the confidence shown by the likes of Jordan or other black athletes and hip hop stars.

Rhode (2010) recalls how he used to play basketball with his friends on a makeshift netball hoop, referencing the lack of means he had at that stage in his life. This notion of dream and realisation is at play in *He Got Game* (2000) where Rhode draws the object of his ‘dreams’ and performs the action he so desires. Many of Rhode’s works play with dream and ownership, with real objects and those desired.

In this way Rhode engages and links hip hop, the street, vandalism and criminality within a dream like state and the expansive global position as a means to overcome circumstance and create a very real success through its transformation into art. This is the core of what Rhode has done - now living in Berlin and enjoying a successful career – he still considers himself “a young artist” or “an upcoming artist” (Rhode 2010). Rhode went through struggles in South Africa to be where he is now, but his biggest struggle came when he moved to Berlin in the hope of finding the success and recognition which he felt he had never received in South Africa (Rhode 2010).

Rhode moved to Berlin in his mid-twenties as part of a residency programme with now Johannesburg Art Gallery (JAG) curator Khwezi Gule. Rhode (2010) states he did not enjoy his residency program due to the fact that he was living in the far East of Berlin, in an area where he was warned not to leave his house after ten at night due to the threat of violent crime. Even though Rhode faced a number of hardships he was determined to make a success of himself in Europe even though he desired to return home to his family, in particular his mother who played such a pivotal role in his life (Rhode 2010).

The importance of the mother is central to coloured masculinities is referenced in the text, *From Boys to Men*, in the chapter entitled *Social construction of masculinity on the racial and gendered margins of Cape Town* penned by Elaine Salo (2007). Salo cites the ‘ordentlike moeder’ or respectable mother as a large part of coloured male youth identities and their upbringing and development. Rhode (2010) says although the term ‘ordentlike moeder’ was not one he used, he agrees that the concept is much the same as his upbringing in the coloured community.

Rhode (2010) cites his mother as a large influence not only in his life but also in his practice. Rhode (2010) goes as far as to say that domestic chores he was instructed to do by his mother gave him a sense of different types of household materials with which he could work, such as his use of sunlight soap. He jokingly adds that when he was at University he would wash dishes to take his mind off his studies and his work (Rhode 2010).

Rhode (2010) claims that his life could have taken a very different and negative turn during youthful masculine development if it was not for his parents, specifically his

mother. When he was at high school, involved with other boys in deviant behaviour, what they saw as playful at the time ran the risk of moving into more serious criminal endeavours than vandalising walls. The youthful criminal masculinities and vandalism are apparent in his earlier work in particular and it is of interest to note that while he retains a youthful energy and enjoys pushing boundaries, he is a dedicated family man and father figure to his son. Rhode (2010) speaks of friends and colleagues of his who found art world fame and succumbed to drugs and drink and an all around wild lifestyle and explains that his family keeps him grounded.

When asked how family and being a father affects his work and self image, Rhode (2010) jokingly states that he may come back from a big show at the Los Angeles County Museum, thinking he is an art superstar and he is brought back to earth when his wife tells him he has to take his son to the doctor. The 'domestic' is a growing subject in Rhode's work showing how the influence of his family has affected his practice.

During his residency in Berlin Rhode met a young German woman of mixed race whom he would later marry and moved in with her into an apartment closer to central Berlin. Rhode (2010) explains that they met through a circle of mixed race (or coloured as one says in South Africa) friends. Rhode (2010) describes their first apartment as in an area not suitable for children and states that drug addicts and gangsterism is high in that particular area of Berlin. During this time Rhode's girlfriend (now wife) became pregnant with their first child and he felt even more pressure to be successful. Rhode (2010) describes this time as a growth period in his life and reiterated in conversation that his family keeps him grounded and focused. The masculine ideal of being the patriarch and provider became part of Rhode's existence, although this fatherly role is not overt in his dicey performance work.

Fatherhood, as a responsibility felt and expressed by young South African fathers is explored in the text *Teenage Tata: Voices of Young Fathers in South Africa* written by Sharlene Swartz and Anna Bhana (2009). Although Rhode was in his early twenties when he knew he would become a father and is not technically a teenager, I feel the reflections in this text are still relevant. During the time Rhode knew he would become a father, he was dependant on welfare from the German government. Swartz & Bhana (2009) explain that current studies into young fathers "highlights a litany of negative

life outcomes...such as increased poverty and dependence on expenditure welfare”, however the positive reactions that young fathers have had to fatherhood have been recorded as stated in the text. Although many studies highlight the negative aspects Swartz & Bhana (2009) found:

[T]he majority of young fathers were found to be involved significantly in the lives of their children, despite their own struggles. This in turn helped them feel positive about their sense of self’; and ‘young fathers described selves that felt more accomplished, more defined, more complete’ after a year of involvement in parenting.

Rhode (2010) says that fatherhood increased his sense of purpose and drive and after selling one of his seminal works, *Bicycle* (1998), to the Museum of Modern Art, Rhode’s career took off and he was able to improve his and his families position.

Family is important to Rhode and he recounts affectionately and with pride that his wife and son, when he was but a newborn, stood and watched him adventurously submerge all but his head in a river for the work, *Automatic Drawing* (2004). In this work Rhode performs one of his wall drawings almost completely submerged in the river.

Backyards of friends or family have become a central interest for him of late and he states that the backyard has its own interesting history, as much as a wall in central Johannesburg would. In *Paper Planes* (2009), which was notably exhibited recently at *In Context*, an exhibition hosted by the Goodman Gallery at Arts on Main, Rhode featured two children racing laser cut drawings of toy planes spray painted onto one of his childhood friend’s backyard walls. One of the children is Rhode’s son and the other is the daughter of his friend who owns the house where the work was performed and photographed.

In *Paper Planes* (2009), the two children race toy planes that magically take on a life of their own as the children watch on mystified at the aerial acrobatics. It is a playful work that touches on childhood memory, friendship and the community in which Rhode grew up. It is not the first work in which Rhode has utilised children from the Johannesburg coloured community to re-enact childhood memories. As an example of this, In *New*

Kids on the Bike (2002) two schoolboys ride a drawn bicycle that seemingly whisks them away from the childhood bullies of Rhode's youth (Rhode 2010).

What is notable about Rhode's work is that it uses the language of disenfranchised mainly non-white and male youths who are part of the hip hop sub-culture: the language of graffiti. Graffiti has come a long way from its origins in the streets of New York and many other wall art forms can be traced back to other parts of the world. But, for that sake of narrowing down this text, I will use the term graffiti to describe the wall art form using spray cans, popularised in New York.

Rhode (2010) states that although his work is often illegal and could be considered vandalism, he does not wish to call himself a graffiti artist or associate himself with that specific sub-culture. For him what matters is the image captured on film, not the lasting document of his presence in the area. Rhode (2010) even goes as far as to say he thinks of himself as 'The Grey Ghost', an anti-graffiti artist, Fred Ratke, who has been going over pieces of graffiti in Orleans with grey paint since 1997 (Jordan 2009).

Rhode himself had a conflict with a well known South African graffiti artist; Rasty. The dispute, according to Rhode (2010) was over a wall he had been using for some time to create his art works and which was taken over by Rasty and his crew, PCP. The PCP crew are a group of graffiti artists who do mainly legal large wall murals. Eventually Rhode had to unhappily concede the wall.

Although Rhode does not sit comfortably among mainstream graffiti artists he faces similar situations and challenges to them in his art making. Rhode has encountered danger or felt endangered on the streets of Johannesburg, for example, when he worked on a wall of an abandoned and partly demolished structure that was home to a number of street dwellers. In another situation Rhode felt he was about to be arrested by a security officer, when in fact the officer wanted to help him in his performance (Rhode 2010).

What differentiates Rhode's practice is the element of performance, where he desires to involve people that would normally not be involved in art. He enjoys breaking rules, in a way that is playful. At one point Rhode was close to being arrested in the city of Cape

Town for attempting to draw on parliament's exterior walls. His curators from the Cape Town National Gallery had to come to his rescue explaining that he was an artist and was part of an exhibition at the gallery.

Nancy Macdonald's (2001) *Youth, Masculinity, and Identity in London and New York* looks at the role masculinity has to play in graffiti. She views graffiti as a misunderstood battle between mostly male youths known as graffiti writers or simply 'writers' asserting their masculine dominance over other 'writers' (Macdonald 2001:1). Rhode faced very similar challenges to regular graffiti writers, those being potential arrest, danger of the street, 'beef' or arguments with other 'writers' and facing the elements.

Macdonald (2001:2) states openly "Graffiti is 'vandalism' no matter how you look at it. However Rhode (2010) distances himself from this discourse saying he is not a graffiti writer looking for a rush. It is the wall surface that is important to him, if he sees a wall he likes he will 'bomb' (create a work on) it. The language of graffiti, which Rhode himself adopts, often using the words like 'bomb' or 'hit' to describe his work, also calling his work 'pieces', which is a graffiti term. He speaks proudly about 'bombing' three spots in New York in one night, one of which included a police car (Rhode 2010).

The duplicity and play with masculine identities is something that is common to both Pienaar and Rhode's selected works. Both Pienaar and Rhode find themselves both a part of a masculine subculture while still existing outside of it. It is this duplicity that I find most interesting.

Another sub-cultural masculine reference that permeates Rhode's work is the identity of the coloured male, specifically through the 'Coon' – A Cape Malay invention based on a carnivalesque character with a painted black face and large white lips, not dissimilar from the New Orleans carnival slave like character.

On a travel blog called *Africa Heart Beat*, Thomas Tomczyk (2010), a travel writer, describes the Coon Carnival as such:

The Last 'Coon' Parade

Cape Town's Minstrels Serve as Tools in Celebrating and Defining a Local Community's Identity

Over 16,000 people wearing oversized satin suits of psychedelic and colourful patterns marched in the Kaapse Klopse, or Coon Carnival, on January 2. The Cape Town carnival, which originated with the British abolition of slavery in 1833, has evolved aesthetically from black African American minstrel entertainers whose first visit to South Africa took place in 1890. One such group, the Virginia Jubilee Singers from Hampton, Virginia, arrived in Cape Town causing a great furore and excitement and a link was created between the North and South African minstrel experiences which lasts to this day.

The Kaapse Klopse musicians have incorporated music influences from all over the world to create a unique music known as *ghoema*, based on a Malay drum set known in the Cape as a *ghomma*. Black American dress styles, musical instruments and music styles, such as Gospel, R&B and Jazz, have all been adapted by the annual South African minstrel procession.

Rhode (2010) is fully aware of the history of the Coon, general representations of coloured males and also representations of coloured males in art. He sees the 'Coon' as a problematic factor in coloured masculinities, but also is able to transcend racist or negative connotations through his taking ownership of and playing with the 'Coon.'

In the works I have selected from Rhode's oeuvre such as *Juggla* (2007) Rhode (or possibly his doppelganger) dons an oversized suit and a polystyrene hat. What is interesting in Rhode's play with the Coon identity is that the suits he uses and messes with paint and chalk are not cheap or working class. In fact, they are made at a high end German tailor in Berlin. He gets an oversized cut, with an early twentieth century swinger or jazzman like cut (Figure 9).

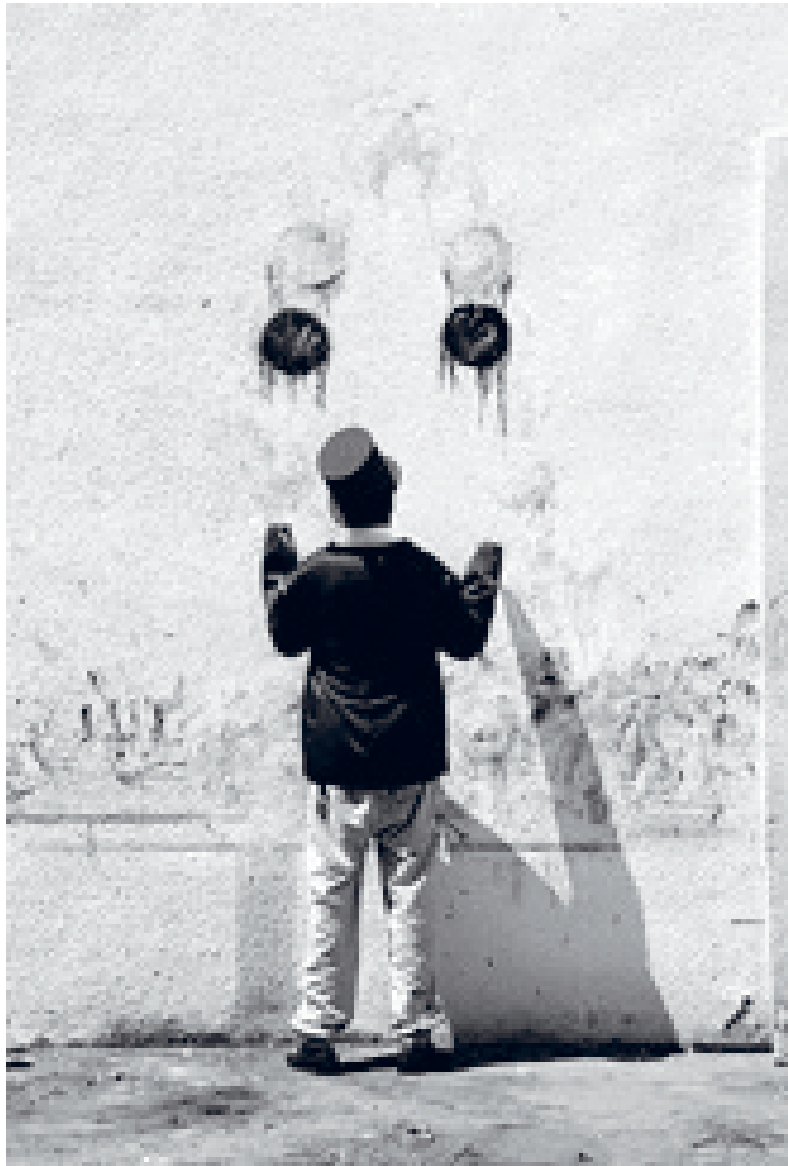


Figure 9: Rhode, *Juggla* (2007)
Robin Rhode: Walkoff Catalogue

Rhode embraces this part of his masculine identity, taking ownership of it, and locating it in a global time and space. He therefore transcends and problematises the 'Coon' and deconstructs his own and the larger coloured male identity.

The 'Coon' is a clown like sub-cultural character and Rhode (2010) states that he has a particular affinity for clowns. He uses humour in his work and his latest doppelganger is in fact a French trained circus performer. In one of his most recent works; a collaboration with renowned Swiss pianist Liev Ouve, Rhode's circus trained doppelganger performs an act of extreme physical prowess, once again in the oversized suit and white gloves. He lifts his body up onto the wall with his hands and then walks across the wall, in a gravity defying display that tricks the eye most eloquently.

The subtlety of the act makes it not overtly masculine; the muscle's needed to perform the stunt are not on display, as Pienaar displays his muscles. Here everything is trickery, sleight of hand, and not completely revealed. To paraphrase Macdonald (2001): graffiti hides everything in the light, the seen and unseen exist as one.

To conclude, one can look at Rhode's upbringing as a large component of his work. His boyhood experiences in the boy's bathrooms at school, his involvement in hip hop and street culture, his love of sports and sporting icons have all influenced his performance of masculinity.

Chapter Four - *Sean Buch: Prettyboys, Metrosexuality, Vandalising Identities and 'Jude' Masculinities*

This is not my father's world - Today young men are bombarded by media messages and a global environment and therefore new and ever changing representations of masculinity. Hyper-masculine ideals are proliferated through the various forms of advertising and mass media, from pharmaceutical companies offering muscle building supplements to give a young man super-human strength on the sports field; hyper violent contact sports such as mixed martial arts as a growing gladiatorial media sensation; video games and films with gore and extreme violence, as well digitised, mechanized and computerised weapons of war creating armies that give might to world superpowers (Campbell 2007).

This is coupled with the de-construction of Western patriarchy due to post-modern discourses such as feminism and post-colonialism, leading some theorists to describe this time as a 'crisis of masculinity' (Shefer et al 2007). A new masculine ideal has developed as a result of this so-called crisis, that is, though seemingly contradictory, quite feminine. Men of today are attempting to be more caring and in touch with their emotions and their partners sexuality (Campbell 2000).

If one takes a look at the glossy men's magazines, such as *Men's Health* or *GQ*, one can see that there has been a significant change; a good looking, well groomed man is often on the cover of these magazines. . These magazines promote a healthy lifestyle where men talk about their feelings, please their female partner sexually, eat healthily, dress well and look good - Examples of the metrosexual in the mass media are sporting icon David Beckham or actor Brad Pitt.

Young men are no longer expected to fill the roles of their fathers. This is a particular case in point in South Africa, where young men are no longer required to serve in the South African Defence Force. Women in South Africa are now considered the political and social ideal for employment under the guidelines of Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment and gender equality (Shefer et al 2007). One could consider this a healthy turning point and the destruction of patriarchy, but I feel it is a possible mutation

of patriarchy to co-exist with new modes of postmodernism and retain its dominance.

Whatever the underlying socio-cultural motivation for the change in masculine ideals, the change affects the way men see themselves. An example is Simon Winlow's *Badfellas: Crime, Tradition and New Masculinities*. In this text Winlow (2001) in his abstract states that he looks at "fights, frauds and drugs racketeering [that] regularly hit the headlines ... For [some], they constitute a way of life". In his study Winlow (2001) explains in his abstract that "camaraderie, hard physical labour and criminal reputations allow for changing masculinities ... Why is violence attractive to these men?"

In my art, I would not say the performance of masculinity is necessarily an overt presence in my work. Rather, I play with the notion of masculine identity in some works through the use of the male body, specifically my body, in a way that is self defacing yet satirically celebratory. The works are, like Rhode, also a reference to graffiti culture and vandalism, but in a different way. The vandalism in the case of my artworks is of my own masculine identity.

The photographs I choose to 'vandalise' and form into artworks engage collage and various painterly techniques. These are professional modelling photos of myself from shoots done with a talent agency known as Talent Etc. - An agency that represents actors, singers and models in the Johannesburg and Pretoria area. Through Talent Etc. (Figure 10) I have been in a number of commercials and one popular South African television series and have at times presented myself as a representation of male beauty, or what my male friends have jokingly called a 'pretty boy.' These photos of me represent a masculine identity where the ideal has been changed in recent years from the rugged "Marlboro man", to the 'pretty boy' or more effeminate male.



Figure: 10 Buch, *Model Shoot* (2009)
Talent Etc.
Image courtesy of artist

From my discussions with and investigations into Pienaar and Rhode's practice and lives as male artists, I have explored duplicity and facets of identity as a lived reality as well as performance. In my discussions with Pienaar we spoke about the nature of art as considered effeminate, both of us were active in Afrikaans Rugby culture, although Pienaar was much more successful than myself! We both received strange responses from fellow teammates when you told them you studied 'kuns' or art in Afrikaans.

My being Jewish was also something that caused a certain amount of discomfort in my interactions with the Afrikaans rugby playing fraternity. In one particular instance, when

playing a rugby game in Pretoria West, a 'real' macho Afrikaans community, I was asked by two young Afrikaans men about my nationality, specifically if I was Portuguese. I told them I was not a Portuguese, but a Jew. They replied to this by saying, 'We didn't know Jews played rugby'. The implication, I felt, was that Jews are not known as showing physical prowess especially, in a game as rough and tumble as rugby, rather being known for intellectual or business pursuits (Shapiro 1994). This displayed, as I perceived it, certain contempt for Jewish masculinities.

The Jew as a male and as a masculine identity has been a contested area and racialised for many centuries - From the physically idealised David in Michelangelo's famous and iconic marble sculpture outside the Medici Palace, to Shylock, the fetid and money grubbing Merchant of Venice written by Shakespeare; accusations of treason against Richard Dreyfus in Colonial France and today as the violent and oppressive Israeli soldier in the contested Palestine corridor.

Jewish masculinity has taken a varied and wide ranging turn of representation. From my own experience I would say that South Africans' impressions of male Jews is one of a wealthy metrosexual concerned with their looks and income, as well as devoted 'mama's boys' who are not all too good at rugby or winning fist fights and are known to be circumcised.

Another aspect in the performance of Jewish masculinity could be seen to be the macho Israeli soldier who exists in some news media in the form of Nationalistic Zionism in a manner not too dissimilar to that of the Apartheid era Afrikaner Nationalist soldier or even the 'uber-macho' German Nazi like discrimination. The Jewish male and Jewish masculinity is fraught with contradictions and multiple representations. In my work I subtly explore the range of identities reflected in these representations using existing images from historical photographs or photographs of myself, which I conflate, paint onto, paste over, destroy and re-form into new hybrid identities.

The notion of masculinity as performance in this research is not solely linked to performance artwork, but masculinity as a societal performance where men enact or play roles. When I attend the synagogue, or box at the Wits University boxing club, play rugby, go to bars and pubs and attempt to engage sexually with women or 'out drink' my

male friends; these are all masculine activities or roles that I perform. It would be hard, if nigh impossible to separate 'self' from performance, but the visually aware and critical nature of art allows for a distancing that leads to a more self-conscious investigation into youthful aspects of masculinities in South Africa.

In much the same way as Rhode stated to me during our interview of playing the role of the 'artist' at school, I would say I did the same. I was known for my drawing ability from a young age and the type of images I began drawing in my notebook along with my other boyhood male friends were icons of masculinity, such as fast cars, big trucks and jet planes. Pop culture too featured in my early drawings of super heroes and cartoon characters, such as Spider-Man, the Ninja Turtles and Bart Simpson.

My first childhood romance was founded on me drawing a cartoonish portrait of the girl I adored, playing into a stereotypical masculine artist role of the romantic artist. In later years I would sometimes draw portraits of the girls I was attracted to, to woo them or to "own by way of the gaze", informed by art historical influences of Gauguin and Picasso.

My view of the romantic artist was challenged when I began studying art at University. I learnt about post-modernist concepts such as deconstruction, post-structuralism, feminism and post-colonialism and as a such I painted a work that first openly dealt with the performance of masculinity that expressed my feelings about my disillusionment of the ideal of the 'romantic artist.' The work was entitled *The Obituary of the Romantic* (2004), based on a famous unknown artist's portrait painting from the Romantic era.

Another work that became self-referential and focussed on masculine performance was a piece which engaged with shaving as ritual which I titled simply *Shave* (2005). It was a stop frame animation piece that had a razor gliding repeatedly over the skin with audio recordings of myself shaving and humming in the bathroom. In this piece I attempted to explain shaving as masculine ritual and link violence and the notion of a blade against skin. The blade glided over the same piece of flesh until it became red and the repetitive action linked to the unquestioning lore of patriarchy.

In my final body of work for my Fine Arts Bachelor's degree I completed several paintings self-consciously and ironically in the abstract expressionist mode, *a la* Pollock

(Figure 11), one of the quintessentially masculine heroes of the Abstract Expressionist Art Movement in America (Emmerling 2003). I recorded videos of myself dripping paint onto the canvas shirtless and all over the place. The abstract expressionist mode of splashing paint has been endlessly analysed and interpreted as masculine, with some theorists going as far as to align it with a representation of ejaculation (Jones 1995).



Figure 11: Buch, *Urban Expressionism Exhibit* (2008)
Image courtesy of artist

The problem I encountered at the institution where I completed my Bachelor's degree was that my paintings became decorative rather than representing anything beyond their painted surface. This occurred due to the demands and expectations of the institution. If I painted figures, I was told to paint over them or mute them, if I had a recognisable object or figure I was told to flip the canvas. At my presentation of my work as a video performance piece, there was giggling and sniggers from the lecturers and fellow pupils alike and it seemed to me at the time to be a misunderstood endeavour.

Upon arriving at the Wits School of Arts to undertake my Masters degree, I attempted to further abstract my work and involve myself with and open my work and process to becoming more involved in the graffiti scene. I collaborated with a young woman, a video artist and fellow student for a video art competition. The video piece was titled *Jack5* with reference to Jackson Pollock and the 1970s Pop music group, the *Jackson Five*. This included me painting on walls and canvas in studio and on the street. I called the piece Jackson5 in reference to abstract expressionist artist, Jackson Pollock and the iconic 70s Pop group which included Michael Jackson. Pollock is an uncontested mach figure in American culture, while Jackson had many questions over his sexuality and masculine presence. I felt that the contradictory nature of these two icons was effective in showing the contradictory nature of masculine ideals.

I created small, and in retrospect ineffective graffiti pieces in splashed paint and used the 'tag' (signature of a graffiti writer) *Jack5*. The desire to use Pollock was inspired by his cult like status in he holds American art world as renegade figure, embodying free masculine expression (Jones 1995).

The work utilised a backing soundtrack of electronic music mixed and edited by a friend of mine who is an electronic DJ and in this way embraced and completed the reference to the lure of popular culture. The intentionality of the piece was to satirically display the notion of free expression and its eventual institutionalisation and commodification.

After this work and my unsuccessful play with art and the graffiti scene, I decided, if somewhat unconsciously, to return to work using figuration. As indicated, I began using my own body, large photocopies of which were blown up images of my modelling photos (Figure 12). I glued and attached these images onto board and began to deface them. This is the stage where my work started to position itself with a conscious engagement with masculinity.



Figure 12: *Untitled: Prettyboy #1* (2009)
Image courtesy of artist

I am currently working with identity both personally and socially constructed and the layering and gaps that are created in the understanding of masculine identity. Pienaar (2009) made an interesting point that because of the state of masculinity in relationship to hetero-normativity with the so called 'crisis of masculinity' and the rise of metro-sexual males, heterosexual males are now questioning their masculinity and the role of patriarchy. This is something that I hope to present in my own body of work, the immutability of constructs such as masculinity.

The working title of my Masters exhibition is *Attack, Attack: Visual Re-Construction through Conscious Destruction*. I will present constructed images of the world in which we live, through the use of rough and sometimes violent impressions of historic events and news headlines. Through the use of collage, graffiti styled mark making, found objects and traditional painting and drawing techniques I will imbue otherwise considered trash with a certain amount of value by objects by presenting them the sterile gallery environment or 'white cube'.

In my work, the line and mark-making I use has become more haphazard and rough of late, yet I find a desire to return to fine line with delicate materials such as charcoal or refined oil painting. I have also attempted to recover and use my earlier works by tearing, cutting and pasting onto their surface. The found object also seems to find its way into my practice; objects that would not necessarily be considered the material of art pieces, things that have lost their usefulness are rediscovered. In this way I recycle and re-structure meaning and attempt to present the viewer with new meanings that I am the author of.

I equate my practice as very much in line with discovery of identity and social processes of growth – The violent gestural painting, tearing, pasting and reconstructing deal with a frenetic search for purpose. As violence is said to be part of a youthful masculinity, as described in Winlow's *Badfellas and From Boys to Men* (2001). My initial desire to use graffiti in my work, literally painting or spraying onto public property with the risk of arrest or physical danger (real or perceived) in the Johannesburg streets was a literal desire to interact with danger or anti-establishment modes.

During my time at the University of Pretoria there was an amount of sexual promiscuity,

fighting, excessive use of alcohol and at times, illegal substances. My desire to engage in being a 'bad fellow' was crowned with a physical confrontation that resulted in a rather terrifying night in jail and a couple of humiliating and aggravating months of community service.

The new playfully deviant modes, in my work, are focussed on using objects and methods more closely associated with the street or urban landscape than those of the art gallery. Yet, the gallery space is important to me and contextualises my desire to be an established artist, rekindling my boyhood desires to be a 'real' artist. As a youth, I would tell people I wanted to be an artist like 'Da Vinci'.

The 'artist' is somewhat at odds with traditional masculine modes as expressed by John Webb (1998), an Australian teacher and author, in his text *Reflections on Australian Masculinity*. Although this text looks at Australian masculinities, I feel that the Australian masculine culture is not dissimilar from South African masculinities – There is a mutual history of masculinity guided by sports, such as rugby and cricket, the armed forces and masculine rituals of drinking alcohol, as well as both being previously under the control of and influenced by the British empire. I present this quote by Webb below (1998:151) as relevant to the research:

If a man is defined by his relentless pursuit of public acclaim and a public person, art demands the opposite: many sequestered hours. Australian society has a deep distrust of solitary activity; a man must guarantee his masculinity by public exposure and constant presence in the arenas of men. Separation from places of men, the sites at which masculinity is created, is seen as critical by its aloofness – one of the greatest sins the Australian man may commit. Art also implies an unhealthy interest in introspection, distrusted by Australian men, who must be always outward and intellectual.

Webb's specific view of art as introspective and isolating is somewhat romanticised and not applicable in the works I explore of Pienaar or Rhode, who often present, create and perform their work extrovertly in public spaces. My work of late has been focussed on studio practice, and I would agree that art's traditional relation to patriarchal masculine society is not seen as 'macho'.

The gallery structure represents a certain amount of prestige associated with success and esteem, not just within the art world, but also for the viewer and larger public. To some extent the gallery controls what 'art' is by presenting art outside of the isolation of the artist's studio. My practice is both a desire to be part of the gallery structure that would promote my work and present the impression of success that fulfils the masculine role of being economically stable, while still engaging in an element of defiance to produce works that question the viewer's rationalised notions of what an artwork is.

I recently presented my work at a critique session of students from the University of the Witwatersrand led by visiting artist Candice Breitz. Breitz (2010) stated at the critique that if she had not known who the artist was she would have been able to tell the artist was male. She described my paintings as macho and ejaculatory (Figure 13), but humorously stated that I should make the viewer work harder for the ' cumshot.' She stated that foreplay can be as violent, challenging and evocative as the final sexual act of ejaculation.



Figure 13: *Suck My Jet* (2010)
Photo courtesy of artist

After hearing me describe the works, Breitz (2010) stated she felt I had a more nuanced idea of gender relationships and gender politics than my paintings presented. Breitz (2010) advised that I take a fine paint brush and delicately paint on 'eyelashes' as an example onto the otherwise brutally applied paint. I had thought of combining a fine brush mark with the brash painterly gestures to imply a type of dichotomy between my personal states of consciousness - The garish lines representing the brash macho, intuitive and ejaculatory application of paint and the delicately applied brush to play on the feminine expression of self as artist, in this case the painter.

As a young artist, still to become established, I assume my practice will still develop and is yet to be fully defined, but there are some themes that have been and likely will remain in my work, specifically the assertiveness of the masculine in paintings that demand the viewer's attention through loud and brazen painterly gestures and subject. From my earlier days involved in graffiti I still desire a marking of territory through the discourse of painting. The experimental nature of my practice rooting itself in self-discovery and coming of age is akin to the Bildungsroman or coming of age tale of the youthful masculine adventurer in literature such as James Joyce's 1916 novel *A Portrait of the Artist as Young Man*. Penguin Fiction marks Joyce's novel as:

A landmark in twentieth-century literature. *A Portrait of the Artist as Young Man* is a deeply ironic and powerfully emotive novel, which explores a variety of themes and events that parallel Joyce's own experiences.

My artwork functions in a very similar way to Joyce's seminal novel, it is at once self-referential but speaks to the larger body of coming of age masculine focussed art. I feel the inevitable success will lie in my practice in the self-conscious and ironic tones of my painting. As Jean-Michel Basquiat's writings under his tag SAMO or Same Old Shit professed on the walls of New York buildings and subway stations, as well paintings, my work is also a recycling of socially constructed imagery that at once express virility, anarchy and youth, while still paradoxically referencing much respected world history, philosophy and contemporary culture.

Basquiat's offhand and authoritative works are a large inspiration in my work. The notion that an artist can casually refer to a subject of cultural significance with painterly gestures and a hotchpotch collection of images and socio-culturally ideas seems to me an effective way to communicate with a larger audience. This speaks of a need young men, myself included, feel to be attractive, famous and cool. When Rhode (2010) speaks of art as the 'game' and his desire to achieve acclaim within the artworld as an athlete would, I identify with that desire, and I assume that Basquiat felt much the same way and so took his art from the streets to the gallery.

The way I perform and dress myself both in my person and my artworks displays a desire to seem artistic and 'hip', which speaks to the masculine identity of the dandified artist, as explained by Jones (1995) in her reference to artists such as Yves Klein. The

dandified male artist stands within patriarchy as an intellectual authority if that artist has achieved acclaim and been established within the art world. I attempt to place myself and my practice within the art historical canon in an ironic tone and disruptive demeanour yet still referencing the 'sartorial display' of the male artist (Jones 1995). This allows the 'artist' freedom (whether imagined or real) to create new identities and play with the constructs that he/she is subject to due to the ethnographic realities of their personal or lived experience.

Chapter 5 - *To Conclude*

To conclude, I would like to make clear that in this body of research I chose to deal with artists who reference masculinity in relation to hetero-normative patriarchal practice of two specific ethnographic communities, however I am aware there are many and varied types of masculinities that are not expressed in this research.

I feel it is important to mention the many varied types of masculinities that may include those performed by females. The nature of lesbian masculinities for example is something much explored in *Tommy Boys, Lesbian Men and Ancestral Wives: Female Same-Sex Practices in South Africa* which challenges the notion that homosexual females are 'un-African'. In chapter five of this text entitled '*I am a pet goat, I will not be slaughtered*': Female masculinity and femme strength amongst the Damara in Namibia the authors, Elizabeth Khaxaz with Saskia Wieringa, explain how values have "changed over time due to the influence of colonisation, Christianity and apartheid...and continue to impact on sex and sexuality" (2005:125)

Furthermore, complexities within Southern Africa among transgender individuals have presented a challenge for institutionalised notions of gender and masculinity, with a particular case in point being athlete, Caster Semenya. Semenya's much publicised domination of woman's athletics due to the possibility that she had internal male sexual organs, allowing for an unusually high production of testosterone, later confirmed by the International Athletics Commission, highlights a problem with fixed notions of gender and sexuality.

South Africa still faces a multitude of difficulties caused by racial and ethnographic divisions through stereotyping due to socio-cultural constructs of the 'norm'. I recently attended a public talk given by Robin Rhode and Candice Breitz for a group exhibition entitled *In Context*, relating to the notion of place and identity, I posed a question to them regarding the continued popularity of art in South Africa, specifically photographic art, that documents 'otherness,' such as Pieter Hugo's albino portrait series or Mikhael Subotsky's photography of the coloured area Beaufort West and I asked if South Africa is still perpetuating a political mindset predicated by Apartheid ideology – Breitz (2010)

replied that South Africa is a country still in 'trauma' and the nature of it is that the trauma must reoccur in the zeitgeist for society to come to terms with the pain of the past.

Rhode and Pienaar's work does deal with the 'trauma' caused by patriarchal ambitions of Apartheid by managing to play with its stereotypical representations, whether it is a muscular Peet Pienaar standing on a plinth with his penis tucked between his legs or Robin Rhode replicating the stereotype of the 'drunk Bushie' in the corner by urinating at the National Gallery. Both artists use the performance of masculinity to chart new territory by challenging constructed meanings of the performance of masculinity.

Pienaar's desire to be publicly circumcised and Goniwe's subsequent reaction poses important questions over authorship and ownership of masculine practice. This research was not intended to answer the question of whether circumcision is morally right or wrong or whether Pienaar's performance was correct or not, but what it does do is shed light on how the artist acting out a very necessary performative function can make incisive comments on a socio-political similar issues highlighted by Breitz in the seminal text *Grey Areas* (1999).

Grey Areas, a collection of essays compiled and edited by Candice Breitz along with Brenda Atkinson (1999), brings to the fore debates that developed from Breitz's work *Rainbow Series*. Eminent curator and academic Okwui Enwezor criticised Breitz work for being simplistic and reductive about identity and sexuality in South Africa (Breitz 1999) and as a response to this debate thirty five critics, artists and academics contributed to *Grey Areas* which documented the importance of representations in South African art of gender, race and identity politics. What was realised in this text was the invaluable role art can play in negotiating tepid political waters and also bringing to the fore subjects that would otherwise be swept under the 'politically correct carpet'.

The body in art has changed in its meaning, presentation and reception in 20th and 21st century art and as captured in *The Body in Contemporary Art*, by Sally O'Reilly (2009). In recent decades, the body has moved from being the subject of traditional portraiture to become an active presence in live and participatory events (O'Reilly 2009:7). Art historical, socio-political and cultural developments, from radical feminism

in the 1970s to contemporary scientific breakthroughs, have all had a profound influence on artists' attitudes to, and representations of, the human form.

O' Reilly (2009:17) continues that "The main thrust of this [art and its relationship to the body] has been from passivity to active agency, so that the body is no longer a static, optical phenomenon, but the embodiment of dynamic human relations and even a medium of change and influence with the artwork itself." In this way the artist and his/her body and therefore identity can become dynamic, fluid and therefore enact change for both artist and viewer.

Due to the generosity of artists Peet Pienaar and Robin Rhode by sharing insights into their artwork as well as their personal histories, insight was gained into the workings and practices of two sub-cultures highly relevant to South African masculinity. Pienaar's performance of his masculinity, both in his works and his person, offer an interesting defiance of heterosexual norms in an Afrikaans community that seems to not readily accept young men who are gay (Pienaar 2009). In works that brazenly showcase Afrikaans masculinity through his homoerotic celebrations of Rugby culture, Pienaar becomes a type of 'double edged sword' threatening liberal left wing and post-colonial sentiments as well as challenging his 'own people', the conservative Afrikaners, as well as a black constituency.

It speaks volumes that Pienaar decided to remove himself from the art world and focus on design by creating a design studio named The President. At The President, Pienaar is rule-maker and the boss in his own constructions of mainly Afrikaans pop culture. Since Pienaar left the art world a shift has occurred in South African popular culture – It is 'hip' to be Afrikaans (Pienaar 2009). According to Pienaar (2009) a number of notable popular figures are presenting themselves as Afrikaans when they are not to gain more acclaim. Examples Pienaar (2009) gave were of writer and musician Riaan Malan and rapper Max Normal in his current music group Die Antwoord. Of this phenomenon Pienaar (2009) states:

It's very interesting because I think a lot of English guys are getting into this Afrikaans thing now. Like Ian Roberts and 'them' are doing this whole thing, and Riaan Malan is doing serious Afrikaans music thing, which is really

horrible and Max Normal.

Pienaar (2009) rationalises this cultural shift by stating, “[I]t’s really refreshing [as an Afrikaner]. I think English guys are really struggling to find an identity”. It is important to consider Pienaar’s point that in a post-Apartheid country where identities are being reformed and reshaped daily and people are trying to find their place, where do English speaking South African masculinities figure in the deluge of South African masculine sub-cultures? This explains Pienaar (2009) is why so many young white men are turning to Afrikaans bands like Fokof Polisiekar to fashion a masculine ideal that fits a new South Africa.

Pienaar explains the importance of his role as designer and creative supervisor of Fokof’s new look:

The whole aim of that magazine [MK Bruce Lee – An Afrikaans Music Magazine and pop culture publication] was to push those boys [Afrikaans rock bands, especially Fokof], with stylists and really push them in a new way; to really change the way that they dress and the way they present themselves.

Pienaar (2009) reiterates that Francois van Coke, lead singer of Fokof is a serious influence on young Afrikaans men at present and this he feels, shows a positive change in the attitudes towards masculinity and homosexuality. Pienaar (2009) explains that “If you’re gay, masculinity is always an issue and something you have to work out from a very young age. It’s like a given but it will always be there. Now it’s a little bit different but it’s still there.” It is also somewhat tragic that Pienaar felt the art world was no longer the place for him and his practice and “disengage with art completely”.

Rhode meanwhile continues his gritty street performances, but of late has moved towards more refined and intricate works that have been affected by his move to Europe (Rhode 2010 & Pienaar 2009). This offers an interesting dichotomy between his original masculine coloured street culture and representations of boyhood initiations in the rough and hard city of Johannesburg, to the complex identity play that had him engaging with American movie directors for his BMW sports car commercial to visual

renditions of classical music such as Mussorgsky's *Pictures at An Exhibition* (Rhode 2010).

The notion of 'owning' one's socio-cultural position by using skill or mastery in a specific discourse of expression, such as the visual arts, can allow for transience, play, gestures and expressions beyond restrictive normative codes.

In Duncan Brown's (2006) text, *To Speak of this Land*, he considers in South Africa:

[H]ow people have, historically and in the present, used different forms to express, accomplish and enact a sense of what it means to live (in) a place, in terms of intimacy, ownership, usage, displacement or alienation.

Indeed, South Africa is complex in relation 'intimacy, ownership, usage, displacement or alienation', specifically because of its rich and intricate and politically sensitive history. As in Sarah Nuttall's seminal text *Beautiful Ugly: African Diaspora and Aesthetics* (2006), one can see how art allows for a certain amount of navigation through this history. This body of research relies on the artworks to be exemplars of the socio-cultural state of South Africa.

A quote by Nuttall (2006) in the foreword to *Beautiful Ugly*, describes very much what this body of research has aimed to do; "...drawn from the contemporary African, written from different vantage points, concerning a topic the force of which is felt by many but seldom articulated".

Art is placed at the forefront of negotiations of important subjects like masculinity in South Africa because of its ability to make identity malleable and therefore help realise a state truly free of the reminiscence of the patriarchal ideals of Apartheid. An example of this mutability is O'Reilly's (2009) mention of Rhode's practice in her chapter on *The Body in Time and Space*, stating:

Robin Rhode's practice...looks to the grittier worlds of street culture and graffiti, where constraints of authority are resisted and knowledge is passed on through encounter and word of mouth. In Rhode's *Untitled (Rings)* a

drawing in chalk on the ground, of two lines each with a circle at one end, could be mistaken as an instruction for road workers until the artist performs an illusion that transforms them into gymnastic rings.

Rhode's body flexes and stretches in real space, as if the chalk rope and rings were exerting real force. A photograph is taken, the lines are partially erased, a new position is drawn for the next shot, and so on. A storyboard emerges, like a series of animation stills, with the trace of previous moments visible on the asphalt.

As stated by O'Reilly (2009), the importance of Rhode's work, which is also applicable to Pienaar's oeuvre, is the ability of art to transcend the state of one's body in time and space. The exploratory and playful engagement with masculinity by 'the artist' in both Pienaar and Rhode's works provides a framework with which to engage with the pertinent issue of the validity of patriarchy and the new and ever-changing role of young men in South Africa, as well as the many challenges still facing developments in gender and racial equality.

In *Arguing with the Phallus: Feminist, Queer and Postcolonial Theory: A Psychoanalytic contribution*, Jan Campbell (2000) offers "a re-negotiated interpretation of the symbolic system as a necessary and valuable intervention in cultural theory," Campbell places psychoanalysis at the forefront of the 'patriarchal debate', but I feel that the notion of a symbolic system is not dissimilar to that of art. When Campbell presents *Psychoanalysis, Postmodernism and the Bodily Imaginary* in the introduction to his text he offers a process of healing in relation to trauma that I feel is applicable to art:

Unconscious, self-experience, too complex and dynamic to be defined as a self state, [Christopher] Bollas describes as an 'aesthetic intelligence', a sense of the self, an inner object relation, where knowing the self cannot be thought, but can be felt (Bollas, 1995:166). This unconscious work of self-experience 'gives birth to the spirit of place within the individual, which is felt when it is there and terrifyingly missed when it seems to have departed' The real for Bollas is a bodily and creative place of self-experience, and Bollas' notion of an experiential real...[is] potentially transformative...

Campbell (2000:12), relates the psychoanalytic theorist Christopher Bollas' to reversing "traumatic forgetting screen memories which contain "condensed physically intense experience in a single object." To refer back to Breitz's (2010) statement that South Africa is a country still in trauma, I would see art as a useful way to replicate the notion of the 'condensed physically intense experience in a single object' in the form of an artwork, that at once reminds us of the trauma and so acts as a "recreation of a lost, internal (maternal) object, understand[ing] the past as trauma which has been self-destructively obliterated through amnesia."

Campbell (2000:14) claims that "the bodily imaginary becomes a symbolic one when it has become socially and institutionally reproduced." I would argue that Pienaar and Rhode's work allow for a fissure in attempts to institutionalise patriarchal meaning and thereby repair certain damages done by socio-cultural repression and stereo-typing.

In my own work I have discovered, by using masculinity as a locus, that meaning itself is immutable and constructed and dependant on norms imposed and then performed by individuals. However, rather than seeing this process of performativity of norms as a constraint I have found it to be something positive where new meaning can be gained through ironic and at times satirical play with visual contexts. The 'artist' as an individual within the South African and African context therefore becomes a useful player in the discussion over moral conditions of the very socio-political constructs presented in his/her work.

At a recent discussion at the Johannesburg Art Gallery its director, Antoinette Murdoch, stated that the South African government has cut funding of the National Arts Council and has attempted to suppress works that it finds socially immoral. The discussion centred on works by Zanele Muholi, "a critically acclaimed artist whose work explored the identity and relationships of black lesbians in South Africa" which were accused by the Arts and Culture Minister Lulu Xingwana of being "pornographic", showing a contempt for lesbian sexuality as well as homophobia of the present South African government (Warner in tonight.co.za 2010).

This research hopes to illustrate the power of creative independence to affect change. Through masculinity as an example I trust I have shown the necessary role that art

plays in the socio-cultural, through negotiating meaning and empowering individuals to express and create meaningful identities.

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Appendix 1

Interview with Peet Pienaar at his Design Studio; The President - 12 Dec 2009

Sean Buch – SB

Peet Pienaar – PP

Note: Some of the dialogue from Pienaar indicates that he is a first language Afrikaans speaker, and the grammar has not been changed or corrected.

Audio recording lasting 60min

SB: How do you understand the term masculinity? How it has been relevant to your body of work?

PP: My work is so personally based; I just do things that I feel, so personal to me it is difficult to say I am doing a work about masculinity, and it was deemed as masculine.

SB: A lot of the impression that people get of the work? Be physically imposing and references sport. You came from a small farm, played rugby.

PP: It was compulsory to play rugby. Have to behave in a certain way. Have to behave like a boy, have to behave like a man. "Don't worry; whoever goes to the army will make him a man." What is masculine? I can't tell you.

SB: Notion of self versus self presentation, what you present to the viewer. For example the work I am looking at specifically, your circumcision piece [I Want to Tell You Something]. The way Thembinkosi Goniwe reacted to you was as if you were an imposing, domineering, white male, supremely threatening to his Xhosa cultural position. His attacks were quite general, your response were quite personal.

With your desire to use a black female doctor to perform the circumcision, I can understand that there was a personal agenda there but I am sure you could have seen that there would have caused a tension with the other artists?

PP: For me personally, you get your penis cut by a black female doctor, get your penis cut by a black woman as an Afrikaans man was the way of a lot of people [Afrikaans men] were feeling at the time. Their power is being handed over, relevant from an Afrikaans perspective. And for me the doctor has a powerful position, so it is not a degrading position. And for me it was a bit far fetched to see her as playing the role of a sex object. It wasn't necessarily something to do about sex.

SB: Related to that, how did your sexuality relate to your expression of masculinity?

PP: If you're gay, masculinity is always an issue and something you have to work

- out from a very young age. It's like a given but it will always be there. Now it's a little bit different but it's still there.
- SB: Do you think if you had a different upbringing you would have turned out differently?
- PP: No, but I think if I had been straight I would have turned out differently.
- SB: In what way?
- PP: I think I wouldn't have been that interested in masculinity or male stuff or maybe I don't know, you never know.
- SB: My engagement with masculinity, I am heterosexual. My engagement with it has quite a lot to do with, when I was in Pretoria it was mostly female students and they would say I was being intentionally masculine in my work, like my paintings were really brash, it was just the way I painted. and I thought there was nothing in it. But when I started looking at the intention of the work I realised maybe I didn't fulfil masculine desires with my father, that I wasn't high school sports champ, so I played a lot in university and woman. The fact that I'm doing art, like when I played rugby at TUKS and they asked what are you studying and said 'Kuns' they thought that was odd.
- PP: Ja, that is a big thing.
- SB: Even from a heterosexual perspective, then engagement with masculinity has been there, because you are a guy, masculine conditioning just exists.
- PP: I think it's a double thing, you're male and you have to do male things, but you're doing art and is that because you're gay or not? Or is that because you're just doing that, so where do you fit in, because you not straight...how are you supposed to act with people?
- SB: Would that relate to the collaborative project with the art student?
- PP: Craig Johnson, yes.
- SB: How did that interaction play out? Do you still have contact with him?
- PP: We have no contact at all.
- SB: What was it? Was it destructive in the end, that interaction?
- PP: Ja, it was really destructive in the end. I just don't think he took it seriously. But it was very serious, we were on the phone everyday, it was a like a full on relationship, but it was never physical it was just an mental thing, sort of game. I think he just did it as a project, and he didn't put emotion into it (Peet tattooed his name onto his shoulder)
- SB: And the idea of play? Because one of your quotes is that you are using art to

- live an interesting life - If you go to the gym it's boring, but if you go the gym as an artwork
- PP: Then it becomes interesting - It was a big motto for me for a long time, and it was a motivation for me to do cool things that you would not normally do. Like getting circumcised or whatever, delve into stuff that a 'normal' person would never dream of doing and that for me was really nice.
- SB: There are a lot of body artists that are female, and there is a perception that to do body art is brave, and if it is brave then are connotations it can become a masculine act, because femininity is often associated with being subjugated and being soft where as someone like Tracy Rose; her work maybe seen as masculine in that it's confrontational?
- PP: I don't know I think for me it was always hectic afterwards, after a performance artwork for months I would be seriously depressed and I would be at home, I felt exposed to be people – It was really, really hectic. And it took like a really long time to get over it.
- SB: So why did you choose to do that activity?
- PP: I don't at that stage it was in the art world, 'what's next, what's next, what's next?' Until it was at the stage when there was nothing I wanted to do still
- SB: I know there has been quite a large change in the way you work – I know you changed your moniker from 'artist' to 'designer'. It's also Cape Town, I know the art scene are a lot more linked [at least in form and content] than they are in Johannesburg, but that desire to...I don't know how you have disengaged with art and that environment.
- PP: I have completely disengaged, after the circumcision piece.
- SB The question is why? A lot of people find the art world quite addictive, [myself as an example] I'm just getting into it.
- PP: I found it quite empty, there's so much fighting and there's not a lot of resources especially for performance work. And you have to be in a very close circle of people and go do stuff internationally. And for me it was like forcing myself to go things to be in that circle and for it wasn't important anymore. And then I find design really, really interesting, [art] just didn't satisfy me at all anymore.
- SB: 'Cause with your...Well, this was the question I was going to ask afterwards but I'll just ask it now - How has becoming a designer affected your opinions on art? - Which is something you just answered now, but also an avenue of art to form social critique – but I also think you were keen to use design as social critique
- PP: Ja, ja.
- SB: How do you think the two discourses...?

PP: [Pienaar answered without this without my question ending] Well, the with design is that it's 'mass', with art I felt, like you really just see the same group of people, you show your work to the same group of people, its a little bit of entertainment for a the same group of fifty people. With design you can engage with a whole group of people and ask questions that no one has asked. Like you know doing a lot of magazine stuff, I am really able to question 'what is a magazine?' And print and publication...stuff like that. That for me is really exciting because I can see I am making a really big change in society that is really mass. In art you can never...I never felt I could do that.

SB: I think there were some desires in your earlier work to do that for example when you wanted to sell your foreskin on eBay.

PP: Yes, ja.

SB: People [those involved in the exhibition] thought: 'That is just not happening', this wasn't ok. I think within art there is a bit of a protectionist thing, that you want to keep it within...

PP: You have to, because you have to be there, you have to be part of exhibitions, you have show...

SB: But then, from your transition to a designer, has that...do you feel it is still in line with a critique of hetero-normative white masculinity. Because that is how I saw your earlier stuff, as a critique or at least an engagement with the archetype with the Afrikaans male – Where as now your dealing with bands such as Fokof Polisiekaar and...Someone like Fokof for example, they have quite a strange position within the 'Hetero-normative Afrikaans male thing' in that they are wearing skinny [tight] jeans, they have long hair, but I've been to Pretoria where they are singing those 'anthems' [the bands songs have become like anthems] at Rugby games or whatever the case is. They seem to engage with both signs of the coinSB: The serious 'Indy kids', more effeminate, and the 'hardcore rugby dudes.' With your design do you still think that you are dealing hetero-normative masculinity in this way, or not at all?

PP: Well, I think with design it's become much more about, um, dealing with an African identity. Because design [African] is very focussed on European/Western design, and when they [the design industry] is doing that, it just looks like they are a copy of Western design.

And I was one the first that started deconstructing African design and looking at design around Africa and seeing what are the principles for design in Africa; the unconscious design in Africa and what are the principles governing design in Africa. For example if you use a plant [an illustration of] like this in Africa and in Europe what are the different meanings?

SB: If I look at your process as a timeline, you were born in a small town farm, Potsch, you the rugby thing, essential to go to the army, and then you engaged with art – It was a process, a personal performance, maybe for

- cathartics – I don't really know, and your transition into design, maybe you used art as a transition?
- PP: For me just because I did engage with art doesn't mean I saw my work as a linear thing – I might go back to doing art, I'm really think about, but I'm not ready yet. In a way for me it's still going on just in a different world.
- SB: I really respect the design world, it has its processes. My girlfriend studied design and I was looking through a design book of hers and I was blown away by the depth of the book. Design; in it's own way attempts to deconstruct certain ideas. But, its almost like...I think as an art student, for me at least, I am looking at you as an established artist wanting to know what I get out of it.
- PP: Where do you see yourself in five years? Do you see yourself as a serious artist doing big shows?
- SB: I fluctuate between a large confidence and a mousey insecurity. It's one or the other.
- PP: I think art has that; you need that in a way.
- SB: I think I will see myself as hugely successful or as a 'bum.' It's like one or the other. I quite like the academic side and I don't even mind the business side. Some of the friends I engage with, I try to explain to them why I like art and how I understand but they still think I'm quite weird. I try to make it fit in my world in way.
- PP: It art is also different in nowadays. Things have changed.
- SB: I know I went to Michael Stevenson the other day and it's huge.
- PP: I know, it's like a museum almost. People are making serious money; they are making serious, serious money - Millions.
- SB: I think the only thing I haven't touched on is your direct engagement with rugby as a source. Your homo-erotic souvenirs and also your dressing up in a green suit going onto rugby fields and your dressing up as a rugby player and going into shopping centres.
- PP: And rugby fields.
- SB: Ja.
- PP: The way the whole souvenir thing started was I was in a relationship with a Springbok rugby player. That's what the whole exhibition was about.
- SB: Oh really? Was this something that was publicised, was it known?
- PP: I don't know.

So that one exhibition was at the Hanel Gallery and I was lying on a mattress with chalk Rugby marker lines drawn on the floor and I was in a rugby uniform. I was wearing boots and white P.T. shorts and I gave people love bites and signed it.

SB: Real love bites?

PP: I think I have some images Ja, and all those souvenirs came from that one guy, like a little obsession (Name excluded per participants request).

SB: Is he openly gay?

PP: No.

SB: Then maybe I shouldn't put it in.

PP: No, maybe not his name. The Sunday times found out about it and there was a huge hectic, hectic thing to keep it out of the newspapers.

SB: There have been quite a few homosexual rugby players.

PP: Like who.

SB: Well, I remember seeing a documentary on Supersport about a gay English rugby player. He was a big guy with muscles...I don't know if that has anything to do anything but South Africa is a Rugby playing nation and Rugby is seen as the pinnacle of masculinity and masculine expression. Do you think that simply by having a different sexual orientation [from the norm] that it somehow subverts that masculinity? Or is that not relevant?

PP: I don't if it was that for me, it wasn't like I wanted to be part of Rugby culture because the men where beautiful and I wanted to look at them, I was too into it for that. Rugby is like the ultimate male expression, where men can be men and they can fuck people up and they have to be hard. They have to be rude, they have to be strong. It's the only place they can really be men

SB: And are you saying that in relation to feminist discourse and the role men are now required to play?

PP: It's very different hey, that's probably why people like you are doing research like this. Five years ago this research would not be done, it wasn't an issue for any straight man, and these things now become issues. You know the role of men and stuff like that have changed, especially for straight men.

SB: It's weird, I don't know, it's almost like there is a hyper masculinity now. Where guys go to the gym constantly and it might seem homoerotic.

PP: It's like five years ago guys would go to the gym, because they wanted to be fucking strong, now it's an image thing. They want to look like a body building.

- SB: Now you can do all this weird stuff, like inject yourself with oils. It's not necessarily real muscles but rather for show.
- PP: It's become a vanity thing now.
- SB: It has become a vanity thing, its like woman trying to starve themselves. And I've seen the gym guys are holding each other while they've lifted weights and they are like "Come on, come on". It's almost pseudo-sexual.
- PP: (Jokes) But it's obviously not (Laughs).
- SB: I'm trying to think if I covered everything, I've looked at homosexuality and Rugby culture in relation to hetero-normative patriarchy. But i do understand you say it comes from a personal space, but the way your work is taught is that Peet Pienaar is a big guy and he is homosexual and therefore he represents such and such. And you have someone like Thembi[nkosiGoniwe] and he is representative of left wing, radical, etcetera.
- PP: It was interesting because also in the circumcision thing, there was a big medical thing afterward - 'Should men be circumcised or not?' Like all these medical journals wanted to contact men that have had circumcisions and wanted to contact me about it, it was really interesting. And it's really different, it changes the way you approach sex completely, everything changes; the way you approach sex.
- SB: Well, I guess most guys have either had sex one way or the another, not going through both.
- PP: Most Afrikaans men aren't circumcised and how do you changed yourself to become part of this society, the Afrikaans man is not part of this society - What do you do to become part of that society'?
- SB: Well, I think the circumcised penis is 'othered'.
- PP: Yes, but most other men are circumcised.
- SB: What do you think of the Afrikaans man as was seen as self and is now 'othered'?
- PP: So, what are you saying?
- SB: (Jokes) The idea is in development. Well, what I am saying is that it 'othering' yourself in a way but you became part of something. I don't know it's a strange thing.
- PP: That is also something I have learnt through all of this – We don't want to be part of one thing, we want to be able to exist equally and for a lot of Afrikaans people felt that the aim was for us to become part of one thing. People don't want to Afrikaans or English they just want to exist equally.

- SB: I have so many questions for you but I feel like I have to keep bringing it back to the masculinity thing.
- PP: You can; it's fine.
- SB: It seems so unnecessary in a way.
- PP: You can just ask; it's fine.
- SB: I think, the final question I could ask is what was the desire that motivated you interacting with this sort of area, performance art and putting yourself on the chopping block in a way.
- PP: Performance for me, allowed me to get an immediate reaction from the public, where when I felt like I was painting in a room somewhere for months and you have one exhibition and everyone gets drunk and you have one review and that's your reaction. I wanted to know...There was a disengagement and the only way I felt I could gap that thing was to bring myself into the artwork.
- SB: Why do you think there was such a strong reaction to your work? I don't want to take it too far but it almost as if you were a bit of a sacrificial lamb for Afrikanerdom and the circumcision was the ultimate act.
- PP: In retrospect it seems like that, but that's not how it felt at the time.
- SB: Listening to you talk and hearing you talk are quite different. The way an artist is put into a specific art historical discourse for art history to continue. The way they taught 'you' at TUKS (University of Pretoria) was that you were this Afrikaans Rugby player who tucked his thing between his legs, dressing up and performing on rugby fields. Later I found out you were homosexual and it didn't change things that much but all the while you've have been described as tall and muscular, blonde and blue eyed. In the same way they would teach Tracey Rose in a certain way. They teach Thembi, he's a certain way. And you became to represent a certain thing.
- PP: Yes, it is seen that way, but not at the time. It's not like your going out to represent heterosexual Jewish men, but it might be seen that way in ten years time.
- SB: Maybe, probably actually, I think that's how it tends to go.
- PP: I think at that time you don't intend it to go that way, it would be arrogant to say I represent that group of people. But that the way it goes in relation to history. But it's very difficult to say that's how it was.
- SB: Is there anything else you think I have not dealt with or anything else related to the topic.
- PP: I don't know, what do you think? You can ask me anything; it's fine.

SB: There was the one thing; I think you did it with Barendt De Wet.

PP: The bodybuilding?

SB: Yes, and also the chess performance. I think in that work you were sitting on the right and Barend was on the left. I think he was in a dress.

PP: He was naked.

SB: I am using an article by Amelia Jones as the basis for my research and she mentions Duchamp [He gender play and identity play]. That was a collaboration so does that mute the personal aspect? Do you think does that sort of mute the personal aspect of your work?

PP: That was a heavily conceptual piece and a lot of references to other art and making fun of it. The personal work was personal and the collaborative work was collaborative.

SB: At a stretch if someone wanted to say that Duchamp played with gender you could say your reference to Duchamp was something similar? But you're saying that was not the case?

PP: No, it was not personal.

SB: What about the relationship of clothing to your work? I don't know for a fact but I don't know if there were any transgender representations of yourself - You were also in typically male clothing, representing a normative mode.

PP: I don't think the 'homosexual' was like really like a big, big thing. I really don't know if I would have engaged with masculinity if I wasn't gay. Homosexuality is just one of the ten things that make up who I am. It's not that important to me at all, it's not that important. Just being male, Afrikaans is important.

SB: I will have to look at your work chronologically, that is how art [history] functions and a lot of people ask 'why did he change?' I think you don't feel any correlation and you being Afrikaans and male and you interacting with design world.

PP: No, for me the circumcision piece for me was like I had pushed my body and my self and the male thing was over.

SB: If you look at the SA music industry, if you look at someone like Max Normal and what he is doing with Die Antwoord and Fokof. I'm not sure if you work with Max Normal at all?

PP: No

SB: He went from this normal guy [office worker] to this super 'Zepher' [low class Afrikaans man], which is both in a way masculine. I was at this gig and he gripped some guy who was jumping around in the crowd and he was like 'Ek sal

- jou fokken bliksiem' [I will hit you].
- PP: It's very interesting because I think a lot of English guys are getting into this Afrikaans thing now. Like Ian Roberts and them are doing this whole thing, and Riaan Malan is doing serious Afrikaans music thing, which is really horrible and Max Normal.
- SB: Is he not Afrikaans?
- PP: No, I mean they might have some Afrikaans history but Max Normal is really English.
- SB: Wow, really?
- PP: Ja, and it's really refreshing [as an Afrikaner]. I think English guys are really struggling to find an identity.
- SB: I think Afrikaans music subculture has really come back strong. The things you guys are doing with MK are great!
- PP: I mean the whole aim of that magazine was to push those boys [Afrikaans rock bands, specifically Fokof], with stylists and really push them in a new way. Really change the way that they dress and the way they present themselves.
- SB: I'm thinking of the one guitarist from Fokof.
- PP: Damian?
- SB: He's got a big beard.
- PP: Yes, Damian.
- SB: He looks like he could be from the Anglo-Boer war stock, but he looks like he could be someone from Kasabian; a UK rock band. It seems to be a play between an intentional masculine presence and also something that completely plays with it.
- PP: Ja.
- SB: The skinny jeans show of the [male] body but they are also very feminine. What is interesting for me is that Jo'burg guys are trying to dress Indy but they spend all day in the gym so they are really muscular so they don't really fit into these skinny jeans and undersized t-shirts. They look ridiculous, I wear small shirts but they are bulging out of it, but they still have spiky hair - Men trying to define what is cool, but a play with femininity [in dress].
- PP: I'm a really good friend with Francois [van Coke, lead singer of Fokof] and we did this thing for Bum magazine, about being straight but he kisses guys all the time when he's drunk. He feels free to express himself in anyway. If he loves someone he will tell them, if he loves someone he will kiss them.

- SB: But this the guy that a lot of Afrikaans guys are following.
- PP: He's a serious, serious, serious guy in that group at the moment.
- SB: It's interesting if you look at a guy like Francois and yourself with your involvement in the Afrikaans rugby community. Guys listen to his music to get ready for a rugby match or something. It seems good in a way; it might be a positive change.
- PP: It's definitely positive, change is always good. And how do you see yourself?
- SB: 'Shew'...I don't know I've had quite a strange process. My dad was a typical Jo'burg Jewish boy who played a lot of sports, married my mom who he very much loves. And when he went to study medicine at Wits where he became political - Both my parents became political and joined the ANC. And I grew up with a lot of left wing people; I lived in a small town called Bushbuck Ridge after I was born [I am not exactly sure why I mentioned this to Pienaar, it seems my parents, particularly my father is important to my identity].
- I wasn't sure if I was arty or sporty and I never got to play sport which seemed important in relation to my dad. And I took supplements and was a bit bigger and played rugby. When I went to Wits all the processes I went through at Pretoria which is a bit of a hyper masculine place [in certain circles]. When I went to Wits I began to look at my own process and I reflected on a lot of the experiences I went through at TUKS. I was accused of being gay at times, for studying art, which isn't a bad thing but it did not seem like a reality for me; but the fact that I do art because a feminine thing. It's been a tension, but I don't mind that tension because the way it plays out is good, it's interesting in my work. I use layers and collage and mixed media to represent that tension some performance but I don't think I would take performance to far. I think the transition from an arty high school, to TUKS to Wits has been interesting.
- PP: I think, it's good, ja. I think there something about conservative institutions are really nice – You learn to work with mediums and technique is strong and it's very important, more so then maybe concept. Wits is really concept based; I mean you still want to make something, I think its something that bothers me with Wits is that just because someone has a video camera doesn't mean they make nice videos, its as if they haven't watch a DVD in their life (laughs).
- SB: Lastly, do you see any relationship with Robin Rhode's process in his desire to articulate his identity...Cape coloured moved to Jo'burg, basketball and hip hop culture - and you with your engagement with Afrikanerdom and rugby culture. I intend to play those two parallels out quite strongly even though I have to now include the contradictions you now mention. People might have been dictating meaning to your work.
- PP: Absolutely.

SB: But if I look at you two guys as entities, I see Robin as the 'city guy' and you coming from 'Potsch' - How do you feel about it and his work?

PP: We were really good friends before he left and we have contact now and again. I really like what he's doing, I really like his work. I think it's amazing. What I said in the beginning, there was a really huge link in the way we seen art in the beginning. A lot of the stuff we did was...'Spur of the moment stuff'; we didn't think too much about what we were doing. And we didn't try and make...'Oh now we are going to make serious art'...We just did 'stuff'. But stuff that I think was really similar. I think his work has become quite serious at the moment.

SB: Do you think it's the move to Europe?

PP: I think so, definitely and I think it's also pressure from galleries.

SB: Pressure from galleries...Ok, institutionalised?

PP: Ja

PP: What else is there that we were...? We both stayed together at a hotel, the Barnes hotel. But that's not really...I'm trying to think if we did anything together? I can't remember, we were so wild at that stage I can't remember much.

SB: There's this Arthrob bio of his, it's quite old and it's quite funny because some of the works are really not developed yet and I was so happy when I saw it, because I thought 'Robin Rhode wasn't always so slick'...Maybe there's hope for me.

PP: No, he was definitely not.

SB: He called himself, I think 'Bushie Agitae'?

PP: Ja, Bushie.

SB: It's weird, because that not at all how he is now. He's almost an androgynous figure; he's got no identity and covers his face. But from reading that [Arthrob bio] he was quite serious about the fact that he was coloured.

PP: Yes, yes.

SB: And that has been completely muted where as yours [identity] has been completely inflated.

PP: He was like really, really, really proud of the fact that he was coloured and Bushie and we would always make jokes about it - Always, all the time. He would say, "Of course I want a smart car, I'm a coloured" or "Of course I want this, I'm a coloured". But he just wanted this European thing because he just really, really wanted to get out of this kind of lifestyle, ja he really wanted to elevate himself – he wanted to be fucking rich, from day one.

SB: I think he is now, though.

PP: Ja.

SB: So then, I just wonder...if I look at you guys as taking two different processes – I would say you converged in the way that you both used sport to express your identity or typical masculine activities. Except his masculine activities were throwing dice, playing basketball...

PP: Or pissing and drinking in a corner.

SB: Ja, pissing in a corner and yours were related to rugby fields...Afrikaans masculine institutions. And in the way that you guys have diverged in that Robin has gone to Europe and he is hitting this art thing quite hard and his identity as a coloured is almost quite muted and...

PP: It's not important there at all, where as here it's still important.

Record of this part of conversation excluded due to sensitivity of subject to Iziko National Museum, Cape Town.

SB: No ways! You like Michael Jordan, you know when he left the basketball game and came back. Jay-Z [American Rapper] has that song, "I'll be back like Jordan".

PP: Ja (Laughs).

So what kind of performance work are you going to do?

SB: Well as far as performance based, I'm not really sure – The boxing [at Wits] for me has been a bit of a performance. I was thinking of recording myself getting smacked, because that happens a lot – Because I'm not that quick.

PP: Oh...Do you get smacked?

SB: Well, you see this [points to nose]...This isn't a natural bump, my nose used to be very 'un-Jewish.' I got a 'klap' [smack]. I've been playing a bit with my own body in collage, photos I took...I'm with a talent agency called Creative Entertainment [Now called Talent Etc.]. I've been in Steers commercials and I did the Sun International thing...I use the photos and cut them up or tear them...They're professional modelling photos.

PP: Ja.

SB: But I've sort of re-structured them, using my own body as a signifier. Some people seem to think I'm good looking which seems to come with its own 'thing,' when I'm actually quite insecure. You know? But it also fluctuates between this 'ridiculous confidence,' you know adolescent confidence and insecurity, the way I dress people consider I'm feminine or homosexual and

all those play with identities are important and I think that's why my engagement with you is quite important...You guys as guys; you and Robin are like guys and do guy stuff, but the engagement with the artworld looks at the contradictions. That's what interests me in my work, but I don't know if I'll ever be a 'performance, performance' artist. I don't know if I have the balls for that.

PP: I don't know hey, I think performance is 'out' now. I think painting has come back...

SB: I hope so, I think it is.

PP: Photographs are back in.

SB: Ja, the one girl I worked with [At David Krut Arts Resource], her partner is Mikhael Subotsky and that guy...'shew' [Implying that I think he makes a lot of money of his work].

PP: Oh, ja.

SB: He's making a lot of cash.

PP: Is he?

SB: Well, one of his photos at Goodman [Gallery] is like seventy thousand.

PP: Well then he'll probably get ten [thousand] or twenty [thousand] (Laughs heartily).

SB: Well, Goodman [Gallery] will definitely get the money.

You're welcome to see some of my stuff. This was one of those modelling photos that I formed into collage. It was one of my first attempts.

PP: Oh, wow.

SB: The penis is actually made out of a Levi's models, that's his face (points to picture)...

PP: (Laughs, finds this very amusing).

SB: It's quite funny.

PP: He's definitely right handed (indicating the curve of the penis in the work).

SB: No, for sure.

SB: I did another one of those recently, these are all the modelling photos I did recently. I played with the face...

PP: Oh, wow and are you working with Photostats?

SB: Ja, Photostats... At the moment, ja. This is basically a series I am working with at the moment.

PP: That's quite nice.

SB: And this is a pornographic image I attached to my leg [in the image].

PP: That's cool.

SB: Ja, it's quite funny. I also found this pornographic website where this guy puts on this bear head and he has sex with these women – It's supposed to be a stripper and supposedly amateur, and all these women want to have sex with him because he's faceless.

PP: (Laughs) And how important is sex to you?

SB: It seems to be quite a lot, when I was in Pretoria I was fooling around a bit. I don't know why...Maybe I was trying to prove something to myself.

PP: Maybe you were just young?

SB: Yes, possibly.

60 min Recording Ends

Appendix 2

Interview with Robin Rhode at his offices; Rhodeworks, 23 Feb 2010

Sean Buch - SB

Robin Rhode - RR

Audio Recording Lasting 60 minutes:

SB: In conversation with Robin Rhode in Studio, 23 Feb 2010 – This is basically an organic mode of questioning where I will ask Mr Rhode a series of questions, about 20 minutes total, in relation to masculinity and his artwork.

RR: [Hollering, whistling, making noise]

SB: [Laughs]

RR: Hmmm [Robin jokingly impressed by seeming professionalism of title of interview].

SB: Could you give us a brief summary where you grew up Cape Town and Johannesburg?

RR: Where I grew up in Cape Town? Um, I think I grew up in was an area called Landsdowne, I'm not exactly sure where it is on the map, obviously it's in the Western Cape. We lived there until I was about eight years old before we moved to Johannesburg – The transition from Cape Town to Johannesburg was quite difficult because...I found it extremely taxing to be integrated into the new primary School – There was a serious amount of bullying which took place.

Um, also my accent was really strong, I had this Capetonian accent and you know the 'Transvaaler's' hated this kind of accent so it became very, very difficult for me to fully integrate myself and I was always somehow, I felt as if I was cast aside. I was never really participating or a participant in the social situation in the primary school. Um, maybe this led to my interest in drawing, I don't know? We didn't have any art education but I had a serious interest in drawing, so I pursued that.

High school was the same. High school was interesting in that I was really then finding my artistic flair which kind of separated me from the rest of the class. I became this kind of stand out individual, more like a kind of clown, class clown or art figure and I kind of liked the respect that came along with that. We also didn't have any formal art education at high school but I always made sure I was part of any cultural event even if I was a kind of bystander or onlooker. I always wanted to participate, but I didn't need to be the main attraction.

It was during high school that I played a lot of basketball and got very much involved in Hip Hop culture – Go to Hip Hop clubs on Saturday afternoons, listen to a lot of Hip Hop and um...Wearing the Hip Hop attire which comes with

the Hip Hop movement. I was really captivated by this whole scene. It was almost as if Hip Hop was the new language of the post-Apartheid kid. Which was something, the coloured community, I also felt could assimilate, you know into our culture because we never had a traditional culture. So in assimilating Hip Hop culture, you get a very interesting way to find a sub-cultural identity. I was really taken up by this idea of this group formation coming through Hip Hop. Which I think probably inspired my piece called *He Got Game*, from the Spike Lee film which I did in 2000 in Cape Town.

SB: You have described in previous conversations [with me], the notion of gaining 'swagger' from you artwork or a type of confidence – Could you relate this strongly to the Hip Hop identity and then also possibly the street art culture which comprises your work?

RR: [Whistles] That's quite a broad question!

SB: It is a broad question.

RR: Ah, the swagger that comes with...which is inherent in Hip Hop culture, I thought could be very interesting to bring across into contemporary art or in the contemporary art process – The idea of executing a work of art with a kind of energy and a... confidence. It was a lot different to how art is seen in a sensitive kind of light.

Suddenly I felt that I could...What does the term 'swagger' mean? It means kind of like an air of self-confidence and it is very much related to your idea of masculinity or the emphasis on your paper which is this kind of, all of a sudden you feel as if you are in a dominant role in the process of art. And that's the swagger which is so much part of Hip Hop, of the Hip Hop mentality which I then brought across into process of contemporary art or of trying to realise my art ideas. I wanted to add that same swagger and in way the swagger could become a mechanism to reject other kind of dominant models, dominant discourses which are placed on me politically or socially. So I guess the swagger was a way of rejecting or a way of, you know, rejection. Of rejecting the other issues – whether it is political or social.

SB: Could we say that this use of art has led to an empowerment, where you have been able to remove yourself from certain domineering aspects or suppressive aspects of South African art culture?

RR: Yes. (Jokes) You on fire, hey?

SB: I'm trying.

RR: Now it's your finale and all of a sudden – boom! You absorbed all of the discussions that we've talked about and some of the 'groupie discussions' (Laughs – Robin and I joked about his fame and how I was like an 'art groupie', as one would follow a musician or rock band).

SB: We discussed your high school initiation rites as having to interact with a drawn

- object on a wall; something you have used in your own work...
- RR: (Interjects) I'm just thinking about this now, this question now and what's interesting about it is that, in terms of masculinity because the initiation process took place in the boys toilet – I think it's interessant, no?
- SB: Ja. Super interesting, ja. And this is also the boys toilet, is where you also have to get changed for sports or...
- RR: Hang out, smoke a cigarette, do some graffiti, do some wall drawings. It's almost a place where the marginalised congregate or the kind of peripheral figures of the school, the mischievous and naughty students, pupil's of the school hang out –And cause trouble. So it's about mischief, it's about that kind of...not naughty, but ja, mischievous or playful characters...I think we can associate all this kind of...you know?
- SB: I think from the perspective of the teachers it might have been seen as a form of delinquency?
- RR: Yes.
- SB: Would you relate this to the artist also being on the periphery in that you describe 'this is where the peripheral figures would hang out or the naughty students would hang out' and you also saw art as a way to 'agitate' [Rhode's concept of 'Bushie Agitae'] – So this periphery might be replicated in your art making practice?
- RR: Yes, fantastic. It's interesting because when you are in this phase of your life, when you are a high school pupil, you know, you are trying to also grasp and understand your body and your going through this kind of peer pressure or your trying to grasp your own masculinity and then you kind of, like...Maybe the toilet is like a place where I don't know...Like show each other your dicks or whatever. But it almost became a place where the 'ouens,' the 'manne' are hanging out – You know what I mean?
- SB: Because the boy's toilet is a restrictive space, it's restricted to boys.
- RR: Yes.
- SB: By replicating the high school initiation right again and again, it seems that you somehow you seem to take ownership of the action, to the point where the point where something that was a form of bullying becomes a form of empowerment.
- RR: What can I add to that?
- SB: I suppose I could say; 'Would you agree?'
- RR: (Laughs) 'The act of bullying becomes an act of empowerment?' - Because the act of bullying is an act of empowerment too, you know?

SB: The way that I have interpreted it was that you where forced to...

RR: ...To interact with the drawing.

SB: But now you are doing it out of choice, so it is a form of independence.

RR: Yes.

SB: Like, what would, hypothetically, the high school bully say if he saw you now? In the way that you are living now, in this empowered state?

RR: He'd be very proud of me.

SB: He'd say, now you the 'man', you know what I mean? You made reference to this initiation as not dissimilar from South African artists such as Churchill Madika...

RR: Madikida.

SB: Madikida.

...who deals with Xhosa circumcision ritual, could you explain the similarity specifically in reference to South African initiation rites from boys to men?... Specifically, within maybe a non-white South African context. Do you think that there is any affiliation there?

RR: I think it is an interesting affiliation...it's more...it's not cultural, it's sub-cultural. Which means the subculture; it is formed out of...it's like a 'bastard' of cultures...or not?

SB: Ok.

RR: You know what I mean?

SB: Ja.

RR: A subculture is something that is formed from the remnants of culture.

SB: I like that, 'the remnants of culture.'

RR: It's like the 'leftover'...When culture has gone through...The remnant is what is born; is subculture.

SB: Would you relate this to your earlier desire of making art that was related to the notion of 'Bushie Agitae'? You said that Bushie is the derogatory term for a coloured person, but by taking on the term, in the same way that a black person might use the term [nigger]...

RR: No...Bushie was a term I used in a way to...I don't think I used it in a way to

- make a statement. It's just, not at all. I never used 'Bushie' as an artwork, I never proclaimed 'Bushie' from the streets – I didn't shout it, I didn't proclaim it, I didn't have it as a tag or anything. I have it as an email address but that's about it. I can't recall in earlier interviews, I'm talking about early, I mean from 1999 to 2000, ever trying to promote 'Bushie' or ever try to champion 'Bushie'. I don't know, I don't think so.
- SB: Do you think it's possible that you may have been pigeonholed in a relation of South African art to the political?
- RR: Yes, I think I could have been pigeonholed especially by critics in South Africa who are most predominantly white males. But I cannot recall ever trying to proclaim to any critic or to any art context that 'Bushie' is...
- SB: Is who you are?
- RR: Ja, I don't know. Even though Bushie is very much for me, the meaning of it goes beyond the contemporary male, but for me relating it to an imaginary ancestry of the Bushman - Documenting their daily, everyday lives by painting on cave walls and I do the same. As, I consider myself the contemporary bushman or contemporary bush-man a.k.a. 'Bushie'!
- SB: One question that might relate is, what are your impressions on representations of coloured males in the art world specifically in artwork by white artists representing coloured males and the lack that you state 'of coloured males involved in the art world'?
- RR: Sorry can I just fetch my...[Robin fetches something]. Your question again was - About the notion of coloured representation?
- SB: Coloured representation in art specifically with 'coloured male' as photographed with artist examples such as Pieter Hugo, Mikael Subotsky, Adam Broomberg and also in the lack of as you stated 'coloured peoples in South African art'.
- RR: Ah, I've forgotten all these points. How do I recall all those issues we spoke about? See, if I speak in a very organic way I just let it all out. But when I have to recall it now...
- SB: I've recorded some of, well most of our previous conversations so it's probably on there.
- RR: I just can't remember, what did I say about...? Well I do think that...
- SB: Well the one point you made is that you felt there were not enough coloured peoples in art – We mentioned Berni Searle and Tracy Rose as sort of the only 'big names.' Then there was a young guy who contacted you who was upset about...
- RR: A statement I could have made.

- SB: About a statement you could have made in the press.
- RR: About 'coloured artists coming before and after me', as if I was the only coloured male in this contemporary art situation and not knowing who the other artists were of colour.
- SB: In relation to an articulation of a coloured identity within South African arts would you say that the lack of coloured peoples representing themselves within South African art is problematic because, possibly, this might leave a gap where artists such as, well, where possibly problematic artworks such as Mikhael Subotsky's Pollsmoor prison series might leave an othered impression of the coloured male? Where as it might be necessary to have someone from that background to articulate there own identity within the South African art context?
- RR: Yeah, because I think that when it comes to photography it is very difficult for there to be an exchange between subject and photographer. Um, it would be interesting to, to see when a coloured photographer photograph a coloured subject or a black photographer photographs a black subject it becomes exotic. But when a white photographer documents, takes a photograph of a black person it is not seen as, ah, as exotic.
- SB: So you are saying when a non-white person takes a photo of another non-white person it is seen as exotic.
- RR: Yes.
- SB: And no the other way around.
- SB: You stated at times that you felt that some South African photographers where problematic in not allowing the subject to articulate there own identity and that they are muted in their expression of their identity?
- RR: I, I think in terms of photography it's much more complicated than that....I mean I'm only looking at it in terms of the final photograph on exhibition and when you look at the final photograph one can, one has a very strong impression that there hasn't been a complete, you know, thorough exchange between the subject and the photographer. The photographer always positions himself or herself within the position of power and one can articulate this by looking at the eyes of the...uh, of the subject in the photograph. So somehow you can see something is taken, that there is a greater taking of than giving to the subject – Between photographer and subject.
- SB: One example we discussed was Moshekwa Langa's photography of going back to his homestead and I felt after seeing the photographs that there was a level of empowerment in the subjects and that they were able to articulate their identities because there was a personal connection to the place.
- RR: Mmm hmmm, ja.

SB: This personal connection to place, would possibly relate that to your desire to go back to Johannesburg streets and interact with the people that live in Johannesburg... You say that there are people present... present when you perform the artwork?

RR: Yes, but I don't search for people first I search for a wall first. I don't search for, I'm not trying... I don't search for a. an audience demographic, I'm just trying to find a geographic before demographic. I just want to find a beautiful wall; I'm not trying to 'target audience'.

SB: Related to the city of Johannesburg and how it affects your art making specifically in relation to danger, risk taking, criminality and street culture you mentioned certain stories where you were felt endangered or where endangered when making an artwork?

RR: Yes.

SB: How strong is the desire to be involved in risk-taking in relation to graffiti artists looking for a rush or is it simply that you feel that the space, the wall space is, is a space... is a, an aesthetic that you appreciate and you feel that because it is a public, it's out in the public domain that you would like to, mmm... take ownership of that?

RR: Yes.

SB: Or... ja?

RR: You know, but after I take ownership of it, it's a very ephemeral ownership, it's a short lived ownership because I am willing to then give off the wall again – To be bombed or tagged, I even re-paint my own pieces.

SB: Always?

RR: I don't always over paint it but I'm not interested in the final piece, in the communication of the wall piece or of the painting so it's a very short lived transaction with the, uh, with the aesthetic of the space – So it's very much a kind of guerrilla tactic. I'm interested in the act of taking risks just for the sake of taking risks. I'm not a graffiti artist looking for a rush. I am a... I am a contemporary artist with considerations rather than trying to... you know... I'm not trying to look for a rush at all - The rush in the process of art.

I actually haven't been working the street of late; I've started working in backyards, which I also find super interesting! Backyards are very nice because you always find such interesting disused objects and, and it's so... domestic. There's something personal about a backyard and I... you know you have the smell of dogs pee and you have disused... furniture and whatever backyards expose, it's a kind of historical space. And sometimes people's backyards are very interesting, than their actual houses... than the interior.

SB: The notion of domesticity is something that you have mentioned a few times in

our conversations and I was wondering to what extent is this affected by your current domestic situation: Being a father and also, maybe your upbringing and close relation to your parents and more specifically you mother?

RR: The domestic is very much linked to a sense of pride, I guess. Um, and yes it's very interesting...uh, in this masculine role in which the domestic involves. You know it's not something which, which us males embrace so readily. Um, but maybe its because of this kind of really strong discipline, domestic discipline that I had to undergo from my mother at home - Was also, I had to embody or take the domestic responsibility. I was, I had to be, I was taught that at a very early age.

RR: I always had to clean up, do the dishes, clean up the dog shit, cut the trees – 'do this, do this, do this'. Which is interesting because it helped me to understand materials, it maybe helped my art making you know? - The relationship of an artist to the creative process and materials. The thing is it comes through in the domestic; when you have to screw on a kind of...curtain rail or it's, I, even when I was an art student I actually enjoyed domestic work, because it helped get used to working with materials. That's probably why I use Sunlight soap for materials for a bike sculpture. Do you know that piece?

SB: Ja.

RR: I love that sculpture! I wish I could...That's the level of sculpture that I need to hit. And I can't hit that level all the time. It's difficult, it's like you end up making one crazy sculpture every four years. It's really difficult. Well I'm really struggling with, like making really good sculpture. Where the sculpture embodies ephemerality but it has such strong comments materials, you know, it's the idea of alchemy again and it's so hard to hit that.

SB: The Sunlight soap seems relevant and it seems relevant in the South African context – it's a general cleaning soap that most South Africans use and it's almost a...

RR: I think what is interesting about Sunlight soap with regards to a South African context is that soap is not only used for domesticity but also used for washing the body.

SB: Ja.

RR: ...The hair, the floor. You know I like the soap doesn't posses any hierarchy, it's totally used to the human body to anything else – You can wash windows with that soap. Even the title for me, 'Sun Light', for a soap to almost become an enlightenment!

SB: Would you say that the combination of the domestic role which might be seen as feminine, combined with, uh...certain masculine, um...mmm, not 'desires', responsibilities maybe? – Is something that would lead to a balance or healthier state? The idea of being domestic and being a father and also having, having certain desires to be the best what you do. Not in a competitive way

necessarily but in that you use terms such you “want to kill the game” or “the game”, and you say it like, like a very macho kind of way to speak but then your also doing it for the reason you are doing it is for quite a meaningful, heartfelt...

RR: I think it's, 'the game', when I speak about that, when I speak about all those macho terms it's about how far I can push my own idea and whether I can accomplish that idea whether I can keep it that idea, it's a way to motivate myself without trying to target any particular kind of people or make a boast.

SB: Ja.

RR: And it's my game because I play the game to my rules. I'm not playing by any other systems rules. I'm playing by my own rules. It's like a challenge for myself to... become better as an artist and as I was saying earlier on you know, 'the game' for me; the challenge for me is to be able to make another good sculpture like the bicycle piece. That's my, that's how I need to up my game. It's always about this kind of 'self challenge.'

And it's about aspirations and it's about creating a great work of art. It's so difficult to replicate that and I'm always trying to like, conjure that same that same motivation; that same feeling; that same excitement that I had in creating 'that' work – A good work of art. So it's more...also it links in a way this idea of the athlete in a way. Like the basketball player on court, trying to, trying to psyche himself up - I use the same kind of technique or the same kind of motivation to a basketball player would use or a sportsman would use – For my work as an artist.

SB: If I can come back quickly to the, uh, 'role of the mother'... I'm going to speak about something I don't really know about unfortunately, this I read in a text book but the text book was called From Boys to Men: Men and Masculinities in South Africa and one of the case studies was coloured youths with the role of the, I think it is 'ordentlike moeder' or like the respect...the 'respectable mother'.

RR: Ja.

SB: Now is this a term you are familiar with, um, it might be from a specific location that this study was taken from. But they seem to find that this was quite an important role in the development of young boys to have a respectable mother and it was something that made you...

RR: Ja, I think that...the term I am not so familiar with but I understand, I know exactly what you mean by this term because its about...I think that in a lot of coloured males have a deep respect for their mothers. You know the term, actually, it's a slang term is “Ma se kind”.

SB: Yeah.

RR: And we would call each other “Ma se kind”, so the mother is always kind of seen as a spiritual figure or leader and when your mother is sworn – you say

“Jou ma se poes,” it’s like the worst thing you could ever...it’s like let’s fight to the death, it’s like a complete challenge until there’s one man standing. So, I think maybe it’s also a way to depend on the motherly figure taken in the fatherly figure; the father takes a step back in the case of domesticity. The father figure is always peripheral I guess in rearing the child. It’s true or no, you don’t think so?

SB: Ja, my dad can’t even say he loves me. He’s said it like once in his life.

RR: I’m so sorry.

SB: (Laughs) No, he loves me very much...

RR: But he would never say it?

SB: He finds it really hard to say.

RR: If he does say it, he starts crying and shit right?

SB: He just can’t, he just can’t. It’s quite funny. He did it via email when I was here, it’s a big step.

RR: Is it!

SB: Ja, he wrote ‘Love Dad’. He’s never ever said that before.

RR: So he misses you hey?

SB: Ja.

RR: Did you write to him about your experiences, seeing the wall...He can only kind of imagine the situation you’re in.

SB: Ja, I’ve been ...I’ve been writing to my family. Especially my dad, my dad travels quite a lot so...

RR: Oh, he’s travelled. So he’s been to Germany before?

SB: He travels a lot.

RR: (Surprised) He travels by himself?

SB: Ja, because he works for the African Union and sometimes for World Health so he’s constantly travelling.

RR: Overseas a lot?

SB: Ja, Geneva, Nigeria, Ethiopia...Ja, he travels a lot.

RR: Hmmm

SB: It's ok though.

RR: You must be very proud of him,

SB: Ja, I'm trying to live up to his academic stature. Actually I could relate this; I would have to jump ahead, to the role of the father figure. I was told, or at least I read, that the sports jersey was seen as an object of desire but it was also a sporting type of accolade that maybe your father wasn't able to receive because of the Apartheid era separation?

RR: Ah, no, the point that...the accolade situation and that kind of social situation and position...

SB: Is that [question] a bit of a reach?

RR: No, ja, it's that my father, it's not that he couldn't have taken that group playing for the provincial sport – He could play provincial sport. No it's just that, no I don't think there's any fatherly situation involved in that jersey.

SB: I read it, I read it!

RR: Really!?

SB: Ja.

RR: Was it in Walk Off...Or what?

SB: I think it might have been in Walk Off but I'll double-check – I'll let you know.

RR: The father figure...led to the jacket...No, I don't think, maybe the first...The situation with my dad is that I think my father, that jersey was part of the sports body, the non-white sports body before the first democratic election. And it was apart of a sports body called SACOSB: S-A-C-O-S. SACOS, South African Congress of Sport, I think it is, that was what it was. It was a non-white sports body.

RR: And I made the provincial team.

SB: Oh cool!

RR: Under that kind of...under SACOS.

SB: For cricket?

RR: Yeah, I opened the batting. I was the opening batsmen.

SB: Hmmm (impressed).

RR: I would take first ball hey, first ball of the match. That was my speciality.

SB: That's awesome.

RR: I did it for many years; I did it also at K.E.S. [King Edwards School – A prestigious Johannesburg all boys school] at the Non-White Development Squad.

SB: Wow.

RR: I was one of the top non-white players in Gauteng, but I had to retire early because I had to do art. So I used to be opening bat and I sued to filed in the slips, first slip. The shit's hey?

SB: Wow, no slip is the worst man.

RR: No, it's the best, you just keep [your collar up] like you hot shit. Keep your collar up, and just wait for that 'edge.' COME ON! COME ON! And that's all you do for the rest [of the game]. It's quite cool (laughs). Talk shit about the party you hit the night before.

SB: Oh, I was thinking of silly-mid [fielding position in cricket]...I don't know why I was thinking of silly-mid.

RR: Oh, silly-mid, when sitting so close and your head is like (indicates close distance). So I did this sporting thing and I made it for Transvaal, so I did tournaments in Cape Town and with Transvaal team I became very good friends with those Western Province players and then they gave me...I switched my jacket my Transvaaljacket for the Western Province jacket. When they gave me the Western Province jacket, it was a coveted jacket, provincial – All the girls loved that jacket! If you make the Western Province team, it's like you know, you're the man. It had a lot more significance than the Transvaal jersey.

SB: Why?

RR: Maybe because of the greater, non-white, coloured population in the Western Cape than in the Transvaal. So there's a lot more interest in the sport, there's a lot more prestige to be in the, to be in the provincial team. Because population wise than in Jo'burg, I think there's a larger non-white community. I mean I don't think a lot of black schools were participating in this –SACOS, I think it was more coloured's and Indian. But, um, I think there is a bigger community in Western Cape, they were actually the founders of SACOS, the four...it was actually founded in Western Cape.

SB: So does that mean most of your girlfriends were coloured or Indian?

RR: No, no. (Jokes) I wish I had scored more but I didn't.

SB: In relation to the notion of physical prowess, it is interesting that people that you have worked with as your doppelganger are people that are 'physically professional'. Your one doppelganger you said was a circus trained acrobat,

who was able to perform some physically challenging stunts and also in your BMW commercial you had Mark Wahlberg's stunt double from the Italian job, who was also Toby McGuire's stunt double in Spider-Man. Both of these guys seem somewhat 'super-human' in what they are able to do.

RR: Yes, but some of my other doppelganger's may not be established performers. They may just have some physical flair in football or something like that, but nothing spectacular. One of my other doppelganger's who I've for many, many pieces – For the majority of my works has a very interesting skeletal structure – He is very tall and thin and it's interesting working with such a tall skinny guy makes the 'frame' seem longer.

So it was interesting how photographically that could work. In my piece called Juggla, I didn't initially pick it up but he's so tall and slender it actually elongates the image. And we would play around with it, because I was very conscious of the physicality of this tall slender character and how he could always utilise that quality. Sometimes it was difficult to work with because I try to use a lot of formal jackets and to get his arm length was really quite difficult. He's really tall and really slender. Sometimes to find formal clothing for him was quite a problem.

I've now found a new doppelganger, who's quite fine – He comes in a standard size, very easy to find. But again, even the new doppelganger has participated in...he's done a lot of school drama classes. So he also has a better understanding of...a better physical understanding. My previous doppelganger didn't really understand the physicality of the choreography initially. We really struggled, hey. But after a while it came across really well. We really got it spot on.

SB: You described yourself in your earlier works as being able to perform a variety of stunts quite easily because your 'game' was good at the time and you were physically ready. Is that maybe similar in a way to how a sportsman would describe their process in sports as a sportsman would look back on their career and say "when I was just in the 'game' and I was ready for anything"?

RR: Yes, but as a sportsman too, when you mature you are more aware of your weaknesses and strengths and your all around 'game' develops differently.

SB: If we compare your and Peet Pienaar's earlier works, we could say that Pienaar's works had an overt masculinity but with your works they seem rather...more natural and less stereotyped and is the encoding of masculinity in the works specifically related to sports or physical prowess conscious and how could we define it?

RR: I think the physical masculinity is not something that is in the forefront. I don't think it is something that is consciously considered during the process of the work. Physical prowess, yes, yes maybe. Identity maybe too, but I can't bring masculinity in as a kind of conscious influence.

SB: I think for Peet being homosexual, he found it [masculinity] to be quite a

conflicting point and something that he had to bring forward in the work to deal with his situation but for you possibly...

RR: I guess I was dealing with it to, but in the artistic process, no? I'm trying to play with it, I'm not trying to expose it in an obvious way. I think I'm grappling with it, but I'm playing with that notion because it's not obvious. I'm trying to challenge to viewer to play with the ideas as well and through this play and through humour, you know, the position of masculinity is destabilised.

It's not something that's at the forefront but rather an underlining theme that something is that viewer can explore. It's there but it's not very obvious, it's almost as if it's encoded in the work.

SB: But is it possible that with Peet it is something that he struggled with but with you it's something more natural and the process of male initiation that you took part in with and it was something that was naturalised, you were playing sports and you got a girlfriend and got married and it's therefore not something 'forced'.

RR: It's more organic, no not organic...there's just nothing to crazy.

SB: Even though you say there's nothing to crazy, there have been earlier works where you have been in danger of being arrested or you did performances that people might have viewed as strange or a bit crazy at the time.

RR: Yes.

SB: The urination, and you also said that you would take Beroxa tablets to make your urine a different colour. Also, the drawing of the Volksie on the wall and attempting to 'break into it'...

RR: Citi Golf.

SB: I think people might have found that a bit shocking?

RR: No, not shocking, I think 'they' thought it was absolutely humorous. They thought it was extremely funny.

SB: Also with the urination?

RR: Ja, I think one or two people were a bit upset, they thought it was too much about masculinity'.

SB: Were you visibly naked?

RR: No.

SB: People couldn't see 'anything'?

RR: No, it was almost like I was playing with the idea of allowing the space to

become private again by actually, you know, by peeing on my drawn urinal in the same way you would pee in the public toilet. You pee in the urinal as a male, your not kind of showing off your dick. You're just trying to be very private and you do your thing and that's it. I tried to re-imagine myself in the situation, as if the audience were with me in that 'public toilet' – You know I tried to have manners.

SB: And you spoke about also finding it difficult to pee at one stage.

RR: Ja, but when I fucking peed, it was like the flood gates opened and I couldn't stop. I peed a river.

SB: The one thing that I haven't mentioned yet is the street, specifically the Jo'burg street as linked to crime and criminality. Could we possibly link the stocking over the head to a mask [in selected works], also non-whiteness or otherness and allusions to possible petty crime or maybe even the example of stealing the car?

RR: Yes.

SB: How does this relate to our own background, the stereotypical, possible youthful criminal or gang behaviour? Or is this part of a stereotypical projected notion of otherness?

RR: Well, besides all of those things, especially the latter it's also about becoming unrecognisable as the 'shadow' itself. It's about the body as a shadow, it's about the body as a form, almost abstracting identity. The face is hidden, obscured.

So the stocking, is that it hides, it has this kind of criminality to it, this criminal element to it but at the same time. I'm interested in not exposing the identity of the person. At the same time I always use hats or caps in my performances and it's a way for 'him' to hide his identity. It's like a mask. While it also reflects the viewers, or the voyeurs stereotypical nature of otherness too imposed on me as the coloured artist. I'm somehow playing with that, with that notion.

60 min Recording Ends