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Exhibitions of Resistance Posters:

Contested Values Between Art and The Archive

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A Research report submitted in partial fulfilment of the Degree

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Supervisor: Nontobeko Ntombela

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I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and that I have not previously, in its entirety or in part, Submitted it at any university for a degree

_____ Date: _____

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Introduction

> Our communities will restore to us the respect we have lost, the moment we utilise every form of art at our disposal, along with the political poster. We shall need to do it from the bottom of our hearts, with purpose, technical skill, and intelligence (Thami Mnyele in Wylie, 2004:60).

This research began as a project of personal interest. I wanted to know more about Thami Mnyele as a cultural worker[1] and activist during the 1980's in the fight for the liberation of South African people because of his widely acknowledged contribution in the resistance struggle against apartheid. Mnyele is one of the most celebrated artists in the City of Ekurhuleni, so much so that there is an art competition named after him. He is widely known for his drawings and etchings, but much more for his resistance posters. It was the latter part of his artistic practice that sparked my interest. His posters have been used in a number of commemorative exhibitions, for example, the exhibitions of political figures like Chris Hani, Oliver Tambo and so forth. This sparked an interest in knowing why there it more of a focus on his posters than there is on his so-called fine art work. Furthermore, why did he shift between these two forms of art? Thus it is this shift in his work that created the need to know more about how forms of classification emerge within the context of South African art.

In this research, I explore three exhibitions of resistance posters as case studies. They are as follows: firstly, *Thami Mnyele and Medu Art Ensemble Retrospective,* which took place at the Johannesburg Art Gallery in 2008 and was a collectively curated project with Clive Kellner as the head curator *(Kellner and Gonzalez 2009*). Second is the exhibition *Images of Defiance: South African poster of the 1980's hosted by* Museum Africa in 2004 and was collaborately curated by The Posterbook Collective and the South African History Archives. And the third exhibition *Interruptions: Posters from the Community Arts Project Archive* was mounted at the Cape Town City Hall in 2014, and curated by Emile Maurice on behalf of the Centre for Humanities Research (CHR) at UWC. These exhibitions have taken place within an art gallery

[1]According to an online article on the South African history online (SAHO), "Medu members preferred to call themselves 'cultural workers' rather than "artists". The term implied that art-makers should not see themselves as elite and isolated individuals, touched by creative madness or genius; but simply people doing their work, whether in painting, music or in poetry".

context, with the first two exhibitions taking place in museums, with the only exception being that of the latter exhibition which took place in a city hall.

Given the socio-political expression of the print medium during the resistance movement in apartheid South Africa, and the difficulty of defining the present period, this thesis considers how the posters are used in exhibitions today. In what way does the context of the exhibition change the value and theorisation of these posters? The everyday struggles, that artists and cultural workers were waging to liberate society through the use of art, is illustrated in the content of these resistance posters. It demonstrates the long history in South African visual culture, between art and politics. The posters also demonstrate how the political struggle evolves from political upheaval to change – from the height of the anti-apartheid struggle in the 1980s to the present day.

When reading about resistance posters, Thami Mnyele is usually the only artist singled out, the only other reference to creators of resistance posters being 'community' members. Most resistance posters were created in collaboration between artist and the MEDU cultural workers being at the forefront. This raises a number of questions about how the attributions of the makers of resistance posters are acknowledged. In reading about South African resistance I have found that this was part of a strategy used by these community members to protect themselves against the apartheid government. This was in relation to the contextual issues of the time, in the apartheid era banning's and arrests were commonly enforced on anyone who was found guilty of challenging the system.

The exhibition *Thami Mnyele and Medu Art Ensemble Retrospective (2009*) re-enforces the singling out of one artist by naming the exhibition after him. And this begs the question of forms of acknowledgement and public positioning of artists in art history and exhibition practices. This brings about the many complexities of exhibition practices and strategies of display of posters that which calls for a deeper analysis of how they are displayed, read and studied. It also calls for the need to reinsert the importance of makers of these posters and to reconsider these posters as artworks – which may challenge the ways in which these posters are classified.

By examining these resistances poster exhibitions this study aims to understand the kinds of values that such exhibitions confer on these posters, whether as historical archive material or

as works of art, given that they are presented and studied within an art gallery context. In turn, it looks at the question of classification, particularly around the question of what gets to be viewed as art or what doesn't. This research asks the questions about why posters remain unacknowledged as forms of art, but as archive material when they are also produced by artists and through a process that is mostly used for producing art. Further, it asks the question of how display strategies play a role in the classification and reading of these posters as art forms even though these exhibitions are not overtly acknowledged as such; yet they speak to an exhibition rhetoric or language usually applied to art?

Other secondary questions are: how is the message contained in these posters translated within the curatorial frameworks thereby implicating how these posters become classified? This study argues for a re-examination of these posters and their location within artistic discourses. It considers whether or not it is valuable to look at these posters as forms of art.

Thesis structure

This thesis is divided into four chapters.

Chapter one: 'State of emergency', looks at the state of emergency contextualisation of the socio-historical and political factors specific to South Africa. This is to assist with the understanding of the political background of South Africa that influenced the creation of resistance posters. I examine how printmaking, a medium historically and internationally associated with images of resistance and revolution, finds its place in the relationship between politics and art in South Africa.

Chapter two: titled 'Poster*, Archive Institution and Art Museums'*, examines two exhibitions the *Images of Defiance: South African poster of the 1980's exhibitions* and *Interruptions: Posters from the Community Arts Project Archive exhibition 2014*. It looks at the kinds of values that such association confers on these posters, whether as historical archive material or as works of art. In this chapter, I will also focus on archival houses that store collections consisting of visual work, specifically prints and posters produced during the 1980's. These archival houses are the *South African History Archives (SAHA)* and the *Centre for Humanities*

Studies (CHR) at the University of Western Cape. This section aims to understand the contribution made by archival houses in bringing the resistance posters into the public domain. It focuses primarily on the visual component of these archives.

Chapter three: Thinking through exhibitions: "Re- Ordering the Canon", explores display strategies and the classification and reading of posters as forms of art. This chapter examines the seminal exhibitions Thami Mnyele and Medu Art Ensemble retrospective (2009). This chapter examines how the message contained in these posters, is translated within the curatorial frameworks, thereby implicating how these posters become classified?
This chapter will look closely at the role of the Johannesburg Art Gallery and the display strategies used in this particular institution and how this refects in the classification and reading of posters as forms of art. Other concerns that will be explored in this chapter are the values placed on the resistance poster, especially as archival material created as an artistic form.

Chapter four: 'Post- apartheid Resistance' is contextualised by the moment after the official end to apartheid and the initial transitional years since the introduction of a democratic constitution. The chapter will begin with unpacking the concept of art as a weapon for political struggle, and how today, after apartheid, we find ourselves in a different realm of 'conflict and change', which, while it supposes – in part – a change in the archetypal medium for protest. Though each artist mentioned in this thesis uses different methods, they each demonstrate how printmaking continues to be used in context to today's social commentary. I have chosen two contemporary artists practising in South Africa who have used the resistance poster and/or printmaking in their works for social commentary – namely Brett Murray and Kudzanai Chiurai. Both artists use the medium of printmaking as a means of questioning current socio-political affairs. This is not to say that these contemporary artists explicitly use art as an instrument for political struggle per se.

Research methodology

The methodologies used in this paper are qualitative. The first methodology is a comparative analysis of academic texts. These discuss Thami Mnyele's background and artistic practice, South

African arts and politics and the Poster. The second methodology used is the analysis of the display strategies used in the curating of the following exhibitions; *Thami Mnyele and Medu Art Ensemble Retrospective (2009), Images of Defiance: South African poster of the 1980's (2004)* and *Interruptions: Posters from the Community Arts Project Archive (2014*) which are the case studies for my research, both in terms of revisiting the exhibitions' image archive and published newspaper reviews on them. Since there is minimal literature on exhibition history and practices in South Africa; I intend to use archival data as primary sources. For archival research I have visiting the SAHA (South African History archives) which holds the largest collection of Political posters within South Africa. I have also visited the Keleketla Library which was established in 2008 as a platform to create access to the use of arts and media for youth. Keleketla Library holds the Medu Art Ensemble Newsletters which were donated to them by Judy Seidman.

The other archival material that I viewed was the newspaper archives at the Johannesburg Art Gallery library archives. The importance of the analyses of the material at these archives was to obtain information pertaining to the intention behind the three exhibitions. The archival material has range from newspaper and magazine archives and may include reports and reviews on the creation and exhibitions of resistance posters.

Chapter one: State of emergency

> The apartheid era in South Africa began in 1948, with the coming to power of the Afrikaner-dominated National Party and its promotion of an ideology of racial and ethnic separation (Puffer, 2009: xvi).

Apartheid is a regime considered to exemplify oligarchy, which is a system of governance defined by the administration of a distinguished group which rules tyrannically with their own interests at heart and with those, not of the ruling party having little if any, political voice. In South Africa, the minority 'white'[2] group were preferentially treated concerning access to most of the country's resources, amenities and geographic spaces. Legislation ensured that the 'white' population group, consisting predominantly of English- and Afrikaans-speaking

[2] On the note of racial classifications during this time, David Welsh and J.E. Spence (2011: 4-5) state that "the appropriate nomenclature for South Africa's racial categories is a minefield". They define the term 'black' as the common status of "victims of discrimination, rather than differences in skin colour". Although a "terminological tangle" itself, the term 'black' is viewed in comparison to the official apartheid classification of 'non-white', the negative of 'white', which was the term used to classify the minority racial group.

people, was preferentially treated regardless of whether they supported the apartheid regime or not. Hendrick F. Verwoerd, the Prime Minister of South Africa between 1958 and 1966, defined apartheid as 'separate development' in an attempt to rebrand and justify the segregationist policies of the regime (Spence and Welsh 2011: 10).

Sipho Mdanda in *The Role of art in the Liberation Struggle* clarifies that the endorsement of the separate development policy "ensured that inequalities between the racial identities constructed through colonialism and under apartheid were enshrined in legislation and implemented through state machinery" (2011: 17; 19). He also explains that the intention of apartheid was "to prevent the designated races from ever merging, forcing them apart, and establishing one as superior to the other" (2011: 17; 19). The separation of racial groups was retained by allocating different geographic and urban areas to different racial groups. Rasheed Araeen (2011: xi) points out that this "did not necessarily prevent people from moving from one area to another as long as this movement followed the prescribed paths or allocated social roles within apartheid".

The architecture of apartheid was constructed in such a way that legislation systematically and strategically divided the nation, yet at the same time allowed different races to artificially cross paths on a regularly monitored basis. The following acts are examples of 'walls' that partitioned society at large, either on a physical level or metaphorically to 'iron out the creases' that could disrupt the orders of separation.

i) *The Group Areas Act (Act No. 41 of 1950)* divided urban areas where different population groups could own property, work and reside, making residential separation compulsory. Forced removals and displacement were often a result of this act (2012a: *South African History Online*).

ii) *The Reservation of Separate Amenities Act (Act No. 49 of 1953)* ordered segregation in all public facilities, resources and services. Amenities were allocated according to the classifications of 'white' and 'non-white' so as to eliminate interracial contact and to preserve separate races (2012a: *South African History Online*).

iii) *The Internal Security Act (Act No. 44 of 1950*), or, as it was previously known, the *Suppression of Communism Act (Act No. 44 of 1950)* banned the Communist Party of South Africa and any activity considered 'communist'. The Communist activity could broadly be defined as any activity related to political opposition that supported radical change. Therefore, any person, media documentation or form of art that openly opposed apartheid or supported so-called communist groups was banned (2012a: *South African History Online*).

The apartheid government enclosed and protected itself and its ideology within this labyrinth of legislation. However, in the course of its strategy of 'racial-preservation', it erected structures that would serve as canvases for resistance art. According to Okwui Enwezor (2009:19), in '*Better Lives. Marginal Selves: Framing the Current Reception of Contemporary South African Art*', resistance art was an art that examined its traditions, made obviously. It was an art that was produced under a state of emergency, under conditions of abnormality and absurdity.

Throughout the 1980s, there were major boycotts and rebellion against the apartheid government. International disdain economically and socially isolated South Africa, and the condemnation of apartheid grew with intensity. By mid-1980s, it was clear that what the apartheid government had set out to do was clearly disintegrated. The South African and international community had challenged the system both physically and socially. The international community had launched the release Mandela campaign. This was followed by and international conference on sanctions against South Africa organised by the United Nations. The pressure from the sanctions against South Africa forced the government to move political prisoners[3] like Nelson Mandela and Walter Sisulu from Robben Island to Pollsmor prison in 1982. This decade also marked the height of apartheid in South Africa and an increase in the armed struggle.

In the arts, many black artists faced the harsh realities of South African life and addressed these realities by creating images directed at the state violence. Situated within the anti-

[3] *Noun*: a person imprisoned for their political beliefs or actions. In south Africa this was a common phenomenon

apartheid movement[4] and falling in line with the political tensions at the time, the use of art as a weapon of struggle saw an increase during the decade. For many, according to Sabine Marschall (2002: 47), "art was the only sector in which political opposition could find a voice". During this period there was an increase in black art movements and art community centres like the FUBA Academy, Medu Art Ensemble and Funda centre (Brown, 2007:5). These collectives were formed not only to protect artists from the exploitation by white-owned galleries but also to challenge the South African apartheid regime.

The phenomenon of politically-active art, or resistance art, was a response to the truths made clear by the events of 1976[5]. Resistance art emerged as artists responded to socio-political events and issues. In her book, *Resistance Art in South Africa,* Sue Williamson (1989: 8) writes that resistance art "is also about the growth of the ideas that art is not necessarily an elitist activity, and that popular cultural resistance has a vital role to play in the life of the community and the struggle for freedom". Williamson's book is organised into chapter categories that focus on specific mediums and types of resistance art, for example, posters, murals, graffiti, T-shirts and Peace Parks. This topic will be explored further in chapter two.

In the first chapter, I have laid out the system of apartheid and the context in which resistance posters were created. To begin to examine the different strategies used by archive institutions and art museums in housing resistance posters in their collections, it is necessary to unpack and contextualise the socio-historic and political factors specific to how these posters speak

[4] Mdanda (2011: 19) explains that "the formation of the United Democratic Front (UDF) in 1983 and the Congress of the South African Trade Unions (COSATU) in 1985 were two major political developments that gave rise to what became known as the Mass Democratic Movement". Seidman (2007: 127) clarifies that the Mass Democratic Movement, known as the MDM, was "not an organisation in itself, but a description of the wide range of anti-apartheid groups drawn together under the umbrella of the UDF [United Democratic Front]".

[5] June 16 1976 Uprising that began in Soweto and spread countrywide profoundly changed the socio-political landscape. Events that triggered the uprising can be traced back to policies of the Apartheid government that resulted in the introduction of the *Bantu Education Act in 1953*. The rise of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) and the formation of South African Students Organisation (SASO) raised the political consciousness of many students while others joined the wave of anti-Apartheid sentiment within the student community. When the language of Afrikaans alongside English was made compulsory as a medium of instruction in schools in 1974, black students began mobilizing themselves

to the South Africa context. I have further explored the political implications in chapters three and four.

Chapter two: Poster, Archive Institution and Art Museums

Joseph Alsop (1982) in '*The Rare Art traditions: The History of Art Collecting and Its Linked Phenomena'*, believes that there has never been a definite definition of what art collection is. He says to define art collection you have to look at what 'collection' is in the first place. Art collecting has a history that is both significant and previously untold. Alsop defines a collection by saying, " to collect is to gather objects belonging to a particular category the collector happens to fancy, as magpies fancy things that are shiny, as a collection is what has been gathered," (Alsop 1982: 70). Alsop believes that collectors create their own category of collection; a collection is defined by its collector. "By creating their own categories, all collectors create their own rarities," (Alsop 1982:72).

This chapter explores the history of resistance posters looking specifically at posters produced in South Africa during the apartheid era. I have divided this chapter into three subsections. The first section of this chapter explores resistance posters looking particularly at the history of printmaking and the medium's contribution to the resistance of apartheid. It elaborates on art and politics in South Africa and the role played by communities in creating posters.

In the section *Archives and Art Museums* the focus is on archival houses that store collections consisting of visual work, specifically prints and posters produced during the 1980's. This section focuses on collections of resistance posters that are stored in archival houses. Mbembe's (2002:19) definition of an archive is that there cannot be an archive if it does not encompass both the building itself and the documents stored there. This section aims to understand the contribution made by archival houses in bringing the resistance posters into the public domain through exhibitions. It focuses primarily on the visual component of these archives. These archival houses are the *South African History Archives (SAHA)* and the *Centre for Humanities Studies (CHR)* at the University of Western Cape. I explore the role played by the Posterbook collective together with the *South African History Archive (SAHA)* in preserving

resistance posters. This section will also be looking at what it means for art objects like the resistance poster to be displayed in a historical museum like the Museum Africa.

The third section focuses on two exhibitions; *Images of Defiance: South African poster of the 1980's* and *Interruptions: Posters from the Community Arts Project Archive (2014)*. Both exhibitions display collections of resistance posters found in archival houses. The exhibition *Interruptions: Posters from the Community Arts Project Archive (2014)* was mounted at the Cape Town City Hall, and curated by Emile Maurice on behalf of the Centre for Humanities Research (CHR) at University of Western Cape (UWC). This exhibition was displayed outside a gallery setting of posters that are stored in an archive house. The second exhibition is the *Images of Defiance: South African poster of the 1980's* was hosted by Museum Africa in 2004 and was collaboratively curated by The Posterbook Collective and the South African History Archives (SAHA). Most of the resistance posters that were displayed at this exhibition are stored and owned by the South African History archives.

2.1 Resistance poster

The section *resistance posters* will not only explore the history of printmaking and the medium's contribution to the resistance of apartheid but also illustrate the types of material culture that are stored in archival houses. These exhibitions as stated earlier were produced as instruments of re-activation of the archive which has been neglected by mainstream cultural history.

> The poster succeeds in putting forward a message instantaneously, immediately, which assaults the viewer with its immediate nature, forcing the message into the psyche. The very nature of the poster is a paradox in our time because of its immediate production and dissemination, but yet archived and lives beyond it instantaneous creation, allowing for the events which caused their creation to be recalled and re-enacted over and over (Mehnert: 2005).

Printmaking was one of, if not the most popular mediums used for resistance art. Printmaking specifically in the form of protest posters and relief prints has been one the main mediums which played a critical role in the fight for liberation and democracy in South Africa. Philippa Hobbs and Elizabeth Rankin in '*There is No Forgetting: Later Prints by Artist from Rorke's Drift*'

(1997:3) state that, like many other cultural forms, "prints constituted a site of resistance". Further, they add:

> In times of change, printmaking has often served a social role in disseminating ideas, sometimes subtly in the resonances of individual artworks in galleries, sometimes more overtly in the messages of publications, political banners, posters, even T-shirts. The democratic nature of the multiple and versatile print, which shifts steadily from 'high' art and more pragmatic applications, may provide an intrinsic if subliminal agenda for its important role in South African art.

Another writer Julian Hecker (2011:11) in her catalogue titled *Impressions of South Africa from 1965 to Now,* attests to this above understanding of the role of the printmaking stating that "The graphic language and inherent reproducibility of print-making have long been tools for social and political Expression, particularly in regions burger going periods of upheaval". The use of the printmaking medium to fight against injustice by the government is not unique to South Africa. Many artists like Francisco de Goya and Otto Dix created prints on cruelty. It was a favoured medium because of its graphic language. The printmaking language is expressive and its ranges of techniques and formats were used to further political goals and convey the atmosphere of a country at a time of great change (Hecker, 2011: 11). According to Hecker (2011:1), the mediums varied formats and broad reach made it particularly well suited to supporting a multiplicity of narratives. Hecker believes the medium can be used to further political goals and to convey the atmosphere of a country at a time of great change.

Hecker (2011, 11) believes that much of the work created during the years of apartheid transcends its historical moment. There are numerous publications by Judy Seidman (*Red on Black: The Story of the South African Poster Movement*, 2007) and the late Jonathan Berndt (*Weapon to Ornament: The CAP Media Project Posters*, 2007 and 'The Spectral Life of Posters in the Archive', 2010 [unpublished]), to name a few influential authors dealing with this specific adaption of the print medium, ranging from poster aesthetics and anonymous artists to a recent discovery of archived Soviet Posters in Cape Town[6].

[6] These posters from the 1940s, known as Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union (TASS) Posters, are held in the Iziko South African National Gallery (ISANG) and form the nexus of networks linking South Africa and the Soviet Union in the1940s and 1980s (Berndt 2010: 1)

2.2 Archive house and the Museum

According to Achille Mbembe (2002: 19), an archive can be understood as a collection of documents - normally written documents kept in the building. Mbembe's (2002:19) definition of an archive is that there cannot be an archive if it does not encompass both the building itself and the documents stored there.

In this section, I look at Archival institutions that store collections consisting of visual work, specifically prints and posters produced during the 1980's. This section aims to understand the contribution made by archival houses in bringing the resistance posters into the public domain. These archival houses are the *South African History Archives (SAHA)* and the *Centre for Humanities Studies (CHR)* at the University of Western Cape. I will explore the role played by the Posterbook collective together with the *South African History Archive (SAHA)* in preserving resistance posters. This section also looks at what it means for art objects like the resistance poster to be displayed in a historical museum like the Museum Africa. Other concerns that will be explored in this chapter are the values placed on the resistance poster, especially as archival material created in an artistic form.

Bhekizizwe Peterson (2002:29) in his article *'The Archive and the Politics of Imaginary'* says, "The archives were a crucial component of the active labour of creating the political imaginary, that is, the intellectual and cultural horizons that shape our grasp of personal and social identities and histories". Peterson (2002: 29) argues that "Underlying the archive is the aim of ordering the past as inheritance" Peterson looks at the ownership and interpretation of the archival material. He continues to explain that the archives, work to systemise the chaos of the past, organising the fragments of the old world in ways that can renew the world we inhibit (Peterson 2002: 29). Peterson says that this, therefore, confines the archive to their institutional and political nature and makes it hard for them to escape the thick imprint of these systems. Achille Mbembe (2002: 2) comments that "The archive is, therefore, not a piece of data, but a status". The notion that history has already been presented by a historian who selectively decides which piece of information is important and which can be left out of history. There is prestige and power involved in who gets to even keep the raw archival materials we need to write our history.

In her paper *The pulse of the Archive* Ann Laura Stoler (2009; 22) describes the colonial archives "as both a corpus of writing and as a force field that animates political energies and expertise, that pulls on some 'social facts' and converts them into qualified knowledge, that attends to some ways of knowing while repelling and refusing others". Such a statement further alludes to the biased nature of archives that were formulated by the apartheid government, which Peterson and Mbembe point out above. According to Stoler (2009: 33), "More than ever, new studies of archival production tackle the politics of colonial knowledge and the 'arrested histories' – those histories suspended from received historiography- that are its effect". Stoler's arguments are related to the structuring of the South African archive. Stoler argues that it is important (2009; 25) "To understand an archive, one needs to understand the institutions that it served".

2.2.1 African Museums

Carol Brown, former director of the Durban Art Gallery and curator at large (2007: 4) in her article *'African Art, African Museums'* states that, in South Africa, most art museums were established at the end of the nineteenth century with endowments of European art; and collecting continued in the same vein. With the beneficiaries of this system being predominately white, many works by the black artist were left out and not included in the collection. Talking about museums of history and anthropology and not necessarily museums of art, Emmanual Nnakenyi (1998: 31) in *'Africa Museums: the Challenges of Change'* says the majority of museums in Africa are products of the colonial era and are twentieth-century creations. Bruce and Saks (1992: 238) supports these two viewpoints in the article *'Frankly Speaking: A New Museum for a New South Africa'* says, "Most south African museums are heavily Eurocentric, in their composition of their staff, their collection policies and the manner in which they have sought to portray South African history in their display". They state that this was in view of the plans to build the new Africana Museum which is currently known as Museum Africa and the process that the museum was taking in trying to create transformative methods of display and that there has always been a pro-white bias when it came to museum display (Bruce and Saks 1992: 240). Arguing why there was such a focus on European art, Brown states that "African Museums were not representative of their own heritage because they did not show or own the treasures of their past" (Brown 2007: 4) according to Brown the

benefactor and curators were mainly of European origin and did not value art by local, indigenous populations.

Museum Africa, previously known as "The Africana Museum" was founded in 1935 with the nucleus of a collection assembled by the collector, John Gaspard Gubbins (Bruce and Saks 1992: 238). It was first based at the Johannesburg Library Building and later moved to Newtown downtown Johannesburg. The aim of the museum was 'to represent every phase and factor of African life, to show these in sections and to vitalize them by securing the co-operation of living entities they represent' (Bruce and Saks 1992: 238). The museum was divided into eight sections. A chronological history gallery, which showed South African history in the pictures; The geographical division; Racial division, which included every 'European nation'; religion; Occupation; Culture; Woman section and a South African National Portrait Gallery (Bruce and Saks 1992; 238). In the beginning, the museum mostly showed the history of the ruling whites and how they viewed "their country, its citizens ad its history" (Bruce and Saks 1992: 238). According to Bruce and Saks (1992: 238), "when black history is shown at all, it [was] usually in the context of developments in the white community and how contact with blacks affects them". In 1994, after the fall of apartheid the museum changed its name from Africana Museum to Museum Africa; Museum Africa despite its name is most decidedly a museum about South Africa and particularly Johannesburg.

One hundred years from now the posters, T-shirts, baseball caps, ties, buttons, and photo cloth will be profound documents of the single most important transition in South African history (Ross 1995: 6). If the 'material culture' of apartheid was a hot collectable in 1993, in August of 1994 it was election memorabilia (Ross 1995:6). And Because of this, you find that most resistance posters are stored in the archival houses of history instead of Art Museums as art.

2.2.2 South African History Archive (SAHA)

In South Africa, the custody and core of South African archival treasury are shared to varying degree between private individuals, civil society institutions and organisation and the state (*Archival Platform* 2015: 19). In 2012 The Archival Platform was formed, this platform is an

initiative established under the support of the University of Cape Town. The Archival Platform's report titled, 'State of the Archives: an analysis of South Africa's national archival system 2014', which was published in March 2015, was the culmination of a massive two-year research project funded by The Atlantic Philanthropies. The research provides an in-depth analysis of the entire national Archival System. According to the research done by the Archival Platform (2015: 19-20) on South Africa archives, the distinction is blurred between what archival material should be collected by a public institution. Public archives have been mandated to collect non-public records of enduring significance since the first archives legislation was formulated in 1922 (2015:20). In the 2015 report, it states that the archival systems have its origins in the legislative and administrative mechanisms that regulated colonial rule. These were generally kept and generated by "British colonial officials, missionaries, travellers, public figures and scholars" (2015: 21). As the agency of the state, the public archives service mirrored political and administrative changes. It was initially shaped by its origins as an instrument of colonial regulation and in its later years by the ideology of apartheid and the bureaucratic culture that supported it (2015:23).

During the 1980s The Posterbook Collective was formed by a group of activist namely, Emelia Potenza, Marlene Powell, Charlotte Shaer and Judy Seidman. They began collecting and cataloguing as many posters as they could lay their hands on. This was not easy as many of the posters were banned almost upon their first appearance (*Image of Defiance*, 2001). Also Anti-apartheid activists began to collect archival material as a counter-memory to the dominant apartheid archival system which only showed a one-sided view of the history of South Africa. "The South African government force-fed the ideology of apartheid to all South Africans, black and white" (SAHA 2004: 2).

The South African History Archive (SAHA) hosts a collection of artefacts of visual resistance of over 6000 unique South African struggle art posters, as well as over 350 struggle t-shirts (SAHA 2015). According to SAHA (2015), the majority of these visual materials date from the period between the late 1970s and the early 1990s, the earliest posters found in their collections were produced by the Communist Party of South Africa in the1940's. According to the book (*Images of Defiance*, 2004) posters have been used for commercial advertising and political propaganda since the beginning of the 20th century. In South Africa during the 1950s,

placards, banners and leaflets were popular in the anti-Apartheid movement. They used graphic protesting as a means of communicating with their communities. In the 1960s there was a great decline in graphic protesting after the suppression and banning of the African National Congress (ANC) and Pan African Congress (PAC) by the then Apartheid Government in South Africa. By the end of the 1960s, the major source of graphic poster production was from student politics at the Universities.

Student politics was rife in the late 1960s, even though the distribution of their posters was limited to campuses but their subject matter dealt with major national issues (SAHA 2004). In the early 1980s when a fire broke out at the students' union building at the University of Witwatersrand, the only known collection of student posters was destroyed (SAHA 2004). In late 1970 the usage of posters re-emerged when the trade unions were resuscitated as a major force in South Africa, but they were not popular. People favoured using banners and placards as a form of communication. Even during the 1976 June 16 student uprising, it seems that poster as a medium was not popular. Posters depicting the 1976 event were only made later.

The real era of posters began in the 1980s; with the formation of the Screen Training Project (STP) in Johannesburg and the Community Art Projects (CAP) which was established in 1977 in Cape Town. Both these projects were community-based and created political posters which were made by the community for the community. The Centre of Humanities Research CHR Studies hosts a number of collections, but for the purpose of this paper, I will focus on the Community Arts Projects (CAP) collection which they acquired in 2009. CAP was established in the wake of the student uprising of 1976. It was formed by academics from Michaelis School of Arts, University of Cape Town (UCT), the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR) and the South African College of Higher Education (SACHED). This CAP collection has several mediums of visual works, namely paintings, drawings, photographs, sculpture, posters and prints (mainly linocuts).

To show the power of this medium, I have selected two exhibitions of resistance posters *Images of Defiance: South African poster of the 1980's* (2004) and *Interruptions: Posters from*

the Community Arts Project Archive (2014). These exhibitions are closely linked to archival houses and the creation of resistance posters in the 1980's.

2.3.1 Posters from the Community Arts Project Archive exhibition

Interruptions: Posters from the Community Arts Project Archive exhibition (2014) which was mounted as part of the *Open Design Festival* at the Cape Town City Hall, 13 – 23 August 2014, was curated by Emile Maurice on behalf of the Centre for Humanities Research studies (CHR) at UWC. This exhibition was displayed outside a gallery setting and the posters are stored at The Centre for Humanities Research Studies. The Centre for Humanities Studies hosts a number of collections, but for the purpose of this paper, I will focus on the Community Arts Projects (CAP) collection which was part of the exhibition in 2014.

The exhibition was a presentation of a collection of artworks that had been lying dormant in the storerooms of The Centre for Humanities Studies (CHR). According to a press statement, the purpose of this show was to re-activate the archive which has been neglected by mainstream cultural history. In the press statement dated 2014, they describe the prints on exhibition as depicting the anti-apartheid struggle and were made, not simply as personal expressions, but as interventions to create awareness about people's resolve to overcome their oppression and dehumanisation. These posters were created by communities.

> Literally, hundreds of 'ordinary' people, all belonging to one anti-apartheid organisation or another, interrupted their usual roles in everyday life – as workers, shop stewards, students and representatives of youth, community, church, labour and civic organisations. In so doing, they become something else – 'artists', makers of images. And in so becoming, they at once subverted the centuries-old notion that it was the Artist (with a capital A), trained in the methods, ideologies and formulations of the academy – the disciplinary 'expert' – who was the sole authoritative voice of cultural 'truth'.

Works by trained artists were also on display. These works were produced mainly at the Screen Training Project (STP) in Johannesburg and at the Community Arts Project in Cape Town. These organisations were established to amplify and grow the cultural voice of the disempowered and the unheard under apartheid. Resistance posters were also produced elsewhere in South Africa – by Graphic Equaliser studio in Johannesburg, by small silkscreen units in communities, and by commercial presses allied to the liberation movement. In

addition, they were produced by the MEDU Arts Ensemble in Botswana and by various international anti-apartheid movements in Europe, America and elsewhere.

2.3.2 'Images of Defiance'

In 2004, over four hundred resistance posters were on exhibition at Museum Africa in Newtown, Johannesburg South Africa. Curated by Jillian Carman, the exhibition drew much of its contents from the South African History Archives (SAHA). This exhibition was a collaboration project between The Posterbook Collective and the South African History archives. These posters form part of the collection of South African resistance posters from SAHA which was donated by The Posterbook Collective. The exhibition was titled *Images of Defiance* and presented political posters of the 1980s. The exhibition was accompanied by a catalogue book under the same title. On display was the selection of posters from pre-1948 through the high apartheid years into the post-apartheid period, with an emphasis on the violent 1970s and 1980s. The exhibition opened on the 25 April 2004. In a press statement by the city of Johannesburg (2004) for the opening, they state that the works on display explore one powerful tool that ordinary people used to voice their resistance to the violent oppression of the 1980s - often at the risk of their lives.

> 'Images of Defiance' contains personal images and universal political statements, and the selection and installation give voice and space to everything, from appeal against the arrests of high-profile political activist leaders to the simple plea of a mother whose son was spirited away by the Powers That Were, courtesy of pass laws or some more subtle misstep in apartheid law and values (Sassen, 2004).

According to Sassen (2004) there is a very interesting range of material on the exhibition, from simplistic and awkwardly drawn images that capture the political thrust forthrightly (if in poor language and ill-conceived human anatomy), to polished images, confronting apartheid metaphorically, with a flower or a gesture of poetry (with accurate perspective and convincingly rendered human form). In the exhibition the images have been carefully sleeved in plastic, proverbially dusted down and spruced up to pass muster in our democratic environment (Sassen 2004). According to Sassen (2004), the exhibition also featured other materials that played an instrumental role in the discourse of resistance.



Fig 1. Collage of some of the Works on Display at the exhibition *Images of Defiance* at Museum Africa in Newtown, Johannesburg South Africa.

"These include banners, some hand-painted, some screen-printed, as well as photographs of what became known as People's Parks, improvised monuments that stood for resistance but aimed at peace in the far distance" (Sassen 2004). The display strategy also included text and improvised images that gave contexts of the time that these posters were created in. "These are works thrown together out of political conviction, with the blood and tears of real beliefs

and hardships. These images are beautiful in their sense of urgency, and they are meaningful for us historically, having weathered the evils of apartheid" (Sassen 2004).

Chapter Three: Reconstruction of Neglected Contributions

> To collect is to gather objects belonging to a particular category the collector happens to fancy; and an art collection is a form of collecting in which the category is, bread by speaking, works of art (Alsop 1982:76).

Museums have a tradition of collecting objects that they feel are rare and unique. If an object is in a collection of an institution which is said to be an art institution then automatically that object is placed within the context of art. Art collections are defined by their collector and the contexts they are placed in. "Objects gain Value through links to powerful people and an individual's standing is enhanced through possession of well-known objects. There is a mutual process of value creation between people and things" (Gosden and Marshal 1999:173).

The 1980's marked a paradigm shift in South African art and this shift was towards the focus on black South African artists by art institutions. According to Sarbine Marschall (2001), this shift is characterised by the reconstruction of neglected contributions, extreme changes in exhibition and acquisition policies and interest in research topics, all to re-write South African art history through bridging the gaps and imbalances created over the past decades. This shift has been recorded in a number of retrospective exhibitions, catalogues, and articles by art historians, curators and scholars (Marschall, 2009).

South African art museums have been concerned with bridging the gap of the past, where black artists were side-lined. According to Emile Maurice (2013) in *Hidden Voices: art and the erasure of memory in post –apartheid South Africa*, a number of curators (mostly white and older generation) have in fact been deconstructing what Marschall describes as the 'white art canon'. This has been done through exhibitions and accompanying texts dealing with the black artistic voices since the 1980s. To note that most of them have been white and older generation is a reflection on who has been controlling the positioning of knowledge about the black artists (Maurice, 2008). According to Marschall (1999), the first of these exhibitions was

Ricky Burnett's *Tributaries* from 1985[7], followed by *The Neglected Tradition: towards a new history of South African art* (1930-1988)[8]', curated by Steven Sack in 1988. Other examples of exhibitions in the re-writing history mould are Hayden Proud's *George Pemba Retrospective* (IZIKO SANG, 1996), Clive Keller's *Thami Mnyele and Medu Arts Ensemble Retrospective* (JAG, 2009) and Marilyn Martin's *A Vigil of Departure: Louis Khehla Maqhubela 1960 – 2010* (IZIKO SANG and Standard Bank Gallery, 2010). By addressing black exclusion, all of these shows have contributed hugely to opening up the story of South African art for the previously marginalised black artist.

This account of the event is simply to highlight the historical background of the seminal exhibitions *Thami Mnyele and Medu Art Ensemble retrospective* (2009). This chapter will look closely at the role of the institution: Johannesburg Art Gallery in particular their exhibitions in reintroducing posters as a form of art.

3.1 Johannesburg Art Gallery and policies of collection

Bruce Altshuler in *Collecting the New: Museum and Contemporary Art* stated that "function of the museum - established in the eighteenth century, alongside its moral purpose of developing taste through exposure to exemplary artworks, required that works brought into the institutional collection be located within a fixed art historical narrative. It is this narrative that has to be taught to visitors". (2005: 2). The traditional view of art museums has been that they are institutions intended to preserve and display works that have withstood the test of time. According to Hall (1997: 155), "Museums exist in order to acquire, safeguard, converse, and display objects, artefacts and works of art of various kinds".

The Johannesburg Art Gallery (JAG) collection was first shown to the public in 1910. According to Carman (2006: 1), the collection was initiated in 1909 after a meeting in Britain between Florence Philips (the wife of Lionel Philips a mining tycoon of the time) and Sir Hugh Lane. Lane was a London-based art agent and curator, who created the first acquisitions policy for

[7] According to Marschall (2001: 53) this exhibition, which opened in 1985, was presented not at a public or even a commercial art gallery, but in a warehouse owned by BMW South Africa, the corporate sponsor. It was the first exhibition in South Africa in which works by black and white artists were shown together without hierarchies (Marschall 2001:53).

[8] for the Johannesburg Art Gallery (JAG) i

JAG. In 1940 JAG saw the inclusion of the first black South African artist into the collection, a work by Gerald Sekoto, *Yellow Houses* (Fig. 2), the only item by a black artist held by JAG during the first 50 years. Initially, JAG was a museum of western traditional art; this was until mid-1980 when a few changes occurred not only with the art collection and the inclusion of additional black artists into the collection. This was prompted by the need to fill the gaps created by the apartheid government in excluding black artist from mainstream art.



Fig. 2 Gerald Sekoto, *Yellow Houses*, 1940, Oil on cardboard, 50, 8 x 74, 5 cm[9]

According to Carol Brown (2007: 4) in South Africa, most art museums were established at the end of the nineteenth century with endowments of European art. Collecting continued in the same vein with the benefactors of this system being predominately white. In the article Brown (2007: 4) describes how African museums were not representative of their own heritage because they did not show or own the treasures of their past (Brown, 2007). The rise in Black art movement also saw a rise in art institutions that showed interest in their art. What Sabine Marschall (2001) calls 'strategies of accommodation' Art institutions which had a highly biased system of art education and collecting practices now had an interest in the inclusion of black art.

Marschall (2001:51) states that, "Because black South Africans were denied the opportunity for formal artistic training and entry into the mainstream fine art sector, the division between

[9] **http://www.gerardsekotofoundation.com/artwork.htm**

these two categories ran largely along racial lines." Therefore works by the black artists were collected and written about as craft and hardly entered art museum archives. Marschall (2001:51) further discusses how works that appealed aesthetically to white patrons found their way into a fine art gallery, but this was not without any compromise. Most of them would be given labels like 'traditional art' or 'transitional art'.

> Another strategy of accommodating the work of black artists into the white dominated fine art establishment is recourse to presumed universal standards of quality determined by the discerning eye of the connoisseur. This approach is frequently accompanied by attempts to piece together a history of the artist, including his or her artistic training, influences, and personal and professional experiences. As a result, an artist's persona, sometimes illustrious, often hero-sized and mythologized, emerges from the sea of anonymous craftsmen, lending credibility to the work and justifying its consideration on an equal footing with the work of white artists (Marschall, 2001: 53).

3.2.1 Thami Mnyele and Medu Art Ensemble Retrospective (2008)

The Neglected Tradition: towards a new history of South African art (1930-1988) was an exhibition that focused on the history of South African art collections and the development of the Johannesburg Art Gallery as an establishment (Sack; 1988). This exhibition exclusively included black artists which were thought to have been overlooked by the art institution in the past. Thami Mnyele was one of the artists that were included in this exhibition. In The Neglected Tradition's catalogue, there was hardly any information on the biography of Mnyele and this was due to the lack of information on the artist.

According to Kellner and Gonzalez (2009), the shortage of information on Mnyele prompted the need to know more about the artist and this resulted in the construction of the *Thami Mnyele and the Medu Art Ensemble Retrospective* at the Johannesburg Art Gallery. Thami Mnyele a visual artist from Tembisa, South Africa contributed to, and occasionally headed, the Graphic Art Unit of Medu Art Ensemble. Born in 1948, Thamsanqa Mnyele's interest in art became evident after he joined the Mihloti Black Theatre. The group was composed of writers, musicians, intellectuals and church groups and was formed out of frustration the artist had towards the biasedness' of the arts industry. To further his skills as an artist Mnyele decided to apply for a grant to study at Rorke's Drift Art Centre (1962) in Natal. This centre has produced some of the most prestigious South African Artists. Here he learnt all the technical skills needed to create art. His time with the centre lasted only one year and he had

to return to Alexandra Township in Johannesburg to help out with finances since his mother was the only bread winner. On his return, he was hired as an illustrator for South African Committee for Higher education (SACHED). As an artist and freedom fighter, he influenced many artists in creating artworks that gave voice to people's demands and he became part of the mobilisation for freedom.

This exhibition *'Thami Mnyele and Medu Art Ensemble Retrospective'* opened in 2008, was according to Sack (Kellner and Gonzalez, 2009) an opportunity to take a look back at a neglected time in the history of South African art. The exhibition was curated by Clive Kellner together with Gonzalez and other stakeholders. The exhibition displayed diverse media, which included documentary film, recorded interviews of Mnyele's family members, newspaper and magazine clippings and artworks by Mnyele, with a section focusing on posters which were produced by the Medu Art Ensemble. The main section was filled with artworks by Mnyele. The rest of the exhibition was divided into different sections, each room having its own theme. The one gallery space had images of all the Medu Art ensemble units. One section showed selected artworks by a South African artist who had been on previous residencies at the Thami Mnyele Foundations studios in Amsterdam. There was also a reading room. One section named the 'Raid room' showing photographs, newspaper archival material and video footage of the 1985 raid in Botswana, where Mnyele was killed. The retrospective also paid tribute to Medu's activities especially the 1982 Culture and Resistance symposium in Gaborone, Botswana where cultural workers in exile and working in South Africa met to define future strategies for the cultural front.

The works included in the exhibition dated back to 1971. Through the years of creating works, you can see the stylistic progression in Mnyele's works. Mnyele work was highly influenced by both artist and poets and writers. According to Miles (Kellner and Gonzalez 2009: 28) "In his works you can see influence by Dumile Feni, Julian Motau, Salvador Dali, Vincent van Gogh and Francisco de Goya, Mongane Wally Serote, Pablo Neruda, Chinua Achebe and many others". Mnyele's works in the early 1970's were more figurative with solid backgrounds, (Fig. 3). In 1973 there was a shift towards more expressive imagery. The figures became less human-like and he exaggerated their forms, (Fig. 4). From 1974 through to 1980 the imagery became more abstract, "evocatively hallucinatory" (Miles Kellner and Gonzalez 2009:31).

Mnyele's transitioned from creating figuratively abstract work into creating resistance posters is clearly demonstrated in the images below.

In 1979 Mnyele was forced into exile in Botswana. Where he joined the Medu Art Ensemble and became one of the leading figures within the collective. He was involved in creating and designing resistance posters and was responsible for the design of the first draft of the ANC's current logo. It is here that his work shifted back to being more direct and filled with slogans and this was done through the creation of resistance posters. Even though Medu worked as collective, Thami Mnyele seemed to be singled out by scholars. This is also visible in the retrospective exhibition and the works on display at the exhibition. The singling out of Thami Mnyele, out of this movement, especially in the exhibition is against the ethos of MEDU's ideals of collaborative work.

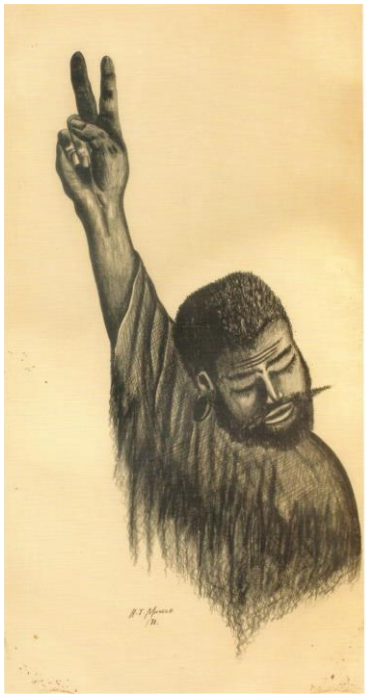


Fig 3: Thami mnyele, *untitled*, 1971.charcoal on paper 85 X 45 cm.

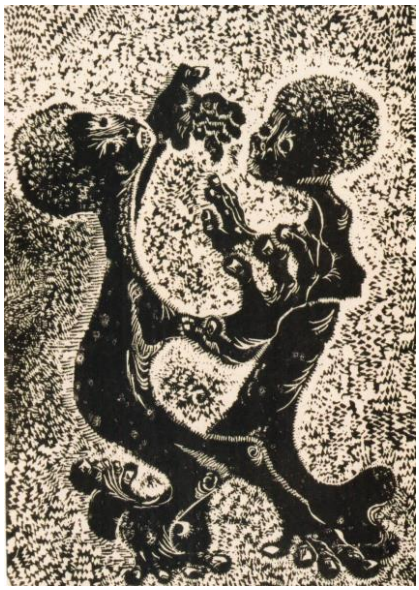


Fig. 4: Thami Mnyele, *Dancing Figures,* 1973, Linocut on paper, 37.5 X 29

3.2.2 Medu Art Ensemble

> The role of an artist is to learn; the role of an artist is to teach others; the role of an artist is to ceaselessly search for the ways and means of achieving freedom. Art cannot overthrow a government but it can inspire change (Thami Mnyele in *Images of Defiance*, 1991:10).

In order to understand the significance of the selected exhibitions, it is necessary to summarise the history of The Medu Art Ensemble and the Culture and Resistance symposium. The period before 1980's, saw the rise of many Black Conscience Movements, with the 1976 student protest also being part of this movement. By the mid-1980's South Africa had erupted into conflict with the imposition of a state of emergency. With it came oppressive conduct from authorities resulting in an upsurge of clashes, riots, strikes which were mostly brutally dealt with. Artists responded to this by creating works of art that were confronting the South African apartheid regime (Williamson: 1989). Despite the apartheid policy a vibrant and independent non-racial culture was forged by artists and activists working in alternative communal organizations and centres like the Bill Ainslie Studios (which became the Johannesburg Art Foundation), Mofolo Art Centre in Soweto (a carry on from Polly St Studios), Katlehong Art Centre in Germiston, Black Art Studios in Durban, the Community Arts workshops in Durban and Community Arts Project and Nyanga in Cape Town, Alexandra Art centre, Funda Centre in Soweto and FUBA (Federated Union of Black Artists), the first black art gallery in 1977 in the Market Theatre precinct, Johannesburg. According to Carol Brown (2007) in the 1980's, there was a move towards a less institutionalised and more community oriented art which was re-enforced by several conferences including the Culture and Resistance festival in Gaborone which was organised by the Medu Art Ensemble. Many art events and structures were formed outside the formal institutional space.

In early 1980's, a group of exiled South African cultural workers began to print posters with a purpose of influencing South African communities against the Apartheid government. This group named themselves the Medu Art Ensemble and was formed in Botswana to use art as a tool to give a voice to the growing struggle of the people of South Africa. Medu, from the Sepedi word meaning 'roots', was a group of cultural workers initiated by Dr Wally Serote on his return to Botswana after a period of study in the USA (Kellner and Gonzalez 2009). It was

started as a cultural organisation for the African National Congress (ANC) but had independence in terms of the form and content of the material they produced.

Originally an organisation for black artists only, it later became a multi-racial organisation. The organisation consisted of six units: Publications and Research, Graphic Art, Music, Theatre, Photography and Film. These units all operated under the direction and/or supervision of the publications and research unit (Kellner and Gonzalez: 2009). Medu designed posters for distribution inside South Africa, to be used by organisations directly confronting the apartheid government (*Images of Defiance* 2006). Medu always adhered to the principle of collective work and community development. Medu conducted workshops in Botswana and promoted resistance to Apartheid in South Africa. Although Medu operated from Botswana their focus was the use of culture as a weapon against apartheid.

Medu called for a South African mass movement to develop silk-screening as a communications technique (*Images of Defiance* 2006: 4). Silk-screening, they said, "required relatively little equipment or capital outlay, does not need electricity, and the skills can be easily taught". Their ideologies lead to the July 1982 Culture and Resistance conference. Where over 5 000 artists from South Africa participated in the Medu-organised Culture and Resistance conference in Gaborone (*Images of Defiance,* 2006). In this festival, they emphasised the important of the arts to be involved in the anti-apartheid movement. Medu Art ensemble tried to instil the idea, "a political struggle is an unavoidable part of life in South Africa, and it must, therefore, infuse our art and culture" into the participants so that when they went back home they can mobilise the communities (*Images of Defiance*, 2006:6). After the conference art activists formed silk-screen workshops in South Africa and taught communities to produce these posters in South Africa. The success of the conference led the South African Government to ban all Medu posters within days of publication (*Images of Defiance* 2006). The distribution of posters from Botswana to South Africa slowed down, as smuggling posters across the border meant risking years in jail.

In 1982 Medu hosted the Symposium on Culture and Resistance, one of the most important gatherings of South African and international cultural activists in Gaborone, Botswana. The Culture and Resistance Symposium was held in Gaborone from the 5th to the 9 of July 1982.

The symposium and the accompanying exhibition and festival of South African Arts was an initiative of a number of South African artists living in Botswana. They felt a need to establish contacts and exchange ideas and experiences with other South African cultural workers. The theme for the symposium "Culture and Resistance" arose out of their need to discuss the artists' position within the environment in which they found themselves.

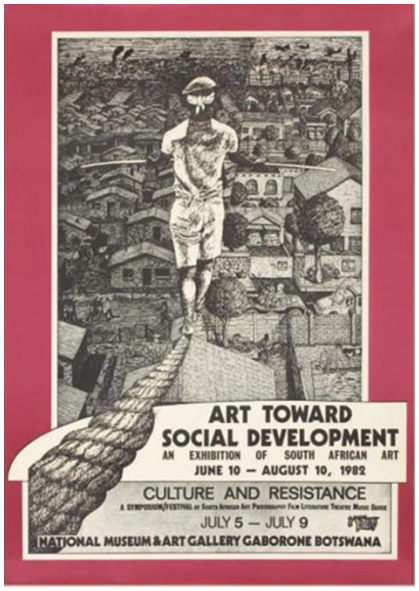


Fig 2: *Art Towards Social Development*, 1982, Exhibition Poster designed by Gordon Metz. Collection of Sergio-Ablio Gonzalez and Teresa Devant

This conference entailed exhibitions, musical and theatrical performance. Politically themed academic papers were also delivered by artists. There were cultural groups from all over South Africa and many exiled artists were also in attendance. As the apartheid state became more repressive in the 1970s and 1980s, many artists faced the harsh realities of South African life, sometimes indirectly, sometimes head-on. The conference was accompanied by an art exhibition of South African and exiled artists, entitled Art *Towards Social Development*. The exhibition was curated by Gordon Metz and Thami Mnyele[10]. This was seen as one of the first big exhibition organised by a black artist. *Art towards social Development* Exhibition was hosted by the National Museums and art Gallery in Gaborone, and a number of works shown

[10]Thamsanqa "Thami" Mnyele (1948-1985) was an artist from Alexandra Township in South Africa who was committed to bringing about social change in South Africa through the medium of art. He was forced into exile in Botswana in 1979 and decided to take a stand and actively participate in the struggle. In Botswana, Mnyele became a cultural worker with the Medu Art Ensemble, co-founded by his friend Mongane Wally Serote.

were far more than expected so two venues were selected, the other being the main hall of the Anglican Cathedral in Botswana. The exhibition was set out to instil optimism and inspire action among South Africans. The exhibition was created to clarify the role of the artist in that historical moment. Even though the exhibition took place in Botswana, it was seen as an extension of the South African art scene, in that, it was addressing issues happening in South Africa and also featured artworks and artists from around South Africa.

The artworks featured contributions from artists both black and white. The artists included Paul Stopforth, Durant Sihlali, Thami Mnyele, Sue Williamson, Kim Berman, Sydney Khumalo, David Koloane, Gavin Younge, Bill Einsle, Steven Sack and Walter Battiss just to name a few. The works on exhibit were created for the conference and featured paintings, drawings, silkscreen posters, mixed media, photography and sculptures. The number of works that were shown was 169 by 58 artists and 168 photographs by 29 photographers. It opened on the 10th of June and ran to the 10th of August 1982. A selection of the exhibited works toured to Sweden in 1984. In the Johannesburg Art Gallery library archive there is a catalogue of works that were presented at the exhibition, but no accompanying visuals of the exhibition. In a written review of the exhibition by Andrew Horn (1983), he describes the artworks on display as being created to "either stridently or with understatements and indirection, set out to expose the fundamental contradictions that lie at the heart of the South African social order".

According to Mario Pissara (2015), the exhibition *Art Towards Social Development* (1982) is emblematic of the period 1980 to 1984 because it was one of the exhibitions that was able to provide a radical framework for non-racial solidarity amongst South African artists. This is despite the efforts by the Apartheid government to keep black and white South African artists apart. *Thami Mnyele and Medu Art Ensemble Retrospective (2008)* can also be viewed as emblematic of this period because of its representation of one of the biggest movements of resistance posters of the 1980's.

3.3. Resistance Art and Its Place within art history

According to Corinne Kratz (2001:21) in *Rhetoric's of Value: Constituting Worth and Meaning through Cultural Display*, museum exhibitions are commonly seen as critical sites for the

constitution of identity and difference. She states “They provide occasions and resources for representing and reflecting on notions of quality, worth, and other social values and meanings” (Krats 2001:21). But how are values and identities shaped and produced through exhibitions? How are exhibitions put together in ways that might communicate particular values and shape various identities? In her article Kratz (2001:21) begins to consider how ‘‘rhetorics of value’’ are produced through contemporary museum exhibitions by exploring the multi-layered, multimedia communication involved as exhibitions convey evaluations and interpretations through visual and verbal means and through ‘‘designed space.’’

> By the very virtue of its removal from its original context, an object undergoes a transformation when it enters the museum setting. The process of re-contextualization involves weaving a new story for the object through labels, lighting, text panels, graphics, and arrangement. These frameworks and visual cues communicate a message to visitors about the culture on display (Drake, 2013:1)

In the article *The Power of The Poster* (1998), Margaret Timmers defines the use of the poster characteristic as “function and form”. According to Timmers (1998), the size, shape and material forms can be constituted as a poster. Printmaking as a medium is very expressive in both the technique and the different formats that it can be applied to. Hecker (2011: 11) believes that the mediums specialised qualities as “portability and ability to move among contexts, the accessible processes and relatively low-cost production, the capacity for mass dissemination”. The collaborations often fostered in the workshop have made it an ideal medium for political statements as well as one available to many, especially at times when access to the fine arts has been restricted. In the review of the exhibition *Images of Defiance* Artthrob Robyn Sassen (200) poses this question, “But are they now art, in a retro kind of a vein, having been removed by time from the political coalface?”

The medium is, after all, inexpensive for the producer, and its potential for small-scale mass production also makes the work itself inexpensive to the consumer. According to Taylor(1996: 94), the graphic possibilities of the linocut[11] make it ideal for mimetic and allegorical works with overt political content, and the images could then be re-circulated through various media such as screen printed T -shirts and banners (Taylor, 1996: 94).

[11] A method used to create resistance poster

Lusenet, Lunn and Michaś (2006) in *Guidelines on Exhibiting Archival Material*, state that the principal aim of archives is not only to acquire, professionally process and make available archival documents for public or private purposes, but also to carry out preservation and conservation in order to keep valuable information and heritage for an indefinite period. Primary goals of most museum institution are the preservation and conservation of cultural material. Exhibiting can complicate and sometimes compromise preservation goals this becomes especially problematic when it is impossible to avoid exhibiting original items. Most archival documents and objects held in our heritage institutions, especially those made of organic materials like paper, wood, parchment, leather and similar materials are in a continuous state of physical and chemical change. An institution like SAHA has digitalised most of their resistance posters, which further compromised the uniqueness of the poster. Unlike posters, artworks are revered because of their uniqueness, being one of a kind.

In his paper titled *Alter Images and the Aesthetics of South African Resistance Art*, Andries Oliphant (2006: 163; 173; 174) touches on key features in his description of resistance art. He describes it as the "direct transcription of political events"; the simultaneous negotiation of the aesthetic and the political; a form of art that is "acutely sensitive to the situations in which human freedom is in peril"; and a disapproval of what is "ethically dubious", while its greatest challenge was to avoid falling into a category of knee-jerk, predictable and prescribed responses. He also likens resistance art to bridges and pathways between two opposing sides. For Oliphant, then, resistance art is didactic and a unique form of record-taking, it is a creative awareness and consciousness and also a means of joining conflicting forces. Stated differently, the space that resistance art bridged was the same conceptual and physical space dividing 'inside' from 'outside' and 'white' from 'non-white'. This space was significant because it allowed for the articulation of the vision of the transition from one order of governance to the next.

According to Marschal (2001:52) the boundaries between 'white art' and 'black craft' gradually began to shift during the middle and particularly the late 1980's. Crucial factors in this shift were the rising influence of postmodernist theoretical discourses, in particular the questioning of hierarchically ordered binaries, the increasing interest in marginal cultures as a result of the critique of dominant Western culture, and the blurring of boundaries between

'high' and 'low' art (Marschall 2001:52). Marschall (2001) believes that this was influenced by the emergence of a new social and political awareness among South Africans following the 1976 Soweto uprising, as well as the appearance of a new generation of liberal and leftist artists and art historians opposed to Apartheid who sought to subvert the official government policy of segregation.

Artist and author Sue Williamson in her book *Resistance art in South Africa* (1989) writes about resistance art. Her book is considered as an influential study on resistance art in South Africa. In the book, she features biographies of some artists that have been categorised as being influential resistance artists in South Africa (Williamson 1989). In the introduction, Williamson provides a long essay on the history of Resistance art in South Africa and names a few artists who have contributed towards resistance art. Further, there is no inclusion of resistance posters in the 'Resistance Art' seminal book. I feel that the exclusion of poster art as a form of resistance art in this book further creates a gap in fully identifying the resistance poster as art. Furthermore, the fact that the majority of artists included in this book were white further disregards the contributions made by black artists. This disregard also shows how posters have been systematically excluded from the discourse of art, yet become prominent in exhibitions such as the one at JAG, *Thami Mnyele and Medu Art Ensemble Retrospective* (2009) when addressing historical imbalances.

Gavin Younge's *Art of South African townships* (1988) is a book that looks at Township art and provides brief biographies of 'influential' black artists in South Africa. According to Younge (1998), this book was created in response to the exclusion of what he calls 'Township art' from mainstream art and history books. The term 'Township art' is a term used in classifying artworks created by black artists in the 1980's. By labelling (titling) these artworks as 'township art', just like 'resistance art' Younge has created a moment of classification, where black artists work is given yet another term of description.

Both Younge (1988) and Williamson's (1989) books give a brief history of the art that was created as a response and resistance to political domination and oppression. In both books, Thami Mnyele is the only featured artist from the Medu Art Ensemble group. Which further raises a question about the positioning of the artistic contribution, given that Mnyele's

featured work is not the poster, but rather his artistic work? So where was his poster work located and classified if his fine art work was then seen as township art or was it not considered art worthy of inclusion into such a publication? Given that it only presents one side of his artistic practice, this points to a parody on how Mnyele was positioned within the arts, overlooking his other contributions in the larger public domain. Ironically, even though Mnyele is known as an artist, it often his poster images that are synonymous with his name, such an omission to speak to his poster work further raising a question about the value of posters in the context of art historical writing.

> ...artists must learn to break out of the bourgeois trap of individualism and must discipline themselves to place their talents and their perceptions at the disposal of their communities. Any tendency towards elitism among cultural workers must be countered vigorously, not only by other cultural workers but also by the community at large (*Images of Defiance*, 2006)

So how did Mnyele himself see his poster art? Were they meant to be a record of history that has temporal value and lifespan - or was it to be shown in art galleries and studied as fine art? The fact that he made two different kinds of art is telling us that he may not have seen this part of his artistic contribution (poster) in the same light as his other artworks. The ethos of MEDU was that an artist should work in collectives to serve their communities. The individualisation of Mnyele in the Exhibition *Thami Mnyele and Medu Art Ensemble retrospective* is just a singular moment where moments of classification happen. Now does that mean what curators and the museums have done is wrong to put posters in archives and his other work in a museum? Yes, since sometimes the value of the artwork is often granted by the maker - the artists. Given that the resistance Posters have appeared in art exhibitions are they thus reclassified? What happens to the historical aspect and their connection to the political history? In my research, I am not asking for a reconsideration of the resistance poster to move to the art museum. I am just curious at how this exclusion alludes to the classification that occurs when they don't form part of these collections.

Chapter Four: Post-apartheid resistance

Negotiations for a democratic country commenced around the same time as the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, which contributed to the shift in South African politics in the early 1990s (Peffer 2009). For the first time, South Africa under the leadership of the African

National Congress (ANC) was immersed in a series of negotiations concerning its political future. Peffer (2009); Oliphant (2011: 177) believes that the negotiations were Influenced by the apartheid Government's long-held paranoia of Communism. 1994 marks the first democratic election in South Africa and the period defined as post-apartheid[12]. This chapter is contextualised by the moment after the official end to apartheid and the initial transitional years since the introduction of a democratic constitution.

The chapter will begin with the unpacking of art as a weapon for political struggle, which has been established in previous chapters. MacPhee and Rodriguez (2008: 9) write that "in the political realm, there is a long history of compelling and easy to reproduce political graphics being used and reused by activists and artists". This graphic vocabulary lends itself to be adapted to different social contexts around the world. In this chapter, I will also be looking at the appropriation and misappropriation of resistance poster by both contemporary artist and resistance artist. I have chosen two contemporary artists practising in South Africa who have used the resistance poster and/or printmaking in their works for social commentary – namely Brett Murray and Kudzanai Chiurai. Both artists use the medium of printmaking as a means of questioning current socio-political affairs. This is not to say that these contemporary artists explicitly use art as an instrument for political struggle per se.

4.1 Art as a weapon of the Struggle

Most South African art institutions displaying the material cultures of western art, their collection and the museum have each been firmly situated as 'committed participants' in colonial histories (Barringer and Flynn 1998: 4). This reductive and inadequate account is simply meant to highlight the fact that although the historical trajectories of black and white South African artists overlap they have long been subjected to efforts to keep them apart. Consequently, South African art has deep fault-lines, primarily based on race, but also on ethnicity, class and gender. According to Omar Badsha (personal communication, August 2005), it was in the aftermath of the Sharpeville Massacre (1960) that some black artists, including Dumile Feni and Badsha, began to wrestle with the role of art in society. According

[12] A term that has been used in attempts to describe the period from the end of apartheid up to and including the present moment.

to Sue Williamson (1989:8), it was the 1976 Soweto Uprisings that "jolted [a generation of artists] out of lethargy". However, it was the Culture and Resistance symposium in Gaborone 1982, organised by the Medu Art Ensemble that perhaps did the most to provide a radical framework for non-racial solidarity amongst South African artists. The recognition that artists could play a meaningful role in social change saw politicised artists transformed into 'cultural workers'.

> Resistance art doesn't follow the path of bourgeois art with its access to the entire range of technical apparatus. Released from the production line, that special economy of publishing and marketing, resistance art finds itself in the daily lives of the oppressed.

Works of art can be of great value to the understanding of history, it can convey meaning, make a political or social comment and be a symbol of events, which have been experienced and seen. They also convey the history of the exhibitions that they have been featured in. The symposium on Culture and Resistance was important not only because it placed culture at the forefront of resistance to Apartheid but also because it allowed participants to envisage a role for culture in a liberated South Africa. Even though the Culture and Resistance festival lasted for five days; the artistic and aesthetic debates that took place framed cultural activity around South Africa for the next decade. The impact of the festival and the exhibition shaped conversations and created a culture of resistance in communities. Artists were inspired to create art that was not just aesthetically beautiful, but art that is also informative. This exhibition did not just inspire artists alone, but I think was also the birth of resistance art. Throughout the 1980's there were different schools of thought on the role of culture under a racially oppressive society. There were many debates about the use of art as a weapon of the struggle. While some groups like Medu were for the use of culture as a weapon of the struggle, others were asserting that the use of art should be more than a space for political expression. The second half of the 1980's brought about a change; the cultural activism generated by the Botswana conference had been absorbed and whites in South Africa felt they too had a stake now in the great effort for freedom.

As the 1980s drew to a close and with the official end to apartheid drawing nearer, the call to ban art as a weapon of struggle came as a surprise to many who had invested themselves in creating a graphic language of resistance specific to South Africa. In 1989, Sachs delivered the

paper *Preparing Ourselves for Freedom* which, according to Ashraf Jamal (2005:1) “rocked the mainframe of resistance culture”, and according to Oliphant (2011:181) “marked the terminal point of what many considered the blunt instrumentalist approach to art”. The paper questioned the very necessity of resistance art in a historical moment on the verge of political transition. Sachs’s first, and probably most significantly contested proposition was to ban “saying that culture is a weapon of struggle" (1990a:19).

> Artworks produced within the framework of ‘Culture is a weapon of Struggle’ were too often done under pressure. As mass mobilisation intensified, so did the repression. Graphics made under these conditions at time saw the immediate needs of function swamp concerns about fine-tuning form: there was no time for detailed line and subtle shadows (Kellner and Gonzalez 2009)

Njabulo Ndebele’s analysis of ‘protest literature’ in his book *Rediscovery of the ordinary* (1990) challenges the use of art as a weapon of struggle. The book which is a collection of essays that had been produced from the 1970’s, argues for a multilateral approach to writing by black writers. That the overt focus was only on protest literature was problematic. According to Ndebele (1991, 16) “Taking a position can sometimes interfere with the artistic merit of a work of art, and subject matter becomes more important”. Ndebele challenged black South African culture at a critical time in South Africa. Ndebele felt that artist had forgotten how to create works of arts, by choosing to depict the politics of the time. Although Ndebele’s theories are located in literature, they are somewhat in line with Sach’s (1990) position on resistance art in South African being a construct of history. Although Ndebele was not talking about a total eradication of these images but rather critiquing the overbearing nature of resistance material over any other kinds of material/images (or rather in this case literature). He was cautioning artists to focus not only on these kinds of images which were biased towards the resistance.

In the review *Rediscovery Revisited*, Rob Gaylard (2009) says that Ndebele’s has a Post-apartheid political perspective, and subverts Ndebele’s view that black artist should reframe from reflecting the political struggle. According to Gaylard (2009), Ndebele’s approach is informed by exposure to the Aesthetics of the western art traditions. According to Gaylard, 2009) Ndebele’s exposure and interest in popular narratives have led him to the view that art should provide entertainment without didacticism or overt authorial intrusion.

The anti-apartheid movement grew stronger, with apartheid drawing to a close. South Africa was affected by civil unrest, states of emergency were declared: it became evident that the museum sector had to react. The interesting part for me is that the moment that society was starting to adjust to the idea of socio-political freedom, this is when there was a rise in exhibitions concerned with the black subjects. Exhibitions like '*The Neglected Tradition: Towards a new history of South African art (1930-1988)'* at Johannesburg Art Gallery curated by Steven Sack were on the rise. Curators were trying to bridge the gap that existed within these institutions. Despite Ndebele and Sachs proposition for positive images in arts, artists and other writers were in opposition to their radical statement. Steinberg (1990) in her response to Sachs, cautions against these views and brings to light the relevance of the images of struggle by situating artists' voices and their rationalisation of producing these kinds of images. Such debates and positions in the art (captured in both articles) offer an understanding of some of the complexities presented when dealing with art as a weapon of struggle.

Mandisi Majavu and Mario Pissarra (2015: 13) recognise that "with new terrains of struggle emerging, it is too early to tell what role, if any, art will play in engaging the evolving struggle for human rights". While the role of art, if there is to be any, in a contemporary moment of conflict and change is still unknown, artists like Kudzanai Chiurai and Brett Murray have taken to using their creative production to comment on the present political moment in Africa whilst paying special attention to Leader-Figures and the institution of leadership. I have selected these artists based on their creative production and their thematic concerns and the fact that much of their work contains pointed socio-political commentary pertinent to the current moment. Perhaps one could define such work as post- or neo-resistance. Once again the prefix 'post' signals a fulfilment, which in this case is apartheid resistance art, whereas 'neo' implies a 'new' resistance, which, too, is also fitting for the "new terrains of struggle" (Majavu and Pissarra 2011: 13) emerging in South Africa.

4.2. Appropriation and misappropriation

Most South African posters were produced anonymously, so as to avoid persecution by apartheid's security police, if the artists who made them were identified by name. Resistance

posters are a reminder of an era in which communities responded to a crisis of the human condition resulting from apartheid. On the other hand, they offer us the possibility for thinking about the post-apartheid present, given the dehumanising legacy of apartheid. In both respects, they invite a re-imagining of political society in the face of unemployment, poverty, disease, unequal education, persistent racial divisions and new class polarisations. These works, therefore, remind us that the question of the human condition is still at the heart of understanding post-apartheid society. They also draw attention to the silence of cultural resistance in contemporary times.

As displayed in the chapters above printmaking was one of, if not the most popular of the mediums used for resistance art, either as protest posters hastily designed and printed under the darkness of night or carefully thought through relief prints. It was a favoured medium because of its graphic language and inherent reproducibility resulting in cost-effective and time-effective processes; accessibility of tools and printing facilities; portability and ability to transition between contexts; and lastly the capacity for mass production and dissemination (Hecker 2011: 11). Printmaking engaged with the anti-apartheid movement on a practical level; prints, especially protest posters, had quite a specific function equated to political communication (Seidman 2011b:113). Perhaps the protest poster can be considered the most recognisable type of graphic art of all resistance art.

Because of the expressly political purposes of many such images, the end products were in many ways de-individualized, in order to allow for their easy appropriation by political organisations; thus, cultural production was ‘instrumentalized’ (Taylor, 1996: 94 - 95). The lino print became the visual medium for the decade of South African populist art, a period associated with the political strategies of the United Democratic Front (the UDF), an alliance of organisations that effectively fronted for the ANC during its last decade of exile. The UDF deliberately invoked culture as one of its most powerful political tools, and its self-description was populist and oppositional that of a ‘People's Culture.’ One of the burdens of the fledgeling country now is how to develop a culture which tolerates and indeed encourages the differences necessary for producing a multiplicity of opinions and groupings which in turn will give rise to civil society.

There is an international graphic language specific to protest and revolution. A book titled *Reproduce and Revolt* (MacPhee and Rodriguez 2008) contains a visual dictionary of international graphic imagery precisely for socio-political use. MacPhee and Rodriguez (2008: 9) write that "in the political realm, there is a long history of compelling and easy to reproduce political graphics being used and reused by activists and artists". This graphic vocabulary lends itself to be adapted to different social contexts around the world. During the liberation movement, South African artists often appropriated material from other revolutionary imagery from Europe and Russia, and these imported graphics were altered to be more specific to the South African struggle context. For example, *In the World* from *May Day is Ours!* 1989 (Fig. 6), a black and white poster produced by the Gardens Media Project15 as part of a 5 part poster series for May Day 16[13], has visual similarities to a colour poster designed by N.M. Kochergin, *I-e Maya 1920 goda. Cherez oblomki kapitalizma k vsemirnomu btratstvu trudyashchikhysa! (The First of May)* in 1920 (Fig. 7).

Although the posters are not identical, the imported graphics and poster aesthetics are evident in the South African poster. In both images, the text serves two purposes: it frames the top and bottom of the picture plane in two separate bands, and it announces May Day. In both, the picture plane is compositionally divided into two sections. The bottom half is occupied by figures in motion and the top half is taken up by an orb shape. In the South African version, the orb represents planet earth (this is also suggested by the text at the top of the poster). The directional lines in the background suggest rays of light emitting and illuminating the earth from behind, creating silhouettes of the worker implements and tools that crown the planet. The 'orb', in the Soviet poster, may symbolise the sun. This is encouraged by the outward succession rings of warm shades of yellows. The pick and hammer carried by the two male figures are similarly silhouetted by the 'light'. The figures in the South African poster face the viewer, resulting in a more confrontational image, whereas the images in the Soviet poster are depicted in profile and only seem to pass by the viewer. On the left-hand side of the South African poster, there is a section of a wheel. The inclusion of the wheel points to the COSATU logo (Fig. 8), initially designed between 1985 and 1986 by Lou Alman. Strong

[13] May Day is also known as International Workers' Day, and it is a celebration of the labour force.

Soviet iconography is present in the logo, namely the three worker-icons and their respective tools (Fig. 7).

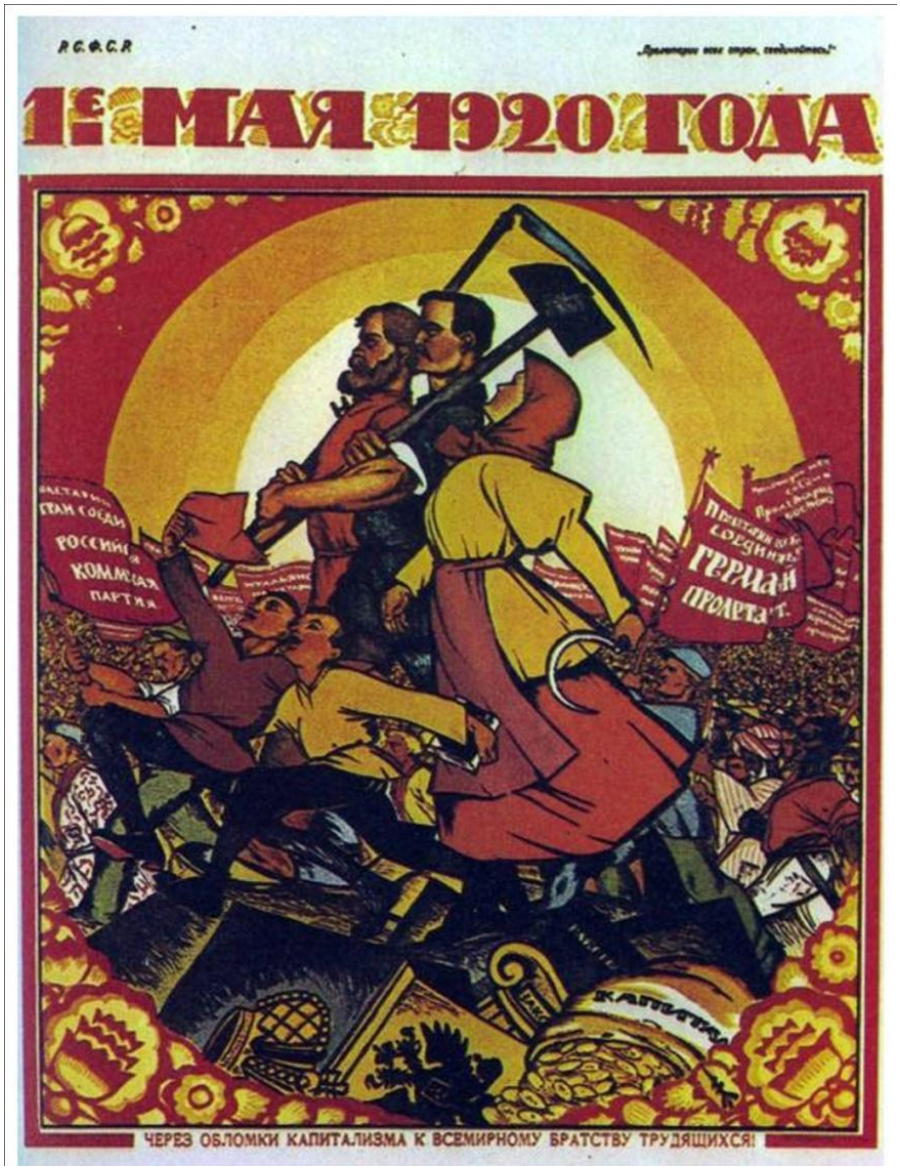


Fig.7: N.M. Kochergin, *I-e Maya 1920 goda. Cherez oblomki kapitalizma k vsemirnomu btratstvu trudyashchikhysa! (The First of May)* (1920), Lithograph, 70 x 53 cm.



Fig. 6: The Gardens Media Project, *In the World* from *May Day, is Ours!* (1989), Silkscreen, 100 x 70 cm.

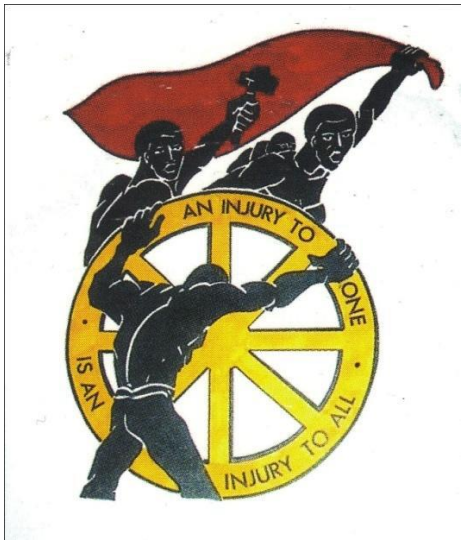


Fig. 8 Lou Alman, COSATU Logo design (1986).

The appropriation and use of popular struggle iconography were a common creative strategy amongst poster designers and cultural workers. The typical struggle vocabulary included images of raised and clenched fists, flags, shackles, urban or industrial landscapes, and worker implements and tools. Because these symbols were so often repeated they were in danger of becoming impotent clichés. At the beginning of the 1980s, Seidman (2007: 78) defended the use of repeated symbols, saying, "True, they can be clichés, over-used. But they can also be immediate, real. Any object in a painting that is recognisable will almost certainly fulfil a symbolic as well as representational purpose. We must be conscious of this dual role". Upon reflection on the use of these symbols and the role of culture as a weapon of struggle, Frank Meintjies (1990: 30) writes: "clenched fists and militant rhetoric alone do not denote important cultural work . . . Sloganeering soon becomes a barrier to the depth and genuine expression". These symbols were, however, part of a visual language that communicated messages that could be shared and understood across social divides. It is easy to assume that this sort of graphic language is problematic when it is assigned a particular, prescriptive function when the socio-political context in which most of the posters were produced is not considered.

4.2.1 Brett Murray

Cape Town-based artist Brett Murray is no stranger to pointed political comment. During apartheid he worked in the cultural sector of the anti-apartheid struggle, creating satirical images that attacked abuses of power. Today he continues to produce work that is thematically similar. He writes (2011: 10): "parody is part of the satirist's arsenal and it is through this that I hope to expose the new pigs at the trough". Murray's appropriation tactics recollect the struggles of the past as he re-configures history to comment on the present, while he parodies and satirises familiar struggle imagery. On the one hand, he achieves this in his work by directly using Soviet propaganda which was used and adapted during apartheid for protest and resistance purposes, as well as using actual apartheid-era posters. On the other hand, he achieves this by continuing to work in the archetypal print medium or by quoting its poster aesthetic through other mediums like painting, for example, The Spear 2010. Lloyd Pollack (2011: African Colours) describes the artist's revival of this imagery and how it relates to his broader conceptual concerns. During the 80's, the forces of resistance appropriated [Soviet propaganda] and made it the visual language of the Struggle. The artist

exploits the apparatchik's[14] tool of mass manipulation, swindle and hoax to pull the wool away from, rather than over our eyes, filling the space with sarcastic triumphalist monuments to ANC nation building and transformation whilst pointing up the party's ideological mendacity and emphasising the hollowness of its supposed achievements.

The techniques and processes of printmaking lend the medium to appropriation and allow the artist to synthesise imagery sourced from various materials. A contemporary example of appropriation (or misappropriation, depending on where one stands) of protest poster iconography and printing is Brett Murray's rendition of anti-apartheid posers that featured in two recent solo exhibitions, *Hail to the Thief I* and *Hail to the Thief II.* The exhibitions included three poster prints titled *The President 2010* (Fig. 9), *The Struggle 2010* (Fig. 11) and *Amandla 2010* (Fig. 13), which parody iconic political posters from the 1980s: *You have struck a rock 1982* (Fig. 10), *Tell my people that I love them . . . . 1982 (Fig. 9)* and *Asiyi eKhayelitsha 1982* (Fig. 14) respectively. Brett Murray's reworking is almost exact, a deliberate copying of the original images, except for the words, which have been changed. The text in *Amandla* (Fig. 13) has been changed to *We demand Chivas, BMW's and Bribes,* in place of 'We demand houses, security and comfort'. In *The President* (Fig. 9), only the last word has been changed from "crushed'' to "president". Murray's text reads: "Now you have touched the women you have struck a rock; you have dislodged a boulder; you will be president". The text in the original poster (Fig. 10) was derived from a popular 1956 struggle song translated into English (Seidman 2011: 10) from isiZulu. Seidman created the original in 1982 especially for the role played by women in the struggle for liberation. Seidman (2007: 123) states that "during the 1970s and 1980s, the role of women in the liberation struggle came under a new spotlight. Women comrades were detained, tortured, and killed". Murray's parody subverts the intended meaning of empowerment and homage to the role of women in the liberation struggle. His text seemingly reads as a step-by-step guide to becoming President. Posters were also created to mark struggle days, now public holidays, such as June 16 and August 9. Murray's appropriated posters were received with mixed feelings; on the one hand, they were praised for their tongue-in-cheek approach to the questionable escapades of the ruling elite

[14] The Merriam-Webster dictionary (2013) defines 'apparatchik' as "a member of a Communist apparat [an Administrative system]" or "a blindly devoted official, follower, or member of an organization (as a corporation or political party)".

of the country, and on the other hand, they were criticised for plagiarising iconic struggle images. *The Struggle* (Fig. 11) is an adaption of Seidman's commemorative poster; *Tell my people that I love them….* (Fig. 9). Seidman (2007: 76) writes that the execution of the man in the image came to be honoured as a landmark throughout the struggle years.

In her poster, Seidman includes the last words spoken by the figure, identified as Solomon Mahlangu[15], before he was hanged: "Tell my people that I love them and that they must continue the struggle". Murray omits the last word in his rendition and adds the words "for Chivas Regal, Merc's and Kick-Backs". His decision to change the text and continue working in the medium using the same graphic language forces a different reading. While highly contentious, if not scandalous to some, Murray has opened up the debate concerning the conduct of the ruling elite as well as (in) appropriate appropriation of familiar struggle imagery[16]. Lloyd Pollak (2011: African Colours) defends Murray's strategy as licit, arguing that the contemporary African National Congress "appropriated the struggle, and exploited it as part of its legitimising mythology. As the party has ceased to [honour] the struggle ideals of equality and social justice, it and its propaganda are now fair game". Seidman (2011b: 10) vehemently disagrees, stating that "recasting images in the public domain to deliver a message contrary to the originals is misappropriation", and she argues that Murray's artistic revisions "have the images saying the opposite of what we believed". In his artworks, Murray comments on the contradictory political institution along with the ruling elite who, for some South Africans, force the perception that the present moment is truly not the one which was previously fought for during apartheid. Through his continued use of this archetypal medium,

[15] Solomon Mahlangu was an anti-apartheid activist and member of the cadre of Umkonto we Sizwe, the military wing of the African National Congress. According to the records on South African History Online (2012d), "on 13 June 1977, Mahlangu and his companions, Mondy Johannes Motloung and George 'Lucky' Mahlangu, were accosted by police in Goch Street, Johannesburg. In the ensuing gun battle two civilian men were killed and two wounded. Solomon Mahlangu and Motloung were arrested". Solomon Mahlangu was tried with two counts of murder and several terrorism charges, which resulted in his execution on 6 April 1979. Observers believe that this date "was deliberately chosen to coincide with the 327th anniversary of Jan van Riebeck's arrival at the Cape in 1652" (*South African History Online* 2012d).

[16] It is noteworthy to mention that Murray's artworks were included in two separate solo exhibitions which ran for a couple of months in both Cape Town and Johannesburg at the Goodman Gallery. It is worth considering why, during the second exhibition when *The Spear* (Fig. 22) debacle occurred, the appropriated struggle posters did not cause more unease, as they commented on the collective shortcomings and skewed priorities of the ruling elite, including the President (Fig. 5). Phylicia Oppelt (2012: 5) refers to the posters included in '*Hail to the Thief II*' and writes: "There are other art works in the Murray exhibition that should cause the ANC far more discomfort and should lead to introspection".

he demonstrates how a previous resistance medium and aesthetic continues to be used today for pointed socio-political comment, as well as how this also complicates the notion of appropriation of Soviet struggle imagery during apartheid by cultural workers. Murray's appropriation of the familiar medium and posters forces a reminder of the struggle in the face of what he perceives to be the undermining of liberation ideals.

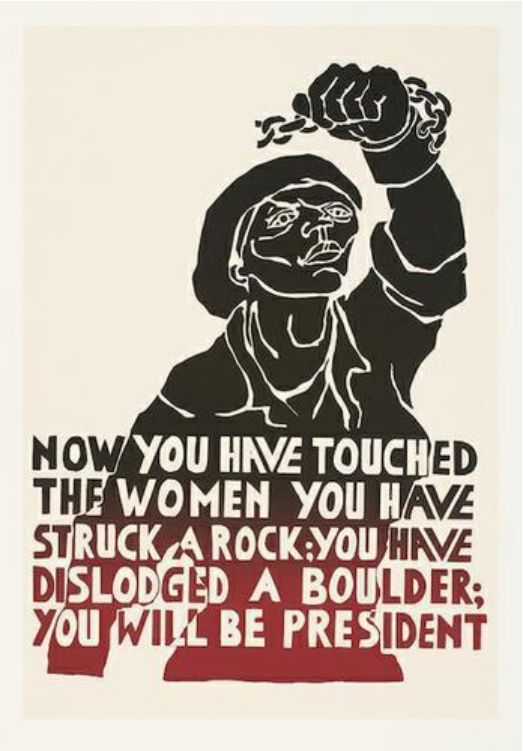


Fig. 9: Brett Murray, *The President* (2010), Silkscreen, 100 x 70 cm.

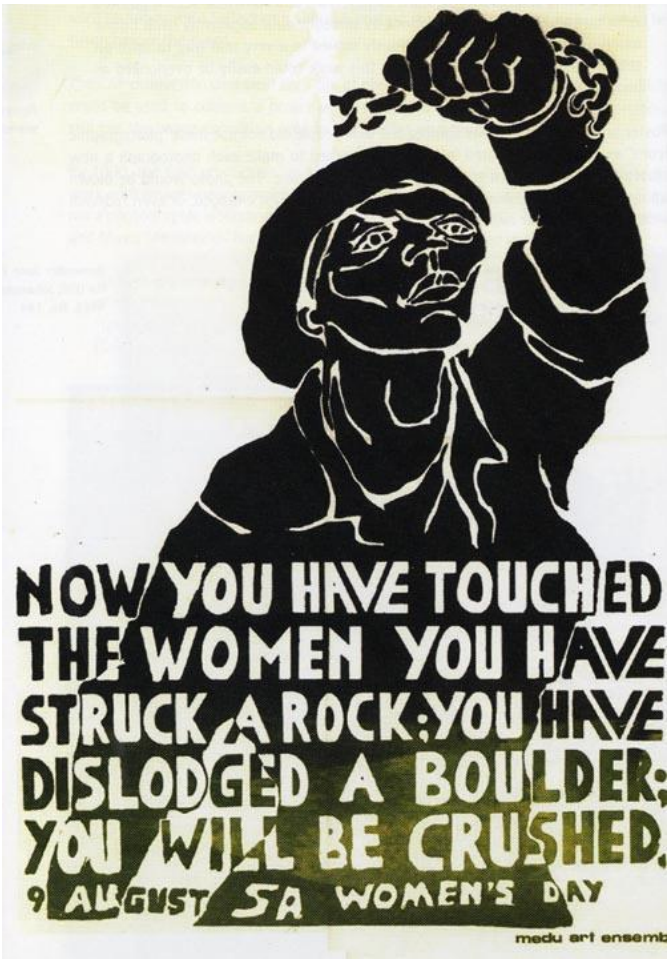


Fig. 10: Judy Seidman, *You have struck a rock* (1982), Silkscreen, 60 x 42 cm.

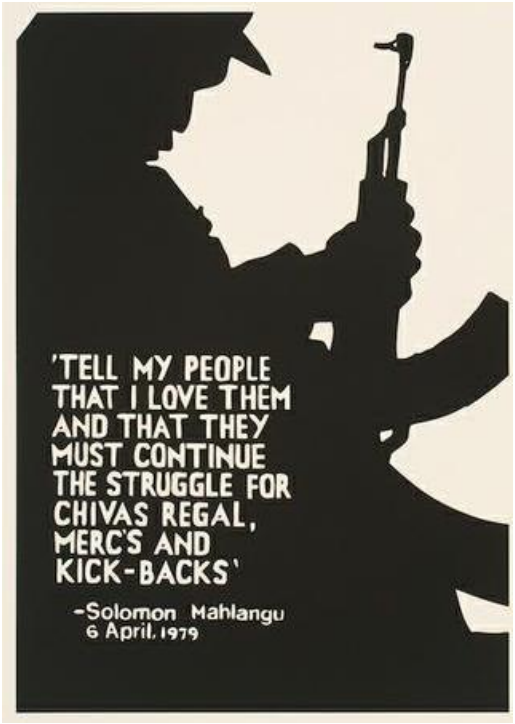


Fig. 11: Brett Murray, *The Struggle* (2010), Silkscreen, 100 x 70 cm.

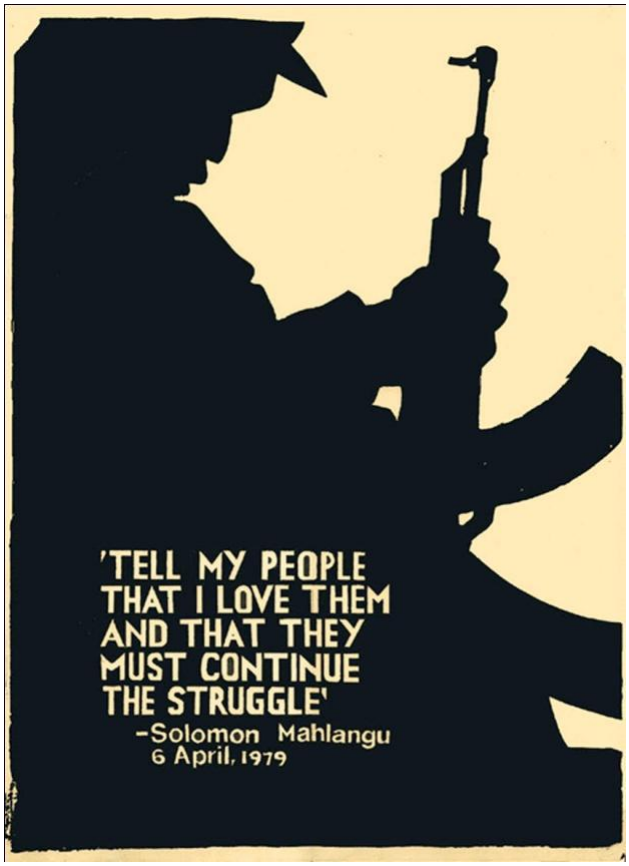


Fig. 12 Judy Seidman, *Tell my people that I love them . . . .* (1982), Silkscreen, dimensions unknown.

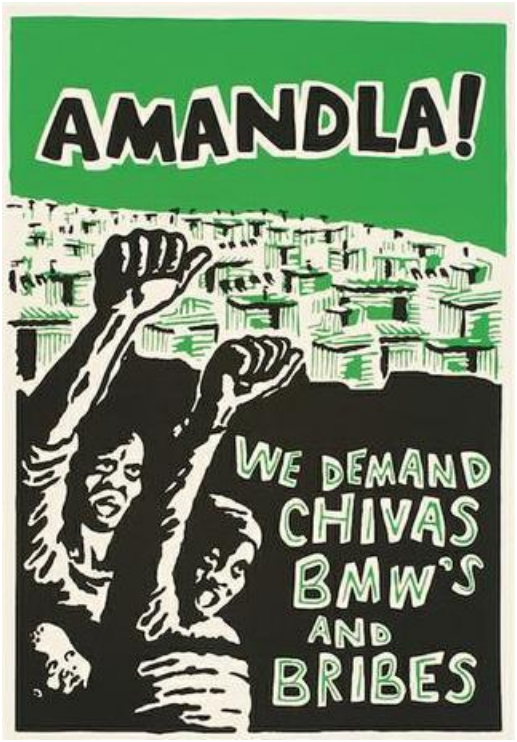


Fig. 13: Brett Murray, *Amandla* (2010), Silkscreen, 100 x 70 cm.

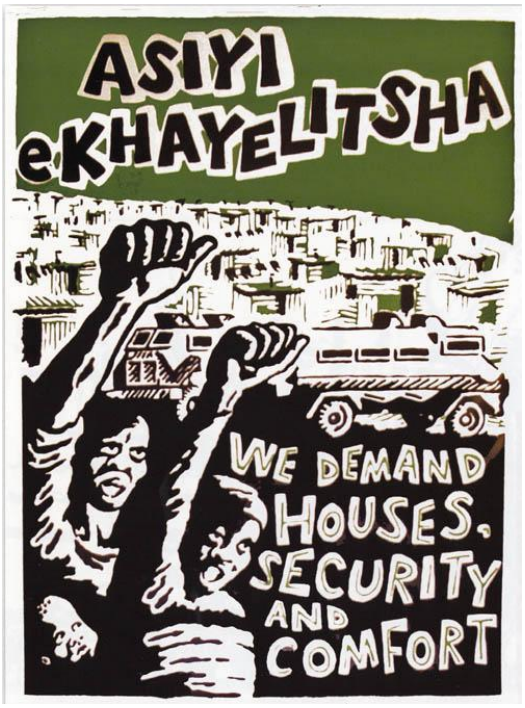


Fig. 14: Artist Unknown, *Asiyi eKhayelitsha* (1982), Silkscreen, dimensions unknown.

4.2.3 Kudzanai Chiurai

Kudzanai Chiurai is a Zimbabwean-born artist. Chiurai left Zimbabwe in 2000 and was based in Johannesburg, South Africa, until 2013. Chiurai is a professional artist and activist as he exhibits his work in the formal gallery space and also extends his skills to more informal networks and situations. The exhibition listing on the Goodman Gallery's website (2013) for his solo exhibition, *dying to be Men* in 2009 in Cape Town, describes his strategy of extending his work into the public informal sphere. It states that "in the lead-up to the 2008 Zimbabwean elections Chiurai distributed stencils highlighting its political situation at solidarity meetings, creating a viral campaign in the streets of Johannesburg". Then, during the 2008 Zimbabwe elections, he staged a mock election complete with a voting station and an exhibition of his agitprop posters, for example, *We always have reason to fear* 2009 (Fig. 24), in the Johannesburg central business district. Storm Janse van Rensburg and Zach Viljoen (2011) write that Chiurai's endeavour "not only [provided] the Zimbabwean refugees in the city an opportunity to participate in the election they were excluded from, but also [gave] the general public a chance to register their desire for change".

Hecker (2011: 19) argues that, in the post-apartheid era, Chiurai recontextualises the poster. He has taken the poster, the archetypal and preferred medium for the circulation and dissemination of political content, and used it to comment on current political affairs. Additionally, he included these posters in an exhibition, subverting their nature of being ephemeral public objects. The graphic poster aesthetic is sustained by both the posterization[17] effect used on the repeated figure of a riot officer and the inclusion of direct text, demonstrating the continued use of the archetypal print medium for socio-political commentary.

[17] The Merriam-Webster (2013) dictionary defines posterization as "the obtaining of poster like reproductions having solid tones or colors and little detail from photographs or other continuous-tone originals by means of separation negatives".

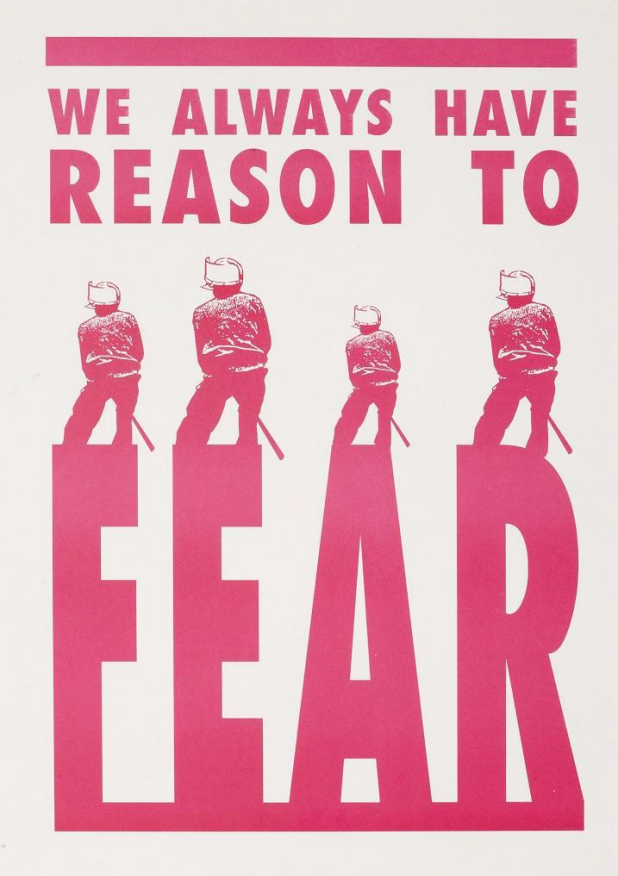


Fig. 15 Kudzanai Chiurai, *We always have reason to fear* (2009), Lithographic print, 64 x 45.5cm.

Conclusion:

This research report has followed three periods in the history of the political struggle for freedom in South Africa. From the height of the anti-apartheid struggle in the 1980s to the present day. Printmaking, a medium historically and internationally associated with images of resistance and revolution, finds its place in the relationship between politics and art in South Africa. Given the socio-political expression of the print medium during the resistance movement in apartheid South Africa, and the difficulty of defining the present period, this report and the accompanying exhibition both consider how the same creative medium continues to be a vehicle for change in South Africa. Artist today continue to use this medium in their everyday struggles. Which artists and cultural workers were waging to liberate art and society from the illegitimate authority of apartheid became the content of resistance art. Today, after apartheid, we find ourselves in a different realm of 'conflict and change', which, while it supposes – in part – a change in the content of a given struggle, encourages the continuance of the archetypal medium for protest.

By analysing how exhibitions reflect on the role of posters in mobilising communities through the arts to create social change and how they are reflected upon through exhibitions, this study makes an important contribution to the scholarship of South African art history. Furthermore, there is very little scholarly writing that addresses this tension within the practice of arts located with propagandist readings and fine art, which therefore makes this, study a worthy addition.

The continued use of the medium includes the different ways that it has been used by artists like Thami Mnyele, Sue Williamson, William Kentridge, Brett Murray, Kudzanai Chiurai just to name a few. The extent to which it has been used for pointed socio-political commentary is evidence in the extensive material in archives and collections of both museum institutions and archival houses. Though each artist mentioned in this research report uses different methods, they each demonstrate how printmaking continues to be used in a present-day context, and how it has shifted from a blatant socio-political tool into an instrument for political irony and means of expressing ambiguities and contradictions.

I have used three exhibitions as case studies, but my research paper aims to speak to the discourses surrounding display strategies used in exhibitions. Looking at the positioning of the resistance poster in South African art history, the intention is to highlight how these exhibitions have used display strategies to construct values in the resistance poster, whether as historical archive material or as works of art.

The State of Emergency placed pressure on the production of protest graphics during the 1980s with both positive and negative effects. For example, on the one hand, art was an outlet and means of bypassing the restrictive laws, but on the other hand, artists were left with very little room for experimentation and aesthetics and were expected to limit the message to be delivered (Seidman 2007:195). The availability and reproducibility of trusted symbols and graphics struggle vocabulary were advantageous to the task at hand.

In previous chapters, we have established that in the medium of printmaking, as MacPhee and Rodriguez (2008: 9) point out t “there is a long history of compelling and easy to reproduce political graphics being used and reused by activists and artists”. This graphic

vocabulary lends itself to be adapted to different social contexts around the world. In this chapter, I will also be looking at the appropriation and misappropriation of resistance posters by both contemporary artist and resistance artist.

In their paper, Frenkel and MacKenzie (2010:7) write about the notion of 'newness' in relation to the post-transitional, and point out that "newness does not necessarily mean that something has not existed before". Similarly, Bourriaud (2002: 17; 18) contextualises the artistic means of postproduction as "no longer a matter of starting with a 'blank slate' or creating meaning on the basis of virgin material". This notion – creating new forms that are not necessarily unique – is similar to the strategy of appropriation in resistance art. Postproduction, though, is beyond appropriation, in that appropriation supposes ownership while postproduction seeks out the collective idea of sharing (Bourriaud 2002:11). Bourriaud (2002:17) states that the prefix 'post' "does not signal any negation or surpassing; it refers to a zone of activity", and if the posttranslational signals more of a conceptual rather than a temporal shift (Thurman 2010: 91), and is characterised by what Frenkel and MacKenzie (2010: 4) name a broadening of concerns and styles that reach both backwards and forwards whilst not claiming to exceed transition, it too can be considered a zone of activity (Jamal 2010: 15).

> "Exhibition archives reveal complexities within art history writing about the invisibilities and visibilities of artists. They also provide a means towards a more nuanced understanding of written histories and offer a way to understand why and how the positioning of artists gets created." (Ntombela 2013: 8)

Even though there has been a breakthrough since the 1980's on exhibitions and academic writings on the black artist, there is still a lack of information on the subject itself. According to Nontobeko Ntombela (2013), the black artist has been "systematically" excluded from art institutions by the past political regime, and this has affected the way that we engage with the archive today. "Unlike white artist whose work was often taken up in academia and written about in academic art historical context, black artist were left with journalistic reviews as the only form of textual engagement. " Nontobeko Ntombela (2013) Together with

academic literature, newspapers have been one of the main sources of bringing the artist into the public domain. For black South African artist during the apartheid era newspapers were the only form of written text that published black artist exhibitions. In an Article title “New Forum for the Art World” by Joyce Ozynski in the Rand Daily Mail dated 25/06/1980, it becomes apparent that during the 1980’s there was a need for written art resources that were impartial from the government. This text, therefore, is also concerned with analyzing the types of exhibition sources that were available to the black artist during the 1980’s available.

These sources include archival material, place in both art institutions and archival house. The archive provided ways to study analyze and frame artist contribution within South African art practices. Going through the JAG archive I have found that there is a big gap exhibition of work by the black artist. The JAG archive has provided more questions than answers, especial looking at the information they contain. I feel that there is a lot of information missing from both academic text and archive on this exhibition. The black artist contribution into South African exhibition history has been neglected. By neglecting these contributions by a black artist, the archive creates has many limitations.

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