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AGENCY, POWER AND CONTROL OF SPECIAL KNOWLEDGE IN THE PRODUCTION OF ART AND RITUAL. A contrapuntal examination of two disparate cultural examples: western conceptual artist Joseph Beuys and Zambian Kunda women's rock art images and chisungu coming-of-age rituals, and how these resonate with my identity and art practice.

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AGENCY, POWER AND CONTROL OF SPECIAL KNOWLEDGE IN THE PRODUCTION OF ART AND RITUAL. A contrapuntal examination of two disparate cultural examples: western conceptual artist Joseph Beuys and Zambian Kunda women's rock art images and *chisungu* coming-of-age rituals, and how these resonate with my identity and art practice.

A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for a Master of Arts degree.

University of Witwatesrand

Pamela Anne Guhrs-Carr

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DECLARATION

I, Pamela Anne Guhrs-Carr declare that:

i. The research reported in this thesis, except where otherwise indicated, is my original research

ii. The thesis has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university

iii. The thesis does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons

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Pam Anne Guhrs-Carr _____

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ABSTRACT

There are two separate, but related questions posed in this study. The central enquiry relates to how artists and cultural practitioners retain power over their work and how the management of secret or special knowledge within each case contributes to this. I intend to explore how ritual, art and shamanism act firstly, in the practice of Joseph Beuys, a German mid-twentieth century performance artist, and secondly, in the practice of *chisungu* (a Kunda female initiation practice) in the Luangwa River valley in Eastern Zambia. Because these examples are from two unrelated cultural paradigms, the second, underlying question therefore is 'how does one examine two apparently disparate cultural practices together?' The study engages questions of the hybrid nature of cultural practice, ownership of knowledge, and of art itself as the object of inquiry. It does this by examining specific art practices, my own included, in which the knowledge is often controlled by theorists, artists and practitioners. The making of images for a specific ritual function as amongst Kunda women, empowers the makers and viewers in that very process, but viewed later out of context may be as equally read or misread leading to shifted visual and written interpretations. I claim that by bringing these together in a contrapuntal analysis, the understanding of each is enhanced because the criss-crossing of ideas from one brings new light to the other. These are hybrid readings and they affect each other, highlighting similarities and differences in both these cultural practices.

The study will emphasise the controlled knowledge inherent in these examples of art-making practices with ritual overlays. I relate these to my own biography and art-making identity, which is itself one of hybridity and apparent contradiction. I aim to demonstrate that the creative power of cultural hybridity in art and ritual is specifically revealed by an examination of issues of transformation (and their intimate connection to ritual), the management of knowledge and power, and the emphasis of process over product.

CHAPTER ONE

1. Introduction

In this chapter I introduce the artists and ritual specialists that I am examining, and give an overview of how I aim to view these diverse cultural products and performances under one lens. The cultural and anthropological readings associated with the management of knowledge around these varied artworks and artists are discussed in the literature review. A rationale, theoretical framework and methodology is also provided in this chapter.

1.1 Joseph Beuys

Joseph Beuys was a German performance artist living in mid-twentieth century Europe who is now a legendary figure in the context of contemporary art. Born in 1921 in Germany he wove a myth around himself as a Second World War fighter-bomber who survived a crash and was rescued and healed by nomadic Tartars who wrapped him in felt and covered his body in fat. Felt and fat became his signature materials. He embraced shamanistic practices in an attempt to heal himself and his nation from the devastation suffered by large parts of Europe as a result of World War II. The main narrative of this myth – what Peter Nisbet (2001, 5-18) called 'crash-injury-felt-fat-recovery' – involved Beuys' use of materials with metaphorical significance such as fat, felt and honey that referred to both healing and to the ritual role of animals.



Figure 1: Joseph Beus 1969 Goethe's Iphigenie auf Taris (1779) and Shakespeare's Titus Andronicus. Ropac Paris Pantin Gallery.

1.2 Kunda People

The Kunda-speaking language group is a multi-ethnic matrilineal group of people who live in the Luangwa River valley in the Eastern Province of Zambia. This is a remote area of 95 000 square kilometres known locally as Malambo, where they are outnumbered by wild animals including lion and elephant. Most of the people living there are subsistence farmers growing millet or maize.



Figure 2: Aerial view of the Luangwa River Valley.

The Kunda women make decorated clay images relating to transformation and healing for the girls' coming of age ceremonies known as *chisungu*. Some of these are large and are used in connection with the body where the girls lie inside the clay structure. Others are smaller and linked to a teaching, a story, a dance, a dramatic mime and a song. Animals appear in the form of images, metaphors and stories of transformation in the *chisungu* ritual.

There are six Kunda chiefs, one of whom, Nsefu, was Senior Chieftainess before her death in 1995. Kunda chiefs are guardians of their history and because of her position as Senior Chieftainess, Nsefu was the main custodian of the oral history of the Kunda. The origin of the Kunda has been recognised by the local official palace history as a branch of the migration from the Luba Kingdom in the Congo Basin and is dated around 1840–1850. Their Kunda language is part of the Lubu-Sabi linguistic group. The hybrid nature of the Kunda language itself is symptomatic of the articulated nature of the Kunda and is characterised as an interactive dialect (See Appendix 1).

1.3 Rock art

Rock paintings have been produced in Zambia for many thousands of years (Smith, 1997: 21). Most of this art belonged to people known as Twa or Batwa, hunter-gatherers whose red, finely drawn images of animals and abstract figures are found in rock shelters all over Zambia.

The 'late white' paintings are tentatively dated between AD 500 and 800 when matrilineal farming groups first settled in Zambia (Phillipson, 1976; Smith, 1997, Zubieta 2013[1]). For some decades both archaeologists and anthropologists linked these late White spread-eagled tradition of rock paintings (so named by Ben Smith, 1997) with the matrilineal women's initiation *chisungu* practices, or *chinimwali* as they are named in Malawi (Apthorpe, 1962; Schoffeleers and Lindgren, 1978; Phillipson, 1976; Smith, 1995; Winterbottom and Lancaster, 1965). The paintings at Kalemba Eastern Province Zambia (14°7′ S 32°30′ E) form part of my research. Phillipson (1976:183-4) writing in *The Prehistory of Eastern Zambia* concluded that the paintings at Kalemba pre-date the arrival of the Ngoni to the area, and refer to Nsenga women.

[1]Phillipson was an archaeologist in the 1970s who described the rock art of the women's initiations in Malawi and Zambia. Smith and Zubieta also wrote about these same rock art images later in the 1990s and 2000s.



Figure 3: White spread-eagle paintings. Kalema Eastern Province Zambia, 14°7′ S 32°30′ E. Photo Pam Guhrs 1999.

But up until 2009 most of the researchers were men and so were not privy to the specialist women's secrets that have been upheld over the years – the concepts behind the rock art images remained unknown for a long time although the link between them and the rock paintings at Kalemba near Chadiza in Eastern Province Zambia had been tentatively revealed (Apthorpe, 1962; Lancaster, 1965; Schoffeleers and Lindgren, 1969; Phillipson, 1976; Smith, 1995; Winterbottom and Lancaster, 1965). Phillipson (1976:183-184) concludes that the paintings at Kalemba pre-date the advent of the Ngoni and refer to Nsenga women. This is relevant from the perspective of the absence of the Kunda cow image, which I suggest relates to Ngoni raids on matrilineal groups and must therefore be a later addition. I will explain this in more detail at another point in the thesis.

Recently, more in-depth research by a female archaeologist Leslie Zubieta, (2011, 2013, 2016), who learnt the initiation knowledge and practice of Malawi female rituals, revealed that the link between the paintings and the initiation practice is indisputable. The women initiates, in both Zambia and Malawi, currently make these images from clay. It is difficult to know what, over time, led to the shift in images from the rock paintings to the skeuomorphic three-dimensional renderings of these

objects in the lives of villagers. One can only surmise that due to the extreme proximity to the cave and rock sites and the paucity of stones in other regions that the practice shifted to these embodied clay signs. Part of initiation teaching involves learning the concepts behind the images including aspects of performance, dance, songs, mimes, stories and ritual. I give a more extensive account of my own 'exchange' with the group of Kunda women who made the journey to the rock art site with me in Chapter six.

1.4 Myself

My father was in the Wildlife Services in various regions in Zambia from the 1940s and was given honorary headman status by the traditional authority (chiefs) of the Luangwa area where he embraced the concept of *ubuntu* and *ulemu*[2] and built his career and his years of service to the wildlife and people in the area. His conservation work from the early 1950s in Luangwa was considered visionary; benefiting and empowering people on a grass roots level. I grew up in the Kunda area of Luangwa River valley and speak the language. In the late 1970s to 1980s I was making art and home-schooling my daughters in Chief Mwanya's area. In the late 1980s we moved to Mfuwe in Kakumbi's chiefdom in a more all year-round accessible area to build our own extended family village. In 1995, when my daughters were eighteen and twenty respectively, they were invited to be initiated into the Kunda female cultural domain by way of the *chisungu* maturity rites. These are twin inheritances that I intend to negotiate, firstly as part of my art practice, and secondly, as part of my identity.

My own position is based on a deep immersion into a rural Zambian Kunda way of life, which in time became part of my identity. The boundaries of my beliefs and practices have been tempered by having been born in Malawi and grown up in rural Zambia amongst the Kunda. Although I originally did my Fine Art degree in the early 1970s at the University of the Witwatersrand, my outlook, value system, language and

[2] *Ubuntu* is the commonly understood concept of humanity. *Ulemu* loosely translates as 'respect' and is a related concept governing social relationships and identity amongst the Kunda.

lifestyle are more akin to that of the Kunda than to a middle-class suburban white woman in South Africa, or indeed in other parts of Zambia. Due to a combination of geographical isolation and my father's outlook, I believe that my upbringing was indeed a hybrid one, which belies the received narrative and ideas about white colonial identity.

Growing up in Zambia we moved often, always living on the edges of wilderness areas where my father was walking the areas and setting up the National Parks. Therefore, animals were always a central part of my life.

After completing a Fine Art degree at the University of the Witwatersrand I began painting and making art professionally. I married a German artist, came into contact with German art and was drawn to the early drawings of Joseph Beuys. They reminded me of the Malawian and Zambian rock paintings I had seen in reproductions as a teenager. I was intrigued with these images and this fascination has persisted.

I first met Eneria Njobvu, one of the main Kunda initiation teachers, at a funeral, and then for the second time at a Village Action Group (VAG) meeting, through a friend, Elena Phiri, and because of my interest in the rituals we built up a strong friendship. She took me under her wing and made sure I was with her and her initation group at many other rituals that they invited me to, so that she could teach me. I spent much time at her village socialising with her and the other women, and our conversations often turned to the details of the *chisungu* knowledge. After my daughters were invited to be initiated in *chisungu* I spent many years attending, learning and absorbing the rituals with her (See Appendix 2). After a while I realised that the images from the rock art in Malawi and Eastern Province Zambia, such as those at Kalemba and Chaingo that I had seen in reproduction in Phillipson's *Pre-History of Eastern Zambia* (1976), and Schofeleers's *Rock Art and Nyau Symbolism in Malawi* (1972), corresponded to some of those that I was now seeing in the rituals. These images had never been completely described in the literature because one needs to be fully integrated into the community aligned to the initiation teachers to properly understand and experience the knowledge connected to the art making and its significant imagery. The women initiation teachers and I decided that we needed to discover these rock images for ourselves and organised an expedition to see this work.



Figure 4: Chiango - White spread-eagled painting. Photo Pam Guhrs 1994.

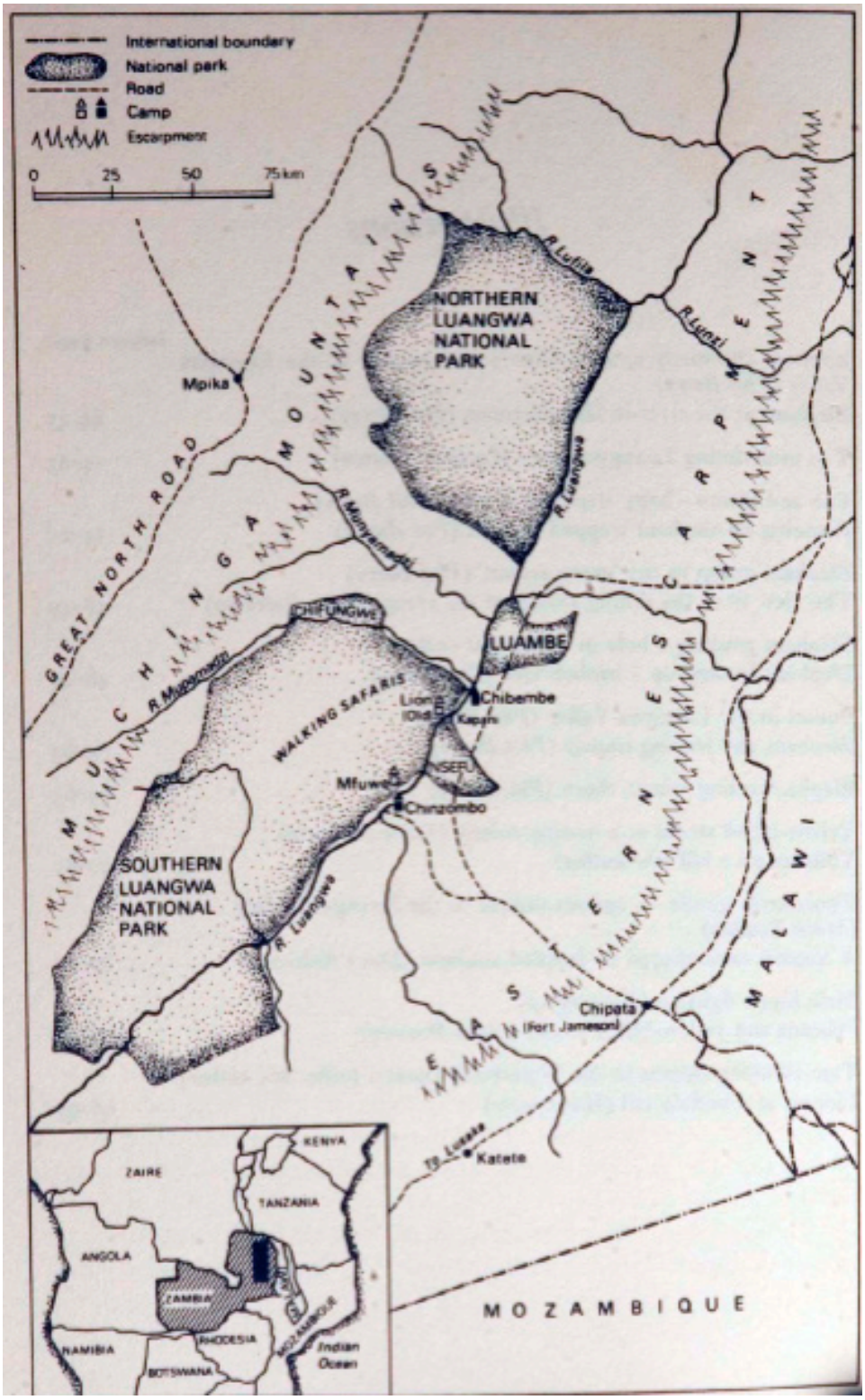


Figure 5: Map of Zambia (N. Carr Norman, 1979: 10) showing the research area of Luangwa River in Eastern Zambia and extending to the rock paintings on the eastern plateau into Malawi.

2. Rationale

2.1 Contextual overview

The idea of an artist as an individual working separately did not make sense to my Kunda friends and neighbours who found my being alone in my art studio all day unusual and inappropriate with even sinister implications. The idea of institutional art in the western sense did not exist in this society where survival values leave little tolerance for individuality. This prompted me to question the dual nature of my identity and art practice, as well as the apparent dichotomies between ritual and art in the ways that these have been written about. In reflecting on my own artistic and cultural hybridity I was compelled to draw together two examples that were not so much 'case studies' as personal influences, both of which suggest their own overlays of hybridity, ritual, transformative power and secret or controlled knowledge. As a Kunda initiate and as a graduate in Art History and Fine Art, the work of Zambian Kunda women and the work of Joseph Beuys have shaped my own work and practice and in a sense, I amalgamate these two influences. My selection of Joseph Beuys was prompted by the deep primordial patterns that resonate in his art and the interface between his work and the Kunda art.

2.2 Theoretical background and context

I drew on the idea of the cultural writer Edward Said regarding the contrapuntal to explore these two worldviews; western art and Kunda art. He used the concept of counterpoint in music and applied it to cultures. In counterpoint many parallel themes and melodies are put together in a manner that provides a metaphor for the way cultural studies also interlink. Instead of any particular melody losing its individual identity by being combined it contributes to the greater whole. Said's (1993) method allows each cultural instance to resonate equally, sometimes overlapping and sometimes separate, but with no domination of one over the other. This is not a side-

by-side comparison of the two different cultures, but an interchanging flow of themes, noting the consonances and dissonances of each along the way.

The anthropologist and cultural theorist James Clifford added further perspective. He considered the concept cultural hybridity and developed the idea he termed articulation (2003:48). He explains this as a kind of interlinking of cultures, but more in a manner that responds to how various parts of different cultural practices form a dialogue, a criss-crossing of ways to form a new articulated culture or identity: like a creature, he wrote, with different grafted limbs (Clifford, 2003:48-49). This seemed a bit simplified until I realised that he also noticed the complex transformative aspect of this result, and pointed out that in the translation from one context to another something new happens; surprising new dimensions emerge. These ideas offered me a solution to the challenge of organising two apparently separate cultural spheres into one framework. Comparable to Clifford, Said (1993), also believes that this criss-crossing of ideas enhances each creatively into something new. Both writers believe there is creative and transformative power in cultural crossovers.

In addition, Said's (1993) contrapuntal perspective has given me an appropriate manner in which to engage my own identity from these dual life experiences that have shaped my identity and artwork; firstly, the centrality of my art education and values, and secondly, the immersion of the Afrocentric experience of being a participant in a Kunda African society over a lifetime. And finally, how these two experiences have been integrated into my sense of self and can cohabit in an interconnected fashion as I live strung out between deep rural Zambia and urban Johannesburg.

I identify with both the unusual shamanistic European art practices of Joseph Beuys as well as with the resonances I sense closer at hand in the Kunda ritual practices as dual sources for my own work. I am interested in how controlled access to meaning brings power for the artists that I am researching, and how these material objects are made, presented and fit into a broader community, both for Joseph Beuys and the Kunda women. I will explore how my own practice is influenced by both worldviews.

2.3 The relevance of my own artistic practice and positioning

Bringing together the two worlds of Johannesburg and the Luangwa Valley where I have lived for more than forty years and still live today, I understand the problems caused by over a hundred years of western anthropologists dominating and representing African culture and acquiring knowledge for their own ends. Similarly, I agree that there are enormous problems associated with art-making practice that appropriates little understood tropes or images of African culture without permission or sensitivity. The perspective that I offer here, in describing my own experience in a culture to which I belong, where I am accepted as a local and where I interact on a daily basis, is, I believe, a unique contribution, which adds nuance to the debate.

I am not an anthropologist attempting to assimilate a culture foreign to her own but someone with generational knowledge and community confidentiality. And yet making a living as an artist and in particular doing my Master of Fine Arts (MAFA) at the University of the Witwatersrand offers me the space to examine precisely this kind of study of cultural mixtures of a post-colonial Africanist and specifically South African experience that a degree at Witwatersrand allows for in the present day, as well as opening up the space for me to do exactly the kind of work that I am doing. The study of Joseph Beuys in History of Art has been as much of a formative influence on me as the Zambian ritual and cultural productions that I have been part of for many years. Without fore-grounding the racial, economic and cultural power dynamics at play in South Luangwa, I must of necessity remain aware of these as I negotiate my art-making identity in this context. However, it is in the detail of the examples themselves, their consonances and dissonances, that can help to understand how artists are able to retain power over how their work is received, and therefore how hybridity itself can be managed in a way that privileges the owners of the art.

I said earlier that my position is not that of the anthropologist 'looking in' from the outside, but rather that I am working as a cultural practitioner from within, that my own work is a ritualised practice that acknowledges both heritages. In fact, I hope to subvert the 'inside/outside' binary. The power of my own hybrid position is that I am simultaneously both inside and out. From an interactive process I acknowledge the

Kunda women's interpretations of the rock paintings while also dealing with the ethical issues around what has been integrated and shared with me by these women, yet protected by the management of secret knowledge. My own work relates directly to the rock paintings of Eastern Zambia and engages notions of originality in that the original transmissions of these rock images, which are handed down are like ancient music scores, are re-enacted, interpreted and performed over time, thus diluting issues of authorship and innovation. Although concept-driven, in the re-translation of it I attempt to grasp the image on a level of feeling rather than visual superficiality. These black and white images in my own practice are drawn repeatedly with a tutored hand like a visual replaying of the musical score, and then later with eyes closed in a meditative fashion creating the transference of a mental state, which bears a relation to aspects of shaman-like existence and altered states. Closing the eyes releases the unconscious gesture or the underlying emotive aspect of the form. Cutting off the dominant sense of the visual reflects back to many African art practices including the Kunda women where elements such as sound, mime, performance, singing, drumming all take precedence over the purely visual.

These gestural images, resembling a type of calligraphy, are then enlarged onto a board in a manner related to western technical drawing, through a series of grids. The resulting drawings are completed in tar or watercolour with a large brush. Here repetition alludes to ritual as an indigenous mnemonic tool and to the topic of spontaneity, while the use of grids is a western tool that engages with the specificity of control and the ability to map accurately.

2.4 Materials

I communicate the message of transformation in my work by using materials such as tar, lime and watercolour, which are in themselves value laden. The watercolour emphasises the elusive fragility and constant change in aspects of life, art and ritual, by the unmanageable, out-of-control nature of this recalcitrant medium while tar is organic, primordial and tough. This in some ways is not unlike Beuys' interest in the prehistoric peat bogs of Ireland with their own primordial overtones (Tisdall[a], 1979:

34; Walters, 2012: 83). I also use lime, which is a white ochre, a fragile inorganic substance with ancestral links to ancient lime mines in Luangwa, although I use a commercial product mined in another part of Zambia. Both tar and lime have chemical properties that can change their composition and at certain stages of the process, spontaneously ignite. We do not know if there was significance to the white material used by the makers of the rock paintings in this research; the white spread-eagled images in Eastern Zambia, or whether sound and movement accompanied them as they do today. But we do know that, according to Smith (1997: 15), they were painted with white clay dug out of the earth and ground into a powder. It was then probably mixed with water to make a paste that was applied to the rock surface. I discuss the materials used by both Beuys and the Kunda in more detail later but both use materials that have metaphorical transformative significance, for example, the fat and felt of Beuys, and the red ochre of the Kunda women art makers.

'Special knowledge' is a term I use that has the same meaning as 'secret knowledge'. It is attached to the Kunda women's images and is carefully guarded over the generations. But like all practices of image-making these are in a dynamic relationship to changing historical contexts.

By examining both the rituals and the art in two culturally diverse examples, my central argument is that the power of agency and autonomy in the production of ritual and art is retained through the management of special guarded knowledge while hybridity enhances the creative and transformative power of the art.

3. Theoretical framework

Clifford (2003) has added an extra perspective to organising two apparently separate cultural instances into one theme, especially with regard to art production. Because I view none of the examples as a pure cultural practice, his concept of articulation has helped me to think about them in a way that accommodates this.

In a series of interviews, *On the Edges of Anthropology* (2003), Clifford challenges

the idea of a 'pure product' and in his examination of cultural products he concludes that there is a blending of multiple influences that overturns any notions of authenticity.

Before this, Clifford had written in *The Predicament of Culture* (1988) that culture or tradition was something that was self-made; the identity of a culture was something that was constantly inventing and reinventing itself. However, later in writing *On the Edges of Anthropology* (2003), he prefers the concept of articulation, which he explains as a political connecting and disconnecting, a hooking up, and then an unhooking of elements in a socio-cultural body. What may look like a whole cultural body is actually, according to him, a set of historical elements that have been made up through a constant process of making and remaking. If it were a literal body, it would look like some sort of puppet with grafted limbs. From this point of view the idea of an 'authentic' or 'inauthentic' culture has no place. Culture is an open-ended process rather than a defined thing.

Holding the Chair of the History of Consciousness program, Clifford has moved between the perspectives of literary studies, history and cultural anthropology. He described how he found himself addressing different audiences as an 'import-export specialist between the disciplines' (Clifford, 2003: 55). But these crossovers and movements of ideas are not simply, he points out, transporting of an object from here to there. It is always a matter of translation. As he points out it is, 'through the process of translation in the new context what is brought across is made new; it takes on unexpected dimensions' (Clifford, 2003: 55). The relevance of the idea of translation carries through into my own practice.

Like Said (1993), Clifford believes, as I have pointed out, that this criss-crossing of ideas enhances each one creatively into something new. The importance of creativity in these kinds of crossovers will become clear throughout the thesis while its mechanism will be demonstrated in my own work in Chapter six.

Shifting power relations and the open-endedness of contact-histories make up the idea of a cultural body that according to Clifford's (2003) theory of articulation is not a monolithic single community. The Kunda people, for instance, are not only constantly

redefining themselves through different histories or stories (*mbili*) depending on the political alliances of the time or the particular chiefs in power (Strickland, 1995), but also absorbing non-Kunda others – the process of articulation is therefore ongoing. The identity of Kunda is decidedly multi-ethnic (See Appendix 1). The cultural body in Clifford's eyes is an articulated body; a sort of creature with connected and disconnected limbs and joints; articulated and disarticulated. According to Clifford (2003: 47):

> There is nothing written in nature or in history that this particular group must include who it does or be allied with that particular group. Even a time-honoured kinship system will look more like a set of political alliances than something with the naturalness of an organic body.

3.1 Hybridity

Mikhail Bakhtin (1981) and Homi Bhabha (1994) are credited with taking the concept of hybridity from biology to language and culture. More recently the term has come under more scrutiny and Marwan Kraidy (2005), writing in *Hybridity, or the Cultural Logic of Globalisation* challenges its use as a term too general in its application – he thinks that it should rather be used to describe local contexts and specific practices. He describes hybridity as a problematic term that can either be thought of as subverting cultural and political oppression as interpreted by Bhabha (1994), or alternatively it can be thought of as something that is honoured by a privileged class of people. In its many varied definitions, he calls it a 'risky notion' (Kraidy, 2005: i) that does not take power into account. It is also advised by Yazdiha (2010: xii), '… we ought to begin looking at hybridity's, each as a particular, localized practice, as opposed to a highly singular hybridity conceived as an all-inclusive sociocultural order'. We need, she continues, '… a renewed emphasis on local knowledge where the notion of the local is reconsidered …" (Yazdiha, 2010: xii). While I understand the problematics of the term I disagree with Kraidy and align myself with the position which suggests that hybridity theory can be a 'powerful tool for liberation from the

domination imposed by bounded definitions of race, language, and nation' (Yazdiha, 2010: 36). Furthermore, Yazdiha (2010: 36) states that hybrid theory has the capacity to empower 'marginalised communities'. She does not see it as divisive or ignoring power but rather says that, 'the greatest power lies in the heart of the collective (Yazdiha, 2010: 37). She also says that hybridity can 'offer the opportunity of a counter-narrative, a means by which the dominated can reclaim shared ownership of a culture that relies upon them for meaning' (Yazdiha, 2010: 32). I believe that hybridity allows knowledges that have been denied up until now to enter the dominant discourse and to go a long way towards reversing the effects of colonialism.

In the same vein hybridity relates to identity and there is a 'vast body of literature that critiques the essentialist notions of identity as fixed and constant …' (Yazdiha, 2010: 31). In discussing the politics of identity Harris (2013) describes an increased tendency to reclaim an 'indigenous' identity. She speaks of this in *Emergent Indigenous Identities: Rejecting the Need for Purity*.

Like Harris, Clifford too in 'Traditional Futures' *(*2004), notes how on occasion indigenous populations reclaim their own essentialism. He notes the scholarly reluctance to take 'conservative' African practices seriously. The trend is underway he says, for cultural theorists to 'register the return of the '"native"'[3] (Clifford, 2003: 163). He cites instances of indigenous people claiming a separate indigenous identity. In my experience Kunda women were doing the same: 'This is Nsenga but *this* is the Kunda way of doing it', they often said, emphasising its separate, indigenous, conservative nature although at the same time embracing 'outside' elements. (pers. comm.).

Despite these claims I intend to show that it is hybridity that carries creative and transformative power. Following Said (2005), and the anthropologist Victor Turner (1969), I demonstrate in the research that ritual has the power to generate new ideas and that social transformation is elicited by using 'performance' and 'art'. While this thesis intends to engage questions of the hybrid nature of ritual and art, I observe that within art and ritual, those grafted 'exotic' elements, far from being a simple

[3] Clifford uses the term 'native' in its original sense of the land of one's birth.

appropriation from another culture, may be absorbed into the art and ritual, obscuring the 'original'. Yet these grafts sometimes became the very elements necessary for creative transformation. This observation supports the idea that there is power in cultural hybridity and in the introduction of 'foreign' or 'inauthentic' elements.

This power of hybridity was confirmed by the examination of the different strategies that artists and ritual practitioners use to maintain control of their power. I show that they do this in both the Beuys and the Kunda examples by taking elements from different sources, disrupting the 'norms' and received conservative traditions, and creating new meanings from this hybridity. I will show that by maintaining certain levels of secrecy, destroying the resulting products and managing their knowledge well, the Kunda women acquire a certain power in their community. I later give examples of instances where hybrid elements are used as subversive subtexts of resistance to dominant authorities in both the Beuys and Kunda samples.

Contrapuntal reading and this hybrid juxtaposition of the chosen examples allowed me to engage the power effects of performance, art and ritual that would otherwise not have been exposed, while also enhancing my understanding of each example. Kunda art and ritual is given a richer reading because of Beuys, and vice versa. Because the contrapuntal reading does not examine each as a strictly separated culture, but a more fluid mixture of various influences, socio-political, historical and aesthetic, it clarifies the fact that this mix in itself brought agency and power to the producers. By this method I am proposing a way of reading art/ritual products in a post-colonial context because, as I hope to demonstrate, each practice is not culturally 'pure', but destabilised by its own practitioners.

So, by disrupting the status quo of so-called 'tradition' and 'pure' art and creating hybridity by deliberately bringing in foreign elements, the examples show that for artists and ritual practitioners this is an effective means of accruing power. I believe hybridity is created, whether intentionally or not, in all cultural practices. Hybridity is a way of engaging fixed cultural identities with change. I consider this as inevitable unless the tradition is absolutely fixed – which is almost impossible. Art and ritual are part of a continuum which address the power of replicated tradition but also of a considered adaptation as it addresses the moment. It is like a fixed musical score that

is played over the centuries, but the interpretation is held to be significant so that even the rock paintings that I will discuss have changed over the centuries through interpretation in an innovative manner. By using a contrapuntal reading of Beuys' hybrid art and Kunda ritual practices with hybrid elements, it is possible to show that hybridity is in fact a process by which artists and ritual practitioners may retain control of the work and its interpretation specifically by the management of special knowledge.

Through some of the implications of this observation and proposal I hope to clarify that in the power laden spaces of art institutions, museums, and performance spaces, where the potent dynamics in terms of the original intentions of the artist or ritual specialist may be violated, often disempowering the artists, it is in fact possible to have an alternative reading. I give examples of dominance or oppression being subverted by the artist or ritual practitioner managing the knowledge. This is done in both cases by deliberately embracing and using elements of the dominant or oppressive culture to disrupt relations of superiority. Beuys' example can be seen in 'Democracy is Fun' (Klaus, 1986), made during his expulsion from Dusseldorf University where he taught. The Kunda women demonstrate this with their *N'gombe* or Ngoni cow, which I suggest is seen as a symbol of patriarchal oppression.

4. Literature review

My investigation of Beuys is conducted through the available literature. However, I have not used the readings on Beuys to explain what his art means but rather to see how writers in the west view Beuys' culturally hybrid art from the perspective of western discourses.

Both the ritual and art history readings gave me a view on my embedded self, which is why James Clifford and Edward Said have been particularly useful, because the work of the Kunda that related to my experience in Luangwa, and the historical location of the art of Beuys that spoke to my own academic heritage. Said's ideas about counterpoint harmony in music provided the perfect metaphor for the way

cultural examples may be examined together. The original idea was formulated by him in his book *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), and then later refined in his subsequent commentary in a series of interviews published as *Power, Politics and Culture* (2005). Reading these texts revealed to me the most suitable manner in which to explore two apparently different cultural studies together without making direct comparisons.

4.1 Anthropology and art

In *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* the social anthropologist Alfred Gell (1998: 1) wrote:

> There is no sense in developing one 'theory of art' for our own art, and another, distinctly different theory for the art of those cultures who happened, once upon a time, to fall under the sway of colonialism. If western (aesthetic) theories of art apply to 'our' art, then they apply to everybody's art, and should be equally applied.

This 'anthropological theory of art' that he formulated helped me to think about the artists that I have researched in a less binary way than that of west and African. And to also take into consideration some of the significant work done by art historians, such as Nooter and Roberts (1993) and Susan Vogel (1997), working in western institutions on African art.

The work cited above by Gell (1998), was also relevant for helping me to understand the art I am researching as linked to events – as an event itself, rather than an object, as something intrinsically related to the people around it and to its makers, something that influences the thoughts and actions of people that come into contact with it. This applies to both Beuys' work and the Kunda art. Some of Beuys' ideas seem to have been built on Victor Turner's where the art objects are transformative and always act within social relationships; they never stand on their own (Gell, 1998: 7).

In a general sense David Napier in his book, *Foreign Bodies: Performance, Art and*

Symbolic Anthropology (1990), provided valuable insights on identity when looking at African art. Through reading his work I understood the elitist nature of avant-garde art that often needs special knowledge to understand it, rather like an induction into a secret society. I applied these insights to my analysis of Beuys.

4.2 Anthropological writings on Kunda

Van Bruwer wrote 'Matrilineal Kinship among the Kunda' (1958) published in *Africa* 28: 207-223. In addition, Elizabeth Colson (1961) and Langworthy (1969) wrote about matrilineal kinship systems in Zambia. Lane Poole wrote *Native Tribes of the Eastern Province of Northern Rhodesia: Notes on Their Migrations and History* (1938; 1949) which was published by The Government of Northern Rhodesia and reprinted twice. This provides information that is still used today on Kunda oral history about the apparent migration at the same time as the Ambo from the Congo Basin. Audrey Richards wrote *Chisungu: A Girl's Initiation Ceremony Among the Bemba of Zambia* (1956), which also provided insights into the Kunda *chisungu*. The chapter by Leslie Zubieta (2013: 60-61), 'The rock art of chinamwali and its sacred landscape' confirmed that some of the women's rock images were possibly appropriated from the Batwa hunter gatherers who lived concurrently in the same area, adding to my theme of hybridity in the art.

I have leaned heavily on Bradford Strickland's fine analysis of the Kunda epistemology that he conducted through intense idiomatic and linguistic investigation on a microcosmic level in chi Kunda in his doctorate titled 'Makalidwe wa Akunda as Kunda Ways of Staying: Productions and Management of Knowledge, Agency and Power Among The Kunda of Eastern Zambia' (1995). His dissertation from the University of North Carolina has informed my thinking on both anthropological methods and the Kunda polity itself. It provided me with a valuable base from which to organise my analysis. His emphasis on idioms, such as, *mbili sa gona* (history never sleeps), has assisted my understanding of the open-ended nature of the Kunda epistemology and the dynamic character of knowledge and stories that have no ending and no closed interpretation but are always subject to changes, transformations and

additions. This way of managing knowledge correlated with my own findings and was, I realised, the core strategy in the women's rituals to gain power and transformation.

African Folklore: An Encyclopedia (Peek and Yankah, 2004) was useful in that some of Strickland's articles on Kunda were published here. For example, 'Oral Tradition: Oral History and Zambia' (Strickland, 2004[a]), and 'Identity and Folklore: Kunda' (Strickland, 2004[b]), were helpful to me because published work on Kunda is scarce. There is also an article by him in the same book that includes Kunda beliefs about animal transformation titled, 'Spirit Possession: Kunda' (Strickland, 2004[c]). All this, together with Strickland's PhD dissertation, proved invaluable for the reiteration of my own observations and understanding during my exploration of the Kunda idioms and epistemology.

I used James Scott's ideas in both his books, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance. Hidden Transcripts* (1990), and *Weapons of the Weak. Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (1985), to substantiate my argument about the Kunda women's destruction of the most public image in initiation; the large clay cow that stands in the public space of the ritual. James Scott's (1990) theory is about the power of a subversive subtext in art, language or performance that can be used by the subjugated to thumb their nose at their oppressors without being liable. I maintain that the cow in the Kunda art and performance contains a subtext of the historical brutality and violence towards Kunda women by the patrilineal cattle owning Ngoni from the Eastern escarpment. I argue that they used the clay cow and its public destruction through the act of kicking, as a signifier of Ngoni patriarchal oppression. Although this large clay sculpture of a cow is prominent in some of the rituals, cows do not exist in Kunda country, as domestic livestock cannot survive the tsetse fly and sleeping sickness.

4.3 Rock art and Kunda women

Leslie Zubieta's (2013) most recent publication, *Chinimwali and its sacred landscape*, was helpful in both providing a time frame to the women's rock art and validating

several points of my central argument by showing, through dates, how effective the strategies are that the women use for managing knowledge and keeping the secrets. Although her research was conducted in Malawi with Chewa women, I found that the Kunda women are using similar initiation rituals and, like her, I am linking most of white spread-eagled rock images to the current ethnography.

Zubieta (2013) also confirms the link between animals and the young girl. She in fact suggests that the initiate is symbolically transformed into an animal during the ritual. I found this aspect of transformation was also a feature of the women's teachings in Luangwa. It fits the idea of transformation during ritual when the girls' 'reality' (her very human self) is turned upside down as she stands on the threshold of her new identity. The disruption of normality is recognised as a vital step in the transformation process and plays an important role in ritual (Grimes, 1982 and Turner, 1969).

> We know that when the matrilineal groups arrived (ca. eighth century A.D.) they found hunter-gatherers whom, according to archaeological evidence, had inhabited the region for more than 15,000 years. These groups known by the name of Akafula or Batwa survived until the late nineteenth century (Zubieta cited in Clark, 1973: 40).

She says that the Chewa women appropriated some of these symbols for their own use (Zubieta, 2013: 61), which I found interesting as it further demonstrated the rich complexity that makes up the hybrid nature of the Kunda women's art.

The link between *chisungu* and the rock paintings at Kalemba in Eastern Province Zambia had been only tentatively revealed (Apthorpe, 1962; Phillipson, 1976; Schoffeleers and Lindgren, 1978; Smith, 1995; Winterbottom and Lancaster, 1965). Phillipson (1976: 183-184) concludes that the paintings at the Kalemba site near Chadiza pre-date the advent of the Ngoni. He also refers to Nsenga women (Phillipson, 1976: 183). This is relevant from the viewpoint of the absence of the Kunda cow image, which I think relates to Ngoni raids on matrilineal groups and therefore must be a later addition.

Phillipson (1966: 79-80, in his writing about the Ngoni raids of the nineteenth century, said that the local villagers living around the Kalemba or Chaingo rock art

sites did not know what the white paintings were. Our excursion with the female initiation teachers confirmed this, as there was no knowledge in the nearest villages as to what the rock images were or signified. This is because the area is under Chief Mpezene, the Ngoni chief, which would imply that people in this region would not recognise the deep historical symbolism of these images. (See Appendix 2).

4.4 Field research considerations

Smith (1999) in *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples,* and others, such as Zavala (2013), suggest that research should be collaborative with indigenous people who should participate, benefit from and take control of their representation. Kunda women have full control over their knowledge through various strategies that I will discuss. From a position of trust, I have also carefully rehearsed with all my Kunda initiation teachers exactly what may or may not be revealed.

Zavala (2013: 55-71) writes that indigenous voices must be heard. Participatory Action Research (PAR) at grass roots level situate the indigenous management of knowledge as the focus. She says that the individuals of the community should propose their own perspectives. I have followed the main initiation teacher, Eneria Njovu's injunctions as to exactly what knowledge I may reveal to the academy (or anywhere), as no English was spoken during my time in the rituals. I never had a camera inside the initiation house and never used recording equipment. Mostly I learnt over many years through oral repetition but sometimes I wrote down what I was allowed or instructed to write. However, I did not write when the knowledge was guarded. These women have complete control over the special knowledge around their art and dictate exactly what may or may not be recorded.

In a counter argument Ortner (1995) coined the term 'ethnographic refusal' but thinks it may give a mistaken impression of the society by leaving out certain knowledge. However, because of my immersion in local knowledge the concept of 'ethnographic refusal' informed all my decisions about what not to write and what not to reveal.

Mofitt, Chetwynd and Todd (2015) wrote *Interrupting the northern research industry: Why northern research should be in northern hands* in Northern Public Affairs 4 Magazine. In speaking about the Northwest Territories, they used the term 'tacit knowledge', which is about knowing more than one can speak about without thinking too much about it. This knowledge, is according to Chetwynd (2015: 1) 'forms of knowing draw upon intuition, praxis, and more intimate person-to-person teaching. It encompasses values, beliefs, and perceptions'. In referring to how they have been represented by outsiders, according to Chetwynd (2015), 'indigenous frameworks offset the mistrust of research with communities because of important pre-existing relationships, which increase perception of honesty and credibility of the researcher'.

I have a long-standing relationship of trust with the knowledge keepers and because of my immersion in the culture I have used my 'tacit knowledge' to avoid discussing certain issues which I instinctively know are too sensitive to expose even if some of them are already in the literature, for example *mdulo* or ritual temperatures. These ritual temperatures are discussed later in more detail.

Chetwynd (2015, 19) says that one should be conscious about how one's own ideas about knowledge and power are related to personal belief and value systems because it has a direct effect upon practices. She says that is 'it is only after carrying out this personal and institutional examination that scholars and disciplines can be in the positions to acknowledge indigenous knowledge and what it means in changing organizational culture' (Chetwynd, 2015: 169).

Cameron (2015), in *Far Off Metal River: Inuit Lands, Settler Stories, and the Making of the Contemporary Arctic,* shows through research and interviews, how some of the stories that matter to the Inuit are not divulged to settlers. Cameron (2015) argues that refusing to pursue these stories involves respecting the rights of Inuit to their own knowledges and experience. According to Cameron (2015), interpreting knowledge is an ongoing relational process. I have also refused exposure of many stories and concepts in this thesis that I feel should not be available for sharing.

In Tuck and Yang (2014[a]), the authors suggest that refusals are conducted in three parts: firstly, a research participant refuses to engage in a particular conversation; secondly, a researcher agrees to also refuse; and thirdly, as a result, indigenous sovereignty over a particular knowledge claim is maintained. I then explore in the chapter, what it means to engage with ethnographic refusals 'generatively', as per Simpson (2007: 78). I found it enlightening to realise that instinctively I had been engaging, even though almost unconsciously, in 'tacit knowledge' and 'ethnographic refusal'.

In Tuck and Yang's (2014[a]), *Unbecoming claims: Pedagogies of refusal in qualitative research* 'refusal' was highlighted. It was viewed as an anti-colonial method for 'analyzing and communicating research data and also that there are some forms of knowledge that should be kept out of the academy' (Tuck and Yang: 2014[a]: 811–818).

I also followed Needham's (1972) recommendation in *Belief, Language and Experience* to examine the viewpoints in a different language through a microcosmic and linguistic base, understanding that many of the idioms of the area reflect the epistemology. This was useful advice for me to follow and taught me to listen carefully for Kunda idioms during our conversations [4].

I found many enlightening chapters in *A Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies* (2008), Denzin, Lincoln and Smith (eds). A particularly useful chapter was 'Critical Race Theory and Indigenous Methodologies' by Christopher Dunbar (2008). He discusses research as it relates to people from groups excluded from the 'dominant cultural model' who have experienced discrimination and oppression and the necessity of 'writing their own scripts' (Dunbar, 2008: 96). I found that I shared similar views on research in most of the chapters I read. This substantiates the assertion that, 'the term "research" is inextricably linked to European imperialism and

[4] The experiences of colonialism differed greatly within different countries of the African continent as anthropologist Megan Vaughan noted about Zambia (Vaughan, 1994: 11). She has shown through her writing that perhaps the point of entry into this particular world view therefore will not be via colonial discourses, but rather via local discourses as far as possible (Vaughan, 1994: 13). Which is why I have tried to understand the rituals and *mwambo* (traditions) through the language of local ChiKunda discourses and idioms.

colonization' (Smith, 1991: 1). As she says, the word 'research' is 'probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world's vocabulary' (Smith, 1999: 1).

In my own experience and in accordance with ideas on decolonial and indigenous methodologies of research, I found that power for the Kunda women was always located within the indigenous community and accorded with the phrase: 'what is acceptable and not acceptable is denied and determined from within this community' (Denzin, Lincoln and Smith, 2008: 6). These methodologies resounded personally, as I have angered academic specialists in rock art research in the past for refusing to reveal the meanings of certain images or rock paintings relating to the women, and so I found it consoling to read that, the research practices, 'require that scholars live with the consequences of their research actions' (Denzin, Lincoln and Smith, 2008: 6).

They also wrote that there is '... a need to decolonise structures within the western academy that privilege knowledge systems and their epistemologies ... The decolonising project reverses this equation making western systems of knowledge the object of critique and inquiry' (Denzin, Lincoln and Smith, 2008: 6). Although I believe this complicates the idea of western knowledge as a monolithic and dominant discourse, I think this is what Beuys was doing, however problematic these attempts may have been, by privileging non-western knowledge of the Tartars and Upper-Palaeolithic myths that were normally excluded from academia.

Another source, also connected to concepts of non-western ideas from marginalised communities in which I found many useful articles was *Politics of Identity: Emerging Indigeneity* by Harris, Nakata and Carlson (2013) (eds). One such article was, 'Indigenous Identities and the Politics of Authenticity' (2013) by Harris, Carlson and Poata-Smith.

Another source, 'Identity Politics: Who Can Count as Indigenous?' (Nakata, 2013), although it refers to the attempt to classify Aboriginals in Australia according to various criteria, was useful. Particularly in trying to grasp issues such as essentialism, 'community' and various forms of belonging instead of 'simplistic either/or identity choices' (Nakata, 2013: 137). He questions the positioning of 'identity':

within its own discourse and how some frameworks appear logical and have gone unquestioned, but are in fact only logical within that particular discourse" and how that in turn has "shaped both consciousness and the discourse over the last forty or fifty years (Nakata, 2013: 143).

Homi Bhabha's *The Location of Culture (*1994*),* and his essay, 'Culture's In-Between' (1996) in *Questions of Cultural Identity Du Gay* (1996) (eds), particularly his concept of 'the third space' helped me to locate my own identity in the various cultural sites I move amid and between.

4.5 Literature on Joseph Beuys

I learnt a great deal about Joseph Beuys through the writings of Caroline Tisdall, in particular her monograph *Joseph Beuys* (1980), as well as Lucrezia De Domizio's (1992) book, *The Felt Hat: Joseph Beuys, a Life Told.* From these readings I gathered that in his work and life Beuys absorbed and fastened elements of Celtic prehistory, Judeo-Christian iconography and shaman rituals from the nomadic Tartars of the Crimea onto his work and onto the image that he projected of himself.

The special case of Beuys is his adoption of another cultural identity by embracing the role of a Eurasian shaman, a social and ecological regulator and teacher, with the props he carried or wore. His fisherman's vest, felt hat and shaman's crook all signified other religions or cultures. The readings I consulted seemed to indicate to me that many of the writers, especially Tisdall (1980) and Durini (1992), substantiated Beuys' romantic idealisation of other cultures.

Tisdall (1980) and Durini (1992) show how Beuys spoke of modern man as having lost the ability to achieve certain things and indicated that the dominant discourses in university systems were dry and over-analytical. According to Beuys they needed enchantment and magic. He looked towards the ancient legends of Irish myths and the nomadic Tartar tribes to demonstrate his evolutionary theme for mankind's

spirituality, suggesting that modern man has regressed in this respect.

It is clear from the literature that induction into the knowledge around his art was essential to the understanding of it. It is almost as if there was a closed system of self-reference from which his objects had not managed to detach themselves and find independent meanings on their own. Later on, many years after his death, essays in the book, *Joseph Beuys.Mapping the Legacy* (2001), highlighted his management of knowledge up to that point in time and showed how successful he had been at controlling concepts surrounding his art.

The fact is that just about all the previous writings have shown that his work has always been interpreted as he dictated, which was the 'crash-injury-felt-fat-recovery' narrative (Nisbet, 2001: 5–18) and this has obliterated the chance for any closer investigation around the artist's intention. Although recent scholarship has managed to extract some of these objects from their own closed meaning systems, especially the writing of Gene Ray (2001), who has re-looked at some of the objects and given them meanings that Beuys never wrote or spoke about. For instance, Ray (2001) discusses the ubiquitous felt made from the hair of hares that Beuys insists relates to Tartars' healing through warmth. Ray (2001: 55–74), however, shows that felt was also made from human hair. He shows photographs of huge grey rolls of this hair stacked at the concentration camp ready for loading on the train that would take it to the factory where it was made into felt, suggesting that Beuys' intention was to show something historical and more sinister. This essay, published in *Joseph Beuys. Mapping the Legacy,* was part of the symposium that took place at the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art in Sarasota, Florida, 4–6 December 1998. Coinciding with this event was a major travelling exhibition organised by the Walker Art Centre titled *Joseph Beuys Multiples*. A catalogue of the essays related to the event and exhibition was published in 2001 and edited by Gene Ray. This included the original reprint of the essay 'Beuys: The Twilight of the Idol', a controversial essay by Benjamin Buchloh that originally appeared in *Artforum* in 1980. Buchloh was scathing about many aspects of Beuys' work, particularly his ahistorical stance in the wake of the Holocaust. He slated his blind cult followers and worshipers who, he declared, made an artist out of a cult figure because of their ignorance of history of art especially Dada He read sinister intentions into Beuys desire to not only carry art into

politics but to “make politics into art” (Buchloh, 2001: 200), claiming it had Nazi connotations. But other authors, particularly Victoria Walters (2010: 45) in *The artist as shaman: the work of Joseph Beuys and Marcus Coates* (2010) speak about Beuys not being historically didactic but state that he was looking at deep notions of healing the ruptures of society made by the war. Walters writes of Beuys engaging with the downtrodden coyote, the 'pest animal' in *I Like America and America Likes Me* (2010). She cites Donald Kuspit, saying that for Beuys this work:

> was encouraging the audience to see the humanity in the dehumanised victims of the Third Reich, to transform the guilt into empathy and productive creativity, to revive people’s sense of their own humanity, an issue which the artist saw as being of vital importance in post-Second World war Germany (Walters, 2010: 45).

In an essay titled ′Crash Course' in *Joseph Beuys Mapping the Legacy*, Peter Nisbet (2001: 5–18) addresses the question of inconsistencies in Beuys’ myth of the plane crash, rescue and healing by the Tartars. There is a similar theme in the Kunda coming of age rituals in the danger, death or injury and healing or revival theme that instead of a crashed plane, involves a leopard attack on a young girl.

In the same publication Kim Levin (2001: 175–184) in an essay called 'Some Neglected Bequests points to the dictatorial controls Beuys’ exercised over his work. and how this has distorted scholarship and understanding. This essay was very useful in helping me to understand the extent to which Beuys went to control the knowledge around his work and the prohibitions he put in place regarding publications. Many years ago, Levin was active in critical writing during Beuys’ life and although she interviewed him on occasions she encountered the blocks that he had put in place to prevent independent interpretations of his work, or any unwanted monographs. This, she concluded, resulted in distortions and omissions with the result that a good deal of the Beuys literature was reduced, 'to the cult-like parroting of his words and ideas' (Levin, 2001: 176–7). It became clear throughout all the readings on Beuys that his need to control the access to the meanings around his work and the manner in which he discouraged independent investigations led to a ‘near total suspension of independent thought’ (Levin, 2001: 176). Although he died in 1986 most of the

writings about him still parroted his ideas, showing that the management of his knowledge outlived him in some way.

The overriding impression of all these essays was that persistent questions needed rethinking and addressing, such as Beuys' ahistorical stance, his plane crash myth and how much his intense control of the knowledge around his work, manipulation of the media, self-promotion and adoration of fans has skewed scholarship for the last thirty years and are only now being reconsidered.

The fact that Beuys' work resembled ritual as he intended, was made clear in an exhibition called *Rites of Passage, Art for the end of the Century* (1995) in London at the Tate Gallery where some of his work was exhibited posthumously. The catalogue, written by art theorist Stewart Morgan with Frances Morris, and published by Tate Gallery Publications, emphasised the resemblance to ritual in many of the artists' work and provided different insights about Beuys.

Morgan (1995), like many other critics, also drew attention to Beuys' references to transformation and shamanism. Like the Kunda's belief about certain animals, such as the hyena, Beuys' use of animals like the stag, prompted it to be proclaimed as, 'that sacred shape-changing creature of folklore' Morgan (1995: 44).

5. Methodology

For my methodology I use a combination of secondary anthropological literature and participatory first-hand field research. The latter comprising conversations with initiation teachers, and my daughters, and myself, included and participating in the rituals.

5.1 The derivation and use of a contrapuntal methodology

The key manner in which this methodology operates is through the contrapuntal. It is explicitly not comparative but rather is a methodology that I develop through this dissertation and which provides the keynotes through which all the art performances are heard, a theme informed by my reading of the cultural theorist and writer, Edward Said. His ideas about the contrapuntal originated from his love of music and how counterpoint harmony, which entwines many parallel themes, provides a metaphor for the way cultural studies also interlink.

The concept of counterpoint allows me to avoid the pitfalls of simply comparing the two examples and offers a way of listening to and engaging both within my personal art practice. Counterpoint also allows two apparently disparate cultural tonalities to be played out within the same orchestral entity, and provides a resonance between the hybridity of Beuys' and the Kunda practices. Within these practices there are six themes common to both that form the basis of the 'plainsong', the base that the 'melodies' of Beuys and the Kunda examples attach themselves to. I clarify these in more detail in the next chapters, but I have identified hybridity, ritual, management of knowledge, animals, shamanism and healing, transformation and process over product as the main themes. These topics form a continuous thread that runs throughout both examples. Like a conductor I attempt to synthesise all the topics of these apparently dissimilar themes into a single endeavour, adding 'melodies' of Beuys and the Kunda to them, to create a different, not necessarily harmonious, but perhaps richer sound, or interpretation.

Mohammed Fairouz, the talented composer and musician spoke to Krista Tippet in an interview on radio, *On Being* in 2015 called 'The World of Counterpoint'. He spoke of the musical concept of counterpoint and described how there is, 'one lovely melody … another lovely melody … you put them all together and play them', and instead of any particular melody losing or giving up anything by being combined as a whole it does not lose individual meaning … it does not lose its 'identity or its *raison d'être*' (Fairouz, 2015). Instead it contributes to the tapestry of the whole, to the greater whole. There is no domination of one melody (culture) over another. He says that to

imagine a piece of music of endless harmony would be 'so boring' (Fairouz, 2015).

Haj Yazdiha (2010) in 'Conceptualising Hybridity Deconstructing Boundaries through the Hybrid' in *Formations* (1)1: 13 claims that her modus operandi is also contrapuntal. She describes the advantages of adapting through Edward Said (1994) the idea of western classical music the counterpoint of where:

> Various themes play off one another, with only a provisional privilege being given to any particular one; yet in the resulting polyphony there is concert and order, an organized interplay that derives from the themes, not from a rigorous melodic or formal principle outside the work (Yazdiha 2010: 13).

She also speaks of how approaching hybridity contrapuntally helps us to 'move beyond bipolar models of global against local, power versus resistance, imperialism contra hybridity, and focuses instead on complex processes at play' (Yazdiha: 2010, 13). These ideas made sense to me because they echoed some of the potential polarities of Beuys and Kunda; the possible binaries inherent in examining someone with a European/Eurasian/German global history of art identity together with a localised African Kunda example. But dissonance and resonance are part of counterpoint in the musical metaphor. I posed the notion that if the two melodies are heard together they possibly create a third. Moving beyond what Yazdiha (2010) terms the bipolar models of cultures it becomes a possibility. Furthermore, by understanding that it is indeed not simple, but that the complexities can be examined in a localised way through a contrapuntal view of hybridity that could create another entirely different view.

5.2 Ethical Considerations

During my field research most of the information was obtained by asking questions, taking notes and making drawings of initiations. I was directed by my teacher and guide, Eneria Njovu's clear boundaries of what was and was not appropriate to reveal or record. I was also at times able to take photographs. On one occasion she asked that

we do video recordings of her descriptions of the rock images in my copy of Phillipson's book *Prehistory of Eastern Zambia* (1976) as a referent visual record of the paintings we had visited together. Although given permission to photograph inside the initiation house I chose not to, feeling that it seemed intrusive. Even though some of the 'inside' images (the more confidential ones used inside the initiation house), appear on the Eastern Province rock paintings I have left them out so that my photographed documentation is of the outside images and performances which are intended for public scrutiny.

5.3 Knowledge

In tune with the auto-ethnographical tenets of my research, I upheld the secrecy of the knowledge I acquired. Therefore, within this dissertation, instead of revealing *what* the images mean, I have rather chosen to focus on *how* the women have managed this knowledge and some of the strategies they have used to retain and control this ancient transmission of the concepts and symbols of ritual as they relate to the rock art of eastern Zambia. These powerful matrilineal, matriarchal Kunda women are very clear about what is acceptable and unacceptable to reveal. I have been invited to contribute to academic publications, yet I have angered academics in the past by my refusal to divulge any of the guarded knowledge even to University archives. It must be emphasised that this secret knowledge is not being lost but is passed on in succession to other young Kunda women initiates and trainees of our community. The western academic world is appropriately kept at bay through the controlled and careful management of indigenous power in the transmission of this indigenous knowledge system.



Figure 6: Initiation women teaching lots of younger women in Luangwa at Chivimba Village. Photo by Pam Guhrs 1999.

5.4 Secrecy

The issue in academia about publicity of knowledge assumes a consensus that western categories of managing knowledge must submit control of this knowledge to scholars. The owners of this knowledge often refuse this submission but are denied access through linguistic or educational constraints. As early as 1995, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o wrote that the peasant worker in Africa has been denied access and therefore participation in discourses about their own economic, political and cultural survival. He says that for democracy to survive, information must be accessible to all equally. This also applies to research. As I have pointed out this knowledge is, in Luangwa anyway, being passed on as the older initiation teachers teach the younger ones who are in training (See Figure 6).

Women's secret knowledge about coming-of-age especially brings to light issues of control of this privileged knowledge, as this knowledge concerns the body, and appropriating the control of this privileged knowledge is tantamount to exercising control over the bodies of these African women. The possibility is that this is then represented back to the African women and their daughters, a situation which denies an African feminist perspective (Strickland, pers. comm. 1999). I have upheld the

ethical expectations of my status as a Kunda initiate in every way possible, carefully rehearsing with the women what I may reveal.

Indigenous people should benefit from the research, in a way not presumed by the researcher, but articulated by themselves. It is therefore worthwhile giving an account of how the initial 'exchange' came about, resulting in an expedition with the women initiation teachers to visit the rock art sites and to see the ancient yet familiar images. A full account of this aspect is included in chapter six. For the purpose of this discussion I draw attention to three main points. Firstly, the initial agreement to undergo the *chisungu* initiation rituals was at the invitation of the teachers themselves. Secondly, after my own introspective process about my artistic identity and practice had begun, Eneria Njovu invited me to create an artwork for her village, in exchange for the large paper drawings of rock art ciphers and initiation cyphers. Finally, the mutually agreed upon visit to the rock art site was of great significance to the women, as it marked an important moment where they were able to track and unearth ancestral knowledge that they themselves felt had been lost or interfered with. The occasion was marked by great jubilation and celebration, and is, I believe, an example of 'research' that was as useful for the so-called participants as it was for me. Far from an ethnographer-subject relationship, this was a mutually beneficial collaboration in which the primary consideration was our common experience as women, artists and researchers protecting important ancestral knowledge. This relationship and its impact on my art making process is further discussed in Chapter six.

5.5 Units of analysis

The following themes comprise the basis of the analysis in both the Kunda and Beuys examples because they are common to both; ritual, transformation, process over product, management of knowledge around the artworks and shamanism and healing. I note the occurrence of these topics in both Beuys and the Kunda and by doing so I introduce the two melodies that merge into the common 'plainsong' base holding the various themes noted above that make up my methodology of contrapuntalism.

6. Terminology

6.1 Shaman

Shaman is a disputed word that requires definition. It is mainly a Eurasian term, and this was the sense in which Beuys referred to it. 'Shamanism in the strict sense is pre-eminently a religious phenomenon of Siberia and Central Asia' (Eliade, 1964 cited in Walters, 2010: 36). I follow some of Lewis-Williams' explanations in his book *The Mind in the Cave* (2004), where he explains Palaeolithic rock art through neurological studies of consciousness and altered states, which shamans employ. For him 'shamanism' points to a human universal – the need to make sense of shifting consciousness (Lewis-Williams, 2004: 176). This list describes what I have learnt to be the capacities of shamans involved in women's initiations in Luangwa Valley. A shaman is a figure who may:

- Contact spirits and supernatural entities through special skills.
- Be associated with potent energies or use materials considered to have potency.
- Engage in healing.
- Negotiate with powerful energies on behalf of others, for example in pollution and purification rites such as *mdulo* (described later in the Chapter three).

S'nganga is a common term in Chinyanja and is someone who is a shaman according to the above description. The nineteenth century word *ganga* in Chinyanja language was a word for the bush. The magic power that is available from the bush could be used for ill intent in the same way that the term 'witch' and 'witchcraft' was used. In Chinyanja *si* is a prefix denoting negation. Therefore, in this case the *s'nganga* would be someone who could negate the evil powers of the bush and I consider the term to be synonymous with a shaman. During a *chisungu* event another *s'nganga*, apart from the main initiation teacher, may be available for hire by mothers who want extra protection for their children during times of particularly intense energy forces.

6.2 Initiation terminology

The Kunda female initiation is known as *chisungu.* It consists of two primary figures; the teacher, co-ordinator and organiser of the performances and rituals known as a *nanga zolanga visungu*. An aunty figure or a guardian, a woman well known to the novice since childhood, and someone who looks after and cares for the child as she is undergoing the ordeal of initiation, is a *nyampungu* or a *nyamkungu*.

The clay three-dimensional and relief figures, including the drawing symbols are known as *vilengo* (singular *chilengo*).

The zebra man head crest worn by Kunda women who have graduated from *chisungu* is called a *muwewe.*

7. Outline of chapters

In Chapter one I provide an introduction. I introduce each cultural example, Kunda, Beuys and myself. I explain the methodology and theoretical framework that has been employed for the research and give a review of the literature. Chapter two is devoted to a discussion on ritual and how it has been written about. Chapter three pertains to Kunda women's art practices. I emphasise the special knowledge guarded by the women and how that, together with a hybrid element, brings them power. Chapter four concerns Joseph Beuys, his absorption of early European culture, his constructed identity from another culture as a shaman – a social regulator – and how the control and management of this hybrid knowledge introduces power plays. In Chapter five the material is further investigated for emerging consonances and dissonances between the two examples. In Chapter six I explore how my own artwork was influenced by my engagement in both worldviews and discuss the moral issues around the protected knowledge as well as the transmission of images.

8. Conclusion

Having introduced the examples and themes that comprise the analysis of this research I continue with a deeper exploration, in the chapters that follow, of the threads of the subject matter. Ritual, and how it has been perceived, will be studied further in Chapter two.

CHAPTER TWO

2. Introduction

Many writers in the field of ritual studies were biased when describing the effects of ritual on social contexts, especially in the colonial era where it was assumed that ritual was a static tradition trapped in a bubble of time. Later studies however showed that far from being static, rites of passage provide a dynamic opportunity for creativity and growth. In this chapter I discuss the ways in which both Beuys and the Kunda women use ritual in their work and manage their knowledge around ritual and its social effects. The theme of transformation is central to this. Ritual studies have acknowledged liminality in the psychological sense as a threshold state of transition; a state in which subject/object relations may change. I note the occurrence of these topics in both Beuys and the Kunda and by doing so I introduce part of the 'plainsong' that makes up my methodology of contrapuntalism.

2.1 Ritual

Ritual involves change in numerous ways. This has been my experience which has influenced my art and art practices, as I too am exposed to the continuous flux of life's changes. These changes are aptly summed up below:

> … crossing places or passing places; those twilight regions of our lives where established rules disappear and uncertainty holds sway … which contain adolescent and midlife crises. Sometimes they are simply between. States to be endured (Smith, 2006: 240).

2.2 Writings on ritual

Van Gennep's seminal book *Rite of Passage*, first published in 1909 in French and translated into English in 1960, provided the original term, 'rite of passage', and the idea of its tripartite division. He examined what he called 'life crises' and the ceremonies that accompany them. In the first phase, as he described it, there is a separation of the individual from society and a breaking down of social norms (Van Gennep, 1960). In the second phase there is a 'social death', a liminal, in-between state of isolation from the group where a transformation occurs in the individual (Van Gennep, 1960). Finally, in the third phase there is a reintroduction into society accompanied by the joy of the transition where the initiate is incorporated back into the society as a changed person (Van Gennep, 1960).

This theme of ritual at the heart of Beuys' work refers not only to the personal but ultimately to the social transformation. This is what informed my choice of his works; performances that resembled or related to ritual but also had an emphasis on social transformation. Furthermore, this examination helped me to understand the same phases in the Kunda girls' coming-of-age rituals along with their social implications.

Van Gennep's book also provided the structure for most of the subsequent writers' thoughts about ritual. Victor Turner, for instance, an anthropologist well known for his studies of the Ndembu people in Zambia, built upon Van Gennep's work and added to the literature on ritual in *The Forest of Symbols* (1967), *The Ritual Process* (1969), *From Ritual to Theatre. The Human Seriousness of Play* (1982), and *The Anthropology of performance* (1986). Later Grimes built onto Turner's work in *Beginnings in Ritual Studies* (1982).

I found Turner's conclusions about creativity during the second phase of ritual; the liminal period, compelling. I agreed with him that this removal from society is the crucial time of transformation, the period he considered the most dynamic for improvisation, renewal and metamorphosis. This phase, the time of 'social death', where the neophyte is a 'non-being' to society, is the second phase of the ritual. (Turner, 1967: 96). Kunda women call this *mkati mu nyumba* (inside the house). The

initiation house, empty and set aside for the purpose, is where most of the Kunda clay images are used for teaching, together with the mimes, songs and dances and where the initiated sit or lie in stillness, like a corpse. All the women are there, and yet the removal of the initiates from the rest of society is absolute. For Turner (1967: 99), a rite of passage is not a mere acquisition of knowledge but a basic ontological transformation. Most ritual theorists agree that all participants go through three phases: separation, transition or transformation and incorporation.

2.2.1 Separation

The first of these phases, separation, involves removing the individual, or initiate from the normal secular space of society to a special and differentiated space. It is a clearly demarcated space, as defined by Turner (1982: 24), 'sacred space and time'.

This alienation from the social norm and disruption of expectations inside the Kunda *chisungu* house is no exception in creating a social vacuum for the girls to experience. It separates and detaches them from their previous social status.

2.2.2 Transformation and liminality

This second phase comprises a ‘social death’. The novices are not to be seen by the rest of the public. It is a transition before the third phase of incorporation.

In ritual studies, the second phase, this process of transition, is what seems to fascinate many writers (Douglas, 1969; Kristeva, 1995: 21–28; Morgan and Morris, 1995:11–19; Turner, 1969: 93–96). I now examine what exactly this stage of 'passage' entails. As the name suggests there is a transition, a process or transformation. This is what Julia Kristeva terms 'abjection'. In her book the *Power of Horrors: An Essay on Abjection* (1982) she regards this period as the space in between the subject and object. Morgan and Morris, writing about the exhibition, *Rites of Passage: Art for the*

end of the Century at the Tate in London in 1995, create an amalgam of two domains together. They do this by stating that it is not only the exploration of subjects 'that lie at the interface between our bodies and ourselves', but they also consider it in an artistic sense leading people across borders and twilight zones into different states or cultural places, into 'forbidden zones' (Morgan and Morris, 1995: 12). These authors seem to imply that perhaps art is showing viewers a different dimension, leading them from a threshold and into a different realm, indeed fulfilling the role of a shaman or a ritual guide.

Van Gennep called this phase a ‘margin’ or ‘limen’, which means threshold in Latin. Liminality in ritual is the period that lies in between two different social statuses. If the girls have to walk through the village they must walk bent almost doubled over, led by their ever-vigilant *nyamkungu*, and covered from head to foot in a *chitenge* cloth, hidden from everyone. They are socially dead. The rest of the village ignores them, as if they do not exist. The 'novices are outside society, and society has no power over them' (Van Gennep: 1960, 114). They are on the threshold of a transition in social status.



Figure 7: Kalonga annual Chief Undi ceremony. Photo Pam Guhrs 2004. (Note: this photo is from a public ceremony and not a ritual)

2.2.3 Incorporation

In the final phase of the ritual the Kunda neophytes are reintroduced into their village as adults who are aware of their new privilege and their accompanying responsibilities. Their incorporation period means that they are reinstated as fully-grown women. This is a period of great rejoicing and the newly initiated Kunda girls are washed and adorned with beads. They then proceed to dance on a specially constructed elevated platform made of wood and bamboo.

3. Creativity in ritual

The liminal period as a time of potential transformation means that the women who own the *chisungu* have the responsibility of leading these girl children from one ontological place to another. Therefore, I would concur with Turner's (1967: 99) statement about an ontological shift because all the girls I have spoken with have said they felt a profound change in their essence, in their being, in their heart *(mtima)*. I conclude then, that the Kunda women who perform the ritual have shaman-like responsibilities as social regulators.

According to Grimes (1982: 150) colonial anthropologists such as Durkheim (1912) and Malinowsky (1925) presented ritual as conserving societal norms instead of recognising their creative and transforming function. Furthermore, ritual was viewed by Turner (1982: 28) as producing seedbeds of cultural creativity. Rituals were not safe deposit vaults of accepted ideas but in many cases dynamic performative systems generating new materials, using traditional actions but constantly recombining them in new ways (Turner, 1986: 24). He said:

> cultural performances are not simple reflectors or expressions of culture or even of changing culture but may themselves be active agencies of change, representing the eye by which culture sees itself and the drawing board on which creative actors sketch out what they believe to be more apt or interesting

'designs for living' (Turner, 1986: 24).

Grimes (1982: 150) continues with this train of thought by saying that ritual is essentially the trigger that produces change. Grimes credits Turner with the fact that recent studies of ritual are more concerned with the dynamic 'flow' and the innovative changes generated in the society from ritual, in preference to the older anthropology of ritual studies with its emphasis on a pure timeless tradition that stretched back unchanged through the ages. 'Turner's theory of liminality', he wrote, leads him to stand the anthropology of ritual on its head (Grimes, 1982: 150). He explains that:

> Ritual is no longer a Durkheimian collective representation which reflects society and insures social solidarity. Ritual is not a bastion of social conservatism whose symbols merely condense cherished cultural values. Rather, ritual holds the generating source of culture and structure. Hence it is by definition associated with social transitions while ceremony is linked to social states: Ritual is transformative, ceremony confirmatory (Grimes, 1982: 150).

Turner (1982: 21) believed ritual to be transformative psychologically thereby leading to social transformation. This concept is at the base of Beuys' work, who believed that transformed individuals could change society. His detractors have criticised him for not directly addressing the elephant in the room of the Nazi holocaust (see literature review in Chapter one), but I believe he was working to transform the psyche of the whole nation starting at an individual level. The Kunda *chisungu* is dynamic and embraces change as can be seen by some Kunda women introducing an Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) component into their coming of age rituals (Miranda Guhrs, pers. comm. 2005).

This threshold, this twilight zone that is neither one state nor another, this time of creativity, is the time of instruction for the Kunda neophytes. Through various, often nonverbal means such as dancing, painting, clay moulding, different or unusual combinations of animals, humans and bush elements were rearranged and amalgamated, the images often not tied down to any particular meaning, but often

multiple ones. The rudiments of ‘playfulness’ around these familiar elements de-familiarised them, often changing them. The ludic recombination of these images is what for Turner, is the essence of novelty and creation of new forms. For instance, conventional patterns and configurations are turned upside down and disorder intrudes into the normal cultural structure. Informal changes and re combinations may often occur with the clay images used by the Kunda women and indeed may also be seen when Beuys is conducting his rituals or ‘actions’ and ‘playfully’ rearranging his objects in the piano.

This topic of transition has challenged ritual theorists such as Kristeva (1982) and Turner (1969) to try to explain the elements of danger and fragility of identity that are connected to ritual. When Kristeva described the 'abject' she indicated that there is a collapse of boundaries as subject and object conflate. Rather it is; '… the fragile border (borderline cases) where identities (subject/object, etc.) do not exist or only barely so – double, heterogeneous, animal, metamorphosed, altered, abject' (Kristeva, 1982: 207).

In Turner’s (1969) terminology this state of abjection is a liminal one. It is a gap between two states, 'in the no-place and no-time that resists classification …' (Turner, 1969, 259 cited in Grimes 1982: 151). Yet abjection is also a place of creation that accesses an intuitive area of subjective consciousness.

This creative place is possibly the same ontological condition described as being accompanied by, 'a slight dizziness … as though a bottomless abyss opened before him' (Wittgenstein cited in Needham, 1972: 11). But all these theorists agree about the manifestation of creative impulses in this area of 'slight dizziness'; the area of the intuitive realm and the liminal state. As Turner (1969) has pointed out this is the realm of the asocial rather than the social and during a time of creation such as a ritual, this is the time that art is made.

Rituals do not 'simply point us backwards to a timeless origin' (Grimes, 1982: 150). They are, as we have seen, part of the constant process rather than an object, not only involved in social developments but in psychological ones as well (Turner, 1982: 21). Performances of ritual are social phases where people become adjusted not only to

external but also to internal change (Turner, 1982: 21), a psychological preparation for new beginnings. This idea is at the heart of Beuys' intentions; he used his ritualistic 'actions' such as *Two-handled Spade* to reflect the changes in his internal life after a period of psychological trauma. Because of the therapeutic effect of farming for him, he displays the spade with two handles, one on each side, denoting an idea of commonality and closeness to the earth to encourage people to change psychologically, in the same way he had.

4. Healing and Shamanism

Purification is closely connected to the healing aspects of shamanism. Looking at religious rituals throughout history, Kristeva (1995) concludes that all of them are about purification rites; an object that purifies and the desire for purification is at the essence of rituals. Kristeva (1995) asks the question, what is being purified? She finds that just two elements always emerge: cathartic objects that purify, and those which all deal with violence, death and sexuality (Kristeva, 1995: 24). She goes on to say that there is a 'certain unconscious resurgence of these cathartic objects – objects that purify abjection in the work of certain artists' (Kristeva, 1995: 24). Continuing in this vein she concludes that this demonstrates a concern (again as a metaphor for the body), 'that is at the heart of sacred rites - to take what is marginal to a structure, dirty' (Kristeva, 1995:24). As I indicated earlier, this applies equally to society and Beuys' performance art.

Standing in counterpoint to the Kunda ideas of pollution and healing, Napier (1992) has analysed western metaphors of illness in his book *Foreign bodies* where he shows how these metaphors relate to the idea of the 'self' in western democratic society. And furthermore, 'how central are our *social* metaphors for our understanding of what disease is' (Napier, 1992: 165). Cultures which actively promote a cult of self-consciousness are more likely to describe illness as an 'invasion' of some foreign germs or viruses engaged in 'combat' with cells etc. (Napier, 1992: 165). Military metaphors abound in immunology with the body seen as a 'battleground' disassociated from the individual self. Napier's writings about 'otherness' in social

contexts are paralleled with metaphors from biomedical immunology. 'Diseases, like foreigners, are things different from ourselves, and an invasion of bacteria, like so many foreign armies, leaves us petrified at the prospect of becoming polluted' (Napier, 1992: 148). The Time Magazine cover (see Figure 8) depicts a typical western perception of the aggressive military metaphors surrounding disease and medicine.



Figure 8: Military metaphors of medicine.

> Understanding this western dominant discourse of the perception of disease has provided me with an insight of how individual and isolated the body is in western thought. Kunda, and indeed most African notions of the body and traditional healing, are less of an outside assault on an individual, and more of a connection with people around. Indeed 'sending from the heart' (*ku tuma na mtima*) is a common Kunda practice to influence or effect action in another by sending from one's own heart to the heart of the person one is trying to influence to take action in the right direction. (Strickland, 1995: 102)

With such thoughts in mind I began to understand the link between a western belief of self-consciousness and the cult of genius in art, and yet how art has paradoxically isolated the individual. (Kristeva, 1982; Morgan, 1995). These are the kind of ideas of healing that Beuys was trying to break away from and has in turn helped me to

understand in counterpoint, the anonymity in the Kunda art and the transformative forces of *mdulo* or ritual temperatures that Kunda people have to deal with on a daily basis.

5. Conclusion

In this chapter, by examining how writers in the west have viewed ritual, I have established my premise that knowledge about ritual and transformation is intrinsically linked to the art practices of each example. The two threads, Beuys and Kunda, have been introduced in relation to the whole theme of ritual. The Kunda rituals negotiate special knowledge as does Beuys with residual materials that have knowledge embedded in them, and because of his hybrid identity Beuys was considered by the authorities as impure, polluted and a danger to the social structure.

In the following chapters I explore how these ideas about transformation and management of knowledge manifest themselves in the ritual, art and performance of the Kunda women and Joseph Beuys, and how the materials used represent transformation. I will show that knowledge is related to ritual and is part and parcel of the actual art practice of both the Kunda women and Beuys. This knowledge is managed by the artists themselves and adds power to the art practice, which in turn challenges dominance; in Beuys' case, the academic authorities and in the Kunda women's case, the Ngoni men.

CHAPTER THREE

3. Introduction

In this chapter I explore Kunda ritual practices in a historic and contemporary manner. Kunda society is a matrilineal society and as such there are significant differences in the knowledge held between men and women. I examine how women manage their knowledge. I look at and the accompanying transformation that occurs. This is accomplished through a discussion of the images of Kanga Jowe, the leopard and the cow. There are also ways in which power operates in art and ritual especially through the management of knowledge. Special knowledge plays an important role in Kunda society and I discuss how secrecy is viewed differently in this society as opposed to western society. In the examples and themes explored in this chapter I show that each becomes translated into something new; that the 'impure' products result in power plays.

3.1 Kunda ritual practices

3.2 Oral history of Kunda

Strickland (1995: 30–41), for his PhD in Anthropology wrote out the history as verified by Paramount Chieftainess Nsefu, the keeper of the Kunda oral history. She confirmed it at her palace at Nsefu. He also drew from Poole's (1949) extensive account. These two histories are similar as both state that Mambwe led the migration of the Kunda from Luba country in the Congo Basin. The dates for this migration are both placed around 1840–1850 (See Appendix 3).

All the narratives form the basis of contemporary Kunda history as given officially at Nsefu's palace – namely tensions between Mambwe and his powerful father Chawala

Makumba, the migration of the Kunda from Luba to their new home in the Valley (Malambo) under his son Mambwe around 1820–1850, and the incorporation of the Kakumbi lineage from a different hunting clan. Mambwe is considered the true founder of the Kunda and their history starts from there (Strickland, 1995: 36). All these chronicles form the main historical data of this oral history. I had developed my own relationship with the Chieftainess and our conversations expanded my own interest in the history of the Kunda.

3.3 Kunda Environment

One of Zambia's foremost biologists, wrote that 'the Luangwa Valley is one of Africa's richest sanctuaries for a large diversity of animal species' (Phiri, 1998: 283). Indeed, is inhabited by an abundance of wild animals including lions and elephants. The Luangwa River is one of only two major rivers in Africa that has never been dammed and whose thick riverine vegetation on both sides remain intact.



Figure 9: Mainly subsistence farmers, Kunda store their grain in Nkokwes (storage bins) woven from local bamboo. Photo Pam Guhrs 2004.

Settlement is sparse because of its poor access and an inhospitable and disease-ridden climate. The ground also a thick layer of sticky black clay that becomes saturated and

impassable in the rains, cutting off most of the area from the outside world, including health facilities for at least five months of the year.

Every Kunda person who lives in Malambo (the local name for Luangwa Valley) has had first-hand experience with animals one way or another, and animals and plants of all kinds are familiar to all who grow up there. Human animal conflict is prevalent. As shown in Figure 9, grain is stored in *Nkokwes* but this provides little protection against animals and there is minimal food protection from elephants. Everyone who lives there has had experience of the danger of animals because every year many people are taken by crocodiles, killed by elephant or buffalo or eaten by lions or leopards; incidents that would never reach the national press. Each millet field has a tiny hut, preferably built on an anthill where vigilance is constantly necessary. Someone always has to do night duty to scare away animals, such as hippo and elephants, that destroy the crops that represent a year's supply of food for the family.

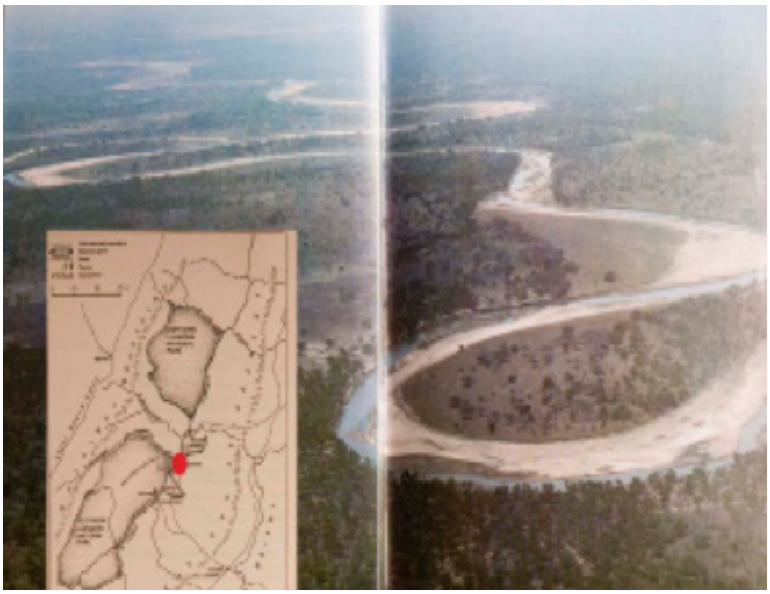


Figure 10: Arial view of Luangwa Photo from Norman Carr's book Kakuli.

During the day food must also be protected from kudu, bushbuck or the ubiquitous primates; baboons and vervet monkeys. Those animals also compete with the elephants for other village food, the crops and fruit, such as mangos and paw-paws.



Figure 11: Elephants crossing out of the National Park and into the villages to raid crops and mangos. Photo Pam Guhrs 2006.

3.4 Power and the importance of gender differences in Kunda knowledge

Professor M. Mtonga, an indigenous researcher from Malawi/Zambia, emphasised the 'matrilineal belt' across the Central African woodland that includes the Kunda (pers. comm. Sept 2007). This has been substantiated by other researchers (Roberts, 1976:262 cited in Brantley, 1997), and is referred to as a matrilineal-uxorilocal[5] society. In anthropological terms matrilocal simply means living with the wife's family and matrilineal means that lineage descent and kinship affinity are determined through the woman. In this sense a man's children belong to his wife, while her brother rather than her husband is considered the 'responsible relative' or uncle *(malume*) and one who holds social and political power over the clan, thus depriving the husband of any authority over his children (Mtonga, 1996: 63). This two-edged system gives relative power to the woman in that society. (See Appendix 4).

Many erroneous assumptions have been made about the role of women in matrilineal-uxorilocal societies. Colonial ethnographers may have had a cultural bias against matrilineal societies. These perceptions came from a very different colonial mindset and there was a tendency to try to fit gender relations into European moulds (Ahmed,

[5] Uxorilocal means the same as matrilocal.

1998; Brantley, 1997; Mulenga Kapepwe, pers. comm. 2009; Sacks, 1982;). African women were often viewed from a western assumption, especially the consideration of woman's primary role as wife. Kunda women consider themselves to be, and are, powerful on a village level most notably because they own the children; important for subsistence farmers. What westerners often consider being power in a woman and what they themselves consider to be power is not quite the same thing, nor is it expressed in the same manner (Mulenga Kapepwe, pers. comm. 2009).

When describing matrilocal conditions, I do not mean to convey the fact that every single Kunda village follows this hard and fast rule. True to the articulated nature of Kunda there is no totality of system. In a matrilineal society the woman's right to the land, the important role of female initiation and the fact that blood ties can never be questioned is because the line of descent is through the woman. This all indicates that Kunda women do have more power of a certain kind than in many other African societies. That power however, is not total and always needs to be situated.

Due to the nature of my circumstances, having grown up in close proximity to this Kunda community in the Luangwa valley, collaborative and reflexive research methods seemed appropriate. My accumulated generational knowledge over a lifetime, and the community trust and confidentiality entrusted to me to observe the dynamics of power, hybridity, authorship, agency and management of knowledge, as displayed in the various examples of Kunda women's practices at close quarters, all served to place a personal responsibility on me as to how to represent this material, both as an intimate confidant, and as a scholar.

4. Power and management of knowledge

Because art in Africa is generally conceptual (Nooter, 1993) the performers of rituals retain political power through secrecy and guarded knowledge. To preserve this secrecy and in line with the concept of ethnographic refusal (Smith, 1999; Zavala, 2013), I focus on how the women manage their knowledge around the images and not what the symbols are considered to really mean. Part of the strategy for managing

knowledge is linked to the destruction of its products. Induction into the knowledge is necessary to understand Kunda ritual and artistic practices. This is not unlike the kinds of induction in the form of special knowledge that is needed to understand contemporary conceptual art and artists such as Beuys. In their practice both the Kunda women and Beuys use repetition to teach special knowledge connected to art and ritual. I argue that hybridity in Kunda knowledge parallels and converges with the hybridity of Beuys. The power the Kunda women have in the management of their knowledge is because in Kunda epistemology knowledge should be useful; nothing is worth knowing unless it may be used in some way (Strickland, 1995).



Figure 12: 'Knowledge is Power' Restaurant - Nyima Eastern Province, Zambia. Photo Vic Guhrs 2002.

4.1 Healing and shamanism

Therefore, a large of part of the power of Kunda women resides in their knowledge of mankwala or medicine; the usefulness of it and the secrecy and access to medicine that the men cannot access. The females define their parameters with control of knowledge related to their art and their mankwala and with this comes a male sense of deference underscoring the matriarchal structure of the society.



Figure 13: Kunda women collecting healing and medicinal herbs with headman Kalemba on the way to Kalemba rock paintings site near Chadiza. Photo Pam Guhrs 2001.

The women also have control over taboos and purification that extends into all aspects of Kunda daily life through the role of salt and fire as a medium of energy contamination that is part of Kunda lived experience. The root of the word *mdulo* comes from *ku dula* meaning to cut. Becoming ill from *mdulo* is described as having been 'cut'. Diseases that are caused by *mdulo* can range from pains in the chest *(chifua)* to unknown illness and death. This is not uncommon and is thought to be due to violating certain social norms by associating too closely with persons of cold (*wozizira)* or hot (*wothenta*) ritual temperature. Fatal contamination can either occur by someone else's intention or accidentally. Newborn babies are considered to be very cold, as are older men and women. Sexually active adults are hot, and menstruating women are very hot (Probst, 1995: 9). Adulterous sex heats up the participants with the very, according to an example offered by Probst (1995: 9), 'hottest' person who would be a man (generally considered hotter than women) who 'had extra-marital sex with a menstruating woman').

The '*mdulo* complex' has been described by many writers (Hodgson, 1913; Marwick, 1965, Probst, 1995; Schoffeleers, 1993 cited in Drews, 1995; Zubieta, 2013). *Mdulo* is a complex system, described as both a certain set of diseases as well as a moral category in which the former is embedded (Probst, 1995: 9). The Kunda observe

many pollution taboos including pollution of the body, the will or heart, through cooking fire (*moto*) and salt (*munyu*). The women's control of ritual temperatures (*mdulo)* and powerful energies generally also adds to the males' perception of female power locally.

5. Ritual

5.1 Chisungu

5.1.1 Introduction to chisungu

The *chisungu* rite of passage takes place after the harvest and before the next planting. It is broken up into three consecutive parts. Some of these occur inside the ritual house and there is a stated difference between inside and outside spaces and the activities that occur there. No woman may disclose what happens inside the house as this knowledge is carefully guarded.

5.1.2 Inside the initiation house

The first phase is spent inside the *chisungu* house where the girls are removed from the rest of society and where they sit on their own in the house in anticipation for whatever may come next.



Figure 14: Initiation house for Tamara. Photo by Pam Guhrs 1998.





Figure 15: Left - some clay images used inside the house.

Figure 16: Right - some clay images for chisungu.

The relief spoked wheel-like *chikusi* with its alternately red and white-pigmented surfaces are considered to be highly potent and is secluded within the ritual hut. The interior walls are also decorated with small dramatic relief symbols alluding to significant states, ideas and behaviours.



Figure 17: Chikusi in action inside an initiation house. Photo Sandy Bornman-Carr.



Figure 18: Clay Chikusi.



Figure 19: Left - chikusi at Chaingo rock art site. Photo Pam Guhrs 1997.

Figure 20: Right - chikusi on canvas painted by Eneria Njobvu. Photo Pam Guhrs

When writing about the Bemba girl's initation 'Chisungu shows no traces …' of a link to the supernatural (Richards 1956: 152). Those early writings from 1956 differ from my conversations with the Kunda initiation teachers and my own observations which indicate that not only is there is a definite link, but the supernatural element is given as much if not more weight than the other teachings, and it underlies most of the stories. In fact, during the use of the chikusi, one may need some metaphysical backup and a sing'anga (or a ritual specialist-healer) may be called in to provide an antidote for the uncontrollable and powerful energies of this particular clay relief. She is available to be hired by mothers who require her services to protect their children during performances around the chikusi.

This separation inside the house, involves removing the individual, or initiate from the normal secular space of society to a special and differentiated space. For the Kunda girls it is the inside of the house specially set aside for the purpose. According to Turner (1982: 24):

> it is more than just entering a temple – there must be in addition a rite which changes the quality of time also, or constructs a cultural realm which is defined 'out of time', i.e., beyond or outside the time which measures secular processes and routines.

In this first separation phase there is a reversal or inversion of cultural norms that further separates and detaches the young neophytes from their previous social status. For example, young Kunda girls told me that they were surprised by unheard of rudeness when their normal gestures of respect of greeting their elders who entered the room were brutally repudiated and they were in fact sworn at with crude language. This humiliation and shock creates a social vacuum for them and contributes to the feeling of detachment from their previous social status. 'Initiations humble people before permanently elevating them' Turner (1982: 24). Van Gennep (1960) also described this phase as a disruption of social norms.

The second phase is the liminal time of 'social death'. The initiates are invisible to the community and if the girls have to walk through the village when being led to the toilet they must be hidden from everyone, bent almost doubled over, led by their ever-

vigilant *nyamkungu* and covered from head to foot in a *chitenge* cloth. They are socially dead; the rest of the village ignores them, as if they do not exist. According to Van Gennep (1960: 114), 'the novices are outside society, and society has no power over them'. They are on the threshold of a transition. The initiate, attended to by her *nyamkungu,* is required to sit still with legs out straight; head bowed making no eye contact.

This transition period before the phase of incorporation is also punctuated by intense activities of dancing, miming, drumming and teaching by the women teachers. And drummers continuing without respite; means that day and night becomes indistinguishable. Everyone is pushed to their physical extremes, there is very little sleep and it is doled out parsimoniously by the teachers or *nangas* who will give one a little corner for perhaps half an hour per night towards dawn before being drawn back into the activity. The young initiates may rest for short periods on their guardian's (*nyampungu's*) lap, but they too are kept busy and when they are not involved in an activity they must sit dead still.

5.1.3 Outside the initiation house

During the liminal phase for the girls, apart from being in the initiation house they are also taken outside for some activities in the public village space. Prior to that the women would have already constructed the large clay forms called *vilengo* (plural of *chilengo)* decorated in graphic delineations of red and white ochre. Some of these are used in performance outside the house and the rest are secluded inside the house and the activities are away from the public eye. A *chilengo* is simply any one of the large painted clay structures that are made in the open space of the village for the public to see, but is also a term used for those smaller ones inside the house. Girl's initiation has defined boundaries of 'outside' (*pa bwalo*) and 'inside' (*mkati*).



Figure 21: Girls lying in the chilengo outside. Photo Pam Guhrs 1998.

If the women have brewed millet beer this is poured over the girls at this time although generally it is rare for this extravagance to take place other than at the Chief's Palace. These activities vary from *chisungu* to *chisungu* (See Appendix 4).

Lastly the girls go into the house again for the final ritual ceremonies. Here the pace intensifies as physical limits of the initiates are pushed to the extreme. Repetitions as a strategy enforce the teachings.

All the images from the rituals that I describe and illustrate are already in the public sphere of contemporary present day Kunda rite of passage rituals - the '*bwalo*' or outside activities available to everyone, men and children. These clay objects are constructed and displayed by the Kunda women in a public space of the village yard complex for a general audience to see. For the Kunda women the most centrally displayed object for all to see is the *ngombe* or cow. This is unusual as it is wild animals that are usually used metaphorically in the teaching (Zubieta, 2013: 54).



Figure 22: Full grain bin after the harvest at Chief Kakumbi Palace during his daughter's initiation. Photo Pam Guhrs 2001.

The third phase accompanies the responsibilities of adulthood. After being invisible for so long, the neophytes are reintroduced into their village as adults aware of their new privilege and the responsibilities that go with it. The incorporation period means that they are reinstated into social life as adults, which is a period of rejoicing. The newly initiated Kunda girls are adorned with beads and dance on a specially constructed elevated platform made of wood and bamboo. In the Luangwa region a zebra mane headdress called a *muwewe* is worn and this is given to the initiates to wear when they 'graduate'.





Figure 23: Left - Lois Njovu, an initiation teacher with her zebra head crest. Photo Pam Guhrs 1999.

Figure 24: Right - Initiate graduates with zebra head crest. Chief Undi Katete. Photo Pam Guhrs 2003.

5.1.3.1 Kanga Jowe - transformation

Kanga Jowe is the transformation figure. The symbol of this figure represents the celebration of survival from the darkness; becoming a new and different person to the one you were before.

After a strenuous period of the initiation, the rite of passage is finally complete. The girls are purified and bathed in the river and festooned with beads. They are promoted to wear the zebra mane head crest of *chisungu* teachers. They may teach others now but only under supervision. They are reintegrated into society as new beings, as adult women. They are transformed. A special platform may be built out of bamboo and bush poles and the girls joyfully dance their newly taught dances and the ritual of transformation to a woman is complete. This image also occurs on the Kalemba rock art site in Eastern Zambia (see figures below). The upturned arms are possibly a sign of triumph or joy, of attracting attention after the transformative ordeal of *chisungu*.





Figure 25: Left - Kanga Jowe. After the ordeal of many days and nights, the girls are bathed in the river, decorated with beads and dance on a specially constructed platform at Kakumbi Palace. Photo Pam Guhrs 2000.

Figure 26: Right - Kanga Jowe rock art at Kalemba site. Photo Pam Guhrs 2001.

5.1.3.2 'Nsimba' - The Leopard

This image represents the dangerous predator that gets killed in the forest. A *chilengo* or image of a stylised leopard appears in rock art sites, and also as temporary shallow painted clay reliefs on the trunk of trees in the Kunda initiations. Their Kunda makers call these splayed-out spotted leopard-like images *nsimba* or genet, and they are associated with stories of danger both metaphorical and real. They are similar to the rock drawing at the rock art site of Chaingo in Eastern Zambia illustrated below.



Figure 27: Left - Leopard, 'Nsimba'. Rock painting at Chaingo Eastern Province. Photo Pam Guhrs 1997.

Figure 28: Right - Dead Leopard. Kunda canvas painted by Eneria Njobvu. Photo by Pam Guhrs 1999.



Figure 29: 'Nsimba' clay image in action in the public space as a clay relief on a tree at Elli Phiri's village, Chief Kakumbi, during Miranda's Kunda chisungu. Photo Sandy Bornman Carr 1999.

Edith Turner (1987), wife of Victor, who lived with him in the Ndembu Zambian village in Bemba country, wrote that *Nsimba* meant genet cat, 'sex cat'. Genet cats defecate in the same place each day and their scent glands give off a smell of semen (Turner, 1987: 89). All the Kunda special knowledge around the images of this leopard or genet is associated with danger and death. She cited Blier (1995)who said that the leopard is a 'prototypically hot animal associated with aggression and danger' (Turner, 1987: 222). The hotness of the *mdulo* state or ritual temperatures resounds with all the stories around this image of a leopard; the same image which occurs on the rock paintings such as the Chaingo site.

Stories associated with this image of the leopard or genet come from different sources of *chisungu* family alliances and are similar in their imagery. One version tells of a woman who goes to the river to collect water, is attacked by a leopard, and the leopard dies at the hands of a hunter with his axe. The danger she experienced is linked to various ideas of danger depending on who is telling the story. In several of the versions, for example, a wild animal such as a leopard or a crocodile attacks her. But implicit in the story is another version, which is also a danger warning, that she may be going down to the river to meet her lover. Other groups tell this version, and some mix the two. In all the various but linked stories she is berated for leaving the drawing of the water too late; night is about to fall, and she will be out in the bush in the dark. The moral of the stories is always danger. Some say she was lazy for procrastinating, others emphasise the meeting of a lover in the dark. The typical motif implicit in all these stories, although the images are numerous, are all related to danger. While some involve aspects of adultery they all end in the death of the leopard (or sometimes the lover) killed with a blow from an axe. The axe plays a central part in the rituals of the women in Malambo and often appear as an icon.

The image of the stretched skin of the dead leopard in all its forms is the aftermath of the axe attack. (See Figures 27, 28 and 29). The leopard is dead, but the girl lives on. The stories around the girl and the leopards are what I consider to be the equivalent of Beuys' crash/injury/revival narratives – a metaphor for the dark night of the soul or the social death of the neophytes heralding a transformation of identity.

The *iron axe***,** an essential artefact for farmers, is as an important symbol in the leopard story – an axe kills the leopard when it attacks the girl in the forest. The axe is iconic and plays a central part in the rituals of the women in Malambo or Luangwa Valley. It is also used in an 'axe song' where many of the iron heads are removed from the wooden handle and used in a complex and beautiful percussion piece with many different tonalities.



Figure 30: An image on Kalemba rock art identified by Mfuwe Kunda women teachers as an axe.



Figure 31: Kunda initiation teachers with axe. Photo Pam Guhrs 1997.





Figure 32: Left - Clay figure with axe killing the leopard.

Figure 33: Right - Clay figure with axe.

5.1.3.3 'Ngombe' - the cow

This is a borrowed signifier of matrilineal power. Kicking the cow is an act of claiming female power through a hybrid image. Within the more public domain the women sometimes construct a large high relief cow-like form decorated in graphic delineations of red-and-white ochre alluding to the external intrusive power of the distant Ngoni cattle herders. That large *ngombe* or cow, appropriated from the Ngoni, is sometimes, but not always, the conspicuous centrepiece of the public performance in Kunda country. One could be puzzled by this image as there are no cattle or any other domestic livestock in Luangwa due to the presence of tsetse fly and sleeping sickness and Kunda people have historically had no experience of cattle at all. The horns, which decorate the head of this cow sculpture, are buffalo horns found in the bush and its tail from a wildebeest (see Figures 34 and 35).



Figure 34: The clay cow with buffalo horns and a wildebeest tail. Chivimba village. Photo Pam Guhrs 1998.



Figure 35: Kunda initiation teachers pose by the 'cow' at Chivimba village- the central image displayed for the general public in some Kunda initiation rituals. Photo Pam Guhrs 1998.



Figure 36: The cow is vigorously kicked to pieces by teachers and pupils alike after the young initiates have jumped over it. Photo Pam Guhrs 1998.

It is the only chilengo (clay figure) that is demolished by the initiates and teachers together in public. It is destroyed in a fairly violent manner, kicked and abused continually until it is shattered and damaged. According to Scott (1990), oral rather than written traditions offers the kind of anonymity of cultural expression that makes them ideal vehicles for cultural resistance.

There is a violent history of Ngoni invading Kunda people within generational memory in the valley. They arrived as warriors into Zambia from their South African source, and for this reason they were all men. The Ngoni settlers from the eastern escarpment historically raided the Luangwa Valley for women, fighting and killing Kunda men. I suggest that the cow is a vehicle for cultural resistance (Scott, 1990:178) by the Kunda women, representing a subversive subtext. Zubieta (2013), speaking of the higher eastern plateau area outside the Luangwa valley talks of this. She explains that, '… from the historical accounts we know that Ngoni invaders were almost exclusively men and intermarried with Chewa women' (Zubieta, 2013: 64). However, down in the Luangwa Valley the Ngoni could not settle with their cattle due to sleeping sickness, so they relied on raids. (See Appendix 5).

I propose that the iconic cow signifies the patriarchal Ngoni cattle owners to which the Kunda women have a discordant historical link, and that this action of kicking the cow to pieces is a subversive act of rebellion in a gender that was perceived as subordinate by Ngoni but resisted that label. The meaning of the action is not overt, but according to Scott (1990: 161):

> The multiplicity of authors provides its protective cover, and when it no longer serves current interests sufficiently to find performers or an audience, it simply vanishes forever.

This cow image is not to be found on the rock paintings and it seems unlikely that it vanished, as the paintings predate the arrival of the Ngoni migration into that area.

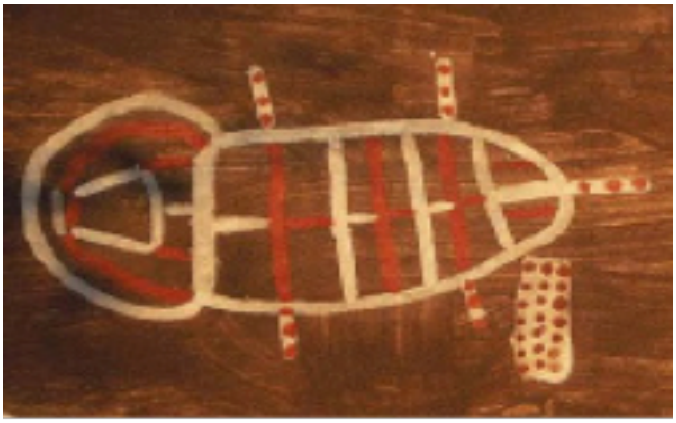


Figure 37: Drawings on canvas by Chivimba initiation group of the cow - red oxide, earth of the area and acrylic on canvas. Pam Guhrs 1999.



Figure 38: Buffalo horns picked up locally in the bush and a zebra tail adorn the cow. Photo Pam Guhrs 1998.

Far more likely, it was a new image unique to the Luangwa where the 'hidden meaning' (Scott, 1990: 162) of Ngoni domination becomes the special knowledge that is controlled by the women. Furthermore:

> those who have been earlier privy to the more seditious interpretations will appreciate the hidden meaning of the innocuous version. Thus, it is the

> particularity and elasticity of oral culture that allows it to carry fugitive meanings in comparative safety (Scott, 1990: 162).

The fact that the Ngoni use a cow image in some of their rituals gives credence to the idea that it has been appropriated from them and subverted by the Kunda women.

6. Secret and special knowledge

Art in Africa is closely related to knowledge and realms of knowledge may be communicated through art. In fact, various African societies recognise and communicate this way (Nooter, 1993: 23–24). I agree with Nooter's (1993: 24) claims that when secrecy or special knowledge is associated with art objects and performance it empowers its owners. Kunda men certainly appear to respect this aspect of the women's knowledge that excludes them.

I have used 'refusal' as an anti-colonial method for analysing research data. (Tuck and Yang, 2014[a]). The network of privileges and alliances that Eneria Njovu and Ellie Phiri, as my collaborators, have bestowed on me involves the guarded knowledge that I refuse to reveal.

The transitory nature of knowledge around the performance art is evident when one considers the *chisungu* objects that are broken up and taken away. This is one of the strategies for managing knowledge and a way of not passing it on. It is evident that this art is about process and not the product, which accrues power to the practitioners; a point of discussion to be taken further in the next section.

6.1 Process over product and fugitive knowledge

Women employ art objects made of transient materials that are strategically ephemeral and designed to vanish after the performance is completed. The women's clay sculptures are broken up, crushed and removed out of sight afterwards, an

eradication of the evidence of the unshared or guarded knowledge.

Nooter (1993) noted that one of the strategies used to manage knowledge in African epistemology is secrecy, which operates as one of the main tactics in both ritual and secular experience. As she said, 'everyone knows the powers and values of secrecy, and everyone knows its dangers' (Nooter, 1993: 18). Yet in the western setting, although knowledge is seen as a public good, she points out that if businesses and governments were to expose their secrets they would cease to exist. However, this is exactly the way in which people understand and learn about other cultures; concealment and revelation of knowledge is a strategy used in this process of learning about the self and other (Nooter, 1993: 18).

She further points out that the colonial enterprise in conjunction with missionary zeal, misunderstood or stereotyped the nature of secrecy and attached a sinister significance to it (Nooter, 1993: 18). Clandestine and secluded performances were branded as evil and pagan. This is probably because western epistemology may have different approaches to secrecy compared to how other cultures view it. In the western sense secrecy brings to mind espionage or negative undertones, such as subversive or self-serving political groups or other sinister connotations.

In Africa, on the other hand, secrecy is viewed as a necessary part of social reality and a necessary part of certain systems of knowledge, especially initiation teachings. Nooter (1993: 18) acknowledges that colonial or missionary ignorance and banning could easily have helped certain art forms to survive. Secrecy, therefore, needs to be considered within the social framework of whatever culture it resides within. It is a socially constructed strategy of power (Nooter, 1993: 19) and resistance.

Building on Strickland's (1995) work on the Kunda polity, I have found that the Kunda knowledge he portrays as open ended also applies to the special knowledge around the art that I have examined. Its fugitive nature permeates all the teachings around Kunda epistemology and the art. The knowledge around the objects is indeed 'indirect, allusive and metaphoric' (Nooter, 1993: 18), and the control of this knowledge is strictly executed as is Beuys' special knowledge. But unlike Beuys, in

Kunda epistemology the ephemeral nature of knowledge is integral to the management of the secrets.

The following idiom is indicative of the open-ended nature of Kunda knowledge, which is always changing and illustrates the fact that Kunda epistemology is by nature fugitive and fragmentary. The idiomatic expression *mbili sagona* means literally, 'history never sleeps' (Strickland, 1995), but is always fleeting, and that stories are dynamic and changeable depending upon which alliance is telling it. Interpretations of local histories change frequently. In fact, the word *mbili* means history and story, the fictional nature of each coinciding. Many of the meanings around the *chisungu* are fugitive in this sense, which is an effective strategy to guard secret knowledge.

Consistent with Kunda epistemology is the fact that this knowledge is not static but part of an ever-changing flux. This is the way that Kunda knowledge is known. Meanings attach or detach themselves from the women's clay figures, the *vilengo* as they gain and lose meanings (*malango*) depending on the telling and on the different family alliance groups that each retain slightly different meanings for the same image so that the image becomes multi-dimensional in meanings once its varied interpretations are learnt. Again, this resonates with Beuys who controls but disseminates his knowledge as accurately as he can.

Another strategy of control, which becomes obvious when an outsider is asking questions about sensitive information related to energies, such as *mdulo* or 'witchcraft', is by simple denial. Apparent ignorance is a common strategy to avoid sensitive subjects pertaining to rituals.

The power of Kunda art resides in the fleeting nature of the making of the object and the fact that specialised knowledge is essentially part of the process as the artefacts are destroyed as part of the ritual. The knowledge in the initiates is all that remains of the art and this knowledge is controlled and well managed firstly, through secrecy and secondly, through the dynamic, shifting, open-ended use of the stories that make it impossible to pin down or capture. In the next chapter we can see the contrast in Beuys' art with the stories and knowledge surrounding it that were shared and firmly

entrenched in public knowing to enable specific readings.

7. Conclusion

In this chapter we have seen how the themes of ritual, transformation, process over product, management of knowledge and healing occur in the Kunda art. The next chapter will show how these topics present themselves in different ways in Beuys' art

CHAPTER FOUR

4. Introduction

In this chapter I examine the life and work of Joseph Beuys. Joseph Beuys was a controversial artist who often used animals in his work and whose signature materials of felt and fat related to shamanism and healing. He thought artists had a central role to play in society and made sure that he himself controlled the information around his art.



Figure 39: Joseph Beuys 'La rivoluzione siamo Noi' 191 x 102 cm polyester foil. Hamburg Art Museum 1971.

I chose particular works of Joseph Beuys that resemble ritual with aspects of shamanism often involving animals, healing and transformation. My use of the term shaman here is linked to Northern European or Eurasian terminology: one who is considered to be a social regulator. Hybridity and management of knowledge and power also inform my choices although these themes pervade all Beuys' oeuvre.

Beuys' work became indistinguishable from the artist himself as he wove a central hybrid myth of Eurasian shamanism through his iconography. His entire oeuvre is impossible to understand without knowing the story that appropriates a Eurasian cultural dimension and its association with deep time into his own practice. His tale of his plane crash in remote Mongolia during the war, his rescue by a nomadic tribe of Tartars and the healing of his injuries with felt and fat all become central to the metaphorical themes that inform his work. I consider all his work to be 'articulated' (in Clifford's terminology, 2003), examples of contemporary western art, combining diverse ritual practices from other social systems, such as American Indian, Celtic Irish and Eurasian shamanism.

4.1 Background and history of Beuys

Joseph Beuys was born in Cleve, a small town on the Lower Rhine in Germany, 12 May 1921. This region has been described as being at the centre of German mysticism (Durini, 1992: 13) and images from this town such as the large golden swan on the tower of the Schwanenburg castle and the varied landscape surrounding had an impact upon his imagination as a child.

These images then became part of his oeuvre, especially in the drawings of the 1950s (Durini, 1992; Tisdall, 1980). They were different from the Modernist art of the time and resembled Palaeolithic art. I think that these are his attempts at trying to understand the world, and the mindset of our earliest ancestors through the works produced in prehistory. With his deep interest in shamanism Beuys delves back to the earliest image-making looking at Palaeolithic rudimentary brush drawing and powerful images capturing both the likeness and presence of the animal and humanoid forms.

4.2 Joseph Beuys' early drawings





Figure 40: Left- Red ochre cave painting. Vallon-Pont-d'Arc, France 15000-18000 BC.

Figure 41: Right - Joseph Beuys. Stag. Early watercolour.





Figure 42: Left - Joseph Beuys. Queen Bee 1958.

Figure 43: Right - Joseph Beuys. Actress 493 x 700 mm





Figure 44: Left - Joseph Beuys. Two Women 1955.

Figure 45: Right - Joseph Beuys. Three Elephants 1950.

Beuys wrote, 'I had a very lasting attachment to the Lower Rhine region and to Cleve' (Durini, 1992: 14). '… I can still remember that for years I behaved like a shepherd: I went around with a staff, a sort of "Eurasian staff", which later appeared in my works, and I always had an imaginary herd gathered around me' (Durini, 1992: 4–15). This staff appeared repetitively in many of his actions as a prop. Beuys used his body and his props, especially the shaman's crooked stick and the felt fabric as the principal cornerstone of his teachings. These esoteric elements connect the shamanistic iconography that spread through his work.

To the east of Cleve, the region fades into the 'endless Eurasian Plain' (Durini, 1992: 13), a landscape linking West and East through the Bering Straits and most importantly for Beuys representing a unity of two different cultures – Asian and European which became for him the polarity of rational and intuitive thought.

The term 'Eurasia' often appears in the titles of Beuys' works. Geographically the word designates that landmass which became separated in relatively modern times

forming Europe and Asia. The hare is an animal that roams over this same vast landscape. It populated and traversed the immense ecology of these vast Eurasian plains. For this reason, the hare became an icon for Beuys, not only for its fur out of which felt is made – his signature material – but also as a symbol for him of the unity of East and West (analytic and intuitive thought patterns and processes).

The dead hare as a stuffed animal repeatedly found its way into countless of Beuys' performances. Felt, the ubiquitous material in much of Beuys' work is historically one of the oldest fabrics produced before the invention of the loom. The ancient fabric of felt, his perception of the symbiosis of East/West symbolism along with the crooked stick, demonstrated his persistent obsession with the medieval shamanistic culture of the Tartars. The shamanism he speaks of refers to deep time, before the advent of Europe and Asia as distinct and separate entities.

In 1940 he took his school-leaving certificate in Cleve, and although he had a passion for art and had practiced sculpture in the studio of Achilles Moortgat in Cleve, his interest and talent in science led him to decide to study medicine and become a doctor specialising in paediatrics.

He was called up to fight in the German Luftwaffe in the Second World War in 1940 at the age of nineteen and trained as a dive-bomber pilot. In 1943 his 'Stuka' JU 87 aeroplane was hit by Russian fire and crashed into the snow in the middle of a snowstorm. A tribe of Tartars in the region found him at the site of the crash. Beuys writes of his experiences as follows:

> Had it not been for the Tartars I would not be alive today. They were the nomads of the Crimea, in what was then no-man's-land between the Russian and German fronts, and favoured neither side. I had already struck up a good relationship with them and often wandered off to sit with them … they … would … try to persuade me to join their clan. Their nomadic ways attracted me of course although by that time their movements were restricted. Yet it was they who discovered me in the snow after the crash, when the German search parties had given up…The last thing I remember was that it was too late to jump, too late for the parachutes to open … Luckily I was not strapped in – I always

> preferred free movements to safety belts. I had been disciplined for … not carrying a map of Russia – somehow I felt that I knew the area better than any map. My friend was strapped in and atomized by the impact … but I must have been shot through the windscreen as it flew back at the same speed as the plane hit the ground and that saved me … I was completely buried in the snow. That's how the Tartars found me days later. I remember voices saying 'Voda' ('Water'), then the felt of their tents and the dense and pungent smell of cheese, fat and milk. They covered my body in fat to help it regenerate warmth and wrapped it in felt as an insulator to keep the warmth in (Durini, 1992: 17).

The veracity of this version of Beuys' plane crash has been questioned by various authorities (e.g. Buchloh, 1980; Nisbit, 2001), but whether it is fact, myth or metaphor, the elements of this story were to emerge frequently in his art: the healing, the tribal shamans, the materials of felt and fat and the transformation which occurred in him after he returned to Cleve after this experience. Even the fact of his love of freedom in not wearing a seat belt, his inducted knowledge of the area which he knew well enough not to have to carry a map, his previous contacts with this 'tribe' and their attempt to include him, all this added to the construction of the kind of identity he needed to fit in with the ritual-type performances of his work. The hybrid nature of his cultural identity was beginning to assert itself as he adopted this shamanistic culture of the Tartars and merged it with his German identity.

He explained that when he returned home to Cleves to find his parents' house bombed and the golden swan on the castle also shattered he decided to give up medicine and become an artist. Here again he is laying the ground for the kind of mix he is proposing for art: the golden swan was associated with mysticism and the symbolic destruction of this quality led him to give up science and seek elements of spirituality elsewhere.

5. Healing

Even after his decision to give up medicine he wanted to use his art to effect healing.

He spoke often of a vast social wound that needed repair. This was no doubt a reference to western culture in general, but it is also thought to refer to his own country's ethical devastation and complicity after the Second World War. Not only did he offer artistic suggestions for a cure in a poetic form, but he also had a practical prescription in the form of his political activism, which ultimately led to his transformation from shaman to politician (Levine, 2001: 2).

His work alludes to all kinds of healing techniques, both social, medical and spiritual: references to western medicine in his iconography take the form of salves of sulphur, gauze and adhesive bandages, X-rays, homeopathy and natural cures such as copper and herbs.

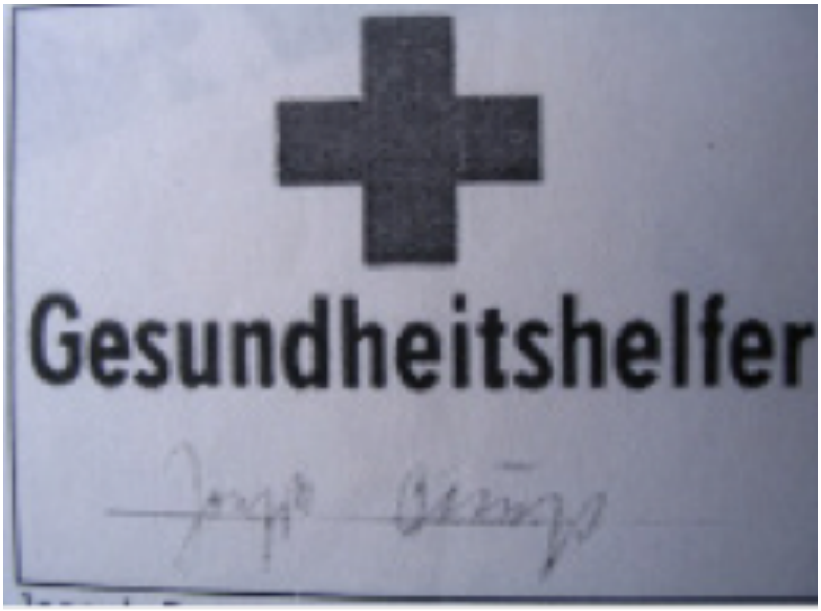


Figure 46: Joseph Beuys. 1979 Helper. Plastic sign, ink. Alfred and Marie Greisinger Collection. Walker art Center, T. B. Walker, Acquisition Fund 1992. 1997b Estate of Joseph Beuys/ARS NY.



Figure 47: Joseph Beuys (1961, 1975). Multiple. Botanical Madness. Schellmann & Kluser. Beuys collecting botanical specimens and healing herbs (Tisdall, 1977).

The above illustration is known as a multiple' and it weaves together different cultural strands of medicine and healing. 'Multiples' were repetitive pieces, framed, available to the public at low cost, either in the form of photographs or printed copies.

5.1 Similarities to ritual - liminal phase and transformation

According to Tisdall (1980) and to what Beuys revealed in interviews he was forced to leave Dusseldorf in 1956 due to an acute state of depression and a nervous breakdown while staying with the van der Griten brothers (Walters, 2010: 37). He moved into their farm and worked in the fields while slowly recovering. Beuys used this period in his work to conclude that:

> Illnesses are almost always spiritual crises in life in which old experiences and phases of thought are cast off in order to permit positive changes… when one comes through it much of what was previously unclear, or only vague, acquires a positive direction (Durini, 1992: 21).

Beuys (cited in Tisdall, 1980: 21) further added:

> In 1949 the sense of trauma became a real illness, the season in hell through which every creative person must go in order to reach a deeper level of perception … without such pain there can be no real experience: from now in my work is the fruit of that experience.

This type of crisis has been described in various religions as the same as the 'dark night of the soul' or the confusion, depression and chaos out of which is born a new life and perspective. This, Beuys claims, is necessary before a transformation; an expanded consciousness or a different spiritual direction may be achieved. 'A positive aspect of this is the start of a new life. The whole thing is a therapeutic process' (Durini, 1992: 22). Although a far cry from Beuys' German audience this is the same process as the ontological shift expressed by initiated young Kunda women.

After his illness he said that:

> For me it was a time when I realized the part the artist can play in indicating the traumas of the time and initiating a healing process… out of it came the theory of sculpture. I saw the relationship between the chaos I had experienced and a sculptural analogy. Chaos can have a healing character, with the idea of open movement which channels the warmth of chaotic energy into order or form… I began to see how structures could be created which relate to every kind of life and work (Tisdall, 1980: 21).

After that difficult period in 1954 of illness and recovery he described himself as having:

> … for too long dragged a body around with me … a physical change had to take place in me. Illness is almost always spiritual crises in life in which old experiences and phases of thought are cast off in order to permit positive changes (Durini, 1992: 21).

This is a clear comparison to a rite of passage in which suffering, and crisis is a prerequisite to purification, transformation and healing.

These thoughts coalesced and found form in his later works, such as *Spade with two handles* in 1965 and *The Chief,* which was first performed by Beuys in 1963 in Copenhagen, and then again in the Rene Block Gallery, Berlin, 1 December 1964.

5.1.1 The Chief



Figure 48: Joseph Beuys. The Chief 1964. Stephan Gallery, Vienna. Beuys wrapped in felt on the floor.

Beuys' performance piece called *The Chief* resembles two phases of ritual. He lay on the floor rolled up in a piece of felt isolating himself from the rest of the world for nine hours inside the gallery in a state of physical discomfort like a corpse, imitating a liminal stage of a rite of passage.

Extended out of each of the ends of his roll of felt was a dead hare. 'When I use the hare,' says Beuys, 'my intention had nothing to do with the hare itself but wanted to be the expression of transformation by way of the matter of birth and death' (Durini, 1992: 25). He explained his repetitive use of the hare in this action writing that, 'the hare has a direct relation to birth … for me the hare is a symbol of incarnation' (Durini, 1992: 29



Figure 49: Eurasia. The hare was a symbol for Beuys of the link between life and death.

'A description of *The Chief* by Wolf Vostell, a 'fellow-Fluxus artist, friend, rival, and occasional opponent of Beuys' was published in the Berliner Tagesspiegel in 1964. It reads in part:

> At irregular intervals Beuys transmitted his messages out of the roll through a microphone, and these were then greatly amplified. One heard breathing, breathing out rattling in the throat, coughing, groaning, grumbling, whispering, whistling tones: a catalogue of lettrist sound vocabulary. Beuys: 'a primary sound which one could relate to the two hares (Vostell, 1964: 94).

Tisdall had a different interpretation about *The Chief*. She said the animal noises he made were to 'reach to areas of feeling beyond straightforward rational explanation' Tisdall (1980: 94 She also quotes Beuys himself as saying that:

> The Chief was above all an important sound piece. The most recurrent sound was deep in the throat and hoarse like the cry of a stag. Oo … the sounds I make are taken consciously from animals. I see it as a way of coming into contact with other forms of existence beyond the human one (Tisdall, 1980: 95).

The concept of a 'passage' in *The Chief* implies suffering and a transformation after

an ordeal. Those psychological changes implicit in that metaphorical cycle of birth and death were not only related to the individual but also to the social body. He considered transformation in the individual was essential before society could be transformed.

Beuys, in his written explanations has spelt out how we should understand the work, which was:

> Parallel to the old initiation of the coffin, a form of simulated death. It takes a great deal of discipline to avoid panicking in such conditions, acting as being dead, empty and lacking emotions and without specific sensations of claustrophobia and pain for nine hours in the same position (Durini, 1992: 28).

So, for the individual, a state of 'passage' in an initiation (as described by Van Gennep, (1960) and Turner, (1969) involves a metaphorical death before a renewal and a social change is possible. It indicates a state of chaos to one of order and the performance of *The Chief* was supposed to be extended into a metaphor for his own post war, post holocaust German society.

His comment on being wrapped in felt for nine hours in *The Chief* demonstrates this event when he wrote: 'In a way it's a death, a real action and not an interpretation' (Tisdall, 1980: 95). This is quite true, but only for himself and the audience; for them it was not a real action but an interpretation.

Walters (2010: 45) considers that Beuys' work could be seen as a practice where appropriation could potentially transform himself and the audience. Beuys insisted on the necessity of personal pain and suffering prior to social transformation, before society can be healed. 'Theme: how does one become a revolutionary? That's the problem' (Tisdall, 1980: 95).

She added:

> … every step forward has to start from radical change within the person concerned … That is a necessity for any evolutionary progress. Transformation of the self must take place in the potential of thought and mind. After this deep-rooted change, evolution can take place (Tisdall, 1980: 95).

This emphasis on healing and aesthetic education to bring about a change in society was what he termed his *social sculpture*.

5.1.2 Spade with two handles (1965). Transformation through the heart

The 1965 performance of the *Spade with two handles* was Beuys' action signifying co-operation and harmony in working the earth together. The spade is held at heart level and shaped like a heart. It refers to the healing features of communal agricultural farming (Tisdall, 1980:126). This is one of two such spades used as an object in part of an action during the Fluxus performance. The whole event was titled 24 Hours. Beuys' part of the action was called '…and in us …under us…landunder'. It was performed at the Galerie Parnass, Wuppertal, 5 June in 1965. About his part of this action Beuys writes:

> I held the spade at heart level and sometimes raised it above my head. Brotherhood and love are suggested in the heart shape of the iron blade, while the handles are like aorta or arteries. So there is a relationship to the bloodstream here, and iron too, an important component of blood... The relationship to agriculture is evident, as are the warmth and love needed for a regeneration of the earth (Tisdall, 1980: 126).

> First of all, he said, these two handles on one spade signify a special kind of compound action for people working with the earth together. Without the spirit of co-operation and harmony and even humour it would be impossible to work … Two handles on one spade signify a special kind of compound action for people working the earth together… brotherhood and love are suggested by the heart shape of the iron blade (Beuys, cited in Tisdall, 1980: 126).



Figure 50: Joseph Beuys Two handled spade 1965. Wood and iron Stroher collection. Hessisches Landesmuseum Darmstadt.

6. Moving away from European art - his hybridity

Beuys has been identified as a 'hard primitivist' (Walters, 2010:45). Looking to past cultures for ideas about art could be construed as primitivism, but can also be seen as rebellion against the emphasis on individuality in the modernist framework. Along with his interest in the nomadic Tartars, Beuys' reading of James Joyce demonstrates his fascination with the ancient Irish mythological element of Joyce's works that he interpreted it as being ' … almost always something spiritual' (Durini, 1992: 19). His anti-capitalist beliefs and the appeal of an agrarian society was highlighted by those interests of his that meshed in with the allure of the primordial again demonstrating his convergence with a different national worldview.

6.1 I like America and America likes me (Coyote) 1974

A large cage was set up in the Rene Block Gallery in New York in May 1974 where Beuys spent a week living inside it with a coyote.

The performance of *Coyote* began when Beuys arrived at Kennedy airport where his friends wrapped him up in felt, completely covering him from head to toe – the material which for Beuys signified insulation and warmth.



Figure 51: Beuys being loaded onto a stretcher New York. I like America and America Likes me 1974 (Tisdall, 1977).

Beuys' arrival at the gallery from the airport in an ambulance implied a situation of danger and spiritual disease. The North American Indians regarded the coyote as capable of transformation; changing its state from physical to spiritual and vice versa at will (Tisdall, 1980: 25). It was one of their highest deities and a symbol of transformation, but it almost became extinct by the American settlers who valued capitalism over nature and declared the animal to be shot on sight; a careless disregard, according to Beuys, of the power of animals as a channel to another state of

consciousness (Tisdall, 1980: 25).

In rejecting all that America represented and identifying with the Indians and their spiritual and animistic beliefs he said, 'I wanted to isolate myself, insulate myself, see nothing of America other than the coyote' (Tisdall 1980: 25). He was then put onto a stretcher and travelled to the gallery in an ambulance, implying a situation of danger and spiritual disease, and was driven to the place he was to share with the coyote for one week.

His arrival in America and his transfer to the gallery on a stretcher meant that his feet never touched the American soil. Then the day-to-day interaction between Beuys and the animal began that looked like a planned ritual. According to Walters (2010: 38):

> … Beuys displayed an openness to the coyote; the action was guided by the animal's pace and response to the objects. Despite their differences, in the action Beuys and the coyote find a way of interacting, living and communicating together, and there is a clear echo of the shaman's training here.

Beuys brought a few significant props along with him – the length of felt, his crooked stick, brown gloves, flashlight (an image of energy) painted brown, a musical triangle, and his pervasive hat. Copies of the Wall Street Journal were delivered daily, which the coyote would urinate on, exemplifying Beuys' attitude to the capitalist monetary system. Man, and animal sometimes shared and sometimes alternated their respective beds of felt and straw.

In polarising two societies in this performance, capitalist America and the indigenous Indians, and in trying to link himself to the pre- industrial Indian group, he attempts to deny any technology. He describes it as if it is an organic landscape on the American plains. He says of the flashlight which was concealed beneath the felt with its light shining out, that, 'I did not want to show it as a technical device. It was a source of light, a hearth or heart, the glowing of a sinking sun or the gleaming of star energy in that grey hill' (Tisdall, 1978: 29). The grey hill refers to the triangular shape of the

felt out of which the light of the torch shone.



Figure 52: Joseph Beuys. I Like America and America Likes me. The grey hill.

For Beuys, animals represented, according to Tisdall (1980, 25), 'an enormous source of energy, since behind the power of each species stands the spirit of its group consciousness'.



Figure 53: Joseph Beuys, I Like America and America Likes Me 1974. Copies of the Wall Street Journal (Tisdall, 1977).



Figure 54: Joseph Beuys. I Like America and America Likes Me 1974 (Tisdall, 1977).

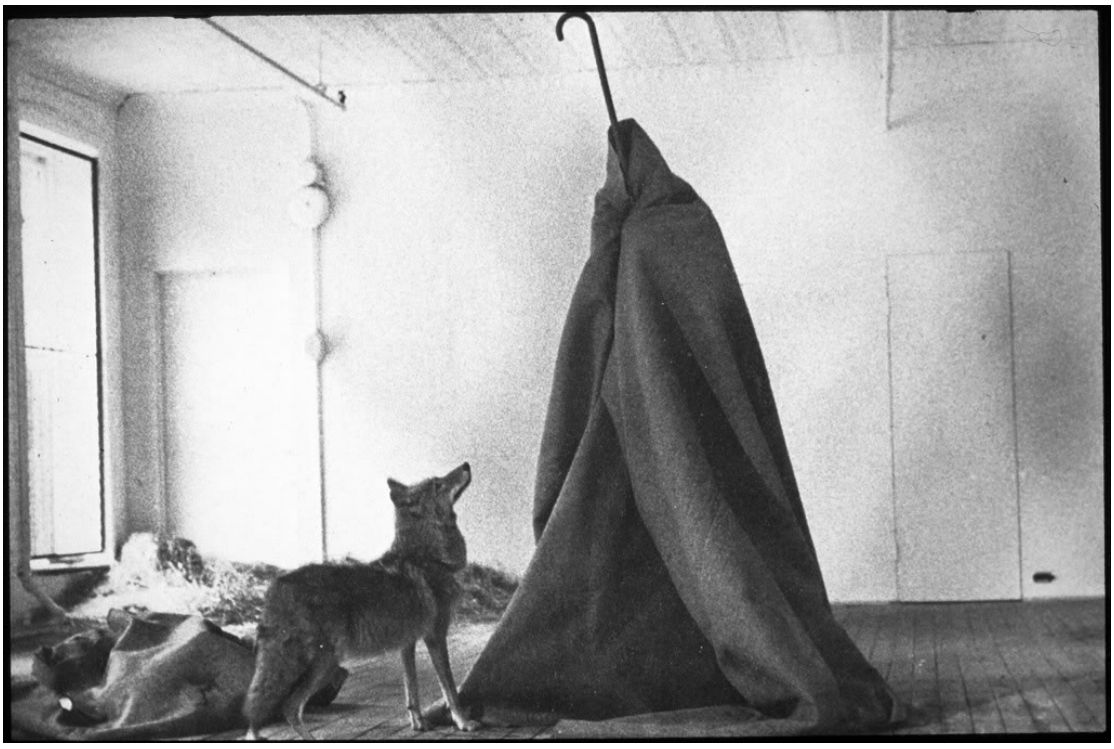


Figure 55: Joseph Beuys. I Like America and America Likes me. 1974.



Figure 56: Beuys wrapped in felt interacting with the coyote with his crooked shaman's stick in I Like America and America Likes me (Tisdall, 1977).



Figure 57: Beuys wrapped in felt interacting with the coyote with his crooked shaman's stick in I Like America and America Likes me (Tisdall, 1977).

7. Materials

Beuys disregarded the materials of ‘high art’, marble and bronze, oil and canvas, for materials that had metaphorical meaning, such as felt, fat, chalk on board, newspaper, live or stuffed animals, and honey.

Felt and *fat* were related to the Tartar tribesmen who apparently kept him in their tent using these materials to warm and heal him. For Beuys these indicated human care, warmth and healing

Fat is a material that has the physical ability to exist in two opposite extremes, both a flowing liquid when warm but crystallised into a defined solid when cold. This would signify transformation, a passage from one state to another. He often spoke of the chaotic nature of the material of fat that for Beuys signified chaos to order and the potential for spiritual transcendence. Fat is, according to Beuys, a nurturing, life-sustaining substance and is essential for nourishment and fuel. He began using fat in the 1960s with the installations *Fat Corners* (1960, 1962) and *Felt Corner* (1963) and a sculpture entitled *Fat Chair* (1964). (See Figures 58, 59 and 60).

These states of hot and cold were Beuys’ metaphors for psychological states; he believed that fat was both life sustaining and psychologically effective, in that 'people instinctively feel it relates to inner processes and feelings'. He believed these materials started 'an almost chemical process among people that would have been impossible if I had only spoken theoretically' (Beuys cited in Rekow, 1999).





Figure 58: Left - Joseph Beuys, 1960. Felt Corner 1960s.

Figure 59: Right - Joseph Beuys, 1960. Fat Corner. Mixed Media.



Figure 60: Joseph Beuys Fat Chair. 1964 Wooden chair with fat. 90 x 30 x 30 cm. Stroher collection, Hessisches Landesmuseum, Darmstadt.



Figure 61: Joseph Beuys. Felt Suit 1970.

With his *Felt Suit* (1970), Beuys explains the element of warmth that the felt represents, and how his use of felt has this characteristic of warmth:

> Ultimately the concept of warmth goes even further. Not just physical warmth was meant. If I had meant physical warmth I could just as well have used an infrared light in my performances. What I had in mind was actually quite another kind of warmth, namely spiritual or evolutionary warmth or a beginning of evolution (Mckinney, 1998: 42).

His materials and objects, such as the batteries he occasionally used in his installations, were embedded with ideas of transformation in the energy they held, the transformation that he hoped to effect in society with his notion of 'social sculpture'. In fact, the materials would transform themselves in the most literal sense, such as the physical alteration that fat undergoes with temperature changes. He declared the

importance of process over product, but this was belied by his careful preservation of the work.

8. Management of knowledge

The knowledge Beuys was managing was based on how ritual can change perceptions and people, which in turn brings about a change in society.

One of the methods he used to manage, and control knowledge was various forms of documentation. Beuys always chose carefully the people around him who would document his 'actions' in the form of photographs, films, press releases and tape recordings of 'meetings' and discussions (Durini, 1992; Tisdall 1979).

> For the important 1979 ... exhibition held at the Guggenheim Museum he wanted to be photographed – publicly and privately – for 25 consecutive days by Baby Durini. So the historic value of the two particular works created on this occasion with photographs is more than comprehensive: they represent the vital document of an unrepeatable event only made possible by means of a visualization of thought and form (Durini, 1992: 124).

Beuys' attention was always fixed on the management of knowledge surrounding his works to the extent that they sometimes became inseparable from the political intentions accompanying them. According to the writer Staeck (1986:14), he constantly kept an eye on what the powerful were up to and spent hours talking to people about his views of art, the economic problems of society today and his concept of social sculpture, which concerned the changing of society. During the 1977 Documenta he spent a hundred days talking to anyone who wanted to ask about his work (Staeck, 1986: 14).

Beuys also wanted to manage his knowledge while he was teaching formally. Contrary to the methods used by the Kunda initiation teachers, Beuys wanted as many people as possible to understand his ideas. During his tenure at the Dusseldorf

Academy of Art, Beuys' anti-bureaucratic and anti-traditional pedagogical ideas made him the focus of much controversy. Anastasia Shartin (1999) links the political activism prevalent amongst the students across the world in the late 1960s to the sympathy for Beuys' expanded notion of art and his classes and teaching strategies. In 1967 he founded the German Student Party in his class and its activities continued there until the late 1960s (Shartin, 1999: 2).

He kept using the term democracy in connection with his controversial methods at the Dusseldorf Art Academy. 'Democracy is fun', he declared (Staeck, 1986: 12), and later made an artwork of the same title. On this occasion, dressed in an old Swiss army medical orderly's overcoat, he led a student campaign against restriction of admissions, the school's policy under which only a select number of students could be enrolled. 'If teachers at the Academy are allowed to have six pupils, then I also have the freedom to take 400, he declared' (Beuys cited in Staeck, 1986: 11).

His art was moving more into politics at this time and years of conflicts and controversy with the Academy's administration followed over his political activities with the students, but the main bone of contention, which led to Beuys being dismissed from his post in 1972, was the issue of 'restricted entry'. Beuys wanted to give unlimited access in line with his belief that 'those who have something to teach and those who feel they have something to learn have the right to come together' (Shartin, 1999: 2). He challenged this idea of restricted entry by over-enrolling his classes deliberately.



Figure 62: Joseph Beuys. We Won't do it Without the Rose. 1972.



Figure 63: Joseph Beuys. Democracy is Merry. 1973.

His work, *Democracy is Merry* (1973) is one of his 'multiples' made from a photograph of Beuys being led from the premises after a demonstration with his students against the policy of restricted admission. Another of his works from 1973, *Rose for Direct Democracy*, is a rose in a gradated cylinder of the kind used for science experiments. This image 'expresses the importance of uniting love and knowledge, passion and science' (Rekow, 1999: 1), one of Beuys' most common themes. This represents Beuys' many ideas about 'harmonizing the forces of nature and civilization, man and technology and art and life' (Rekow, 1999: 1).

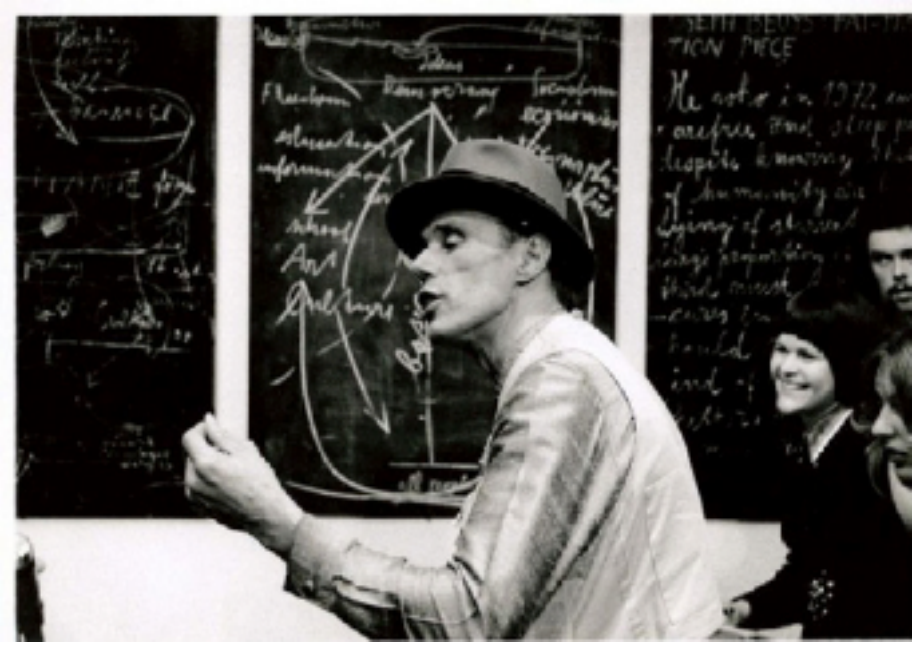


Figure 64: Joseph Beuys. Information Action 1972. Performed at the Tate Gallery, 26 February 1972.

But Beuys went further in recruiting the public to his ideas and in March 1970 he established the *Organization for Non-Voters and Free Referendum.* The Information Office was an in-gallery space modelled after Beuys' practice of opening his office, studio and exhibition galleries as a forum for debate.

It was the site for a series of discussions taking place throughout the run of the exhibition. A 60-minute documentary on Beuys, produced by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), was screened once a week on Thursday at noon. Admission was free. The Information Office was also available for use by classes and community

groups (www.Walkerart.org. 2000).

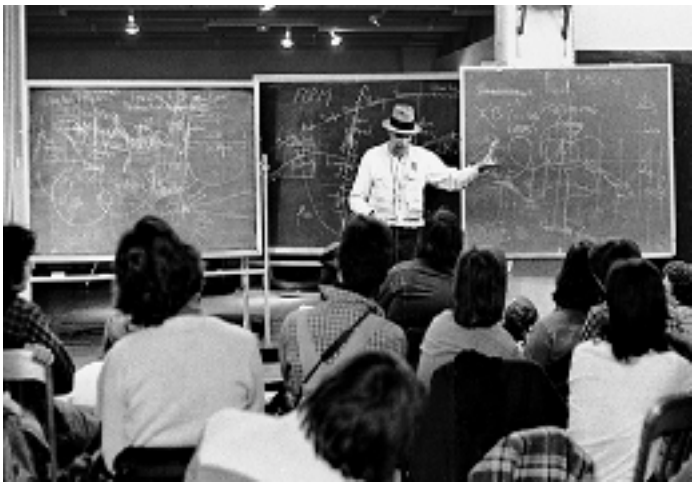


Figure 65: Joseph Beuys. Information Office, 1970s.

In 1972 at the Documenta 5 International Exhibition of Contemporary Art he turned his exhibition space into an information office where ideas about Direct Democracy could be discussed. The rose appears again in his multiple, *We Won't do it Without the Rose* (1972), which shows Beuys engaged in one of these discussions.

But there was still a part of the work of Beuys that remained elusive and secret. As noted by Borer (1996: 23) 'He kept to himself a part of the secret, a "power" that he communicated but did not delegate, and which no imitator could assume'.

For example, in *Explaining paintings to a Dead Hare* 1965, he walked around the gallery speaking to the dead hare and explaining ‘art’ in an incomprehensible language which the public could not follow.



Figure 66: Explaining paintings to a Dead Hare. 1965.

Beuys used this theme of the flow of transformation in many different ways. In fact, following Rudolf Steiner, the German thinker, he consciously used the classical alchemical metaphor of turning base metals into gold. Throughout his life he was obsessed with demonstrating the need for the individual to transform into a higher state of consciousness and awareness before changes can happen in society.



Figure 67: Explaining paintings to a Dead Hare. 1965.

Beuys repeatedly said that his art was intended to arouse in other people a 'spiritual response'. He insisted, 'Art is not there to provide knowledge in a direct way'. Instead he said that 'it produces deepened perceptions of experience … art is not there to be simply understood, or we would have no need of art (Beuys cited in Rekow, 1999: 2).

He called the outward manifestation of the inner image the 'thought form' (Walters 2012: 181). Here again he is inventing terminology for an idea just like 'the expanded concept of art' (Borer 1996: 27). It was through this type of personalised terminology that Beuys was able, again and again, to elucidate his concepts and therefore to manage his knowledge.



Figure 68: Joseph Beuys. Explaining paintings to a Dead Hare. 1965.

Here is how he explained it: 'The expanded concept of art. That's very simple … the expanded concept of art is not a theory but a way of proceeding which says that the inner eye is much more crucial than the external images that develop anyway' (Mennekes, 1984: 34). Again, he was branding himself and his art by disseminating the knowledge about the key ideas.

'All the objections against Beuys claiming that he left behind no completed works are silenced by such museum presentations', wrote Staeck in 1986. The felt-covered piano

is as popular today, in 2017, in the same place at the Pompidou Centre in Paris as it was then, thirty years one ago when this obituary was written. Staek (1986: 7) also claims that the other argument that Beuys did not want to produce finished works is also unable to be taken seriously. In spite of claims like this, I maintain that Beuys' work was more about the concept and the process than the finished products. In the same way that the Kunda women leave no trace of their art behind, it is concept and the knowledge that is more important than the product. As Nooter (1993: 19) said, the aesthetic effect of a work of art in Africa may be because of its very absence.

This chapter has shown one example of an artist squarely situated in a western tradition whose work is related to anthropology, opening up the question of what ritual might achieve when explicitly drawn on by art. Walters (2010) shows that Beuys as does not want to return to an earlier culture but wants to rather stress the idea of transformation.

> His *Infiltration-homogen for grand piano* was a tribute to self-healing through inner silence and meditation. This grand piano wrapped in felt with a Red Cross sign, is a powerful homage to his notion of the therapeutic aspects of personal and social recovery (Walters, 2010: 42).



Figure 69: Joseph Beuys. Infiltration-homogen for grand piano. 1966.

9. Conclusion

In this chapter we have seen how the themes of ritual, transformation, process over product, management of knowledge, shamanism and healing occur in the artworks of Beuys. The same topics were considered in Chapter three on Kunda art. The next chapter will show how these topics, common to both, weave together and apart through the consonances and dissonances that bind and separate them.

CHAPTER FIVE

5. Introduction

In this chapter I examine a contrapuntal reading and I show in the examples not only that special knowledge is part and parcel of the work and the management of it accrues power to its practitioners, but so does articulation – itself a source of power, both social and political.

The analysis will show that what results is more effective when the artworks/artefacts themselves are fugitive and connected to process and special knowledge rather than to a commodity product. I will explore cases and show that that the hybridity that exists in each becomes translated; that the 'impure' products resulted in power plays. Beuys' art and ritual was not considered a pure example of the modernist culture. The Kunda women attached power to themselves through an 'impure' Kunda symbol and by retaining control of the work by guarding the knowledge.

However, in the management of knowledge, the secrecy aspect also sounded out consonances, because understanding the discourses around Beuys becomes as indispensable as understanding a secret society and being initiated into the discourses. Without it the art remains opaque, and without it power remains elusive. Like the hub on a bicycle wheel this point of the power efficacy of art and ritual provides an important pivot on which it all revolves.

By noting the consonances and dissonances that make up the art, ritual and the management of knowledge between the two articulated examples and by using a contrapuntal methodology I have identified a different way of listening to how power operates in art and ritual. When this became clear, firstly with Beuys and then in the Kunda example, it provided the lead for me to examine again the consonances of the power effect in Beuys' performance art, thereby enriching the reading of each and demonstrating the efficacy of power in art and ritual.

5.1 Consonances and dissonances

In Chapter one I established the link with Said's (2005) contrapuntal methods and how this accords with and complements Clifford's (2003) view on articulation. Continuing with Said's musical analogy, my study is a bit like that of being a conductor in interpreting and bringing together the similarity of certain melodies in a manner that synchronises the whole in the act of interpretation.

The previous two chapters explored two examples and alluded to points of consonance and dissonance in the specific ways that the power of hybridity was used in both art and ritual. Here I engage more actively as the conductor, using counterpoint to open up and explore consonances and dissonances in a critical engagement in order to further explore the creative role of hybridity and the management of knowledge that makes art transformative and accrues power to the producers. This contrapuntal methodology is a device that I hope to use effectively to blend all these examples with their internal consonances and dissonances into a broader symphonic entirety.

5.2 Knowledge

Knowledge about transformation is at the heart of initiation rituals for both Beuys and the Kunda. Both engage performance work that relates to transformation in one way or another. Consonances emerged between the two as it became evident that merely appreciating the art only from a visual or visceral point of view was not enough. Special knowledge was needed; each example needed to be socially contextualised and the concepts and discourses explained. Knowing these discourses, the social circumstances around their creation, the cultural idioms and commonalities of each example, and how each overlap the other, became indispensable to understanding each case.

Beuys' idea of western epistemology for example was that it was outmoded and due for a change. He not only considered rational thought obsolete, but elected himself the new envoy of a different mindset introducing different cultural knowledges into his work to try to link reason and intuition.

I found significant consonances and dissonances that emerged within the two epistemologies: special knowledge is a necessary component of the art of both Beuys and Kunda, but in contrast the Kunda knowledge and meanings are open-ended and elusive. Beuys' is fixed and this exposed the inherent dissonances. Then again, it is clear Beuys makes this knowledge available to many while on the contrary the Kunda women make theirs unavailable to others, unless they decide to invite somebody in, as was the case with my daughters and me.

5.3 The power of special knowledge

Special knowledge in both cases was shown to be part of the process by which the art objects or process works were managed and in each case, they conflicted with dominant powers so as to become a form of resistance. Power attached itself to the art object because of the necessary induction into the knowledge and exclusion of outsiders. The invisibility of the art after its destruction created power for the knowledge keepers because it is known that much of the art is related to medicine and the manipulation powerful energies. In Beuys' case the dominant authority was the Dusseldorf University where he was employed and then expelled as a teacher. In the previous chapter I suggested that the women initiation teachers used their cow image to subvert and challenge the stereotype of the powerful and previously abusive cattle-owning patriarchal Ngoni - historically violent oppressors of Kunda women. This hybridised image was used to reclaim female autonomy as a powerful tool of resistance.

5.4 Management of knowledge and power

There is a certain convergence and divergence in the way in which the myths and knowledge around the works are controlled resulting in power plays in all cases. While Beuys managed the interpretations or 'meanings' of his work and dispersed them publicly in a manner safeguarded by himself, so the Kunda controlled their interpretations by an opposing strategy: secrecy, fugitive knowledge and destruction of the objects obscuring any hint of how they operate in leading girls into adulthood and manipulating powerful energies. While the methods of gaining power through special knowledge were similar, the difference lay in the specific strategies. The Zambian example relied on secrecy and anonymity and that became a form of power. Beuys relied on a wide dissemination of all his information through the written word, discussions, films and videos as a means of ensuring a specific interpretation of his works and performances. Highlighted by the consonances and dissonances in both strategies of these two specific case studies, we see how careful control of information and of the cultural artefacts and art works themselves gave power and authority to the protagonists in two radically different societies.

While Beuys' work, as in much conceptual art, was difficult to comprehend, he ensured that as many people as possible understood it. Napier (1992:21) suggested that the management of this special knowledge in contemporary art was like an induction into a secret society. He went further to say that because art is no longer coexistent-existent with other sorts of experience, the public need induction into the meanings of art. He wrote that artists are:

> … guides through what for all the world looks like a rite of passage...meaning is offered only to those who consciously devote themselves to this new cult, who are willing to subject themselves to its ritual transformations. Contemporary performances that occur in so-called public spaces but are only "realized" on the pages of an acceptable art magazine are covertly preaching the gospel .... (Napier, 1992: 20).

We saw how Napier (1992) and others (Kristeva, 1995; Morgan and Morris, 1995)

suggested that artists lead people through a kind of metaphorical rite of passage and that introducing ritual into art transforms people, moves them across borders, and leads to new insights. The transformative power of art and ritual in any culture (Gell, 1998:1) is a creative process.

In the 1960s when Joseph Beuys was performing his 'actions' art suddenly outgrew its previous categories and one needed to be inducted into a new language to understand it. To the uninitiated avant-garde art seemed mysterious, even esoteric (Napier, 1990: 20). Napier wrote that the "'profound secret knowledge'" implicit in avant-garde art invites the comparison into revealing traces of a secret society; the connection to festivals, ceremonies, rites and art galleries becomes apparent.

Although the categories Napier is speaking about are related to art, the same idea is connected to political strategies and regimes of power (Clifford, 2003: 103). Indeed, the consonances of both artists in ritual and art is never neutral, but inseparable from politics and power.

The hybrid creations and cultural combinations from Beuys and the Kunda produced new ideas with a creative thrust; ritual and art became politically charged or confrontational as shown in Beuys' expulsion from Dusseldorf University in 1972 and the Kunda women's subversive use of the cow.

5.5 Anonymity and fame through management of knowledge

The Kunda artists' work was anonymous while Beuys' work was distinctly not. Though in both, the process was more important than the end product. The Kunda artists although known among themselves, are not named or celebrated or published, and their work is destroyed. While Beuys' works, despite being named, were still primarily about the process and the concept. That was crucial to how they were to be interpreted and read. However, because they were heavily invested and encoded with meanings known only to himself and his followers, they created a power play and challenged the very notion of art itself, and a challenge to the academy leading to his

expulsion.

What Beuys proposed was a new kind of sculpture, a 'social sculpture' that consisted of discussion groups and information centres aiming at changing peoples' ideas and transforming their psychological states. Whether he succeeded in this or not is beyond the scope of this discussion, but the management of his knowledge was tied in with his aim of transforming society and inextricably linked to his name and public persona. Kunda art and its management of knowledge was also inextricably tied in with the aim of transforming society, but they worked anonymously as a group rather than as individuals. Both Kunda and Beuys performed and had audiences. Kunda ritual is embedded in the social life of the community but restricted to insiders, whereas Beuys offered his 'ritual' to any viewer within the art world. Beuys went to great lengths to make sure his name was connected to the performances, and to the residual objects or photographs, often using a stamp to print his authorial presence onto the work. His strategy of acquiring fame is dissonant to the Kunda strategy of anonymity, although for each, these opposing methods proved an effective way of managing knowledge and transformation.

5.6 Repetition as a method of induction into the knowledge

Repetition for induction into the special knowledge formed consonances between the two examples. Beuys' excessive repetition of commodity pieces such as his 'multiples', which were photographs or small constructions, was a strategy dissonant to that of the Kunda but used to the same effect. This was to emphasise that the concept (of repetition and commodity) around the product was more important than the product itself. As he once stated, 'Communication of ideas becomes the work of art' (Beuys J, Beuys E, Wenzel & Jessyka, 1997: 8). By using repeated objects, he was demonstrating the repetitive commodification of products in western life that were, according to him, devaluing the precious nature of art. He also used repetition mnemonically in a similar way to Kunda methods of induction in the rituals through repetitive songs, the rhythmic patterns of dance as bodies and minds move in unison.

6. Process and product

In all the cases within these two strategies the materials themselves were also linked inextricably to the management of knowledge. The colours of paints for the Kunda had metaphorical significance or intrinsic power, the red and white ochres, while the fugitive, ephemeral materials of the rituals vanished with little or no visual residue and relied more on process than the actual product. Objects and materials such as felt, fat and lead, used in Beuys' rituals, although put into vitrines afterwards, placed more importance on the ritual process of their making rather than the residual objects themselves, which were simply an *aide memoire* of the performance.

7. Materials

We saw how Beuys' use of materials is significant in indicating for him, a transmission of energy and altered states. Therefore, the red and white oxide used by Kunda women is highly significant. They are considered to contain powerful inherent energies, in particular the red ochre, and are guarded carefully, as are the *vilengo* figures made out of clay. The colours of the paints for Kunda women are all invested with their own specific significant meanings and are carefully removed afterwards. These fugitive materials and the fleeting products have the power of knowledge inherent in them because as the objects disappear, so the meanings vanish with them and only by the repetition and learning are these meanings retained.

8. Ritual

8.1 Transformation through suffering

Morgan sees transformation and ritual as an entwined duet and writes that Beuys 'saw

artists as figures with responsibility and power in the world' (Morgan and Morris, 1995: 13). This important role is in fact just what Beuys hoped to fill with his art, always seeking a union of art, science, religion and economics (Morgan and Morris, 1995: 15) and eventually, mainly politics. Importantly Beuys' aim was not just to reflect society's views but also to influence and transform them. 'Beuys viewed performance art as a medium with the potential for self-healing and social transformation. He believed that by enacting self-invented rituals, he could assume the role of a modern-day shaman and affect the world around him' (Rekow, 1999:). Beuys embraces the mythical qualities of a ritual healer and a social regulator; attributes associated with shamanistic practice.

Napier (1992) observed that the best way to create a social transformation is to destabilise conventional ideas. This is also a creative part of ritual. Napier (1992: 31) suggests that being confronted with different ways of producing art helps to undermine comfortable and complacent modes of thought.

Metaphorical social death or personal crisis can put an individual in a liminal state, after which a re-introduction occurs into society as a different and useful member, and in the Kunda example, one who can then teach the next age cohort, cyclically and repetitively as the Kunda ancestors instruct. The central theme within both Beuys' and Kunda ritual instruction focused on a metaphorical death and rebirth. Although liminality, as we have seen, is a time of dismantling old perceptions and comfortable ideas, the emergence of creativity and the introduction of new disruptive, transformative themes from different sources may result.

Traditionally engaging a pain threshold is part of the process of initiation. This is consistent with Beuys' attitude to enlightenment through trauma and healing. In chapter four I showed how Beuys underwent physical pain and endurance in his performance *The Chief* and how he considered his suffering as a necessary stage in the process of transformation, insight and healing. There are consonances here in how the girl novices must undergo hardships and suffering as part of the initiation, how they must sit or lie still, as a corpse when they are not physically engaging with exhausting activities.

Most but not all spiritual practices, religions or psychological evolution, consist of suffering and then overcoming this towards a rebirth and enlightenment. Kristeva wrote about these hardships as part of the human condition. She said: 'Our hell is our unconscious and .... beneath our apparent placidity is an extremely problematic and abyssal being. For Freud these states of being are subjacent, are constantly with us' (Kristeva, 1995: 22). It is a small wonder then that religion is a definite product of our human condition, our predisposition to religion is common to all societies. An artist therefore, as spokesperson of the community, may have taken on the role of ambassadors or priests or what is described as a 'man of passage' (Morgan and Morris, 1995: 13).

Some may even, as Kristeva (1995: 23) argues about the *Rites of Passage* exhibition, be using the art museum as a kind of quasi-religious institution for the community to obtain a little 'temporary harmony' within the contemporary experience of fragmented identity.

We have seen the works that represent Beuys' own rebirth after psychological trauma are similar in many ways to that in religious ritual. Kristeva (1995) writes that artists put themselves into liminal states; these states are similar to a typical rite of passage. Yet unlike cultures that use a rite of passage as a means of transformation into a community, Kristeva (1995) says modern westerners have alienated themselves. She says, 'we have reached a point of extreme personal solitude' (Kristeva, 1995:23). From this view how much more relevant her reminder seems, that the word religion comes from the Latin *religare*, 'to join, to make a community'. Modernism, is a paradigm of a secular society, a society that she described as being in 'a state of crisis and fragmentation' (Kristeva, 1995: 21) and spiritual disorder, as a trauma, a wound or split.

Beuys' work aims at overcoming alienation, the shadow of the effects of war on a national psyche, but for him trauma suggests transformation and rebirth: the experience of a painful crisis followed by enlightenment. 'Without such pain there can be no real experience' (Beuys cited in Tisdall, 1979: 21). Rebirth can represent purification, which is partly how Kristeva defined the purpose of ritual. According to Beuys (cited in Tisdall, 1979: 21), 'For me it was a time when I realised the part an

artist can play in indicating the traumas of a time and initiating a healing process'. Beuys wanted to effect transformation and he intended to affect this healing and transformation of society through the transmission of his knowledge. We saw how his *Spade with Two Handles* was a transformative metaphorical image of healing and rejuvenation through reengaging the earth after trauma. *The Spade with Two Handles* was about his recovery working not as one individual but in conjunction with others on his friends' farm after a long illness.

The consonances in this idea are epitomised in the Kunda example of the *chilengo* (initiation image) called *Kanga Jowe,* the icon of a girl with arms raised above her head, an exuberant image of transformation and rejuvenation, a rock art image illustrating the time when the girls come out of the liminal state as young adults, transformed and returned in society. In the village they dance high up above the audience's heads on a platform specially constructed for them for this final dance. They are clean after being bathed in the river and festooned with beads. Not only is the ordeal over but the girl is also now an adult woman, as from that moment, and recognised as such and embraced also with open arms by the rest of the community. She can now communicate openly on the same level with other women and may not be patronised. She has moved from the irrational, chaotic state of childhood to one of adult order. *Kanga Jowe*, a dominant image on the Kalemba rock-painting site echoes an uncanny resemblance to Beuys' image of renewal in his action *Spade with Two Handles 1965.* In this action he was demonstrating a recovery or revival from an illness or nervous breakdown by helping on a farm with two friends. The heart shaped spade held to his chest signalled the co-joining of human resources in an act of care and cooperation. The *Kanga Jowe* girls are also in a state of revival after their long initiation ordeal.





Figure 70: Left - Beuys. Spade with two handles.

Figure 71: Centre - Kanga Jowe rock painting.

Figure 72: Right - Kunda girls' post-initiation dance. All have arms raised in celebration of a transformation after suffering.

From the discussions in the previous chapters it is clear that rituals are associated with periods of great individual change and people experience subjective transformation after this occasion. Beuys performatively changes his face with a mask of honey and gold leaf symbolising transformation to a higher state of being.

9. Healing and shamanism

For Beuys the importance of healing and transformation became linked to ideas of purification, concepts that are familiar to Kunda thinking but out of tune with those of his own society especially in art. Ideas that he expressed around *The Chief, Explaining Paintings to a Dead Hare* and *Coyote* are essentially about purification; renewed and fresh thinking for all, and the purging of outmoded ideas from the old 'necrotic' paradigm. This did not only concern physical healing after his mythical plane crash, but also the psychological and spiritual healing that was his repetitive theme.

In *Explaining Paintings to a Dead Hare* in 1965, he engages in a symbolic healing ritual using significant substances to transform himself. He first covers his face in honey, a substance traditionally known for its antiseptic qualities. But this is also the

highly valued product of a complex cooperative endeavour of a hive of bees, which for Beuys is the allusion to the ideal of a cooperative social order. The fragile and delicate gold leaf was applied to the sticky surface of his face and head transforming it into a golden mask, related to the preciousness, light, transformation and spiritual evolution. This is not gold on a halo but on his face, itself, serving to transform his face and identity.

All this metaphorically therapeutic material signified a purging of the old ways of society, which was mediated by Beuys in his self-appointed role as artist-shaman of society. These concepts are a matter of course in Kunda ritual including the repudiation of individuality in favour of the community.

The Eurasian concept of shamanism was deeply influential on Beuys. The shamanistic tradition is connected broadly in the literature to healing, achieved through an altered state of consciousness (Eliade, 1964; Lewis-Williams, 2004). Healing is not the only outcome of the shaman's link with another dimension but is also associated with divination or communication with the spirit realm and with having a link to familiars such as animals. He is primarily seen as a social regulator, both conserving and challenging the extant social order (Lewis-Williams, 2004). Beuys as within the shamanistic paradigm operates alone and on the edge of society, an observer who is able to symbolically and trans formatively intervene. (Lewis-Williams, 2004). Kunda women, *nangas*, the initiation teachers, are working within the conventions of their society and have esoteric healing powers which are pivotal to the transformative ceremonies in which they engage, regulating and shaping the nature of their communities.

Linking the spiritual with the social aspects of life as Kristeva (cited in Morgan, 1995) prompts, also reminds us that shamans are social leaders as well as religious ones. The cited examples all demonstrate that the shaman-like activities of these particular Kunda practitioners deal not only with social aspects of the community but also deeply on other levels with the spiritual ones. Beuys' practice too includes his attempts to educate the public towards a more conscious spiritual stance through enacting a type of shamanism, a tableau to transform his audience, while the *chisungu* women are shaman-like as they manage the spiritual and social aspects of life and

mediate seamlessly between the two.

However, change is almost always accompanied by a certain amount of anxiety. Transformation means moving from one state to another destabilised state. Shaman-like, these art and ritual practitioners all act as mediators between two worlds, creative midwives in the conversion of one state to the nexth to transform society

Apart from being social leaders the *chisungu* women are also doing, and are seen to be doing, a big social service in the community by presiding over the transformation of young girls and leading them over the threshold to become Kunda adults. Their teachings are very much concerned with all aspects of the adult woman's social life in the community. They are the social regulators in the Kunda society emphasising respect and social cohesion as well as having a powerful link to ancestral knowledge.

9.1 Animals

Animals, in the long history of humans, are very much connected to ritual and spiritual power and have often been considered to be a conduit to different dimensions of awareness. In both case studies animals are central to their rituals and their works. Beuys used Darwinian evolution as a metaphor for the development of the spirit. I showed in chapter four, how Beuys also used animals repetitively in his work as a metaphor for transformation and a channel to a different state of consciousness.

The Kunda women also use animal imagery in their rituals. Locally, some animals are considered a potent or even dangerous force emanating from the bush, such as the leopard. The artists in both the examples converge in the ideas of animals as vehicles of transformation to different levels of consciousness or perception. Zubieta (2013: 57) also recognises the importance of animals for the girl initiates.

The apparent supernatural force inherent in some animals cause us to consider the powerful passion of the sublime. Speaking about Beuys, Eliade (cited in Tisdall (1979: 89) said:

> From the most distant times animals have been conceived either as psychopomps that accompany the soul into the beyond, or as the dead person's new form. Whether it is the 'ancestor' or the 'initiatory master,' the animal symbolises a real and direct connection with the beyond. In a considerable number of myths and legends all over the world the hero is carried into the beyond by an animal … among the Siberians and Altainans they can appear in the form of bears, wolves, stags, hares and all kinds of birds.

10. Hybridity and articulation

To continue Said's (2005) musical metaphor, the keynotes of in this thesis, the 'plainsong', consists among other themes, of hybridity and articulation. I have argued that there is no such thing as 'authenticity' or pure cultural types or products according to Clifford's (2003) model of a 'pure product' and I have demonstrated this in in each example.

By setting up European and African art together I aim to extend the reading of each to show new aspects that we could not have seen before were they examined singly. In this way I have found significant material in the consonances that have emerged; the consonants are engaging, and I am seeking a way of putting them together.

Yet the Kunda women and Beuys have absorbed and grafted disparate pieces into their practices until there is no possibility of a 'pure' product. We saw that the *chisungu* as a tradition is both transformative and forward-looking. It has grafted elements onto itself that make up parts of its evolutionary historical identity, such as the artefact from the Atlantic, worn around the neck of a *nanga* or ritual healer from land-locked Zambia*,* known as the *mpande,* which was once used as a Portuguese trading currency. Added to this mix is the fact that Kunda women's images were

possibly appropriated from the hunter-gatherer Batwa peoples (Zubieta, 2013). The images that have evolved from the white spread-eagled rock paintings demonstrated that this traditional practice never stands still and that differing social concerns over many years have reshaped their current images. The introduction of an AIDS component into the *chisungu* teachings demonstrates how vigorous the movement of this traditional ritual practice is in its ability to absorb current issues of modern day life. In a similar fashion, Beuys absorbed areas of other world views into his work, such as the Siberia and Crimean nomads, Irish mythology, to name a few.

11. Political power and hybridity

I conclude from both Clifford's (2003) and Said's (2005) theses that when a dominant authority insists on emphasising cultural purity this indicates a desire to control it more easily. It is after all easier to control the behaviour of a group whose characteristics are apparently known as can be seen from the South African example of apartheid policies of emphasis on different 'tribes' as separate. But articulation as Clifford (2003) describes it is the political connecting and disconnecting, the hooking and unhooking of elements. This is 'also a process of disconnection, through actively sustained antagonisms' (Clifford, 2003: 45). 'Even a time-honoured kinship system will look more like a set of political alliances than something with the naturalness of an organic body' (Clifford, 2003: 47). An immobile society seems predictable and unlikely to change their set of political alliances. As a consequence, this instability and refusal of the artists to fit into a 'pure' static organisation, whether it is political or academic, is evidence that articulation itself contains elements of power. We saw that happen in chapter four with Beuys' disruptive stance at the University where his art teaching did not fit into the academic 'norm'. We also saw in chapter four how the Kunda women had used the borrowed cow as an addition to 'traditional' *chisungu* practices, thereby subverting the patriarchal power of the Ngoni men and also demonstrating the open-ended dynamic nature of the traditional coming-of-age ceremony. In each case the control of the work lay with the artists.

Each example shows that knowledge is power, whichever way it is managed. It

follows that because the art and ritual are inseparable from knowledge, that art is also a powerful product of resistance.

12. Conclusion

There is hybridity within both the Beuys and the Kunda examples that are internal to each of these aspects that have been borrowed. This has enabled a lively interweaving of ideas which enhanced the creativity of the art and ritual practices of each case, translating it into something new and demonstrating the vibrant creative nature of impure products. The detailed examination of these examples has clearly revealed that in each case it was the hybridity and impurity itself that became a source of power and agency for the performers of art and ritual.

This power and creativity is derived through the swapping, borrowing and accumulating of elements from each other, or in some cases resisting hegemonic control through subtle ritualistic/artistic acts. In accordance with a decolonising discourse I conclude that because one cannot consider either ritual or art in static isolation, this articulation is not to be derided but celebrated.

The resounding significance of these acts of power and agency is that it becomes possible to subvert binaries such as self/other, subject/object, which have plagued ethnographic research in colonial contexts.

I have problematised the fact that as a white woman living in an African context I invite criticism by invoking or writing about another culture. While I understand that historically the representation of other people's histories implies a lack of agency and an imposition of power, I also posit that for art and culture to flourish, there is a never-ending borrowing from each other. This leads to a deeper understanding of each other which has not only been demonstrated in the text but also in these examples that show an alternative way of viewing what was often previously thought of as pure art and culture.

The examples chosen proved that the most effective means of accruing power and agency is through hybridity and the control of knowledge, thereby disrupting the status quo of so called fixed tradition and pure art and culture.

The key, of course, is that the 'borrowing' does not always happen in a power-neutral context. In other words, the history of cultural anthropology is riddled with cases whereby sensitive epistemological material has been decontextualised, trivialised and appropriated, with the artist/researcher/anthropologist coming from a powerful hegemonic position, and the research 'subjects' devoid of agency, voice or control. My attempt here was to portray two examples in which the agency rests with the cultural producers rather than the other way around. I realise that this should be carried out with permission, respect, congruence and harmony.

I also concluded that a contrapuntal reading of these two epistemological cases is a creative process in itself, that enriches the understanding of each, because in order for a discipline not to become static, an equal flow and a criss-crossing of new ideas is necessary from one category to the next. I underscore Clifford (2003) and Said's (2005) contentions that crossovers and movements of ideas are not simply the transporting of an object from here to there but that it is always a matter of translation. Through the process of translation what is brought across from one context to the next is made new and takes on unexpected dimensions, becoming translated into something vigorous and fresh. We saw this happening internally with Beuys' new use of animals and their spiritual meanings, and also from the women in Luangwa with their hybridised cow, now a statement of their own strength under the protective cover of anonymity and multiple authors. In addition to this, the contrapuntal reading has enriched our understanding of each of these internally articulated examples also by disrupting the static boundaries of art and 'culture'. In the next chapter I move on to a discussion of how these hybrid ways of seeing have informed my own artwork.

CHAPTER SIX

6. Introduction

The source of my own work spans influences from different cultural experiences including those painted by artists on rock surfaces in times gone by. My own practice over the years has been to transcribe and rescore these images in an attempt to understand and integrate them, internalising the images and concepts in an ongoing process towards a deeper insight.

6.1 Creative praxis

I am negotiating two different worldviews that are both part of my life experience. The first is the subject of art history and its images which I studied, and which has fuelled much of my understanding of art. The second are the concepts and philosophies around the images which I learnt from my long association with Kunda women having grown up in rural Zambia. I therefore straddle these two worlds and value systems that in some ways comprise my view and in others gives me the advantage of a perspective of hybrid clarity.

For this reason, I have been making a body of work from a position of what I consider to be articulated social and cultural identity, connected to issues of transformation and change. The origin of my work is located in both the images of the Kunda women's initiation rituals, *chisungu*, in the Luangwa valley where I live, that are linked visually and conceptually to the rock paintings at Kalemba, Eastern province Zambia, and to the drawings and concepts of Joseph Beuys, a German performance artist practicing in the mid-twentieth century, whose work I came across along with African art and performance in my art historical studies as a student far from the Luangwa valley at the University in a course in the late 1990s.



Figure 73: Cypher[6] detail - watercolour on canvas 160 x 160 cm. Pam Guhrs 2017.

I aim to make work that is non-precious, seemingly unfinished, fresh but accurate, which raises issues of transience, impermanence and transformation. My concern is how to integrate accuracy and correctness of sign[7] to a state of being. The unfinished nature of the work is concerned with fore-fronting process and with coming to terms with a different kind of aesthetic. It is similar to the learning of an alphabet, but the incomplete, on-going quality of the product is not the point; the resulting accuracy is encased in a freedom, while at the same time the use of grids is a western tool that ensures accurate transposition yet questions the notions of control and spontaneity.



Figure 74: Predator - watercolour on canvas 160 x 190 cm. Pam Guhrs 2017.

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[6] A cipher is an abstracted visual code sometimes cryptic by nature.

[7] Here a sign defines the presence of an animals or mindset – a state of being. An image repeated much as a song is resung, both as a didactic tool but also a celebration of the present and the constant reinterpretation of the world and its meaning or sign.

The early drawings of Joseph Beuys always held a fascination for me. They were as enigmatic as the rock paintings and seemed as mysterious. Their apparent incompleteness, their ambiguity of identity, their directness and urgency of execution and their focus on leaving traces of the direct process of their making were fascinating to me and were to be a driving force in the making of my own work.

In the pictures below, we see some of Beuys' early drawings and watercolours.





Figure 75: Left - Joseph Beuys. Early works on paper.

Figure 76: Right - Joseph Beuys. Parallel Processes.





Figure 77: Left - Joseph Beuys. Early works on paper 1954.

Figure 78: Right - Joseph Beuys. Artistes (Cascade) - circa 1954.



Figure 79: Left - Joseph Beuys. Horse 1957.

Figure 80: Right - Joseph Beuys. Actresses 1958.

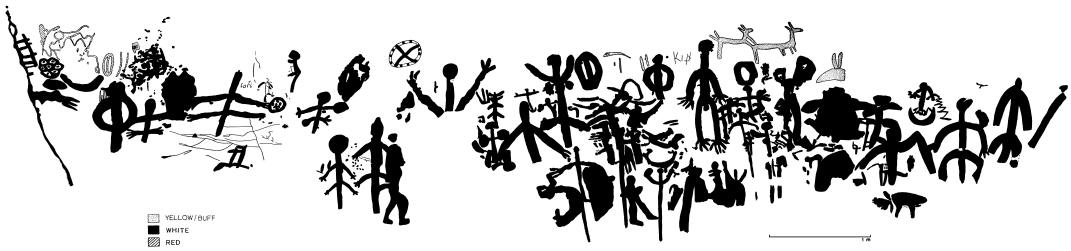


Figure 81: Kalemba rock art (Phillipson, 1976).



Figure 82: Images from Kalemba rock art site - details.



Figure 83: Kalemba rock paintings Eastern Zambia. Photo Pam Guhrs 2006.

6.2 The Journey to Kalemba

My access to Kalemba rock art in a specialist publication led me to recognise many symbols[8] used by Kunda women in their ritual drawings during the ceremonies. On sharing these images[9] with the initiation women they too recognised the signs still in use in their ritual practices and felt an urgency to see these distant rock paintings that they seemed connected to in deep time.

The *chisungu* women mentors and I were keen to see the rock art first hand and, so we organised the expedition to Kalemba.

Below are notes from my research journal:

> Pam: Now you have seen the photographs of the old drawings on the rocks at Kalemba and Chaingo from the book I showed you (Phillipson's *Pre-History of Eastern Zambia*) and we have recognised many, perhaps it would be good for us to travel there to see the actual drawings on the rocks with our own eyes. I could ask Jason if he will take us in his vehicle. It will take two or

[8] I define a symbol as a 'thing' that stands for something else.

[9] An image here means a visual representation of an external form.

three days.

Eneria: Yes. We need to see those drawings if they are really there. I have seen the *Kanga Jowe* and the *Chaingo* from the book – there are many *vilengo* in the book that unlock the ancestral meanings (*ku masula malango wa mkolo*). I have an uncle in Chipata – we can all sleep at his house overnight and then travel the next day.

Pam: OK, then if we go on to Chaingo we can take our blankets and pots and sleep somewhere in the bush or at a village.

We left early one morning, slept overnight in the small town of Chipata, and the next day we finally arrived at the village near where the paintings are situated. After our meeting with the headman of Kalemba he led us along the winding path through the forest, climbing up the foothills towards the rocks in the distance that make up the site.



Figure 84: Walking through the miombo forest to the rock art. Photo Jason Alfonsi 2006.



Figure 85: Kalemba rock in the distance. Photo Pam Guhrs 2006.



Figure 86: Rock drawings at Kalemba. Photo Jason Alfonsi 2006.



Figure 87: Kalemba – rock at the entrance to the site. Photo Pam Guhrs 2006.

Bushes and foliage heavily guarded the entrance to the shelter and before we entered the headman sat us down on a large rock and formally asked us why we wanted to see the paintings.

The Kunda women initiation teachers reiterated the fact that for all of us, all the women visitors present, including myself, making images was our job. They explained that they, the *nangas,* made images for a living and I made drawings that I sold. 'Kalemba', the name of the site, after all, means 'drawing' and we made it clear that it was necessary to see them, because they related to our past or present and livelihood and because it had the potential to affect all of our work.

Headman Kalemba was perfectly satisfied with our explanation. He had, as he led us along the path, explained that these images were made by bushmen and that he was there in the 1970s when Phillipson and the Cambridge archaeological team had examined them. He was astounded therefore when the women all stood in front of each image explaining its meaning with rhythmic clapping, songs and dances. Each image, a cypher, relates to a teaching, a philosophy, a mime and a song. Afterwards

we all knelt down and joined hands while they prayed in gratitude to Mlungu (or the great Creator) for the experience of seeing these inherited images of their ancestors.

6.3 Appropriation or cultural exchange?

The issue of transformation has surfaced in my own practice as the process of making the work was part of my own recovery from life's crises. Just as the young initiates go through various phases of separation, suffering and regeneration, and Beuys' crash-injury-recovery theme pervaded his oeuvre, so my own experience of making the art has provided something of a ritual space for my own fragmentation and coming together and I have been deeply transformed by the process. The 'journey to Kalemba' has had a profound influence on my work, and the images have become internalised both as source material and, in a sense, part of my inherited identity as an outsider/insider.



Figure 88: Standing from left to right: Headman Chitobwa of Kalemba, Elina Phiri, Tikenkenki Ngoma, Helen chulu, two assistenace of Headman Chitobwa. Seated from left to right: Pam Gurhs and Everina Njobvu. Photo Jason Alfonsi 2006.



Figure 89: From left to right: Eneria Njobvu, Headman Chitobwa of Kalemba, Elina Phiri, Everina Njobvu, Helen Chulu, Tikenkenji Ngoma. Photo Pam Guhrs 2006.



Figure 90: Singing and clapping our way through the rock images. Photo Jason Alfonsi 2006.



Figure 91: Pam Guhrs. Indian ink on paper. Origins Centre 2008.

I deliberately took these rock paintings as an act of appropriation and I understand fully that it opens me to criticism. I transcribed these rock paintings as one would in the past have copied a musical as in a musical score by hand. A score that would enable one to replay a Mozart piano piece for instance, bringing back to life, reinterpreting the signs into a living form, interpretation or misinterpretation, such as a musical score that is played through time, losing all sense of authorship in its antiquity, I absorbed and reinterpreted the ancient marks on the rocks onto paper. Using Indian ink and a large brush I repeated these over and over again on long stretches of paper.

Apart from the content of the images themselves, the execution of them has diverged from the original by becoming, with repetition, an almost hypnotic process where subject and object merges, Also, because of my immersion in the rituals and because of my own hybridity, it is a challenge for me to try to understand and internalise another visual language; to learn another way of being in the world; evocative perhaps of what Homi Bhabha (cited in Kalua, 2009) means with his 'Third Space'. This is a space inherently critical of essentialist positions of identity, but one where Kalua

(2009:22–23) likened postcolonial African identity to Victor Turner's (1969) concept of liminality; a dynamic fluidity of identity. This indicates an in between state that allows new meanings to emerge and where cultural representations are not fixed (Rutherford, 1990: 211).

Learning the images of the rock art through repetition was like visually replaying a musical score from the caves – the practice was like learning a piece of music, internalising it from that continuum and the continuum of the past, rerecording, remaking of images as symbolic, affective acts transforming consciousness and effecting group coherence through a shared language of cyphers.



Figure 92: Wall painting in progress at Origins Centre Johannesburg 2008.

Painting on a gallery wall in Origins Centre, I transcribed the complexities of images and cyphers on a distant cave wall. As I now displaced and executed on a smooth plastered wall the question arose whether it was a wall-scape or closer to a form of urban graffiti.

In my somewhat complicated position, amalgamating two worlds, two cultures, and attempting to understand the nature of this symbolic procedure, I am, of course, obliged to ask myself some uncomfortable questions: am I merely copying these cave

paintings; to what extent am I able to understand the magical transformative process of signs and ideograms and unconscious gestures; am I looking at it or am I part of it; and, is the act of integrating the images in my art practice or can I be accused of mere appropriation? These are the questions I have had to countenance and to examine in this ambivalent process.

Appropriating and receiving was not just a one-way process. We all benefited from this visit. The trust displayed on both sides led to the mutual sharing of the cave, the women's' pleasure and deep recognition was as significant for them as it was for me, and I was helping the women to research their heritage just as they were helping me to research my identity. Going to see the rock art precipitated a reciprocal process of shared art making in the form of an art exchange.

Being interested in each other's work, Eneria Njobvu and I decided to do an exchange of our art. After seeing the rock art images in the book, and instructing me to document her interpretations of them on video, she was keen to show me the drawings that she remembered learning as a young girl. It was obvious that they would have historical significance because of the current absence of more permanent drawings due to the absence of cave walls in the Luangwa valley, as in its place instead there lay a deep alluvial plane of clay.

We started by preparing appropriate grounds, appropriate to each of our 'art' practices. While I offered to provide the canvas for her drawings she became my co-creator when she offered to make the base as a large panel out of clay for an *in-situ* sand drawing at her village that I proposed to make.

We prepared each other's supports – for Eneria I had brought a typical western art support – a roll of canvas that I primed with an earth wash of the area, wood glue and water mix, while she prepared the support for me with the special clay *chilengo* according to tradition.

She drew the images she remembered from her own *chisungu* many years ago with her special red oxide supplemented with some of my acrylic paint when she ran out. I

used fixative to preserve her images.



Figure 93: The initiation group headed by Eneria Njobvu painted this canvas in 1999 of remembered drawings taught by her mother. Combretum mberbe ash and red oxide on a canvas base primed with earth of the area. Coll. Origins Museum.

Below are notes from my journal:

> *Eneria*: I remember when I was a young girl doing my *chisungu* that I learnt the drawings from my mother. In those days drawings were mainly used and only a few clay *vilengo* for *mkati* (inside the house). I would like to show you how we did the drawings to see if they are like the ones from the book.
> *Pam*: Yes please, I think we would all be interested to see those.
> Eneria: I will do them in two phases (*nthowi awiri*) between the two initiations (*visungu)* of Tamara and Miranda. (*tidza chita pakati pa visungu ya Milanda na* Tamara*)*. We can do them at your house.
> *Pam*: OK then I will prepare an *mtenji* (or canvas) for you to do your drawings on.
> *Eneria*: I will bring the *lito wa swera.* (her special red oxide).
> We discuss the colours needed and I said I would supply white and black acrylic paint if she brings her red.
> *Me*: Yes, my house has a bigger floor inside and is more private. I can keep it safely, so no one can see it. We can all come to my house and do it there.
> *Eneria*: That's a good plan. Don't forget to keep it covered and hide it

underneath your bed at all times so no Kunda man can see.

Pam: I thought that if you do your work (*nchito*) at my house perhaps I could do one of my works at yours. I could do one of my drawings using different coloured sand such as the *lito wa sweta wa Kapani* (the red Kapani dirst) and perhaps some yellow oxide from Myson's store.

Eneria: Yes, Pamu we would like to see that. We women will help by preparing the base overnight before you come.

Pam: Thank you very much, that will be very helpful.

Eneria and the other women discuss this for a while.

Eneria instructs them in the following way that, 'although it will be similar to a *chilengo* by using the same material and techniques, yet it is NOT a *chilengo* – it is different. Pamu you will see how it will look – it will be a very good place to do your drawing'

I arrived at her house on the day I was to do the sand drawing with the different coloured earths: normal brown clay dried and crushed, the red Kapani 'lito' from our camp and a bag of yellow oxide. She had surprised me by not only having the clay base ready, but she had also obtained and crushed charcoal and white ash powder for me.

I proposed to work with the image of a hyena, which has appeared in my work over the years and which is considered a powerful image of transformation – an animal that is believed to move between two worlds – the physical, material world and the ancestral realm. It can however be associated with death, and in case it was construed as negative I suggested that if this was so, I would change it. Eneria, however was happy with the hyena and after laying the panels of coloured earth on to its *vilengo* base, I drew the hyena in black charcoal dust and white crushed ash.

Ironically while I wanted the image to be transient, Eneria was keen to try to preserve it as 'decor' in her yard. Eventually it all blew away in the wind.



Figure 94: Pam Guhrs. Hyena head (detail) 2004. Yellow oxide, crushed charcoal, lime and combretum mberbe ash.



Figure 95: Pam Guhrs in situ sand panel drawing at Chivimba village. Photo Miranda Guhrs 2004.



Figure 96: Pam Guhrs in situ sand panel drawing at Chivimba village, Chief Mkhanya, Headwoman Eneria Njobvu. Earth of the area, yellow oxide, crushed charcoal lime and combretum mberbe ash on clay panel. Photo Miranda Guhrs 2004.



Figure 97: Eneria sifting sand for my sand drawing 2004.



Figure 98: Pam Guhrs in situ sand panel drawing at Chivimba village. Photo Miranda Guhrs 2004.





Figure 99: Left - Eneria sifting the red 'lito' for my sand drawing. Photo Miranda Guhrs 2004.

Figure 100: Right - Eneria making a crushed charcoal mix for my sand drawing. Photo Miranda Guhrs 2004.

7. Hybridity and identity

> Art is not there to provide knowledge in a direct way ... [instead]... it produces deepened perceptions of experience… art is not there to be simply understood, or we would have no need of art (Beuys cited in Rekow, 1999: 2).

The visual language of these extensive series of ideograms[10] has provided me with an enigmatic matrix of signs from which to engage the perpetual 'anxious questioning' of an artist (Berggruen and Hollein, 2006: 82), and to challenge the publicly orientated works that are shown in galleries and are part of a very different economy. By taking away the premise of the importance of the object and by focusing on and making ephemeral work, I have explored a shift in my own perceptions from seeing art as a product to that of a significant process.

Yet, continuing to invoke the idea of a musical score, I consider that instead of mere mimicry, the process of reworking the images into a personal calligraphy means that I have come to terms with a different kind of aesthetic, or in fact I am forging my own aesthetic, in translation, through a repetitive practice of re-enactment and inflection of other practices and products of making.



Figure 101: Pam Guhrs. Repetitive Kalemba rock images. Ink on paper 2008.

[10] An ideogram is an abstracted sign of a 'thing' or idea.

The process of internalising these images through continuous and repetitive engagement similar to learning one's times table, has allowed them, for me, to become part of a natural process of recall, a way of thinking, transposing, enabling the re-recording of images in new syntaxes, that lead simultaneously to both new insight and to perplexity.

In this I can relate to the words of Rothko when he wrote in a letter to Barnett Newman in 1945:

> '… I have assumed for myself the problem of further concretizing my symbols, which give me many headaches but make the work rather exhilarating. Unfortunately we can't think these things out with finality, but must endure a series of stumblings towards a clearer issue (Miguil, 2006: 47).

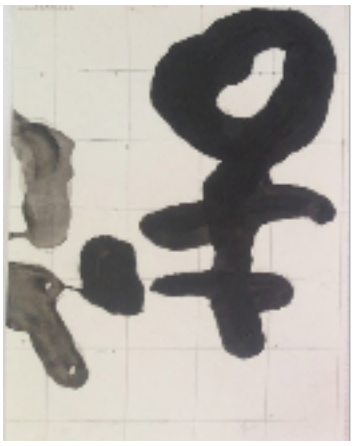




Figure 102: Left - Pam Guhrs. Cypher study. Indian ink on paper. 29.5 x 21 cm.

Figure 103: Right - Pam Guhrs. Cypher study. Indian ink on paper. 29.5 x 21 cm.

Through my years of living straddling two worlds, this method of working highlighted some of the differences between western and indigenous African art. Western art has valued originality while African art exists as a part of a communal transformative and instructive process. In the western setting repetition in art is used a means to merely reproduce works perceived as a commodity, but in African art repetition is instructive and informative, a live equivalent to an oral tradition where the story is remembered and kept alive by the retelling. My life and art seem to exist

in a state of suspension between these two contexts as my work is situated in western art history but my life's experience and the context within which I have grown up in and live has altered my perception and relationship to art history, as well as to broader issues around cultural production.



Figure 104: Pam Guhrs. Cypher. Tar and lime on canvas 2012. 16 x 112 cm.



Figure 105: Pam Guhrs. Predator. Watercolour on canvas 2017. 160 x 200 cm.

Beuys worked with the similar ideas around the performative, but there is a

conundrum in this way of working in the west where a visual residue is highly valued and retained. Thus, Beuys placed residual objects from his actions and performances into vitrines, but as I have discussed in Chapter four the objects were really only mnemonic evidence of an event or 'action' – a form of anthropological evidence. Essentially for Beuys the concept was still more important than the object, his ideas regarding social transformation being paramount. The transient nature of his blackboard drawings, a product of his didactic performances, are traces of his transmitted thought processes. The scribbled phrases, words and lines in chalk, preserved with sprayed fixative, transform the residue of performances into 'high' art.



Figure 106: Joseph Beuys blackboard drawings. Like a field mouse: Joseph Beuys - Directional Forces 1977.

After encountering the rock art in situ, I wanted in my drawings, to make the most of the opportunity to try to rearticulate the original experience of seeing these figures and marks on the rock face, and so I felt the need not for mere representation in my drawings but rather to find a vehicle for channelling the sensations and emotions they evoked. I am attempting to rephrase the original experience of looking at these

images, not through illustration or depiction, but with the aim to release myself from the strictures and authority of easel painting. Moving away from the idea of originality and the notion of the singularity of genius in art, rather to yield to a process that is part of the continuum of becoming part of something that is beyond self. Similarly, Beuys was attracted to the idea of a fluid process rather than that of a finished product. My works were the product of a mental and manual progression, made using the fluidity of watercolour, its unrestrained nature a perfect medium to capture this fleeting and febrile notion. These works therefore focus not on the 'design' or originality, but engage more directly with concepts and a state of being. In consciously trying to work against the notions of slickness and 'finish' associated with a product in the commercial sense, its directness and spontaneity embraces a language of awkwardness; of creating an unconscious gesture rather than a contrived artwork.

I undertook a series of enigmatic images related to the same process but in this case executed in tar and lime on primed board or canvas. Initially in a traditional western art school mode, with as much accuracy as possible, I drew the subject in a figurative manner repetitively many times over on paper with ink. When the repetition enabled an embedded familiarity, leading to almost cellular bodily knowledge of the subject, it enabled me to make the drawing with closed eyes releasing the unconscious gesture or the underlying emotive aspects embedded in the form.



Figure 107: Pam Guhrs. A proverb – ' Don't Dip in the Pot' - tar and lime on canvas 2014.

There is a meditative quality to making marks in this way, the fluidity, the sparseness of line, and the distilled ability to describe detail with great economy is to be seen in some Palaeolithic rock art, images drawn from memory in the depths of the caves on uneven rock surfaces. Beuys' early drawings contain exactly this quality. (His wrapped objects, such as the piano swathed in felt, signified a metaphorical silence, a meditative inner silence). But his works painted with brush on smooth paper re-enact the great shamanistic act of the magic of reproducing the image and spirit of the animal in a powerfully ritualised and didactic space underground.



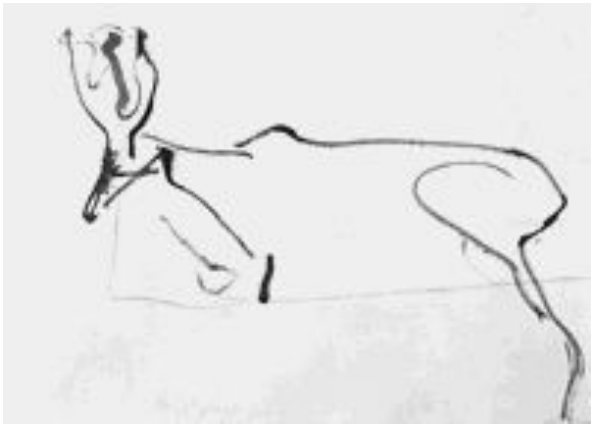


Figure 108: Left - Bison. Chauvet Cave France approx. 570 bp.

Figure 109: Right - Joseph Beuys. Drawing 1960.





Figure 110: Left - Pam Guhrs. Hyena. Ink on paper 2012.

Figure 111: Right - Pam Guhrs. Hyena study. Ink on paper 2012

In my mind-set I have placed the exploration of Beuys' work alongside the Kunda women's images in this contrapuntal quest for clarity about my own. In critical self-

reflection I am forced to ask myself the vexing question of how I am, through this process, inserted into aspects of Kunda cultural practices and between the tradition of Beuys, finding the answer in the fact that my work too is not about originality but rather the continuation of knowledge and concepts in a learned language of signs and cyphers. Beuys' entire oeuvre functioned as a language where each component had a meaning, meanings that were learnt through reiteration and repeated use. 'There is no one signature work to which a viewer can turn for a concise presentation of all Beuys' ideas: understanding comes gradually, like mastery of any language' . She goes on to point out that 'he seems to be creating a new language - aimed to bring about a change in cultural identity' (Rothfuss, 2001:52). His early drawings resemble unconscious flowing of form, spontaneous images of animals or of human like presences.



Figure 112: Left - Joseph Beuys. Untitled (Housewife). Pencil and iron chloride on paper 1952.

Figure 113: Right - Joseph Beuys. Early drawing, watercolour.

After the war Beuys surprisingly does not directly engage the elephant in the room – the legacy of Nazism – but attempts to understand a deeper underlying sense of the psyche of the nation by looking backwards in deep time at cultures that pre-existed and informed self and deeply held values prior to the difficult present. In a way this could also be seen as a decolonising process – a reversal of the dominant narrative by trying to understand how ritual as a mechanism operates – how an esoteric transformation of consciousness can undermine the dominant discourses of the day and effect individual transformation.

I too in my practice am looking into the past at myths that inform the present, a present where culture and race complicate the creative endeavours to understand both particular isolated cultural values as well as deeply shared thought patterns and indexical forms of behaviour. I claim that by recording my direct experience, it becomes not only about negotiating identity, being part of a community and shared experience of another culture, but it is also about challenging the structures of western academia that privilege systems of western knowledge. I engage with an alternative viewpoint for example, a different reading of animals and the natural world and their deep entwining in human society and consciousness.

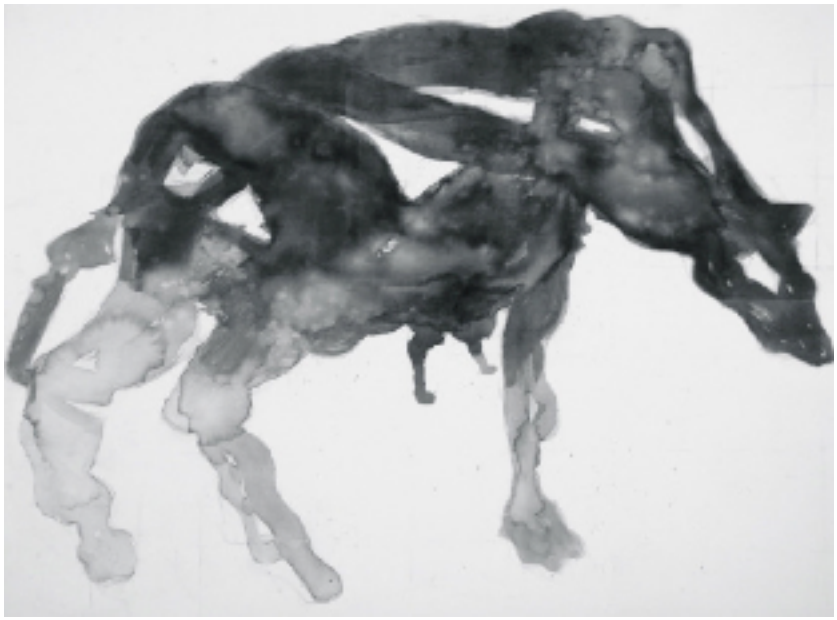


Figure 114: Pam Guhrs. Watercolour on canvas 160 x 200 cm 2017.

A common belief in Zambia is that the hyena moves between both worlds, between two realities and, as in Beuys' works, reminds us of 'contact between other life forms and of existence beyond the human one' (Tisdall, 1979:95).





Figure 115: Left - Joseph Beuys. Watercolour.

Figure 116: Right - Joseph Beuys. Early drawing.





Figure 117: Left - Pam Guhrs. Celebration figure. 112 x 190 cm. Watercolour on canvas 2017.

Figure 118: Centre - Joseph Beuys. Untitled 1958.

Figure 119: Right - Joseph Beuys. Witches spitting on fire 1959.

7.1 Materials

Earlier works were made of a dark black tar derived substance, and a white lime wash, both difficult to work with and control due to a level of intractability in the substance itself. I am currently using watercolour on canvas – an unstable and disobedient medium that is unpredictable and liable to change in mid flow. Spontaneity is essential to the more recent works and so is improvisation where the anticipated outcome is never dependable as planned but occurs by having to trust the process and the moment in which the image is made. Remnants of the charcoal grid and the use of chalk in my paintings echo Beuys' didactic materials used during his blackboard 'lectures'.




Figure 120: Left - Sun cypher. Tar and lime on canvas.

Figure 121: Right - Pam Guhrs. Detail ink on paper 160 x 160 cm. 2008–2014.

7.2 Visual language and iconography

I have developed ideograms that form a kind of lexicon, a visual syntax like sign language based on the iconic cyphers of the rock paintings. As I explained I have derived much of my subject matter from these abbreviated signs and worked backwards, firstly drawing the image in ways I was taught at art school, carefully observing, plotting and recreating the image as in the example of the *Kanya wenya* image (*The Gossip*), a sign denoting a woman sitting on a chair. I have drawn this image repeatedly with a tutored hand and then later with eyes closed, until the figure became simpler, more iconic, more like a cipher.



Figure 122: Pam Guhrs. Kanya Wenya (The Gossip). Tar and lime on board. 100 x 160 cm 2008.



Figure 123: Pam Guhrs studio studies. Kanya Wenya. The Gossip 2008.

When this stage of distillation and internalisation is reached, the original prototype is no longer needed as a referent and the work emerges as if accidental. Matisse, aware of this, was fond of quoting Toulouse Lautrec, 'At last I have forgotten how to draw' (Berggruen and Hollein 2006: 82). This process for me involved replication; painting and repainting. This procedure is only possible through repetition, the sureness of line; an outcome of measured labour-intensity finally manifesting this fluidity and visual authority. My inability to capture this fluidity with certainly on a large scale led me to use the western grid method, plotting the simplified cyphers onto my large formats. The final images may look spontaneous but are in fact scaffolded in a rigid system of replication. When one thinks of the breath-taking ancient engravings of animals on rocks that depict the essence of an animal in a simple line flowing with lithe impulsiveness, the simplicity is deceptive because the chiselling away necessary to gain those taut artless lines is borne of repetitive, calculated toil; there is a definite intensity of labour necessary to capture this apparent spontaneity. In my own practice I am aware of and working against the danger of slickness, of an over generalised skill which then threatens the particularity of the image and the felt intensity of the creative moment made visible. I am learning the value of the idiom of aspects of seeming ineptness, an attempt to grasp a level of feeling, an engaged authenticity rather than

mere visual superficiality.

The Kunda ideograms also form a language in an apparently closed system; each component has a special meaning. However, the meanings are, on closer inspection open-ended, and can even overlap. In a similar way I have embraced these meanings and reinterpreted them visually, duplicating the interpretation so that in the end it becomes a reinterpretation.

By learning these images through repetition my aim has not been to reproduce or to merely document them, but an attempt to integrate and understand and internalise them. Through the process of repetition, I have learnt, and they have become part of me, in the same way as one would learn a piece of music through repetition until it is absorbed and internalised in an almost cellular way through the whole body. To take the analogy a step further, as a conductor or musician chooses a piece of music to perform, replaying and interpreting it, the structure of the piece remains the same, but the process of interpretation has produced another dimension, a different slant on the original, being part of a living transmission.

I have learned much from the Kunda community and their ritual art making process, I have in turn hoped that my experience and the insights gained, have led, in some measure, to being of value to them. I think back particularly of taking the initiation teachers to see the ancient rendering of their familiar images on the rock painting sites. I think it did strengthen their understanding and appreciation of their own deep cultural lineage and the value of their work where we live. This was heightened as well by the fact that there were no persons living in the villages near the Kalemba rock art site who understood the meanings of the images; the women from this area (which is near the Malawi border), having been subjugated by the settlers – the patriarchal Ngoni colonisers, the married local women becoming thereby disempowered – losing their powerful transformation role in their society and their secret knowledge with it. Yet the Kunda women, who lived so far away in isolation, have retained their power and knowledge in their society and immediately recognised the significance of the signs and signifiers as part of a deep cultural knowledge of their own work.

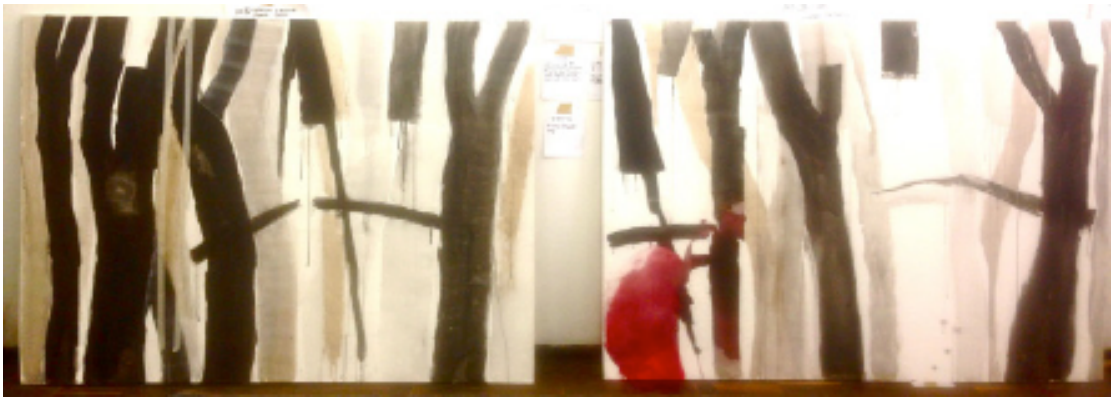


Figure 124: Pam Guhrs. Forest diptych watercolour on canvas 2017. 180 x 160 cm.

8. Hybridity and transformation - subject matter

The significant tales or stories I have been exposed to in my childhood include *Red Riding Hood* with her treacherous journey into the forest being advised to follow the path but on her way home coming across another route so as not to be ambushed. The story unfolds with her meeting the wolf dressed as her grandmother, almost being duped into being caught and eaten.

The Zambian White spread-eagled rock art and its stories are an archive of images used to instruct girls as to the dangers of the transformation process. Western cultural archives also deal with these same concerns as seen in folk tales from Northern Europe such as *Red Riding Hood*.

Due to my double cultural bias or ancestry I am referencing these two different archives and their stories in my work – rituals and insights connected to images around transformation. In both, the young female protagonist undergoes a transformation in a forest after an encounter with a dangerous predator.

The figure, the predator and the forest signify the dark night of the soul or the psychological chaos and danger inherent in the process of personal evolution and transformation.



Figure 125: Guhrs' studio - Forest Studies 2008.



Figure 126: Pam Guhrs. Studio studies - forest and cyphers 2008.

9. Animals

In many preliterate or rural societies where people are connected to the land;

> ... Boundaries between animal and human worlds are indistinct and fluid. This is a traditional African vision, but it is also something very modern that we are only beginning to understand in western countries. We are not the masters of nature – we are part of it (McCall Smith, xi: 1998).

Animals for Beuys' shamanistic paradigm represented a channel to other forms of awareness and this was often referred or alluded to in his work. Kunda beliefs about some animals are also linked to the supernatural. Although I have also always used animal iconography, in my particular body of work I too, am attempting to mine deep time to find another way of painting animals, one which is not purely 'optical' wildlife painting but one that is embodied and psychologically lodged in society.

Animals signify different things in various environments. In Luangwa River valley they are pervasive, and they are directly related to threat and danger, constantly jeopardising people's existence in everyday life. There is an interplay between bush and village, nature, spirit and the human world in Kunda thinking. Western ideas of nature show a distance to and an ambivalence about this aspect of danger. If we consider animals to be dangerous we put them behind bars or isolate them in parks and wilderness areas, containing them and shielding ourselves from being exposed to constant danger.

Having lived my adult life and raised my children among dangerous animals where people live precariously as part of the food chain, the same as every other Kunda person, I have a different view of animals to that of the safari tourist gaze. I understand the necessity to clear or burn the bush around one's home to avoid lion, hyena, wounded buffalo and other threats. From this perspective I am trying to paint the urgency and directness I feel in relation to an animal, rather than how the eye or camera traces the mere look of it. In these paintings I am putting down the unconscious impulse, a sign rather than trying to make a finished art product, not

simply to depict but to be suggestive in other ways.

The issue of transformation has surfaced within my own practice as the process of making the work became part of my own recovery from personal life crises. Just as the young initiates go through various phases of separation, suffering and regeneration, and Beuys' crash-injury-recovery theme pervaded his works, so my own experience of making the art has provided something of a ritual space for my own fragmentation and coming together and I have been deeply transformed by the process.

10. Self-reflexive process, transformation and hybridity

The intersection of art and ritual has for me created a new set of ideas from which to recreate and transform my own art through a self-reflexive process. Beuys engaged the ancient shamanistic practices of Eurasia to reformulate his own sense of self in an attempt to address his own society through a deeply self-reflexive process. My *Celebration Figures* carry a redemptive message, referring to the concept of rebirth and reflecting on the person she was before a transformation, into something different and new. It is a shift in consciousness, a symbolic death that mirrors the young initiates transformation as they are forced into self-reflection both through the reversal of societal norms during the rituals and within the enforced liminal phase of 'social death'. It is here where, before their transition, they hover on a threshold of self-realisation suspended between childhood, nothingness and adulthood.

I find myself at this unusual moment in the history of the continent and its people, finding a way through the problematic legacy of colonialism of attempting to find each other out of an act of interest, care and cooperation from both sides. I have grown up closer to the Kunda and Kunda art, yet my studies of history of art have enabled me to study 'european art', and Beuys as well as African art. I have only seen Beuys' work mainly in reproductions yet seen Kunda art first hand.

Personal, artistic and societal changes are deeply challenging but also extraordinarily

satisfying as we address the fluidity of perception and ways of constructively and creatively dealing with this change, rather than being confronted by being merely passive non-participants or victims of the vagaries of unfolding events.

11. Conclusion

I have constantly had to engage the inherited culture and race which is my legacy, in relation to the context in which I have grown up and become part of, by living amongst the Kunda, being part of each other's lives and being genuinely interested in each other's cultural and belief practices.

I have described the double legacy that I have chosen to negotiate as part of my art practice and as part of coming to terms with my identity and where and how I live. I identified with aspects to be found in both practices of Beuys and Kunda as they intersect at a point where each embraces the transformative aspects of art and ritual and where relative power lies in relation to special knowledge. In both instances I have examined how there is a synchronicity with the point where art and ritual intersect. But importantly, it has been about understanding the source of power itself, at a place at which each talk of and deals with *transformative* aspects of art and ritual, and where power lies in relation to special knowledge.

Transformation for Beuys was directed at both the individual and the whole of society. Transformation is also evident in all the Kunda rituals especially concerning the ontological shifts I have described amongst the novices. It applied as much to me psychologically using art as a ritual space for my own transformation and emphasising the innate process in my art in an attempt to shift from the western notion of art as merely a commodity product.

Hybridity applies as much to Beuys in his adaptation to a shamanistic culture, inherently not his own, as it does to the *chisungu* women with their use of the alien presence of the iconic Ngoni cow, a signifier of the alien practice of patriarchy of the Ngoni insurgents. Also, the more recent incorporation of AIDS awareness in the

teachings and rituals addressed the preeminent threat of this scourge. My own drawings that started off as figurative life drawings coming from an art history perspective, ended up bearing an unexpected resemblance to some of the rock art and to Beuys' early drawings.

In each example it was clear that both the Kunda women and Beuys, through different strategies, had control and agency around their special knowledge; both examples derived power through this control. The Kunda women through their access to knowledge of healing and medicine, and leading the girls though an important life passage, and Beuys through his dissemination of knowledge to students against the institutional authorities.

My own work too needs to be accessed through the accrued *knowledge* that surrounds it. My contrapuntal engagement with elements both from Beuys' practice and from my close proximity to the Kunda has led to a criss-crossing and syncopation of ideas and images incorporated into my practice. I have tried, by experience and study, to internalise these practices in an attempt to integrate the transformative aspects of both of these into my own work and life so as not to be merely seen to be replicating, superficially quotation or appropriating from these two apparently distant cultures.

I have attempted through my research to show that the control of knowledge in both art and ritual brought power to the practitioners who were the owners of that knowledge. I have also through the writings of Edward Said (2005) explored the potential of a contrapuntal reading of similar cultural practices in very different cultures.

This cross-cultural reading is fraught with contestation but in another context Clifford (2004) also remarked that in the translation from one context to another something new happens and surprising new dimensions may emerge through consonances and dissonances.

Finally, the act of translation is also an act of transcribing, of transmission, of internalisation and of re-engagement. It re-vivifies the past as it enters the present and is not necessarily an act of co-option but one of transmission and co-creation. So, no

culture is pure.

Pertinently in November 2016 Omar Berrada, director of the Centre for Literary translation in Marrakech, was included in an interview in Katia Kameli's show in London's Mosaic Rooms titled, *What Language Do You Speak Stranger*? He said that translation is not just pouring the wine from one bottle to another, but an act of 'breaking the bottle'. Berrada (2016) argues that translation has the potential to break down nation binaries. Kate Pleydell (2016) reminds us in her article 'Blurring national Boundaries', that colonisation has always tied nations together resulting in nothing that is created without foreign influence. Histories and cultures were exchanged to the extent that nothing remained 'pure'.

I am proposing one way of reading art/ritual products in a post-colonial decolonising context. We all carry or bring in 'foreign elements', and by this method of viewing the practices in conjunction with control of knowledge, I hope to have demonstrated that each practice is not only culturally 'impure', one enriched by the other, destabilised by its own practitioners but that the resulting hybridity thereby adds great value to each.

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APPENDICES: CHRONICLES OF KUNDA HISTORY

APPENDIX 1

Research Professor of African Languages at the University of Zambia, Lusaka, Dr. Kashoki has said that ChiKunda is a series of overlapping dialects from both the Bemba-Bisa and Nyanja-Chewa groups of languages (Strickland, personal communication, 1995). Depending on the location in a Kunda village Chikunda language is generally referred to as Nsenga-Kunda, Bisa-Kunda or Chewa-Kunda.

Strickland wrote that from the colonial point of view this articulated identity made itself apparent in the twentieth century by a confusion over the status of the people calling themselves Kunda – whether to classify them as an autonomous 'tribe' or not – led to periodic disappearance of the Kunda from official government records of administration (1995:32). He wrote that the Kunda themselves emphasise their articulated identity in the diversity in languages and downplay the homogenising of Kunda institutions and authority (1995:32). The shifting and dynamic identity of Kunda people further defy a homogenous definition. 'There is no universal knowledge of a common historical past', wrote Strickland, 'which could serve as a grounding reference for all Kunda order… Kunda history places diversity, not homogeneity at the centre of being Kunda (Strickland. 1995: 192).

APPENDIX 2

In 1995 Tamara had returned to University in South Africa but my second-born, Miranda, who also grew up in the area had been invited by many older women and was keen to be initiated as a Kunda. She speaks the vernacular fluently and had been encouraged by those women to do the initiation so that she may learn 'proper' Kunda respect. Her friends were all Kunda and there were two of them who were to be initiated with her. They had known each other well for a long time and it gave them all a comforting support system as the novitiates stay together during the activity. There is a camaraderie that persists over time. Her other support, her *nyamkungu*, was Elli Phiri, an old friend of mine who Miranda also knew well. She was the chaperone figure who was to look after her during the time of chisungu. Some months before the initiation the girls start giving little presents of things like soap or groundnuts, to petition the older woman for the role of their *nyamkungu*. The other girls also had solicited their personal *nyamkungus*.

I attended the first initiation with the other mothers after we had organised everything including getting in supplies and alerting the women drummers from the more distant villages. The *chisungu* was conducted at Elli Phiri's village, where she was headwoman, after the harvest with Eneria Njobvu in charge of the proceedings as the *nanga zolanga visungu*. It had taken a few weeks to organise and the rituals lasted three days. I spent the rest of the dry season and the next two attending many different female initiations and interviewing many teachers of the different groups who had taken me on to teach me *chisungu*. Tamara's initiation was done at Chivimba Village the next season with Eneria Njobvu, also in charge of the proceedings, with Elli Phiri as her *nyamkungu*. Miranda, as second-born, had to give her older sister a present because she jumped rank by getting initiated first.

After this I went around as Eneria's assistant, carrying her bags of paraphernalia and guarding the used clay reliefs before their disposal and generally being by her side during the tedious hours of the activities. For the next few years during the dry season after the harvesting we went to many chiefdoms to set up and perform the rituals for girls that were getting initiated. Eneria was a dedicated teacher and I was her pupil.

APPENDIX 3

Up until the eighteenth century the principle forces for change in Zambia were African in origin. One of the reasons given for this is that Zambia is remote from coasts (Roberts, 1976:100). Roberts describes the various migrations and the social and economic patterns, which had been created by the continual flow of people and ideas across the central African woodland. The country north of the middle Zambezi was unknown until then and gold, ivory and slaves, valued by the outside world, were previously untapped (Roberts, 1976:100).

APPENDIX 4

Many Kunda women speak of their disdain for the practice of lobola brought into the country by Ngoni settlers who migrated from a Zulu source in South Africa. The Kunda women consider this an insult to them. I have often heard the remark, 'we are not for sale', concerning the topic. Instead the men do bride service coming to the woman's village to help with the farming and also to be monitored by her family. This bride service often lasts for as long as some years when, if he is deemed worthy, he may take her away usually with the younger children while the older ones may stay behind with her family (mothers, grandmothers, sisters etc). Divorce is common and easy to obtain in which case she will return to her village where there is a support group of her own kin.

Professor Mpopa Mtonga (1996:63) describes matrilocality and bride service as meaning that men are there almost as guests in their village, 'on probation', working the land not for themselves or their children but for their *mpongozi* (mother in-law) and their wife's family as the women also claim ownership of the children – unlike Ngoni who say the men own the children. He in fact knows that he will 'be sent away empty-handed if he misbehaves' (Mtonga, 1996:63). Mtonga explains the *kasinja* mask of *gule wamkulu* that comes into the village in Malawi and sings insults and sexual jokes to the women is a form of attempted empowerment by the men. 'It is a protest', he wrote, 'by men who see themselves as nothing more than 'hired bulls'.

APPENDIX 5

Ngoni are a cattle-keeping branch of the Zulu nation from the south, who invaded them in 1935. Having fled from Shaka's Zulu kingdom in Natal around 1818, the Ngoni had crossed the Zambezi in 1835 (known because of an eclipse on that day) and made extensive raids along the way wherever they settled. The Kalonga Chief Undi was able to keep them at bay during the height of the powers of this empire, but in time the war-like Ngoni settled in the Chipata and Chadiza area of Eastern Province, Zambia under Chief Mpenzeni, where many of the white-daubed rock paintings are to be found. (Zuvieta, 2013). By around 1870, the Undi Empire was beginning to decline and the Ngoni warriors from their base on the eastern plateau plundered the Kunda, Bisa, Ambo, Chewa and Nsenga villages of the Luangwa Valley (Phillipson, 1976:10–13; Roberts, 1976:118–119). This is relevant to this thesis because the Ngoni were foreign settlers with a patriarchal culture (Zulu) who made raids into the Luangwa Valley – a matrilineal territory where powerful women in the community were painting initiation images unlike those women on the escarpment whose paintings on the rocks became defunct after they were colonised by the Ngoni.

The Ngoni still live on the eastern plateau over two hundred kilometres away, and are still patrilineal people who keep cattle, unlike the matrilineal Kunda in the Valley who could not keep cattle even if they wanted to, due to the prevalence of sleeping sickness. Even today, stories abound locally of the times when Ngoni raided the Valley with violence and aggression, capturing women and terrorising people. Even though a cow is used in some of the Ngoni girl's initiations I argue that the constant violent raids on the Kunda in the Valley by the Ngoni has affected the content of the chisungu in the Valley, resulting in a hybridised product – the clay cow with Ngoni undertones.