

Visual & Performing Arts of Africa

Fine Art Focus Area ~ Rhodes University



Photo: Ruth Simbao

Doung Anwar Jahangeer, *The other side with the Matebese family*, *Making Way* exhibition, 2012

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Photo: Simone Heymans

~ MFA exhibitions ~

Gerald Machona's MFA exhibition, *Vabvakure: people from far away*, took place in the Guy Butler Theatre at the Monument in April 2013. The sculptural work, *Ndiri Afronaut* (I am an Afronaut), references traditional *nyau* masquerade as well as the futuristic fantasy of Afrofuturism—a playful form of science fiction and fantasy.

In this exhibition, Machona critiques various imagined concepts: the fantasy of 'the Nation', the fantasy of 'the insider', and the fantasy of the 'traditional African' versus the 'futuristic European'.

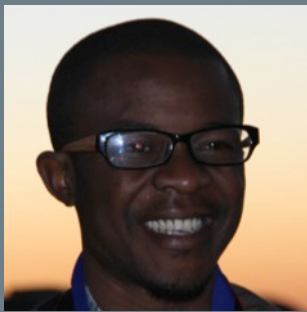
The work poignantly engages with constructs of 'strangeness', subtly challenging Afrophobic attitudes in South Africa.

Machona also participated in the *Making Way* exhibition curated by Ruth Simbao.

Rachel Baasch: *The eyes of the wall and other short stories*



Rachel Baasch's MFA exhibition, *The eyes of the wall and other short stories*, was an outdoor, site-specific exhibition that invited the viewer to walk through the space and to experience the interplay between interiority and exteriority. The installation was concerned with architectural framing and notions of disorientation and place. It was installed on the St. Peter's tennis court.



VISITORS: Zambian art critic, **Andrew Mulenga**, visited ViPAA during the 2012 National Arts Festival. Mulenga won the 2012 CNN African Journalist Award for Arts and Culture. In July **Bronwyn Law-Viljoen**, editor of *Art South Africa* and Fourthwall Books spoke to Fine Art students about writing and publishing in the visual arts.

Making Way exhibition 开路



Photo: Ruth Simbao

Athi Patra Ruga, Performance Obscura, 2012. Making Way exhibition, National Arts Festival

The *Making Way* exhibition, curated by **Ruth Simbao**, opened at the National Arts Festival in 2012 and travelled to Standard Bank Gallery in Johannesburg in 2013.

Making Way explored the ways in which contemporary artists based in South Africa and China engage with recent paths of movement, economic and cultural shifts, the rise of new regimes, and fluctuating

social and urban spaces.

Artists included Athi-Patra Ruga, Brent Mestre, Chen Qiulin, Dan Halter, Dotun Makun, Doung Anwar Jahangeer, Gerlad Machona, Hua Jiming, James Webb, Kudzanai Chiurai, Lebogang Rasethaba, Maleonn, Michael MacGarry, Qin Ga, Randolph Hartzenberg, Thenjiwe Nkosi, Vulindlela Nyoni, and Wu Junyong.



Top: Wu Junyong, *Flower of Chaos*, 2009
Animation video
Courtesy of the artist
and F2 Gallery, Beijing

Bottom: Qin Ga, *The
Miniature Long
March* series, 2002-
2005. Photographic
print. Courtesy of the
artist and Long March
Space, Beijing

One of the most critical geopolitical shifts of the 21st century has been the rise of China as an economic power, and its venture into the Global South—particularly the African continent.

Too often, however, the media sensationalises China-Africa relations, simplistically framing China as either Africa's new curse or as an economic savior to the continent. While revived China-Africa relations have piqued the interest of economists, little meaningful cultural understanding exists, and new forms of Sinophobia are hot on the heels of Afrophobia.

The *Making Way* exhibition showcased the work of five artists based in China: Wu Junyong, Qin Ga, Maleonn, Chen Qiulin and Hua Jiming.

In September 2012, Simbao presented “Artists and New Mobilities: Re-Visualising the China-Africa Debate” at the international conference *Chinese in Africa/Africans in China*, Monash University, Johannesburg.

For further information and exhibition reviews see www.makingway.co.za, Exhibition catalogues are available on request.

Exploring Local Space: Jahangeer's *CityWalks*

The **ViPAA Reading Group** has been exploring 'place', considering, among other issues, the ways that local spaces need to be reframed in an age of intense mobility, mutability and globalization.

Doung Anwar Jahangeer, artist and founder of **dala**, performs intensely local *CityWalks* all over the world. In 2012 he talked to Fine Art students about his performances and his activism work, and at the National Arts Festival he performed *The Other Side* as part of *Making Way*.

During these performances he leads his audience through the city by foot. As he walks, he talks in detail about space and place, and about physical pathways and their surrounds. Through animated conversation

and through his own bodily engagement with space, he focuses the participants' attention on the ground, encouraging them to engage with the road in a corporeal way.

Convinced that pathways reveal the characteristics of society—especially informal, alternative pathways etched by natural, irrepressible flows of pedestrian movement, Jahangeer questions the degree to which meaningful transformation has taken place in South Africa. He argues that even two decades after South Africa's democracy, spatial division remains charged.

Using *CityWalks* to deconstruct myths that perpetuate the fear of difference, Jahangeer reminds us that, "the rich don't walk, for they are afraid to".

Doung Anwar Jahangeer, Grahamstown *CityWalk*, *The Other Side*, 2012. Photos: Ruth Simbao



OTHER CURATORIAL ACTIVITIES

Visiting Lecturer, **Portia Malatjie**, has been involved in a number of curatorial projects, including the MTN New Contemporaries Award (Castle of Good Hope, Cape Town), Transference (Johannesburg Art Gallery), and <dis/play> (Goethe on Main and Ansteys Building, Johannesburg).

Lerato Bereng continues to work at Stevenson Johannesburg. In 2012 she also curated *Out of Thin Air* at Stevenson Cape Town. See <http://artycok.tv/lang/en-us/category/online-exhibitions/beze-stoppy-into-thin-air>.

SELECT ViPAA RESEARCH OUTPUTS, 2012

Nomusa Makhubu published in *Art South Africa* and *Critical Arts*. She also presented a paper at the AICA Congress at the University of Zurich.

Paul Cooper produced the solo exhibition AARDKLOP. He participated in two group exhibitions and presented papers in Helsinki and Pretoria.

Rachel Baasch published in *De Arte* and presented at the Rhodes University Postgraduate conference.

Ruth Simbao published in *African Arts* and *Kronos*, and produced a catalogue for *Making Way*. **Simone Heymans** wrote the Artists' Biographies for the catalogue.

Simone Heymans and **Samantha Munro** participated in *Discharge* at the 2012 National Arts Festival. **Munro** also produced animation for *Hambre Del Alma*, and **Heymans** participated in an internship at Warren Editions.

EXCITING PHD RESEARCH

There are currently five ViPAA PhD candidates working on dissertations.

Paul Cooper, who also Lectures at UNISA, is working on issues of place, site-specificity and public art.

Nomusa Makhubu is close to completing her dissertation on Nollywood and the fantastic subject.

Zama Nsele is writing about nostalgia in contemporary South African art and cultural villages.

Eben Lochner is exploring revived interests in Black Consciousness, and his work relates issues of Humanism to contemporary art and the local art scene.

Rachel Baasch is about to travel to Palestine. Her work compares representations of space and division in Palestine and South Africa.

LITTLE ADDITIONS: Within a period of four months, four babies came into the lives of three ViPAA team members. Welcome Kate and Jessica Cooper, Lerato Makhubu, and Quba Simbao.

Look out for interventions in your local 'non-places'



During the 2012 National Arts Festival, MFA student Simone Heymans utilised text to intervene into public places.

Exploring the relationship between 'place' and 'non-place', Heymans explores habitual transience by considering processes of orientation and disorientation.

This year Heymans will extend her project, targeting various liminal spaces that reveal the erosion of rooted notions of place. You might spot new works in aisles, waiting rooms, walkways or other spaces of flux and banality.

Current Team Members

Ruth Simbao ~ Project Leader & Associate Professor

Nomusa Makhubu ~ Lecturer & PhD candidate

Portia Malatjie ~ Temporary Lecturer

Paul Cooper ~ PhD candidate

Zama Nsele ~ PhD candidate

Eben Lochner ~ PhD candidate

Rachel Baasch ~ PhD candidate

Lerato Bereng ~ MFA student

Simone Heymans ~ MFA student

Ivy Kulundu-Gotz ~ MFA student

Kelebogile Marope ~ MFA student

Samantha Munro ~ MFA student

Lindi Lombard ~ MFA student

Russell Bruns ~ MFA student

Gerald Machona ~ Graduated member

Dotun Makun ~ Graduated member



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Thanks to the Rhodes Fine Art Department and Moira Japp, the Dean of Humanities and Karen Kouari, the Research Office and Jaine Roberts, Research Finance and Kim Nell, and the National Arts Festival and Ismail Mahomed.

ViPAA is funded by the Andrew Mellon Foundation. Its intellectual home is the Fine Art Department, Rhodes University. For more information see www.research-africa-arts.com and www.makingway.co.za.