

Weapons and Refuse as Media: The Potent Politics of Recycling in Contemporary Mozambican Urban Arts

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My research explores the local and global impact of contemporary Mozambican artists who use recycled materials in their art. The transformation of recycled materials into art by artists reflects a nexus of environmental, economic and culturally related issues that I analyze and are reflective of Mozambique's distinct history in Africa and how artists utilize recycled materials to create distinctly Mozambican art. My research focuses on determining how and why Mozambican artists use recycled materials to create their art and how the use of these materials relates to broader themes of recycling, visual culture and post-conflict resolution theory. I investigate artists who use natural and urban refuse, as well as artists involved with the Christian Council of Mozambique's program Transformação de Armas em Enxadas/Transforming Arms into Plowshares (TAE), who transform decommissioned weapons from the Mozambican civil war into assemblage art.

Mozambican artists' conceptual approach in specifically selecting recycled materials to create art is reflected in the words of artist Fiel dos Santos, "We have to start to re-find things, bring them back to use." My research demonstrates that dos Santos and his fellow artists are using recycled materials to both literally and figuratively recycle and deconstruct Mozambican history to create evocative and powerful art. The pre-dissertation research I completed this summer builds on a research trip I completed during the summer of 2008.

I returned to Maputo in summer 2009, with funding from a pre-dissertation research grant from CAS. I expanded my base of artists and strengthened my ties with religious and cultural organizations such as the Christian Council of Mozambique, as I began to observe and investigate the process of weapons retrieval and destruction instrumental to the development of art from arms by the TAE project. I also became more fully connected to the arts community of Maputo, receiving enthusiastic support



and access to the cultural landscape of Maputo from organizations such as the Museu Nacional de Arte and the República de Moçambique Ministério da Educação e Cultura/Departamento de Artes Visuais.

One important development I am very pleased to report this year is the building of Peace Monument, a nine-meter tall monument being constructed in Maputo. I have been able to observe the building of the monument by its creator, Cristovao Canhavato (Kester), a TAE artist. The monument is designed to serve as a symbolic place of

remembrance of the Mozambican civil war, constructed of decommissioned weapons - the imagery of which will include such symbols as a dove, a globe, and a map of Mozambique.

Amy Schwartzott is a doctoral student in the School of Art and Art History. She received a Center for African Studies summer pre-dissertation grant for this trip and is also a UF Graduate Alumni grant awardee.