

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

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My research investigates the local and global impact of contemporary Mozambican artists who use recycled materials as artistic media. The transformation of recycled materials into art by artists reflects a nexus of environmental, economic and culturally-related issues that reflect Mozambique's distinct history and how artists utilize recycled materials to create uniquely Mozambican art. My investigation focuses on determining how and why Mozambican artists use recycled materials to create their art and how the use of these materials relate 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 (CCM) program *Transformação de Armas em Enxadas/ Transforming Arms into Plowshares (TAE)*, who transform decommissioned weapons from the Mozambican civil war into assemblage art.

For the past two summers I have completed pre-dissertation research in Maputo, Mozambique's capital. Maputo is a compelling case study site because of its large number of artists using various recycled materials and its strong network of arts organizations. My previous research focused on broadening my network of contemporary Mozambican artists and strengthening ties with arts organizations and cultural groups to enrich my investigation. This year I have begun intensive fieldwork for my dissertation research and will spend 2010-2011 in Maputo continuing my research on contemporary Mozambican arts.

Shortly after my arrival in Maputo this year food riots took place. Popularly referred to as the "situação," these events underscored for me the importance of my research. The expressive arts of contemporary Mozambican artists reveal important social and political issues. Through my research, I hope to continue a dialogue with Mozambican artists regarding their important messages through their use of innovative media. Although I have been in Maputo only a short time, I am grateful to have been able to take part in a few important artistic events connected to my



research. I was asked to participate in the selection process of an exhibition of Mozambican artists for the United States Embassy that included several established and emerging Mozambican artists. I also helped in the organization of an exhibition produced by CCM's TAE project and artists' collective Nucleo de Arte.



This exhibition invited a wide range of artists from Nucleo de Arte to create art from weapons, and was organized in conjunction with the commemoration of Mozambican peace from the civil war on October

4th.

I also participated in a workshop at Nucleo de Arte organized by artists to teach children about making art from recycled materials. I feel fortunate to have been invited to take part in these varied and innovative cultural events and hope my investigation continues to develop as I explore the visual arts of Mozambique.

Amy Schwartzott is a doctoral candidate in the School of Art and Art History. She received a Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad award to complete her dissertation research in Mozambique in 2010-2011.