

Editorial

Mozambique: An art-world poised on the edges of art-worlds

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Colonial languages, especially English, French and Portuguese, persist as both bridges and dividers on the African continent. If we take the example of *Dak'Art*, Africa's premier biennial exhibition, we can see that there has been a gradual evolution from a principally Francophone project to one in which Anglophones are increasingly present. Lusophone Africans remain marginal in Dakar, notwithstanding recent gains made by Angola in the international sphere, notably at the Venice Biennale. We can also observe that Lusophone Africans remain as under-represented in Dakar as they are in the whole self-styled contemporary African art scene. To some extent this exclusion reflects another colonial legacy, the low investment of colonial Portugal in building infrastructure in her African territories. With much of the modern and contemporary African art narrative of the continent tied to the existence of influential academies, school and workshops, it is not surprising that historically the Lusophones have barely registered in most of the seminal survey exhibitions and studies.

And yet in several respects Lusophone Africa, particularly Mozambique, mirrors aspects of colonial art history in Africa. For instance, one can observe the seminal role played by art centres (especially Núcleo de Arte) and the significant contribution of informally inclined mentors and patrons (notably Pancho Guedes). Postcolonial patterns are also apparent, particularly the privileged relationship between the former metropole and colony. From the pioneering figure of Malangatana to the more recent example of Mudaulane, we can see that for several Mozambican artists Portugal has played a central role in defining their international careers (although it is important to recognize that other examples as divergent as the sculptor Gonçalo Mabunda and the photographer Mauro Pinto have managed to register success outside of the Lusophone frame). The prominence of the diaspora in the representation of art from Africa represents another global pattern evident in 'Mozambican art'. Examples range from early figures such as Bertina Lopes (who moved to Italy) to that of Angela Ferreira (who lives in Portugal), although this edition provides more evidence of movement south than north – as can be seen in the examples of contributors Rui Assubuji and Uno Pereira, as well as Lizette Chirime (interviewed in this edition by Danielle Becker), and not forgetting that Angela Ferreira studied and worked in South Africa. Rafael Mouzinho, in looking at international articulations for contemporary Mozambican art, pays special attention to the possibilities of exchanges with South Africa. That this is not always a one-way path is seen in the work of South African artist Simon Gush, who explores aspects of the historical and contemporary relations between South Africa and Mozambique.

Despite numerous examples of international exchanges, and in spite of affinities with other African contexts, language and history have been influential in placing Mozambique outside or on the margins of African art history (to say nothing of international art history). Early canonical studies of modern African art, where Guedes' influence (extended through influential members of his network, notably Ulli Beier), contributed to a perception that Mozambican

art was dominated, represented even, by a single artist, Malangatana, Malangatana's towering status has been something of a mixed blessing for Mozambican artists, especially younger generations. As much as he opened doors, his hegemonic position has made it necessary for a new generation of artists to signal to the world that there is much more to Mozambican art.

Indeed, to some extent a vast generational gulf has emerged. At one end, this chasm is exemplified by painters and sculptors who were active in the Cold War years, a period that spans both the anti/colonial and post-independence periods. On the other end we have younger, conceptually oriented artists, including but not limited to the collective Muvart, who took on the mantle to promote 'contemporary art' in and from Mozambique. While official narratives have tended to centre on the 'rupture' between colonialism and independence, it is really the artists that emerged after the National Peace Accord in 1992 (itself a consequence of the end of the Cold War) that inherited dramatically new conditions for a seismic shift in the visual arts. Alda Costa has assumed the daunting responsibility of locating the temporal range of Mozambican visual arts, with all of its ideological and aesthetic diversity, and positioning Mozambican art within a coherent national and global frame. Costa's comprehensive overview in this edition is eclipsed by her own seminal academic study of Mozambican art, now available as a monograph, and calling for translation from Portuguese in order to broaden global awareness of Mozambican art history.

International recognition of the comparatively small but undoubtedly rich Mozambican art scene has been growing slowly but steadily in recent years. The inclusion of Mozambique in a series of contemporary exhibitions organized by the National Museum in Oslo (discussed in this edition by Daniella van Dijk-Wennberg, Marianne Hultman and Bisi Silva), provides one example, as does the fairly recent excursion to Maputo that took place under the auspices of CCA Lagos' *Àsikò* art school. Between these two events, we have seen the journal *Critical Interventions* publish a special edition that focused on Lusophone Africa and the Congo. Also noteworthy is the historical study of *Mapiko* masquerades by Paolo Israel (reviewed in this edition by Rayda Becker, and complemented by Rui Assubuji's photo-essay).

While this edition focuses strongly on the visual arts, this is augmented by Ute Fendler's informative account of the emergence of fiction films in Mozambican cinema. Fendler's overview evidences overlapping interests across Mozambican art forms. These include the intersection of political interests implicit in developing a national identity (through the innovative use of aesthetic forms and themes to address local concerns and audiences) and the need to reach international publics.

This edition of *Third Text Africa* situates itself within this comparatively small but growing 'movement' of curators, researchers and academics that is not only concerned with writing Mozambican art into the script but also ultimately concerned with facilitating the emergence of an inclusive art world, history and practice. Within Mozambique, writing on art has historically been limited to a few key voices. With signs of progress emanating from within the educational sphere in Mozambique, we can expect more Mozambican voices to come to the fore, within Mozambique and internationally.

This edition also builds on the precedent established with the previous edition that focused on East Africa. Together these editions exemplify the work of ASAI in researching and publishing on art that is under-represented and under-valued in the global art-world.

The editors wish to thank our contributing authors, we trust that their patience has finally been rewarded. We also thank our numerous reviewers, whose diligence has been instrumental in ensuring that we produce a quality edition.

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