JWTC
JOHANNESBURG WORKSHOP IN THEORY AND CRITICISM

Luanda's Monuments

Kiluanji Kia Henda,
Redefining The Power IV (Serie 75 with Shunnuz Fiel),
2011, photo print mounted on aluminum, cm. 150 x 100,
courtesy Galleria Fonti Napoli

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The photograph shows a man standing on a monumental pedestal, arms akimbo, occupying the home of some forgotten statue. The man is Angolan fashion designer Shunnoz Fiel dos Santos; the now-removed statue bore the likeness of Portuguese colonist Paolo Dias de Novais, who claimed the small coastal settlement that became Angola's capitol as São Paulo da Assumpcão de Loanda in 1575. In the 2011 series "Redefining the Power," Angolan artist Kiluanji Kia Henda depicts Fiel atop different vacated pedestals across central Luanda. In *Redefining the Power IV*, Fiel is wearing a grey one piece outfit with flared trousers, a dark green cap, and long braided dreadlocks down his back. In another, he's reciting poetry wearing bright colors-a green jacket over a red shirt, layers of blue skirts over yellow short pants, and red stockings. In a third, he's dressed in black and purple, holding out the symbol the American musician Prince used as a pseudonym. Henda's photographs use Shunnoz Fiel's sartorial playfulness to pose serious questions about Angola's historical memory- its four centuries of colonial conflict followed by three decades of civil war-and to introduce into public dialogue more inventive and imaginative notions of the nation's future. Henda harnesses and reconfigures the layers of meaning represented by public urban monuments, what Pierre Nora (1989) calls *lieux de mémoires* ("sites of memory"), and rather than stripping them of affect, repurposes empty pedestals as sites for the public contestation of Angola's future. This is a temporal exercise, mixing up the past so as to catalyze and ignite possible futures. Henda's political engagement, characterized by a seductive mix of humor and pathos, exemplifies the power art has to challenge and expand society's oneiric capacities. The project "Redefining the Power" does exactly this-invites critique of Angola's political, social, and economic policies by asking simply, who does Angola want to be?

PLANNING LUANDA: THE CITY AND ITS MONUMENTS

The present disordered fabric of urban Luanda, the landscape surrounding Henda's work, is a direct reflection of its political history. Under Portuguese colonial influence (1575-1975), Luanda's urbanization followed the governing principles of various European models, disregarding the indigenous "essence of its built environment," deemed both fragile and confusing. "Entire cities were thus designed and built from scratch..." (Macedo 2012, 90). Initial efforts were modest, beginning with a series of hilltop forts overlooking the harbor; late-Medieval constructions of thick-walled stone around which clusters of houses gathered and new roads were cut. Luanda was a mercantile post and a hub of the slave trade, but full time residents were few. Over the centuries the city crept down the slope onto the harbor side, forming waterfront avenues and radial plazas in a roughly interconnected grid. These plazas were typically punctuated with statues of Portuguese heroes from what came to be called "The Age of Discoveries," each named for the man depicted, such as *Largo Infante D. Henrìque*-the only such plaza to retain its name following Angola's independence.

Kiluanji Kia Henda,
Redefining The Power II (Serie 75 with Shunnuz Fiel), 2011,
photo print mounted on aluminum, cm. 150 x 100,
courtesy Galleria Fonti Napoli

These stone men atop their towering pedestals served as much to reassure Portuguese colonial citizens as to hector native peoples. Each was a public proclamation of Portugal's domination, a celebration of military and technological prowess presented as cultural superiority embodied. Not until it was consumed by the political ramifications of the last convulsions of colonialism did Portugal claim Luanda as the capital of a large and growing settler society. In the epoch prior, from the fourteenth to the nineteenth century, the European population of the city remained relatively stable. Despite road building and other small-scale infrastructure projects, neither the architectural density nor the outline of the city changed significantly until the twentieth century. As a result, the choice and placement of monuments became one of Portugal's most noticeable planning interventions in this period.

Urban planning took on new agency in the twentieth century, as the Portuguese government in Angola began to reimagine and transition itself from an imperial colonial power to a "pluricontinental" settler society. Luanda's rising population, including many more Portuguese immigrants, and Angola's increasing importance to Portugal's economy (first through diamond mining and later through oil extraction) led to a succession of new master plans. The 1942 urban plan diagrams developed by Etienne de Gröer and D. Moreira da Silva are somewhat outmoded and are reminiscent of Ebenezer Howard's 1902 treatise "Garden Cities of To-Morrow," which advocated the creation of small satellite cities to depopulate congested and polluted industrial city centers in England. The 1952 plan by João António Aguiar features a much more contemporary, Modernist, rationalist network of roughly rectangular blocks, similar to plans developed by Le Corbusier-for whom Aguiar once worked-and Josep Lluís Sert for Bogota, Columbia in 1948. Aguiar also designed plans for several other Portuguese colonial cities in 1952, including São Tomé, Cabinda, and Huambo ("Nova Lisboa"), the last of which stands out for its French Imperial style, representing the grandiose goals of Portugal's fascist Prime Minister António de Oliviera Salazar, who held office from 1933-1968. Salazar's dream of an *Estado Novo* ("A New State"), also called "The Second Republic," was in reality a conservative, authoritarian, pro-Roman Catholic regime which justified Portuguese imperialism as a check against the spread of communism and the growing economic power of the NATO alliance, of which Pedro Manuel Santos writes Portugal felt compelled-as an unfortunate necessity-to be a part.

Aguiar's urban plans were commissioned just after the complete restructuring of the Portuguese colonial system in 1951. Salazar declared that the colonies were no longer to be treated as tributes to the nation, but to be officially considered as *provinces*, with parliamentary representation, a notion Kiluanji Kia Henda refers to as a "myth." References to "colonies" and "colonialism" were removed from political rhetoric, department titles, and official documents, and replaced with the term "ultra-marine" in a gesture towards unity that imagined Portugal neither as a nation nor as a paternalistic empire, but as the capital of a global lusophone culture. Novo Lisboa was to be the seat of this enterprise in Africa. This gesture, partially in response to anticolonial criticism from the UN, extends and justifies a political vision publicized between the world wars (but which is arguably much older). At the 1934 Colonial Exhibition in Oporto, a map ostensibly "drawn" by military officer and politician Henrique Galvão was presented depicting Portugal and its colonies, colored red, superimposed over the rest of Europe, colored yellow. It's title, *Portugal Não é um País Pequeno*("Portugal is Not a Small Country"), points to the motivation for many of the nation's political choices; that is, this was a European power unwillingly on the decline. Like a geopolitical Napoleon complex, Portugal imagined itself enlarged by the territory of its colonies, casting an imposing shadow across European neighbors that had outpaced Portugal-Europe's oldest continuous colonial power-technologically, economically, and in commensurate political power. These maps also served to remind the nation that were it to lose its colonies, retaining control only up to its traditional national boundaries, it would in fact be quite small, and would furthermore lack a self-reinforcing system of colonial trade and wealth accumulation.

Kiluanji Kia Henda,
Redefining The Power III (Serie 75 with Shunnuz Fiel), 2011,
triptyct, photo print mounted on aluminum, cm. 150 x 100,
courtesy Galleria Fonti Napoli

Like the colonies themselves, Portuguese colonial monuments were also rhetorically reframed under Salazar as spectacles of *Estado Novo,* celebrating what Walter Benjamin would call the "cult" value of traditional aesthetics as a popular vehicle for political memory in public space (Verheij 2013). During the 1936 dedication of a monumental statue of Portuguese conqueror Mouzinho de Albuquerque at the center of a new square in Lourenço Marques, Mozambique, the interim Governor-General José Nicolau Nunes de Oliviera observed statuary this way:

The work of art, even when carved by the hands of genius and warmed by its divine breath, always falls short of the artist's dream, and even more of the votive intent that anxiously searches to reveal itself in it. I do not know, however, what better suited homage a thankful nation can pay to those noble men who conquered immortality for her.... (qtd. in Verheij par. 29)

Gerbert Verheij argues that the void between the statue and its referent, its failure to be animated by its human form and its lack of aura or specific presence, aims to "produce a distance between historical representation and present reception, opening up space for the manipulation of its meaning. In a certain sense, the failure of the image as representation is necessary; it produces a *distance* to the historical referent which allows it to appear as something above history, as myth" (par. 31). The monumentality of the statue-an anesthetization of politics-combined with the evacuation of personality, is representative of the *Estado Novo* as well as of the monuments of other fascist regimes.

Totalitarian art uses political aesthetization to reclaim the past in the name of a supposed nationalist (or ethnic) tradition, fusing aspects of social narrative around an all-encompassing idea of the State. Like totalitarian architecture, it is meant to "create not only a new physical space, but also a mental space that could serve as a medium between the idea and its implementation" (Rudovska 2012, 77). In the colonies, these aesthetic objects occupy and infuse shared *lieux de mémoires* with messages meant to artificially impose difference rather than a sense of belonging, to reinforce the existing hierarchy in new terms. The monument is a locus that represents the mythic secular sublime amidst the banality of day-to-day life, creating "a space in which a community can see its own mirror image" (Verheij par. 51). Only after the removal-the "symbolic death"-of such statues can free people begin to "build their own place upon the ruins of the past" (Verheij par. 65).

Kiluanji Kia Henda,
Balamuka – Ambush, 2010,
installation view by Susana Pomba (missdove.org), “No Fly Zone,”
Museu Colecção Berardo, Lisbon, 2013

Thus even as the *Estado Novo* proclaimed itself a welcoming, non-racist vehicle of lusophone culture under the guise of "lusotropicalism," it simultaneously concretized Portuguese dominance across public space at home and abroad. In the 1940 Exposition of the Portuguese World in Lisbon, for instance, the ethnographic section "put actual colonial subjects on display" (Sapega 2008, 22), which seems quite contrary to Salazar's rhetoric of Portuguese imperialism as "of a humanistic, hybrid, non-racist kind" (Peralta 2011, 197). This Janus-faced stance continued throughout the 1950s into the early 1960s with the construction of new towns, the erection of new statues, and the inscription of jingoistic phrases on public buildings and in public plazas throughout Portugal's territories. In the main square of Lourenço Marques, Mozambique, the message *Aqui também é Portugal*-"This is also Portugal"-was laid into the pavement directly in front of the town hall during the 1960s (Verheij par. 18).
In Luanda, a third series of master plans were initiated in 1961 by architect Fernão Simões de Carvalho. These focused primarily on the development of highspeed roads, including Luanda's main boundary ring road. Carvalho was also concerned with Luanda's rising inequality and class separation and sought to promote mixed residential communities through the distribution of high- and low-rise Modernist housing. This planning effort was contemporaneous to the start of the Portuguese Colonial War in Angola, and ended unfinished (that is, without a final master plan) in 1964, after Portugal had suffered numerous military losses across its global territories.
Angola was declared an independent nation in 1975, but already during the war Portuguese statuary began to be removed from plaza pedestals in central Luanda. Despite Portugal's insistence on shared cultural memory, Luanda's removal of these statues of famed Portuguese explorers, which represents Luanda's denial of their colonists' right to claim Angolan cultural heritage, runs parallel to Lisbon's refusal to honor "anticolonial liberation heroes" with statuary in all the decades since (Sieber 2010, 112). The only colonial- era statue in Luanda to be completely destroyed, however, was the war memorial located in *Largo da Maria da Fonte*, Luanda's main market square today known as *Largo do Kinaxixi.* Sculpted by Henrique Moreira and dedicated in 1937, this memorial in honor of Portugal's World War I dead depicted Victory with her sword aloft flanked by two Portuguese soldiers in period military garb. The figure of Victory was also understood to be Maria da Fonte, a nineteenth century Portuguese hero who helped foment a popular revolt. The statue sat atop a monumental Modernist pedestal characteristic of industrial, socialist architecture of the 1930s. In April 1975, just prior to the official declaration of independence, the statue was destroyed using dynamite, whereupon it was replaced by a Soviet military tank (Gillemans). The tank's origin is significant. Throughout the Portuguese Colonial War the MPLA, a resistance and liberation group that held sway in Luanda and succeeded to the presidency, was funded and supplied by the USSR, in direct refutation of Salazar's anti-communist stance. In November 2002, a new statue was erected in its place upon a similar pedestal, a monumental bronze of Queen Njinga Mbande (1582-1663), one of the best-documented and most successful African rulers of the early modern period.
During her lifetime Njinga Mbande, also known by several other names including "Dona Ana de Sousa," expanded her territory and resettled former slaves while holding the Portuguese at bay along the coast of modern-day Angola. She led men into battle through multiple wars, and was celebrated for her wit, intelligence, political acumen, and military tactics. In her statue she is depicted standing, calm and composed, wearing an interpretation of traditional garb more modest than historically accurate, grasping an axe in one hand and looking into the far distance, seemingly ready for any confrontation. The simplicity of the sole figure of Njinga Mbande commands more presence than that of the previous World War I memorial, dwarfing Maria da Fonte in historical importance if not in physical stature. The memorialization of Njinga Mbande, who lived contemporaneous to Paolo Dias de Novais, is a direct rebuttal to the statues of men who embodied Portugal's empire and once commanded the city's squares. The Queen is taller than any of those figures, cast in bronze (which gives her flesh a brown color), and female, in all ways different from Angola's Portuguese conquerors except one-she too is a military leader.
In *Balamuka (Ambush)*, 2010, Kiluanji Kia Henda photographs the statue of Njinga Mbande in exile, awaiting the completion of new construction around *Largo do Kinaxixi*. The monumental bronze finds itself in a courtyard facing the deposed statues of Luís Vaz de Camões, Dom Afonso Henriques, and Pedro Álvares Cabral, among others. Henda stages a twelve-part confrontation simply by turning his lens. That Henda recognizes the political implications of public monuments, their embodiment of shared social values, history, and collective memory, could not be more clear. An earlier work, *Transit, 2007,* shows the dismembered sections of a statue of Paolo Dias de Novais on the ground, preparing for transport to the Museum of the Armed Forces, a former Portuguese fort in central Luanda, where it and many of its compatriots can be found today. During a lecture delivered at the Tate Modern in 2010, Henda explained that this statue does "not [have] a place of exhibition... they don't know how [or] where to keep it. So I had this feeling that this monument became like a citizen which his visa has already expired, and so it should be back to the point of origin." This was the beginning of the artist's interest in the fate and function of Luanda's monuments, particularly during the first decade of Angola's peaceful self-rule.

Kiluanji Kia Henda,
Transit, 2011, photo print mounted on aluminum, cm. 150 x 100,
courtesy Galleria Fonti Napoli

The populism personified by the monument of Njinga Mbande has not yet extended to post-independence planning in Luanda. Urban planning remained dormant throughout the Colonial War, and later, the Angolan Civil War, until 1992, which marked the beginning of a brief armistice. In 1994, an isolated upper middle class neighborhood was developed south of the city, appropriately called "Luanda Sul," populated primarily by government officials and their families. Little has been built for the vast majority of the city's population, 80 percent of whom live in *musseques*, the local term for slums (Macedo 2012, 93). In fact, the most significant planning moves to affect the poor have been the clearing of their homes from land over which they hold uncertain legal tenure. Most of these citizens arrived in Luanda during the Civil War, fleeing rural areas that had transformed into battle zones. With Luanda's formal infrastructure only capable of supporting a population of 500,000, as the city swelled to 18 million it could not maintain its quality of life (Power 2012, 999). Rather than developing a comprehensive regional plan to extend water, power, and sanitation, or a plan to build more permanent, legal urban housing, Angola has instead turned toward the global market for "solutions" which offer maximum profit. Since the end of the civil war in 2002, Angola has sought out development agencies from China and the United Arab Emirates to deliver master plans, publicly touting a "south-south" model of mutual economic benefit that in fact enriches very few private parties.
"Since the end of the civil war in 2002, Angola has sought out development agencies from China and the United Arab Emirates to deliver master plans, publicly touting a "south-south" model of mutual economic benefit that in fact enriches very few private parties."
Given that China is Angola's primary foreign investor and trade partner, it is not surprising that Luanda's current model for modernization is an idealized, high technology version of Chinese urban development circa 1960, built by Chinese workers using Chinese equipment (Power 2012, 995). By 2025, Angola's new geography will feature urban decentralization, the fullscale development of new cities *tabula rasa*, isolated industrial and special economic zones, and extended road and rail infrastructure. However, as Power argues, despite the publication of glossy brochures filled with positive pro-development rhetoric, Angola lacks any systematic or transparent national development policy. What has been built emphasizes segregation and citadelization along class lines, a spatial system that effectively criminalizes the poor, directly counter to Carvalho's 1960s-era aspirations for urban housing models that would consciously comingle different classes. The fear of the lower classes as vectors of crime, violence, and general disorder has become so entrenched that a Lebanese developer, Dar Al-Handasah, proposes to dredge Luanda Bay between the mainland and Chicala island, narrowing its thin land bridge so as to protect newly planned "archipelagos of utopian luxury" from the unwelcome incursions of informal housing and its residents (Power 2012, 1010). Other projects underline the government's internal corruption and ineptitude. The new city of Kilamba, for example, was meant to house 500,000 middle-income residents, but with apartments selling for a minimum price of $120,000 US, it is far too expensive; acres of buildings remain empty.

Kiluanji Kia Henda,
Mussorongo, 2009, photo print mounted on aluminum, cm. 150 x 100,
courtesy Galleria Fonti Napoli

Planning in Luanda has progressed only in fits and starts, shaped during the colonial period by dominate European models such as the English garden city, the French imperial capital, and the 'International Style' of Modernism. Each new plan has negotiated Portugal's evolving relationship to its colonies. Yet only at the book ends of Portuguese rule-in the beginning and during the penultimate years prior to Angola's independence- did statuary play a dominant role in asserting cultural superiority. The messages initially asserted by figures from the Age of Discoveries were reinforced and reiterated during Portugal's fascist *Estado Novo* period. Since independence, the role of statuary has regained its recognizable force as a vehicle for reshaping and reclaiming historical memory. Beginning with the demise of Portugal's "Victory"-the World War I memorial- the post-civil war period has been witness to renewed visions of Angola's history and identity, most notably as embodied in the figure of Njinga Mbande. Contemporary urban plans for Luanda, however, are banal expressions of market forces and lack any power for cultural mobilization. It is this striking contrast, between city and statue, which raises the stakes for the many empty pedestals inhabiting downtown Luanda. Could these pedestals become sites for renewed popular dreams? Or will they too be stripped of their potential for inclusion and inspiration?

HYBRIDITY: MONUMENTS, MEMORY, AND ART

It is against this backdrop of both historical and contemporary government-sanctioned disempowerment and *confusão* (confusion) that one must situate Kiluanji Kia Henda's work. Drawing upon Žižek, Šakaja and Stanić suggest that autoreferencing via architecture and monument building is part of how a nation "finds its sense of self-identity by revealing itself as already present in its tradition" (2012, 503). The monument enables the state to promote a particular reading of the present as embodied by selected celebrations of the past. The statue of Njinga Mbande, for example, brings her centuries-old story of resistance to the awareness of contemporary Angolans, and integrates it with the history of recent conflicts that enabled the nation's enfranchisement with the end of colonialism. In this juxtaposition of temporalities, the location of Mbande's statue is instrumental.

Yet the complexity of Angola's multilayered constituency- diverse politically, ethnically, and economically- complicates any hegemonic vision of the nation's future. The horrors of the civil war, how Angolans treated one another, rival those of the colonial era. Because official narratives of history are often used to legitimize the crimes of the past, history itself places the monument-its symbolic manifestation-in an uncertain position. "With this abiding link between the means of articulating history and an abhorrent past, the very notion of the monument appear[s] untenable" (Stubblefield 2011, 1). With the civil war very much present in the memory of Angola's citizens, the permanence of any monument-wrought in materials meant to last generations-could elicit distrust and suspicion were a more controversial figure or event chosen for memorialization.
"[T]he complexity of Angola's multilayered constituency-diverse politically, ethnically, and economically-complicates any hegemonic vision of the nation's future."
Henda's work asks Angolans to consider what should happen to Luanda's cultural legacy as embodied in its statuary. Should Paolo Dias de Novais stay with his fellows at the Museum of the Armed Forces, a leftover outlier without a true home? Does the Portuguese founder of Luanda deserve honor, ridicule, or indifference? The suspended animation of the dismembered statue in *Transit* suggests perhaps a mixture of all three. For statutes that have outlived their public purpose yet still possess considerable social-historical residue, the "strategy of relocation-[a] change of place from central to peripheral areas" is common, particularly among nations of the former Eastern Bloc (Šakaja and Stanić 2011, 506). A

statue from the main public square may be removed to a quiet residential neighborhood, where its aura is diminished but not forgotten. The valiant allegorical worker upon his pedestal in front of the once state-run factory can now be found on the ground in the courtyard to its rear. Parks that cheerfully and ironically display a collection of ideologically obsolete statuary are not unknown; examples include Memento Park in Budapest, Hungary and Fallen Monument Park in Moscow. Such locations act as the nation's "hybrid memory-scapes," serving to contest new identities by retaining a layer of older, outmoded ones; or they might simply allow citizens to celebrate their nation's break from the past by retaining the symbols of that past defanged and decathected in the present (Light and Young 2010, 1453).

Kiluanji Kia Henda, Ngola Bar, 2005, photo print mounted on aluminum, cm. 200 x 110,
courtesy Galleria Fonti Napoli

The son of a former government official, Henda is a member of the bourgeoisie who has come to reject monocular visions of Angolan society. Born in 1979, Henda has lived his entire life-until 2002-in a wartorn country, learning his craft from photojournalists documenting the Civil War (Afonso 2011). The process of an artist in Angola in many ways mirrors the liminal nature of Angolan culture, a society with the possibility of being born anew. Just as the artist invents new worlds and composes new realities, so too have Angolans required flexibility and inventiveness to survive. Henda describes being "original" as an artist a "huge challenge," particularly "in a country where every[one] has to be creative to overcome many problems. It's like improvisation as a way of living." In his series of portraits of residents from the *musseques*, "Portraits From a Slippery Look," 2009, Henda photographs sartorial trend-setters and celebrated dancers of *kuduro*, an emerging Angolan electronic musical style. As an artist, he seems to have found himself reflected in the redemptive qualities of aesthetic celebration amidst such impoverished conditions. This has impacted his politics as well as his sense of place within Angolan culture. As Henda (2010) declares:

It makes no difference which kind of system we live in, if it's capitalist or communism, mono or stereo party, those places [the *musessques*] they had like very autonomous ways to rule... The culture is hybrid, and intense, and extremely experimental. The high tech is really mixed with animism; and so we had new sound, new music... new dancing, new style, and so for me that was really important to make portrait[s] of this transition that the country is living. And the townships really they become like the place of inspiration.... And I think that any attempt to conceive any theories about this phenomena becomes useless and obsolete the minute they are created. This is a parallel universe.

The creativity and the individualism evident in "Portraits From a Slippery Look" emphasize the cultural hybridity Henda recognizes as emerging from Luanda's townships. Sartorial invention is as much a part of Angola's transition, reimagining, and re-emergence as its urban or industrial development. Henda's partnership with fashion designer Shunnoz Fiel in the series "Redefining the Power," 2011, is particularly appropriate for addressing issues of self-identification and cultural projection in Angola. Sartorial citation accrues power in a post-colonial context. As Jill Cole (2013) explains in reference to the integration of indigenous Ovihimba fashion within contemporary Namibian commercial culture, dress is a signifier for various modes of citizenship. Not only does dress reflect personal aspirations, costume itself carries deeply shared cultural and religious significance in a readily legible form. As Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (2010) tells us, religious traditions among Bakongo people, including costume, are direct antecedents of the carnival celebration in Brazil, reinforcing the debt of global lusophone culture to the sartorial creativity of Angola's people. As one of the two designers for *haute couture* label Projecto Mental, Fiel embodies a nexus of cultural creativity that projects contemporary Angolan identity worldwide. Henda's act of posing Fiel atop a monumental pedestal in place of 16th century Portuguese colonist Paolo Dias de Novais in *Largo do Lumeji*, or 19th century colonial Governor-General Pedro Alexandrino da Cunha near *Largo Rainha Ginga*, works to claim Angola's future for those with the creative capacity to shape Angola's culture.

Kiluanji Kia Henda,
Lady G, 2009, photo print mounted on aluminum, cm. 150 x 100,
courtesy Galleria Fonti Napoli

"Redefining the Power" rewrites the semiotic force of past monuments, "those self-aggrandizing, heroic monuments that utilize their physical remove from daily life to reinforce the static and eternal history they articulate," and makes apparent that the actors who will create and define Angola's future may very well originate from the ordinary creativity of the everyday (Stubblefield 2011, 2). The temporal life of Henda's monuments-as brief as the click of a camera lens-are counter-memorials which allow the "active negation of presence" to shift the political work of memorialization onto public discourse itself (1). That is, Henda's photographs encourage speculation as to whether or not certain monumental pedestals in central Luanda should remain vacant. As James Young (1999) has noted regarding imaginative post-World War II German memorials, "In the end, the counter-memorial reminds us that the best German memorial to the fascist era and its victims may not be a single memorial at all-but simply the never-to-be-resolved debate over which kind of memory to preserve, how to do it, in whose name, and to what end" (9).

Questions about the power and legitimacy of monuments and memorials cross numerous social and political contexts. Memory, as a shared human experience, can be co-opted or claimed, but never fully controlled by any state actor. In this way, Henda's work in an Angolan context enters into conversation with similar debates globally. Luanda is at an important and potentially very powerful moment of urban transition. Emerging into a global neo-liberal economy following its earlier socialist culture, Luanda, like Zagreb, Croatia, is "rethinking history and negotiating its meanings," which, Šakaja and Stanić write, is "one of the essential traits of the post-communist transition" (499). A potential way to further this transition is through the installation of new public monuments proclaiming new ambitions, important indicators of recodified memory though perhaps less "impressive" than the proliferation of new capitalist signifiers such as shopping centers and corporate offices (498). Just as Queen Njinga Mbande will soon look out over a new luxury shopping and office complex at *Largo do Kinaxixi*, what monuments that are similarly inclusive in tone might greet other sections of the city? Henda's work suggests that, as in Bamako, Mali, these new national *lieux de mémoire* could be places "wherein citizens, especially young people, can engage in the performance of a shared history and national purpose" (Arnoldi 2007, 2). These yet to be realized sites will be interrogated by new sets of interpretive practices, engaging in a cyclical process of historical interpretation that allows evolving cultures to continually revisit unanswered social questions. Henda's series "Redefining the Power" represents an intermediate, catalyzing step between forgetting the past and imagining the future. As Achille Mbembe (2013a) explains, the "future" is both a political and an aesthetic category with a profound role to play in postcolonial societies. "Futurism is a form of imagination that in practice is becoming a foundational dimension." The capacity to imagine the future is necessary for genuine collective agency because it keeps open the possibility of its own existence. If societies are constituted on the means of controlling oneiric functions, as Mbembe argues, then by denying basic infrastructure, Angola has curtailed Luanda's citizens' temporal imagination by restricting their bodies to daily struggles, reducing them to a purely biological life. The creative fields, with their capacity to demonstrate, or "try on," different guises of the future like so many different clothes, is key to the revitalization of Angola's shared cultural dreaming functions. As Mbembe (2013b) states,

For Frantz Fanon, the most brutal consequence of the injuries inflicted to those who had been subjected to abject forms of racial violation was an inability to imagine or project themselves forward in time while, at the same time, that is, imagining the future. Their sense of temporality had been crippled, as a result of which they had developed a specific illness-a faulty sense of a future they believed they could not control or shape.

Perhaps this lack of imagination is part of the reason why the Angolan government continues to look outside itself to the international community for urban development models. Kiluanji Kia Henda's "Redefining the Power" offers instead a strong sense of place and of community, and a profound faith in the creative capacity of Angolans to control and shape their own representations.

ARTFORUM

Savannah

“Wild Is the Wind”

SAVANNAH COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN
320 East Liberty Street
January 11–February 28

Zineb Sedira, *MiddleSea,* 2008, still from a color video, 16 minutes.

“Wild Is the Wind” brings together seven artists whose work shares a sensibility that the curator, Laurie Ann Farrell, connects to the mood and lyrics of the 1957 American song of the same title, a slow, melancholic ballad of longing, discovery, and love. To translate these emotions into a coherent visual exhibition, Farrell casts her net wide. *MiddleSea*, 2008, a hauntingly beautiful video by Zineb Sedira, follows a middle-aged man who is alternately lost in contemplation and pacing the deck as he travels as the lone passenger on a ferry. Ghada Amer’s equally compelling installation, *Le Salon Courbé*, 2007, explores the space between cultures and examines the definition of *terrorism* in English and Arabic. Kiluanji Kia Henda’s large-scale color prints reveal the beauty and dignity the Angolan photographer has found among Luanda’s poverty-struck inhabitants. His pictures provide an interesting contrast to *Shish Kebab*, 2004, Lara Baladi’s critical look at the culturally loaded media images that flood society.

Less obvious but no less powerful are paintings by Odili Donald Odita, whose hard-edge abstractions speak of a desire to create harmony among elements that may be at odds with one another. Similarly, Nicholas Hlobo’s elegant sewn “drawings” made from leather, tire rubber, and ribbon offer personal meditations regarding his search for acceptance as a gay black man in post-apartheid South Africa. Combined with Penny Siopis’s figurative paintings, which teeter between romanticism and fantasy, the exhibition becomes a thought-provoking meditation on the very basic human quest for understanding and acceptance.

— Rebecca Cochran

Flash Art

La prima rivista d'arte in Europa • Edizione Italiana • Anno XLIII • n° 280 mensile • febbraio 2010 • € 6.00

BLACK ATLANTIC

AR/GE KUNST - BOLZANO

Il "Black Atlantic" è una zona rimossa della storia moderna. La mostra, a cura di Luigi Fassi, trae spunto e titolo dalla rilettura della diaspora atlantica che Paul Gilroy ha raccolto nello scritto *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Un tema spinoso e difficile da trattare, tanto più in un testo visivo. Questioni che sollecitano la coscienza collettiva come razzismo, indifferenza e sfruttamento avrebbero potuto spingere verso derive emotive o approcci fortemente retorici. La scelta di opere dal registro diaristico ha giovato all'analisi e al ritmo della mostra. Gli oggetti non fanno sentire il proprio peso e anche quando l'affondo critico si fa più diretto, la retorica è equilibrata, a favore della pregnanza delle questioni. La storia della diaspora si ricollega così al nostro quotidiano.

Gli artisti invitati hanno fatto della propria appartenenza culturale il punto di partenza della loro ricerca. Tre gli sguardi in campo. Quello più diretto delle vittime della colonizzazione, come per Hank Willis Thomas e Kiluanji Kia Henda: entrambi mostrano la continuità nel presente delle implicazioni economiche e culturali del colonialismo e tengono alto il livello di allerta storica su questioni irrisolte, come il razzismo negli Stati Uniti e in Europa, o minimizzate nelle pieghe della geografia economica, come il disastro economico e culturale post guerra fredda in Angola. Il secondo sguardo è quello del carnefice: Nanna Debois indaga la storia coloniale che la Danimarca ha deciso di chiudere da oltre un secolo. In lei la testimonianza diventa problematizzazione dei modelli di esperienza del mondo.

Infine, lo sguardo più neutro di Maryam Jafri. L'artista di orgine pakistana si concentra sulle cerimonie dei trattati di indipendenza. La lunga serie di immagini ricavate dagli archivi dei diversi Stati mette in dubbio le radici universaliste del pensiero occidentale, da cui ancora facciamo fatica a staccarci.

Denis Isaia

KILUANJI KIA HENDA, Karl Marx, Luanda, 2006. Stampa fotografica, 86 x 130 cm. Courtesy Collezione Raffaella e Stefano Sciarretta, Nomas Foundation, Roma; Galleria Fonti, Napoli.

Kiluanji Kia Henda: Art Beyond the Local and the Global

By Rachel Nelson

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Kiluanji Kia Henda lives and works in Luanda, Angola, and has been active on the contemporary art circuit since 2007. The artist is an example of the increased presence on international art circuits of Angolan artists since the end of the nearly thirty-year civil war that ravaged the country until 2002. He has shown in biennials and triennials from Venice to Guangzhou and is represented by galleries in Brazil, Italy, Paris, and in Luanda. His work considers both the role of art in Angola, at the end of first decade of peace, in building national consciousness and the potential of art for initiating conversations about broad geo- politics, Kia Henda is negotiating global and local systems of meaning making. Thus, his work is paradigmatic of what noted curator Hou Hanru has articulated in another context as "con- temporary art created from and for different localities but immediately involved with the swirl of global information, communication, and displacement." (1) As artists from countries outside of mainstream art nexuses take part in and influence global art forums, this is imagined, Hanru has noted, as "an efficient means to resistance, interruption and deconstruction of the established, dominant, hegemonic power of global capitalism and its ideology." (2) However, negotiating between local and global concerns has led to some moments of misunderstanding. As Kia Henda shows his work around the globe, the meanings attached to it have shifted through context of where and how it is shown. His exhibition history has become illustrative of the potentials and problems of art and exhibitions as sites of mediation between the local and the global.

For instance, work that Kia Henda has shown in both Angola and in Brazil has generated different responses. In 2008, in an exhibition in Luanda called "Stories and Diligence", Kia Henda addressed issues of sexuality and gender constructions in An- gola with a photograph entitled Poderosa de Bom Jesus (2008). This work is of a locally famous self-identified transvestite from the suburbs of Luanda known as Poderosa, which translates as "Almighty" from the Portuguese. Kia Henda posed Poderosa in the clothing that Mumuila women in Southwestern Angola both historically and currently wear. Treading between both local and global conceptions of Angolan identity, the artist photographed Poderosa in a mode of dress and in a wide expanse of grasslands that creates an image recognizable to an audience used to the representations of Africa found in news magazines. He located Poderosa in the idea of what so-called "traditional" cultures in Angola look like within the global media and called in to questions how this visualization of identity has largely ignored or repressed so-called non-normative aspects of gender and sexuality. Thus, this image proposes to challenge what both lo- cal and global art viewers imagine "traditional" Angolan identity to look like and what gender roles it contains. As Kia Henda explains, in the exhibition of this work in Luanda, "When people first went into the room and saw this picture, the first thing people said was, "This is our culture, our tradition", but as they look, they had to think about what this means- "Our culture, Our traditions"." (3) The hope was that this challenge to the imagining of a rigid conception of cultural identity would also be taken up outside of Angola.

However, when Kia Henda showed this work in São Paulo in 2009, the image worked in a different way. The culturally conventional gender roles of the Mumuila, especially as they relate to dress, are less obvious to the gallery goer in Brazil, so Kia Henda had to indicate the fact that Poderosa was a transvestite on the wall label. And, importantly, the work seemed familiar; the staging of identity politics on the body itself has become a trope in contemporary art. Without a historical context and an aware- ness of the cultural paradoxes at play, this work, demarcated as non-normative with a wall text, seemed only to be a reductive transmission of identity through a raced, gendered, sexualised body. If this work troubles how the body is gendered, it's still staging the body as the location of the battles of culture. Not much seems to have changed since Laura Mulvey's famous polemic in which she assured us that women stand "in patriarchal culture (...) as bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning."(4) While the category of "woman" has been expanded, the role women play in culture has not. Consequently, the work was troublingly reductive in the São Paulo gallery context as yet an- other assertion of "African identity" through the female body, and in the reception of the work, the implications of this became disturbingly clear.

In the months that followed the opening for Kia Henda's exhibition in São Paulo, an artist in São Paulo

produced the photograph as a painting. Kia Henda discovered this when the painting, and the man who did the painting, were featured in the newspaper in an article about an exhibition at the Art Museum of São Paulo Parliament celebrating "authentic Angolan culture." (5) Bantu Tabasisa, the Afro-Brazilian painter who appropriated Kia Henda's work, was quoted discussing the painting as "exhibiting the values of Africa, the traditions of Africa."(6) In Brazil, Kia Henda's work changed, quite literally as it became a painting and no longer his, to being an illustration of the pervasiveness of the idea of African identity as stable and know- able (and structured in the biological). What Kia Henda had seen as non-normative issues of gender and sexuality, polemics in the national discourse of Angola where homosexuality is a crime, were easily subsumed into the definition of African- ness in Brazil. This was perhaps predictable. After all, Africa has long served as a stand-in for Otherness in discourse outside of the African continent. Notions of Otherness are not just tied to race; gender and sexuality have also been imagined to function differently ("exotically") in Africa. Of course, Poderosa fits right into this imaginary. What, then, is an artist to do when his at- tempts to create a more nuanced conversation that resonates with both a local and global audience about what it is to be Angolan are inevitably mis-seen in this way?

The reception of Poderosa de Bom Jesus in Luanda was what Kia Henda had thought of as productive and the way the work should be interpreted, and what happened in São Paulo was obviously incredibly problematic. Yet, in both instances, fictions of identity were created or reinscribed with Poderosa de Bom Jesus; clearly, situating art in its cultural context alone will not suffice in marking a shift from what has come before and what continues to produce knowledge of the world. In Luanda, this work might have expanded the notion of what Angolan identity could be, but it still relied on the idea that such an identity could exist. In Brazil, in the moment when a photograph became a painting and a transvestite became the representative of traditional culture in a country where homosexuality is a crime, some serious ideological work was also being done. The question is: what would it take for that ideological work to be a departure from what has come before and to not rely on preexisting ideological structures based on inequality and injustice? Can there be a significant move away from the racialised, sexualised, gendered paradigms that have reigned supreme, not only in art discourse but also in the process of self-identification and nation building in Angola as well as elsewhere? The idea that something generative can come from such damaging sites of mis-seeing and mistrans- lation seems beset with insurmountable problems; after all, as Okwui Enwezor wrote over a decade ago, for artists from Africa and the diaspora, "the zones of enunciation are so fraught with gross misreadings and the most miserable translations (...) that it seems nothing could possibly mediate the gap that separates the two worlds."(7) Enwezor goes on to say that it is in "those gaps – between worlds – the potent signs that these artists carry from different localities are translated and ultimately transfigured through relocation into new imaginary constructs of identity."(8) While these "new imaginary constructs of identity" have historically been repressive and damaging, as Enwezor alludes to, that moment of translation and transfiguration is a productive space, even if what it produces is harmful. Therefore, in Kia Henda's recent body of work, he is experimenting with the idea that alternative creative possibilities exist for the identities imagined into being in this space that exists when art and ideas travel.

To this end, Kia Henda has started a movement called the Afronauts with another young Angolan artist named Yonamine. (9) In this movement, the world and its power structures have become the unknown to be both explored and created as the artists generate new models and new ethics of cultural translation. This is a playful take on the ideas of a universal aesthetic with high stakes. After all, not only the interpretation of Kia Henda's artworks has been harmed in these spaces of cultural translations, but the interests of Angola in the global political economy have also suffered. From the position of an Afronaut, Kia Henda can wilfully mis-see the signs and significations of the dominant discourses that have structured these interactions. Thus, he has the space to imagine different myths of the world and its structures of power.

In the project that was a point of departure for the Afronauts, Kia Henda staged a "research expedition" close to home. The artist, in this work, addressed the legacy of colonization and the Cold War to flip the narrative of Angola's role in global politics. In Icarus 13: Narratives of Progress from Elsewhere (2008), the city of Luanda is the location for the first fictitious space journey to the sun led by an Angolan mission. As a result, Angola is the site from which exploration begins as opposed to where exploration takes place. While the title of this project immediately evokes the Greek anti-hero that loses his wings as he approaches the sun, Kia Henda misuses and wilfully misunderstands this founding myth of Western

modernity to create a new myth for Angola. The story of Icarus is about the perils of hubris, and through this work, Kia Henda humorously suggests that Angola's aspirations to assume a different position in the global political economy have also been understood in terms of an impossible mission (and even as an example of hubris.) Yet, as Icarus 13 culminates in a successful sun landing, such supposedly unrealistic and foolhardy goals become possible.

Considering the lessons learned in Brazil, if mis-seeing in art can recreate and expand fictions of identity, in Icarus 13, Kia Henda proposes that Angolan history, as it is materialized in the Angolan landscape, can be mis-seen in generative ways. Icarus 13 is an installation made up of eight photographs and a model of spaceship and the surrounding city plaza. The installation reconstructs Angolan political history through a futuristic vision of the architectonic ruins of colonization and the Cold War occupation of Angola. The photograph of the spaceship, a ragged obelisk rising over the city of Luanda, is of an unfinished mausoleum left behind by the Russians in Angola in which the body of Agostinho Neto, the first President of independent Angola, is interred. The photograph labeled as an Astronomy Observatory in the installation is a cinema theatre in the province of Namibe that decolonization left unfinished. The shuttle's take-off illumination is the captured image of the night sky lit up by the celebration of Angola's qualifying victory for the 2006 World Cup. An image of construction workers in the shipyards of Luanda becomes the photographic record of mechanics fine-tuning the equipment of the Icarus 13 spaceship. When Kia Henda lays the myth of space travel over a city that is already overlaid by the remnants of colonization, Cold War occupations, and the evidence of the destruction wrought by a three decade long civil war, he is rearranging the landscape (and wilfully mis-sees that violent history) from one of trauma into one of exploration and self-making. He strings together these monuments to power to create a different fiction in which Angola has the power over its own inventions. As Kia Henda explains, "What motivated those structures [photographed for Icarus 13] to be constructed was to make Angola into someone else's idea of utopia. The country was built on a utopist idea of Angola as a province of Portugal, and then the spaceship and the other buildings and monuments photographed for Icarus 13 are evidence of the idea the Russians had to build the Red Square in Luanda, the capital of Angola. So, all these intentions they had, they are a myth. They are from projects that never really happened yet they exist, they are there, in time. I think I am doing a continuation of that." (10)

Therefore, the artist misuses and misrepresents the monuments left from colonization, that are the Cold War's legacy in Angola, to create a different history, present, and future for the nation. However, does this work really shift the boundaries of the possible? Icarus 13 has been Kia Henda's most widely shown work on the international art circuit. It has been shown in China, Brazil, Germany, and Angola. The installation is shown accompanied by a wall text that playfully suggests that it will not be the last flight to the sun. The text states, "According to the astronauts' description, the Sun has the most beautiful night. This first mission accomplished, we plan to launch the first solar tourist flight within five years- duly equipped with ultraviolet sun block and sunglasses that are dark enough." (11) As curators eagerly show this work, the hard questions that have the potential to be asked by it, or the kind of discomfort that accompanies any sort of radical shift in discursive structures, seems to have been elided. The kind of experimentation that Kia Henda is doing in this work that has been embraced by the international art community, then, has not been without problems. This is a palatable fiction that has been created, for good reason; it emulates the structure that it is trying to mis-see. Trying to take apart power structures often leads to recreating them, and Kia Henda is negotiating a slippery slope. And, in a more recent appraisal of the work, the artist is critical that he has not moved far enough away from the dominant discourse. Icarus 13 is not enough of a mis-seeing of global politics – not in anyway a break from the power structures which have to be undone if the possibilities of the future are to truly change. Kia Henda explains that this work was to be a "critique of the Greek mythology itself, its heroes, Greece as the birthplace of the Modern Western world, where democracy and all these ideas were born". (12) But, when the myth becomes realized in the successful journey to the sun, as the artist also explains, "I have to be critical also of myself, when I use this myth and write a successful travel." (13) To re- tell the myth of Icarus as a triumph of modernity, and the sun turned into a destination for tourists (a capitalist commodity,) is to continue the myth of progress that led to colonization and neo-liberal politics. A fiction free from the discursive structures in place has not been created. Nevertheless, the possibilities multiply along the shiny surfaces of the eight photographs; if this is repetition and not radical reappraisal, something has happened in the process of repetition. It still hints to something more.

As he tours the world as an Afronaut, the fictions and proposals that Kia Henda can create do offer a possibility to imagine a differently conceived future. Even if he has yet to approach the world truly as alien, and his work still slips into fictions of which we are familiar, he is generating critical inquiry into the structures of cultural translation and transformation. What tan- talizes in the possibilities of the Afronauts, and in the potentiality of contemporary art in a global world, is that a space can be made, in which to experiment with possible futures. As art be- comes a space of cultural encounter and creator of identity, it can be utilized to move ideas of culture and identity outside of the world-making that already exists. As Hanru suggests, “art works constantly create vacant spaces or voids. The works are then open to (...) the constant reinvention of meanings through endless negotiations between different individual and collective experiences and aspirations on their equally endless journeys between the global and the local, between history and the present, between reality and projection.” (14) Kia Henda suggests that this can be pushed even further by taking a step out of the global/local paradigms. If the potential for creatively re- imagining the world cannot be accomplished on a global scale, it is time to step into a new atmosphere of art practice.

Rachel Nelson is currently getting her PhD in Visual Studies at the University of California, Santa Cruz. Her work focuses on Con- temporary Art and Globalism, contemporary art from Africa and its diasporas, and the theoretic of writing of global art discourse. She is currently engaged in a project called Fiction and Form in Contemporary Art in Angola and Brazil.

Notes:
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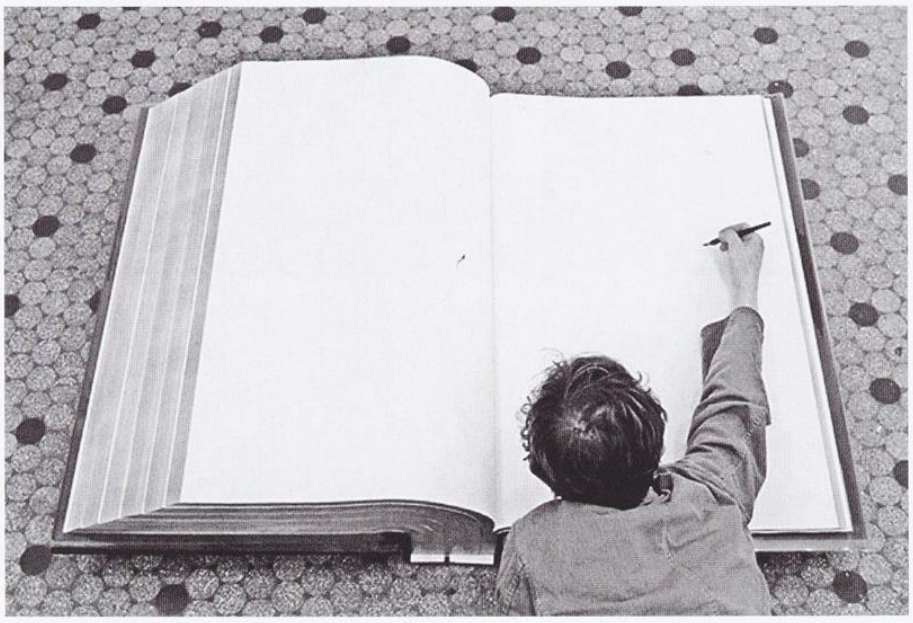
2) Hanru (2005), pp. 61-62 3) Kia Henda, Kiluanji: Interview by Author. Paris, 2011.
4) Mulvey, Laura: Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema. In: Braudy, Leo and Cohen, Marshall (eds.): Film Theory and Criticism: In- troductory Readings. New York, 1999. p. 835.
5) Arzak, Bruno: Africanidade e Arte ‚Mubako‘ expostas na Assembleia paulista. See: Uma Certa Angola: http://umacertaangola.blogspot.com/2009/08/africanidade-e-arte-mubako-expostas-na.html, 24 Agosto 2009. [Accessed on 25 November 2011]
6) Arzak (2009)
7 Enwezor, Okwui: Between Worlds: Postmodernism and African Artists in the Western Metropolis. In: Enwezor, Okwui and Oguibe, Olu (eds.): Reading the Contemporary: African Art from Theory to the Market Place. London, 1999. p. 245.
8) Enwezor (1999), p. 245
9) Kia Henda (2011)
10) Kia Henda (2011)
11) Kia Henda. Kiluanji: Icarus 13: The First Journey to the Sun. See: Other Possible Worlds: Proposals on this Side of Utopia, http://www.otherpossibleworlds.net/?page_id=316 [Accessed on December 2, 2011].
12) Kia Henda (2011) 13) Kia Henda (2011) 14) Hanru (2005), p. 62

VOGUE ITALIA
SEPTEMBER 2012

Parla di un'Angola che sta velocemente cambiando, Kiluanji Kia Henda. E a rendere particolarmente avvincenti progetti come il suo recentissimo "Homem novo", che la galleria Fonti di Napoli ha presentato nella sezione "Statements" di Art Basel 2012 lo scorso giugno, è che sulla reale sostanza di quei cambiamenti l'artista s'interroga, indaga, fa confluire e penetrare il nostro sguardo. Disincantato reporter e testimone di Luanda, sua città d'origine e popolosa capitale del paese, il trentaquattrenne Kiluanji, che vive e lavora ormai da alcuni anni tra Angola e Portogallo, sceglie infatti di rilevarne e diffonderne le intrinseche contraddizioni, tra colonialismo e postcolonialismo, condizionamenti di ieri e indipendenza di oggi. E lo fa anche nel contesto di "Homem novo", apponendo un unico titolo contenitore a due distinti cicli di immagini fotografiche, che contribuiscono a rendere il pubblico internazionale dell'arte contemporanea sempre più partecipe, consapevole, ricettivo alle più promettenti espressioni culturali, creative, artistiche della rinascente identità africana. Non a caso, infatti, le tracce di trascorse sopraffazioni convivono con la propositiva vitalità dell'Angola del XXI secolo, sia negli scatti un po' come cartoline del suo "Redefining the power 75", sia, diversamente, in quelli che compongono la serie "Balumuka (Ambush)". Nel primo ciclo, realizzato sullo sfondo di edifici governativi, pubbliche piazze o altri scorci emblematici dell'Antigo regime, Kiluanji ha invitato una serie di giovani artisti, protagonisti a vario titolo della nuova scena angolana, a prendere posto su piedistalli un tempo occupati dai monumenti, oggi deposti, del colonialismo portoghese. Parallelamente, il ciclo "Balumuka (Ambush)", realizzato sempre a Luanda, documenta una sua ricognizione presso il forte militare São Miguel, dove, stipati in un deposito a cielo aperto, si conservano armi russe o mezzi militari di trasporto. Si tratta di cannoni, carri armati, jeep e altri "memorabilia" della guerra fredda, che interagiscono con statue di Nzinga Mbandi, Afonso Henriques o Vasco da Gama, cinquecenteschi eroi o sovrani che hanno emblematizzato nei secoli il dominio portoghese. Seppure polverosi, accatastati, delegittimati, restano tuttavia a testimoniare le implicazioni economiche e sociali del colonialismo, la storia dei suoi errori e orrori, le sue internazionali conseguenze ancora irrisolte o minimizzate. E ci appaiono come dei rischi latenti, dei traumi rimossi, ma sempre vivi, dei disinnescati pericoli, che permangono tuttavia nel territorio e nell'inconscio collettivo. Indipendente dal 1975, ma in pace dal 2002, dopo una guerra civile e una serie di dilanianti guerriglie, l'Angola non è stata solo ricostruita in tempi record. Animata da nuova autoconsapevolezza, nonché espressivamente libera, ricca di idee, vitalità e vivacità artistica, si è molto presto candidata a occupare una posizione leader nella futura topografia internazionale del contemporaneo. E lo scenario si è riconfigurato molto in fretta grazie a una Trienal de Luanda concepita in forma indersciplinare dall'artista-curatore angolano Fernando Alvim, che ha preso il via nel 2006 e sta per giungere alla sua terza edizione, e alla Sindika Dokolo African collection of contemporary art, che dopo l'acquisizione nel 2005 della già rilevante Hans Bogatzke collection ha accresciuto inesaustamente la sua raccolta e specifica autorevolezza in materia di artisti africani già affermati o emergenti. Curata da Simon Njami e Fernando Alvim, la Sindika Dokolo collection si è poi evoluta in fondazione, incentivando la nascita di nuove gallerie, nonché la confluenza e militanza degli artisti africani in Angola, trasformando Luanda in un luogo d'origine o d'elezione al quale aspirare, nel quale trasferirsi, in cui ritornare a vivere e a lavorare. Non stupisce, peraltro, che sempre la capitale angolana abbia intitolato la mostra "Check list Luanda pop" del 2007, allestita nel padiglione africano nel contesto della 52ª Biennale di Venezia. Ispirata dal successo di "Africa remix", un progetto espositivo firmato da Simon Njami e inaugurato nel 2004, che ha viaggiato fino al 2007 tra Dusseldorf, Londra, Parigi, Tokyo e Johannesburg, ospite d'importanti musei, l'esposizione "Check list Luanda pop" non ha potuto che alimentare la fama, oggi estesa in tutti gli angoli del pianeta, di artisti angolani come Kiluanji Kia Henda o Yonamine, N'Dilo Mutima o Nástio Mosquito, gettando peraltro nuova luce sui contemporanei di tutto il continente. E una nuova storia si sta inevitabilmente scrivendo. M.C.



Artisti che instillano vitalità e un inevitabile interessante quantum d'impegno nei loro immaginari. E da Kiluanji Kia Henda a Nástio Mosquito esplorano identità, attitudini e territori dell'Africa di oggi. Proiettandola nel futuro

Bili Bidjocka, "L'écriture infinie #3" (particolare), 2007, courtesy Sindika Dokolo African collection of contemporary art, Luanda. Nella pagina accanto. Kiluanji Kia Henda, "Balumuka (Ambush)" (particolare), 2010, courtesy galleria Fonti, Napoli. In apertura, da sinistra. N'Dilo Mutima, "Manroja. Ângulos periféricos" (particolare), 2006, courtesy Sindika Dokolo African collection of contemporary art, Luanda. Kiluanji Kia Henda, "Redefining the power IV" (particolare della serie 75, realizzata con il fashion designer Shunnuz Fiel), 2011, courtesy galleria Fonti, Napoli.

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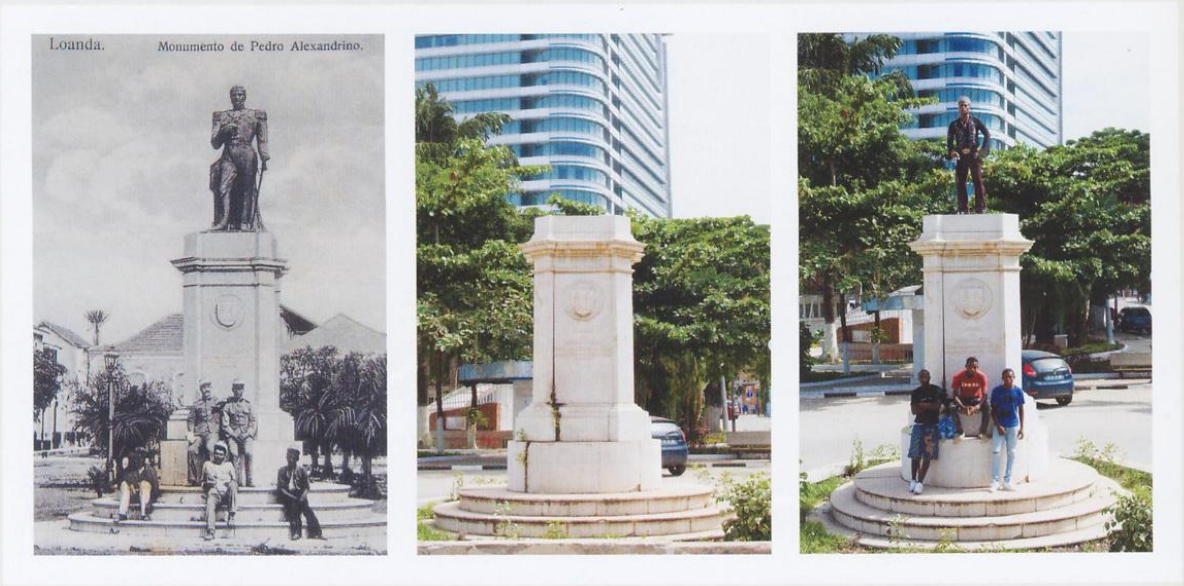
Kia Henda says that he hopes to 'find certain common factors, between various points on the planet, in order to shorten distances and improve dialogue'.



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IN FOCUS

Kiluanji Kia Henda

Post-colonial Angola; photography as both 'pliable fiction' and 'weapon of intervention and denunciation'

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by Sean O'Toole

Kiluanji Kia Henda lives and works in Luanda, Angola, and Lisbon, Portugal. This year, his work has been included in the group shows: 'Tomorrow Was Already Here', Museo Tamayo, Mexico City; 'Les Ateliers de Rennes – Biennale of Contemporary Art', Les Praires, Rennes, France; 'SuperPower: Africa in Science Fiction', Arnolfini, Bristol, UK; 'You Are Now Entering__', CCA Derry-Londonderry, UK; 'Doublebound Economies', Halle 14, Leipzig, Germany; and 'Experimental Station', Centro de Arte y Creación Industrial LABoral, Gijón, Spain. In 2013, his work will be included in shows at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon, the Centre Culturel Gulbenkian, Paris, France, and the Sharjah Art Museum, UAE.

1
From the series 'Balumuka – Ambush', 2010, photographic print mounted on aluminium, 40 × 30 cm

2
Redefining The Power III, from 'Series 75 with Miguel Prince', 2011, triptych, photographic print mounted on aluminium, each: 120 × 80 cm

3
The Return of the Astronauts (5:00am, 9th of June, 2007) from the series 'Icarus 13', 2008, photographic print mounted on acrylic, 80 × 120 cm

Luanda, the rehabilitated African port city where artist Kiluanji Kia Henda was born four years after Angola gained its independence from Portugal in 1975, is a place of recurring ellipses. Perhaps it is not so much a case of omission as incompletion that marks life in this increasingly gridlocked capital city on Africa's oil-rich western coastline. At one intersection where some of Luanda's tree-lined *avenidas* meet, a pedestal that once elevated the statue of Pedro Alexandrino da Cunha, a 19th-century colonial governor-general, stands empty. Outside the National Assembly it is the same: the white Deco-style plinth is also empty, the statue of its former occupant, Alfonso I, Portugal's first king, stored in a military stockyard alongside effigies of colonial adventurers and grandees of empire.

Shortly after independence, in an attempt to establish a new public narrative for its citizens, Angola's Marxist leadership installed an armoured car used by Agostinho Neto, the country's first post-independence president, on one of the unoccupied pedestals. It was a grotesquely prophetic choice. Angola's ruinous civil war, a late-Cold War conflict which dragged on from independence until 2002, plunged the country – which in 1975 was the world's fourth-largest coffee exporter – into radical decline. News and travel reports since have repeatedly commented on the city's vacant plinths, proposing them as a kind of metonym for a state in the process of becoming. Despite a recent oil boom, Angola's narrative of self – one that Kia Henda explicitly allies his practice to – is still in the process of reinvention.

Intrigued by the absent statues and the multiple colonial abuses they signalled, in 2010 Kia Henda visited the fortress of São Miguel with his camera. Set on a position overlooking Luanda's port, this fortification, built in 1576, was once a major point of origin in the transatlantic slave trade. Similar to photographer Guy Tillim, who tracked down the toppled statue of Welsh journalist and explorer Henry Stanley to a government transport lot in Kinshasa, Kia Henda photographed the sombre effigy of Alfonso I in the open-air stockyard. Aside from weapons of war, the yard also contained disassembled stone pieces that once portrayed seafarer Vasco da Gama, and, illogically, a towering bronze statue of Nzingha, the legendary 17th-century queen of pre-colonial Angola who was held captive in the fortress for resisting colonization.

Unlike the other statues, the queen, who appears in seven of the 12 photographs comprising Kia Henda's 'Balamuka –Ambush' (2010) series, was only a temporary visitor. Installed on a pedestal on Luanda's Kinaxixi Square in 2002, she was temporarily moved to São Miguel during an upgrade of the square. It all forms part of an ongoing process of restitution; in January, for example, 35 new monuments and historical sites were presented to Angola's Ministry of Culture. 'Balamuka – Ambush' – the earliest work in Kia Henda's work-in-progress *Homem Novo*, an open-ended exploration into the meaning of the 'new man' eulogized in the country's national anthem – is obviously about Angola's remaking. More formally, it is a descriptive work, which is where many photographers negotiating monuments and memory in postcolonial Africa – Tillim and David Goldblatt in particular – have left it.

Although schooled in southern Africa's austere documentary tradition, informally at first by his adoptive brother, Cassiano Bamba, who died soldiering in the civil war, later by the photojournalists Carlos Louzada and John Liebenberg, Kia Henda's photography is marked by its increasing refusal to simply *show*. His lens-based practice oscillates between an optimistic faith in the vérité style of documentary, and a more playful engagement with the photographs as pliable fictions, and also as artefacts of the ephemeral, performance in particular. A year after finding the toppled statues, Kia Henda collaborated with Miguel Prince and urban dandy Shunnuz Fiel to produce the series 'Redefining the Power' (2011). Luanda's much-remarked pedestals became the site for stylized performances, which Kia Henda photographed from the same vantage points used in a series of archival tourist postcards he had found. He juxtaposed the new and old photographs to distinguish the colonial 'then' from the independent 'now'.

Self-awareness is vital to his practice. 'I grew up in an experimental period in a country that is as young as I am, where there has always been, political options aside, a great and accessible cultural and even religious freedom,' remarked Kia Henda in an interview with Lígia Afonso published last year. He has directed this freedom towards interpreting Angola, which stands at the 'epicentre' of his investigative projects, not because of an exaggerated nationalism, but because through the particular he hopes 'to find certain common factors, between various points on the planet, in order to shorten distances and improve dialogue'. The idealistic nature of his project largely

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owes to Kia Henda's discovery, while living in Johannesburg in the late 1990s, of photography as 'a weapon of intervention and denunciation'. This near-militant faith in photography's activist capabilities is tempered by a rival impulse: photography, as he has acknowledged, is capable of 'sensationalism, omission or disorientation', traits that he has recognized as useful. His photographic installation *Icarus 13* (2008) – which stemmed from an invitation to contribute to a book by Cape Town artists – is instructive. The work, which describes an Angolan scientific mission to the sun, comprises a glass-domed architectural model and eight supporting photographs, one showing the needle-shaped solar spaceship, another the green iridescence from its launch, and an exterior view of the astronomical observatory.

Of course, the purported mission never happened. *Icarus 13* is an elaborate hoax: the green cast across the sky came from fireworks launched in a Luanda football stadium, the observatory is an unfinished provincial cinema theatre, and the spaceship is Neto's incomplete Russian-built mausoleum in Luanda. Reflecting on the work's sci-fi qualities – which recall Jean-Luc Godard's conceit with *Alphaville* (1965) in the way it proposes the ordinary (and in Angola incomplete) as fantastical and speculative – Kia Henda offered what could be construed as a defining motivation for his practice: 'There are two questions which are vital to the African context: the ability to write and know one's own history, and the ability to plan one's own future.'

THE HINDU

Africa aims for the final frontier

Aman Sethi

Artist Kiluanji Kia Henda photographed iconic structures around Luanda, Angola, and recast them as components of an imaginary space programme. Here, the mausoleum of Angola's first President, Antonio Agostinho Neto, is described as spaceship Icarus 13. Photo courtesy: Galleria Fonti, Naples

A pan-African space programme may have its detractors but the continent's policymakers believe that its benefits, including access to satellite data and better communications, far outweigh the costs

The space shuttle Icarus 13, with its slender spires and massive flared base, is parked by the seafront a few blocks from downtown Luanda, the capital of Angola.

But the shuttle will never leave the oil-rich west African country for the weightless serenity of space — Icarus 13 is not really a space ship, it is a mausoleum, an art project, a constructivist gesture in concrete.

"My idea for 'Icarus13' has a lot to do with the idea of celebration, but at the same time, the failure of many post-independent African nations," wrote Kiluanji Kia Henda, the Angolan artist behind Icarus 13, in an e-mail.

Mr. Kia Henda took photographs of iconic buildings around Luanda and recast them as components of an utterly imaginary pan-African space mission: an abandoned building was photographed to look like an astronomy observatory; the Soviet-funded mausoleum of Antonio Agostinho Neto, Angola's first President and Kremlin ally, became "Icarus 13" — a spaceship that would take an all-African crew on a fantastical journey to the sun.

"The misery of many African societies forces us to be submitted on the present and basic issues," said Mr. Kia Henda. "For me it is also important to find a new approach on the reading of African contemporary creation."

Last week, a gathering of Communication Ministers in Khartoum considered a proposal not dissimilar from Mr. Kia Henda's art: if realised, Afrispace will be a pan-African space agency committed to "promote, for exclusively peaceful purposes, cooperation among African states in space research."

The announcement triggered a wave of chatter on social networks with many, predominantly western, commentators implying that African governments could better serve their citizens by investing in anti-poverty measures. Yet, much like Mr. Kia Henda's art, the continent's policymakers believe they must think beyond the immediacy of the present and support transformational technology.

"A pan-African space programme that is well aligned to bring immense benefit to the needs on the continent will have significant economic impact," said Vanashree Maharaj, spokesperson for the South African National Space Agency (Sansa), adding that countries too poor to invest in space technologies would benefit from access to satellite data to improve environmental resource and disaster management, and could contribute to scientific knowledge.

Apart from the absence of the sort of detailed geological and climatic data that satellites could provide, African nations are also hamstrung by some of the world's most expensive yet rudimentary telecommunication infrastructure.

At present, the entire continent has less bandwidth than Norway; almost all of which comes from 20-odd communication satellites, positioned over Africa, that are owned by non-African companies. "Space technologies…provide commercial opportunities and strategic advantages for a tiny minority of countries controlling them," claims an Afrispace working paper.

Space technologies can be divided into the rocket science needed to put a satellite in space, and the earth station know-how necessary to make full use of the satellite once it is in orbit.

"No African nation has the ability to launch a satellite even though Africa has a massive advantage having land on the equator, meaning lower costs for getting into orbit," said Brad Inggs, CEO of Orbital Horizon, a South African company investing in commercial space flight and space advocacy. Launching from equatorial sites, Mr. Inggs said, could result in fuel savings of up to 25 per cent when compared to launch-pads further north.

At present, countries like Ghana, South Africa, and Nigeria are investing in ground stations rather than rockets. While Ghana has set up the Ghana Space and Technology Centre that hopes to become a regional focal point for remote sensing, meteorological and communication technologies, Nigeria launched three satellites last year. The NigComSat-1R communication satellite was built with Chinese support, while a British company built the NigeriaSat-2 and NigeriaSat-X imaging satellites. All three were launched from foreign launch pads.

Rather than each country investing in its own programmes, Michael Afful, spokesperson for Ghana's Space Generation Advisory Council, believes that a pan-African approach "will allow for the sharing of risks and costs and ensure the availability of skilled and sufficient human resources. It will also ensure a critical size of geographical area and population required … for some space applications."

Yet, the greatest obstacles to Afrispace could be political and institutional rather than technological, says Chandrashekar Srinivasan who worked at the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) at a time when many questioned the premise of a developing country like India investing in space research.

"A number of detailed cost benefit studies have indicated that the benefits of the [Indian space] programme far outweigh the costs," said Prof. Chandrashekar, now a Professor of Corporate Strategy and Policy at the Indian Institute of Management in Bangalore. "Africa as a whole is a viable entity for a space programme, [but] it is difficult to get a group of countries at different stages of development and with different capabilities and internal needs to work together."

While a lot of the technology can now be bought off the shelf rather than built from scratch, Prof. Chandrashekar believes the interface between technology and good governance is the most critical infrastructure. "This aspect is pretty bad even in India today," he said.

If it is to succeed, Afrispace must build institutions to leverage scientific infrastructure into development gains, or metaphorically risk becoming a mausoleum like Icarus 13.