

BEAUTY SALONS AND THE BEAST

“Ultimately... public art... is about art and the public. And as long as that public is not just a small group of in-the-know followers of art, but a complex nation of inequality, varying access, varying levels of free time; as long as it is about publics.”

In 2008 I witnessed the inauguration of what has grown to become one of the most prominent public art festivals in the world, *Infecting The City*, a festival that hosts a range of different types of site-specific art interventions and art performances in the city of Cape Town, South Africa, creating a platform from which art becomes freely accessible to anyone and everyone. I was only in the beginning of the third year of my bachelor’s degree at the time, and still rather clueless on what direction I would like my art practice (and my career) to take, but I remember what a big impression the idea behind this festival had on me, and how I wished for even a segment of that idea to one day be experienced in my city, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. I also wished to be one of the organizers for the Dar es Salaam version, in whatever form and scope the context would allow. This year, eight years after this experience that left a lasting impression on me, I am finally able to do so with the apexart Franchise Exhibition *Beauty Salons and the Beast*.



Eric Hair Cutz, Dar es Salaam

Beauty Salons and the Beast is a brainchild of two artists – myself, Rehema Chachage, and Jan van Esch – who also happens to be on the management team for Nafasi Art Space, the only existing contemporary art center in Dar es Salaam. The idea developed as a response to a trend that we have noticed: that attending



Amani Abeid, *World under siege*, Mixed drawing techniques, 16 1/2 x 23 in., 2014

art exhibitions is not really a tradition for most Tanzanians. Hence, not enough locals (as compared to the expatriate audience) attend art exhibitions and other cultural events taking place in galleries and cultural centers in the city. As organizers of maybe more than 50 percent of these exhibitions, we often find ourselves wondering where this Tanzanian public is, and in what ways we can make it possible for them to access the art and the artists.

After much brainstorming, we concluded that perhaps the only effective way to reach more of the public would be to borrow from the *Infecting The City* methodology and experiment with ‘pop-up’ art exhibitions in public spaces that draw a big concentration of Tanzanians. We say, ‘*If they wont follow the art, let the art follow them;*’ and we are on a mission to follow our audience wherever they may be. For this first attempt at ‘pop-up’ exhibitions, we decided to explore beauty salons and barbershops as sites for intervention, after encountering an article from which this exhibition takes its title, *Beauty Salons and the Beast* by Erick Mchome, which highlights the extent to which salons have become one of the booming businesses in the city of Dar es Salaam, and where one finds a large concentrated mix of upper, middle, and lower class Tanzanians spending their spare time, especially on weekends.² This is the kind of audience we have, for the longest time, been trying to gain access to.

Since this is our first experimentation with ‘pop-up’ exhibitions, we thought it best to pilot it with beauty salons and barbershops around or nearby the area where we are based, and hence the choice of Msasani area – which is the administrative ward within

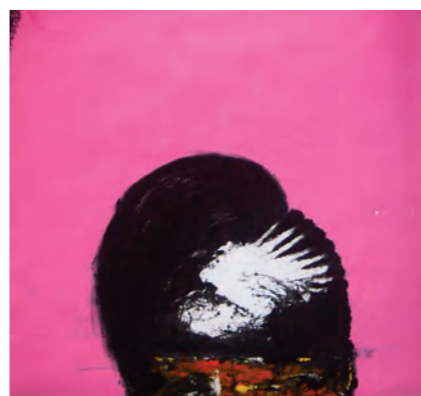
Kinondoni district. Msasani is also placed mid-way between the peninsula, where most middle and upper class Tanzanians reside together with the expatriate community, and Msasani village, an area that was originally a fishermen’s village and still has a large concentration of lower class Tanzanians. Msasani is also easily accessible by (and most of the businesses in the area cater to) other settlers from the rest of Kinondoni district, majority of which are a mix of lower class and middle class Tanzanians. This, therefore, gives us access to a wide range of locals we would never normally see on opening nights in the art center.

Like an increasing number of artists today, the artists selected for *Beauty Salons and the Beast* are interested in the public sphere and in questioning their role in society by using artistic media and creative expression to engage with communities to communicate, explore, and articulate issues of local significance. They employ this exhibition as a means to take art outside of the four white walls that they are used to, to access viewers other than the traditional gallery goers, and to listen to alternative views on their ‘messages’ and ‘media’ so as to develop an ‘eye’ and ‘ear’ for local aesthetics and interpretation of contemporary art. Through their interventions, they want to challenge their audience to pay attention and perceive more deeply the environment that they occupy – the situation through which their interventions are received and the resulting discourse are key elements. In a way, these artists are assuming the role of advocates (through art) for alternative perspectives that challenge assumptions, beliefs, and community values.



Cloud Chatanda, *Global Warning*, Clay and acrylic, 23 x 15 3/4 in., 2014

There are many ways to draw schools of thought and meaning from one artist’s contribution to the next. As curators for *Beauty Salons and the Beast*, we allowed for whatever personal and distinctive interpretations that the artists may bring to the idea behind the exhibition. And although individually, each artist’s topics are highly specialized, the web of experiences stirred outside and within the



Gadi Ramadhani, *Blind Beauty*, 2 Monoprints, 24 x 24 in., 2014

of office. With the voting practice in mind, the artists collectively agreed on *multiple choice(s)* as a starting point and the overarching theme – as a form of assessment tool in which respondents are asked to select the best possible answer (or answers) out of the choices from a list, one discovers that the answer is more often than not ‘all of the above’ – there are *multiple choices*.

The collaboration between **Jan van Esch** and **Aika Kirei**, for example, makes use of this multiple-choice assessment tool to pose questions that address opportunities (or lack thereof) that small and medium entrepreneurs get. On the subject of elections, and following on her late father (a sociology professor and a social critic) who was believed to be the first to play with these words in the same manner, **Rehema Chachage**’s intervention is a wordplay, turning (and hence ridiculing) the idea behind the ruling party’s 2005 election campaign motto *ARI, NGUVU, KASI*

mélange of the artists is expansive and mirrors the range of complexities of our nation and politics.

Included in *Beauty Salons and the Beast* are works that grab the imagination and resonate with our immediate time and place. Most of the contributions are closely tied with the upcoming general election in October 2015, and are reflective on our 50+ years of independence and 20+ years of practicing liberal democracy with contradictions therein, one of the most endemic being how to curb corruption and abuse

(*ZEAL, STRENGTH, HASTE*) – which in reality they have delivered very little or the same but in the opposite direction—into an opposite, i.e., A, -NGU, -KA (ANGUKA-FALL). In a parallel but distinct fashion, the intervention by **Gadi Ramadhani**, which is a continuation of his *Blindfolded* series, depicts how (in the artist’s view) we, at present, all seem to be walking with ‘hypothetical’ blindfolds, completely unaware of how the ruling system (politicians, media, etc.) is constantly manipulating us.

On the subject of choice(s) or making a choice(s), the installation with 50 Barbie dolls hanging upside down and tinted in *50 Shades of Grey*, **Delphine Buysse**’s intervention, examines dualities in life and the difficulties that come with making choice(s), while **Eneida Sanches** explores the same in her intervention but from a slightly different angle. With her drawings of the missing men in her life, hers is more of a confusion and reflection about these missing men and their choice to leave her... the question being: where have they gone and what made them leave?

On a more positive take on the subject, **Cloud Chatanda** depicts in his surreal mix of sculpture and illustration how ancient and unknown creatures that had long been frozen in Mt. Kilimanjaro are woken up to find a chaotic and imbalanced Tanzania and take it upon themselves to fight the causes of this imbalance and restore the nation back to its natural order. And in a similar manner, **Amani Abeid**’s intervention also exhibits a more positive take on the subject through his depiction of a Tanzanian superhero that comes forward to save the world from disaster, after all the famous, loved, and western superheroes failed to do so.



Rehema Chachage, *ANGUKA (Fall)*, Installation, Dimensions variable, 2014

Vita Malulu’s intervention, which is more of a satirical take on the subject, comments on the one-piece Kanga fabric (*kanga moko*) and its newly found freedom as it has recently expanded on its traditionally private and domestic use and is now seen in the streets, worn by women in broad day light.



Vita Malulu, *Kanga Moko (One Piece Kanga)*, Sculpture installation, Metal wire and Plastic, Dimensions variable, 2014

Each artist is trying to, in his or her own distinctive way, voice his/her own story/concern. To quote the Executive Director of Africa Center, Tanner Methvin, “The propaganda is that we don’t have the authority to freely express ourselves. Our voice requires permission from someone or something that does. It is our teacher, principal, boss, or the government official who allows us to dance, sing, paint, photograph, write, or simply speak. They tell us when we have been selected, picked, or chosen and only then do we stand up... This of course is a myth, but one we all participate in progressing every time we suppress ourselves and avoid the opportunity to tell our story.”³

Rehema Chachage © 2015
Franchise Program Winner 2014-2015

1. Jay Pather, Curator’s Note in *Infecting the City: Public Arts Festival*, March 10-15, 2014, Cape Town City Centre, exhibition catalog, p. 3.
2. Eric Mchome, “Beauty Salons and the Beast,” *Mail & Guardian*, Dec. 12, 2011: <http://mg.co.za/article/2011-12-12-beauty-salons-and-the-beast>.
3. Tanner Methvin, Introductory Note in *Infecting the City: Public Arts Festival*, March 10-15, 2014, Cape Town City Centre, exhibition catalog, p. 2.

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Beauty Salons and the Beast

Amani Abeid
Delphine Buysse
Rehema Chachage
Cloud Chatanda
Eneida Sanches
Aika Kirei
Vita Malulu
Gadi Ramadhani
Jan Van Esch

organized by
Rehema Chachage and
Jan van Esch

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cover image: **Delphine Buysse**, *50 Shades of Grey*, Installation, 2014

SALUNI ZA UREMBO NA URIMBO

'Mwisho wa siku...sanaa ya umma...inahusu sanaa na umma. Na hilo litaendelea kuwa hivyo pale ambapo huo umma siyo tu kikundi kidogo cha watu wanaojua na kufuatilia sanaa, bali ni mchanganyiko wa taifa lenye matabaka, fursa tofauti, viwango mbalimbali vya kuwa na muda wa kutosha; hivyo basi, sanaa ya umma hakika itakuwa ni ya umma pale tu inapohusu vilivyo vya umma.'

Mwaka 2008 nilishuhudia uzinduzi wa kile ambacho sasa kimekuwa tamasha maarufu sana la sanaa duniani lilulikanalo kama *Infecting The City*, yaani *'Kuliambukiza Jiji'*. Hili ni tamasha linaloshirikisha aina nyingi za sanaa na maonyesho katika jiji la Cape Town nchini Afrika Kusini na hivyo kutoa nafasi na fursa kwa mtu yeyote kuzifikia na kuona kazi mbalimbali za sanaa. Kipindi hicho nilikuwa ndiyo kwanza naanza mwaka wangu wa tatu wa masomo ya Shahada ya kwanza ya Sanaa, hivyo, hata sikujua mwelekeo wangu kitaaluma na kisanii utakuwaje. Lakini nakumbuka jinsi gani wazo la walioanzisha tamasha hilo lilivyong'usa na kunifanya nitamani siku moja na sisi tuazime hata sehemu ndogo tu ya wazo hilo ili kuwe na tamasha kama hilo katika jiji letu la Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Pia nilitamani niwe mmoja wa waandaaji wa tamasha la aina hiyo jijini Dar es Salaam kwa kadri vionjo, uwezo na muktadha wetu utakavyoruhusu. Hatimaye mwaka huu, ikiwa ni mwaka wa nane toka niupate ule uzoefu ulionigusa kwa mara ya kwanza, nimefanikiwa kuifikia azma hiyo kwa kupitia maonyesho ya Apexart Franchise tuyaitayo *"Beauty Salons and the Beast"*, yaani, *'Saluni za Urembo na Urimbo.'*



MA Barbershop, Dar es Salaam

Tamasha la *Saluni za Urembo na Urimbo* ni zao la wasanii wawili – mimi mwenyewe, Rehema Chachage, na Jan van Esch – ambao pia tupo kwenye menejimenti ya taasisi ijulikanayo kama Nafasi Art Space, kituo pekee cha sanaa ya kisasa jijini Dar es Salaam. Wazo la kuwa na tamasha hili liliubuka kufuatia hali tuionayo Tanzania, yaani: kuhudhuria maonyesho ya sanaa kiukweli siyo utamaduni wa Watanzania walio wengi. Hivyo, ukilinganisha na raia wa kigeni, hakuna Watanzania wa kutosha wanaohudhuria maonyesho ya utamaduni pamoja na matukio mengine ya kiutamaduni katika viinge vya tamaduni jijini. Sisi kama waandaaji wa takribani asilimia 50 ya maonyesho hayo, mara kwa mara tunajikuta tukijiuliza umma wa Watanzania uko wapi na ni kwa namna gani tunaweza kufanya iwezekane kwa umma huo kupata fursa ya kuona sanaa na kuwafikia wasanii.



Jan van Esch and Aika Kirei, *Multiple Choice*, Intervention, Dimensions variable, 2014

Baada ya kubunga bongo na kutafakari sana, tukahitimisha kuwa labda njia pekee ya kuweza kuwafikia watu wengi zaidi ni kwa kuazima mbinu ya *'Kuambukiza Jiji'* na kujaribu kufanya maonyesho yanayoibuka 'papo kwa hapo' katika maeneo ya umma ili kuvutia mkusanyiko mkubwa wa Watanzania. Tunasema, *'Kama hawataifuata sanaa, basi tuiachie sanaa iwafuate wao'*, na tupo kwenye mkakati wa kuwafuata (umma wa) watazamaji wa sanaa popote pale walipo. Katika jaribio hili la kwanza la maonyesho ya 'papo kwa hapo', tumeamua kutumia saluni kama maeneo ya maonyesho baada ya kuona makala ya *Beauty Salons and the Beast* (yaani *Saluni za Urembo na Urimbo*) iliyoandikwa na Erick Mchome. Makala hiyo inaonyesha ni kwa kiwango gani saluni zimekuwa ni biashara zinazokuja juu kwa kasi jijini Dar es Salaam ambapo tunaona kundi kubwa la watu wa matabaka ya juu, kati na chini ya kiuchumi/kimaisha nchini Tanzania yakitumia muda wao wa ziada humo, hasa mwisho wa wiki, yaani, wikiendi. Hawa ndiyo aina ya watazamaji ambao maonyesho yetu yanalenga kuwafikia.

Katika jaribio hili la kwanza la maonyesho ya 'papo kwa hapo', tumeona ni vyema tujaribu kwanza kutumia saluni zilizoko katika maeneo ya karibu na tulipo, hivyo tumechagua eneo la Msasani ambalo kiutawala ni kata katika Wilaya ya Kinondoni. Msasani pia ipo kati ya Peninsula (yaani maeneo ya Masaki/Oysterbay) ampapo wanaishi wageni wengi pamoja na Watanzania wengi wa daraja/tabaka la kati na la juu kiuchumi/kimaisha, na Kijiji cha Msasani ambacho zamani kilikuwa ni kijiji cha wawuvi na mpaka sasa kina mkusanyiko mkubwa wa watanzania wa tabaka la chini kiuchumi. Hali kadhalika ni rahisi kwa watu wengine kutoka maeneo mengine ya Wilaya ya Kinondoni (wengi wao wakiwa ni mchanganyiko wa tabaka la chini na la kati kimaisha/kiuchumi) kupafikia Msasani maana biashara nyingi zinazowahudumia ziko hapo. Hivyo mazingira hayo yanatupa fursa ya kuwafikia Watanzania wengi na wa aina nyingi ambao kwa kawaida hatuwaoni kwenye maonyesho ya wazi ya usiku tuyafanyao katika kituo chetu cha Nafasi Art Space.

Kama walivyo wasanii wengi wanaongezeka leo, wasanii waliochaguliwa kwa ajili ya maonyesho ya Saluni za Urembo na Urimbo wanapendelea sanaa ya umma na kuhoji nafasi zao katika jamii kwa kutumia sanaa kuwasiliana na jamii husika kuhusu masuala muhimu ya kijamii. Wanatumia maonyesho haya kama mbinu ya kuitoa sanaa kwenye kuta nne za kituo cha sanaa walichokizoea na kuzipeleka nje kwa watu ambao siyo kawaida yao kuja kwenye vituo vya sanaa. Kwa kuwafikia watu hao, wasanii hawa pia wanapata fursa ya kusikiliza maoni mbadala kuhusu ujumbe wao wa kisanii na hivyo kuwawezesha kukuza maono na usikivu wa vionjo na tafsiri za Kitanzania kuhusu sanaa ya kisasa. Kupitia kitendo hiki, wasanii wanataka kuwapa changamoto watazamaji na wao wazingatie na watazame kwa undani zaidi mazingira waliyopo – yaani, muktadha ambao sanaa yao inapokelewa nao na mitazamo inayoibuka humo ni masuala muhimu katika maonyesho haya. Kwa namna fulani, wasanii hawa wanachukua nafasi ya watetezi (kupitia sanaa) wa mitazamo mbadala inayohoji tafsiri, imani na misimamo ya jamii.

Kuna njia nyingi za kutafsiri mitazamo na maana ya mchango wa kila msanii. Sisi kama wasimamizi wa maonyesho haya ya *Saluni za Urembo na Urimbo*, tumetoa fursa kwa mitazamo na tafsiri yoyote ile ambayo wasanii wataiongeza kwenye wazo letu la kuwa na maonyesho haya. Japokuwa kila mada ya msanii katika nafasi yake imejikita kwenye taaluma au mfumo fulani wa sanaa, mnyanganyiko wa uzoefu wa ndani na wa nje wa wasanii wote, kwa pamoja, ni mpana na unaakisi uzoefu wa nchi yetu na siasa zake katika mapana yake.

Maonyesho yaliyojumuishwa katika *Saluni za Urembo na Urimbo* ni yale ambayo yanagusa fikra zetu na kugusia kipindi hiki na mazingira yetu ya sasa nchini. Mengi yanagusia uchaguzi mkuu wa Oktoba 2015 na kurejea miaka 50+ ya Uhuru na miaka 20+ ya mfumo wa demokrasia ya kiliberali pamoja na mikanganyiko yake, mmojawapo ukiwa ni namna ya kuzuia rushwa/ufisadi na matumizi mabaya ya madaraka. Kwa kuzingatia upigaji kura, wasanii kwa pamoja walikubaliana tuanze na mfumo wa maswali ya kuchagua kama mbinu ya kwanza na mada mtambuka – kama namna ya kutathmini ambapo watu wanaulizwa wachagua jibu au majibu kutoka kwenye orodha ya majibu, mtu hugudua kuwa mara nyingi jibu linakuwa ni majibu yote, yaani kuta mengi ya kuchagua.

Jan van Esch na **Aika Kirei**, kwa mfano, wanatumia 'mbinu ya kutathmini kwa kutumia maswali ya kuchagua' kuuliza maswali kuhusu namna ambavyo wajasiriamali wadogo wadogo na wa kati wanavyopata au kukosa fursa. Na, kama ilivyokuwa kwa baba yake aliyekuwa Profesa wa Sosholojia na Mchambuzi wa masuala ya Kijamii na ambaye anasemekana kuwa mtu wa kwanza kuyachezeshwa kikejeli maneno ya kaulimbiu ya chama tawala ya uchaguzi wa mwaka 2005, **Rehema Chachage** naye anayachezea kisanii maneno hayo ya ARI, NGUVU, KASI ambayo kihalisia yamekuwa kinyume chake na kuwa A, -NGU, -KA (ANGUKA) kutokana na chama hicho kushindwa kutekeleza mambo mengi waliyoahidi. Vivyo hivyo, japo kwa mbinu tofauti, **Gadi Ramadhani** anatumia mwendelezo wa maonyesho yake ya *Blindfolded* (Kufungwa Macho) kuonyesha, kwa mtazamo wa kisanii, ni jinsi gani leo sisi kama jamii tumefungwa kitambaa machoni hivyo ni kama vile tunatembea bila kujua/kuona jinsi ambavyo mfumo tawala (wanasiasa, vyombo vya habari n.k.) unatuhadaa.

Kwenye suala la maamuzi na kuchagua, **Delphine Buysse** anatumia madoli 50 yanayoning'inia kichwa chini miguu juu na ambayo yamepakwa rangi ya kijivu kwa asilimia 50, kuonyesha na kuchambua mtanziko wa maisha na ugumu utokanao na kuamua/kuchagua. **Eneida Sanches** naye analitazama suala hilo hilo ila kwa namna tofauti. Kwa

kutumia michoro ya wanaume ambao hawapo (tena) katika maisha yake, sanaa yake inaonyesha mikanganyiko na tafakuri kuhusu wanaume hao na uchaguzi/uamuzi wao wa kumwacha... swali lake kuu likiwa ni; wako wapi na nini kiliwafanya waondoke/wamwache?

Cloud Chatanda anakuja na mtazamo chanya zaidi kwenye mada hii kwa kutumia mchanganyiko tete wa uchoraji na uchongaji kuonyesha jinsi viembe vya zamani visivyojulikana ambavyo kwa muda mrefu vimegana kwenye Mlima Kilimanjaro vinaamka na kukuta Tanzania iliyo katika hali tata na kuamua kupambana na matatizo ili kulirudisha Taifa kwenye hali yake ya asili. Hali kadhalika **Amani Abeid** naye anakuja na mtazamo chanya kwa kuonyesha shujaa anaesitokeza (kutoka Tanzania) kuikoa dunia kutoka kwenye majanga baada ya mashujaa maarufu na wapendwao wa nchi za magharibu kushindwa kufanya hivyo.



Eneida Sanches, *Missing Men*, Mixed media, 23 x 15 3/4 in., 2014

Onyesho la **Vita Malulu**, ambalo limejikita zaidi kwenye kejeli, linatumia 'kango moko', yaani kipande kimoja cha kanga chenye vijijamano au vijembe, ambapo tunaona kanga ikiwa imepata uhuru zaidi hivi karibuni baada ya kuacha utamaduni wa kuwa tu vazi la kuvaliwa nyumbani kwa matumizi ya ndani na kuwa pia vazi linaloonekana mitaani, likiwa limevaliwa na wanawake mchana kweupe.

Kila msanii anajaribu, kwa namna yake ya pekee, kupaza sauti yake kuelezea yale yanayomgusa. Kama Mkurugenzi Mtendaji wa Kituo cha Afrika, Tanner Methvin anavyosema, "propaganda ni kusema hatuna mamlika ya kujieleza kwa Uhuru. Eti sauti zetu zinahitaji ruhusa kutoka kwa mtu au kitu fulani chenye mamlika hayo. Kuwa walimu wetu, wakuu wa taasis za elimu, mabosi wetu, na maofisa wa Serikali ndiyo wanaturuhusu kucheza muziki, kuimba, kuchora, kupiga picha, kuandika, au hata kuongea tu. Wanatambia lini tumechaguliwa au tumeteuliwa na hapo ndipo tu tunaposimama...Hili kwa hakika ni hekaya lakini ambayo tunashiriki kuitunga na kuikuza kila mara tunapojibana wenyewe na kuzikimbia fursa za kuelezea visa vyetu wenyewe."

Rehema Chachage © 2015
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