

LUANDA'S MONUMENTS

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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 Assumpção 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. Henrique*—the only such plaza to retain its name following Angola's independence. 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



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.

of Portugal's fascist Prime Minister António de Oliveira 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



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

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 anti-colonial 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. Its 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.

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



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

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 Oliveira 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 aesthetization 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).

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.



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

These focused primarily on the development of high-speed 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 ax 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.

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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 full-scale 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 coningle 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.

Planning in Luanda has progressed only in fits and starts, shaped during the colonial period by dominant 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



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

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.

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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 left-over 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).

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 war-torn 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



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

photographs sartorial trend-setters and celebrated dancers of *ku duro*, 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 reemergence 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.

“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



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

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 coopted 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 “where-in 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 Franz 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.

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