

**TRANSLATION AS A CREATIVE ACT: CULTURAL  
HYBRIDITY AS A CONCEPT IN SELECTED  
CONTEMPORARY ARTWORKS**

by

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## **Declaration**

I declare that *Translation as a creative act: cultural hybridity as a concept in selected contemporary artworks* is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.

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## **Summary**

### **Title:**

Translation as a creative act: cultural hybridity as a concept in selected contemporary artworks.

### **Summary:**

The gap between diverse cultures living in a globalized world is not intransigent nor unassumingly flexible. This space is an arena of dissimilarities and correlations, which result in interactions that incite unusual expectations. ‘Cultural hybridity’ is clearly mirrored within contemporary society. New methods and approaches are required to comprehend the lived experiences of escalating displacement. This research traces the trajectory of migration, identity, self and other from the point of view of contemporary diasporic artists. Notions of ethnicity, authenticity, identity, transnationality, singularity and duality are debated against the backdrop of the creative practices of Anish Kapoor and Yinka Shonibare. Informed by Homi K. Bhabha’s concept of the third space, and also theories of hermeneutic translation by Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur, this dissertation creatively and critically investigates the ambiguities and ambivalences in this field of inquiry.

### **List of key terms:**

Art; Culture; Displacement; Globalization; Hermeneutics; Heterogeneity; Hybridity; Kapoor (Anish); Otherness; Postcolonial; Shonibare (Yinka); Translation.

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## **Preface**

This dissertation, which focuses on cultural hybridity, has a direct relation to my existence as an artist. Personal displacement from India to Botswana sparked my interest in the phenomenon of disorientation. Subsequently this inquiry extended to concept of hybridization of culture with its far-reaching effect on the contemporary individual and the collective psyche. Hybridity and its heterogeneous, interconnectedness open possibilities for expression in a diverse range of innovative processes, which have also influenced my own creative practice. Exploration of the notion of ‘in-betweenness’ in the work of the selected artists, Yinka Shonibare and Anish Kapoor, has been fundamental to this venture. My theoretical and technical research, demonstrated in the exhibition, *Trajectories* (2017), explored related concepts of in-betweenness that inform cultural hybridity. *Trajectories* is documented in an accompanying catalogue, which will assist in the reading and better understanding of the hypothesis discussed in the dissertation.

Culture, translation and hybridity have been well researched academically, however minimal literature has been found on the connection between them, particularly when it comes to the visual arts. Even less has been published by artists, commenting on these issues, so I hope to make a contribution in this regard. In this dissertation the introduction and the literature review investigate hybridity as a concept in the context of culture, language and globalization. This area of research required an interdisciplinary approach. Contributory theories relating to these ideas are considered in Chapter Two to establish key appraisals around inter-cultural communication, translation and interpretation. Chapter Three investigates the intersection between observations regarding hybridity (Bhabha), linguistic hospitality (Ricoeur), and the fusion of horizons by Gadamer. The chapter also outlines a critical analysis and comparison between these concepts and the selected artists’ works. These three chapters further inform Chapter Four on my own theoretical and art-making practice, which decodes and uses methods of translation to incorporate concepts such as in-betweenness and hybridity. The Conclusion of the dissertation substantiates findings that I set out to achieve in the research questions and the aims of the study.

The limited scope of this dissertation prevents an in depth discussion on all the complex interdisciplinary theories referred to. However, it does attempt to briefly position certain concepts in relation to this momentous topic and indicates points for future contemplation and research.

### **Acknowledgements**

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And most importantly, my family. My loving wife Ajitha Manjesh, my son Mythréyan, my daughter Mrinālini and Rufus for their unconditional love and understanding. Your endless support has made this possible. I love you all.



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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The extensive displacement of people and diminishing distance between cultures<sup>1</sup> has been attributed to globalization.<sup>2</sup> These phenomena have not only intensified the process of intercultural interaction but amplified the importance of cultural translation.<sup>3</sup> In order to disengage from diverse cultures and histories and facilitate communication, it has become imperative for contemporary communities, involved in multiple layers of contact, to devise creative approaches or act within a process of so-called hybridity.<sup>4</sup> In our current global society, citizens can be observed as functioning within a system that interacts through virtually non-existing or porous boundaries and where communication has become complex. The representation of multicultural spaces in contemporary societies influences us to re-conceptualize notions such as home, roots and locale. The information networks with blazing speeds existing along with social network communities have already verified these facts. These networks have established cultural transcendence beyond the

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<sup>1</sup> Culture may exemplify the most enriching and inspiring foundations of a society's traditions, but as the cultural theorist Edward Said (1993: xii) argues, it is "the articulations of a specific world view", in terms of a shared culture, a sort of collective-self, which people have when their history and ancestry are mutual. "Cultures can be regarded as complex semantic clusters (...) and more than language games and translation they are 'forms of life' comprising, in addition to written texts, social customs, religious beliefs, rituals, and practices. Moreover, cultures are internally diversified and unfinished, that is, always evolving and on the move" (Dallmayr 2009:23).

<sup>2</sup> "[G]lobalization is a multidimensional process, taking place simultaneously within the spheres of the economy, of politics, of technological developments – particularly media and communication technologies – of environmental change and of culture" (Tomlinson 2007:352).

<sup>3</sup> Translation: an act, process, or instance of translating: such as  
a: a rendering from one language into another; also: the product of such a rendering  
b: a change to a different substance, form, or appearance: conversion  
c: a transformation of coordinates in which the new axes are parallel to the old ones (Merriam-Webster Online (Sa)).

<sup>4</sup> Hybrid:  
1: an offspring of two animals or plants of different races, breeds, varieties, species, for example a *genera* or a hybrid of two roses; 2: a person whose background is a blend of two diverse cultures or traditions; 3: something heterogeneous in origin or composition: composite hybrids of complementary DNA and RNA strands or a hybrid of medieval and renaissance styles (Merriam-Webster Online (Sa)).

parameters of cartography and traditional collective exchanges. Affordable, more comfortable travel facilities have added to the conundrum. Art and artists of today are no exception and are also entangled in the dynamics of this phenomenon. Contemporary philosopher and curator Nicolas Bourriaud (2009:14) points out that “Displacement has become a method of depiction, and ... artistic styles and formats must henceforth be regarded from the viewpoint of diaspora, migration and exodus”.

This research project, with the title *Translation as a creative act: Cultural hybridity as a concept in selected contemporary artworks*, focusses on the complexities, ambiguities and ambivalences of existing ‘cultural hybridity’ and its relationship to contemporary art practices. Traditional geographical boundaries have become flexible, especially with the open border policy in Europe. Anthropologists such as Arjun Appadurai (1991:195), amongst others, have already argued for more than a decade that we “can no longer privilege a single location in order to determine the characteristics of a given cultural group”. This (together with the internet) has impacted on culture and is a phenomenon currently influencing the social construction of reality and communication. Translation and interpretation have become inevitable. This in turn has resulted in a mode of cultural hybridity. According to the Australian academic Nikos Papastergiadis (2007:193), “Identity is always conceived in the ‘twixt of displacement and reinvention’”. I argue that artists whose identities are evolved or shaped out of displacement experience both a sense of separateness, but also a particular type of integration. Their legacy or oeuvre of artworks verifies the results of attempting to resolve this ambivalence of being different or the Other in their existence.

## **1.2 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY**

Ideally, cultural communities can be identified, positioned and comprehended within their localities. Their identity surfaces through a cultural pattern within their territory. A singular cultural system based on common language, behaviour and values forms the basis upon which the cultural community exchanges meaning collectively. For example, my own community of *Kerala State*, from the southern-most part of India, is considered to have unique cultural patterns of identification

known as *Malayalee* (those who speak the language Malayalam, a combination of Sanskrit and Tamil, have similar rituals, and eat and dress in a similar fashion). The collective Malayalee community living in Botswana, which also represents myself, communicates in a similar pattern of behaviour as a subculture within the Tswana culture. Individuals living within a foreign community cannot be excluded from different cultural influences. It is difficult to be totally devoid of culture as a phenomenon. This includes the faculties of understanding, the meaning of reality, and the undertone of the experience in the local and the global.

The vast majority of us live local lives. But the impact of globalization has changed the very texture of this locality and therefore the nature of cultural experience in general. It is apparent that this borderline or limit of identity plays a significant role in shaping the individual's capacity to communicate with other cultural systems. This is probably why conventional theories of culture emphasize the representation of locale and structure of societal identity. The Argentine academic and anthropologist Nestor Garcia Canclini (1993:13) states that in the past,

Having an identity meant – above all – having a country, a city, an area: an entity where all that was shared by the inhabitants of a place was identical or interchangeable. Those who did not share this territory, who had neither the same objects and symbols nor the same rituals and customs, were the others – those who were different.

This statement of Canclini helps us to understand that uniqueness of one cultural pattern used to be better understood in contrast to another in the past, “beyond any semblance of sameness” (Bhabha 2009:ix). These observations can be understood by scrutinizing the excessive migration and its varied patterns in recent history with the advent of globalization. Appadurai (1991:48) describes it as follows:

As groups migrate, regroup in new locations, reconstruct their histories, and reconfigure their ethnic projects, the *ethno* in ethnography takes on a slippery, non-localized quality, to which the descriptive practices of anthropology will have to respond. The landscapes of group identity – the ethnoscapas – around the world are no longer familiar anthropological objects, insofar as groups are no longer tightly territorialized, spatially bounded, historically self-conscious, or culturally homogenous.

Globalization can thus be considered as a complex phenomenon, a dialectic which provokes diverse responses from people, nations and cultures around the world.

Stuart Hall (1990:310) speaks of the “complicated cross-overs and cultural mixes which are increasingly complicated in a globalized world”. John Tomlinson (2007:1) adds that:

At its most basic, globalization is quite simply a description of these networks and of their implications – for instance in the various ‘flows’ – of capital, commodities, people, knowledge, information and ideas, crime, pollution, diseases, fashions, beliefs, images and so on – across international boundaries.

To comprehend the attributes and the development of identities that are evolving in our contemporary society, we cannot ignore the phenomenon of globalization that aims to melt the boundaries and avoid categorizations. As is demonstrated in Chapter 3 of this dissertation (Section 3.1), postcolonial and contemporary art in general has also been permeated by creative acts or approaches by artists to defy categorization in the sociocultural scenarios of a globalized world. “As figures of this transformation, contemporary artists have realized that it is just as possible to reside in a circuit as in a stable space, just as possible to construct identity in motion as through fertilization, and that geography is always psychogeography” (Bourriaud 2009:57). Contemporary artists hold poetic values concerning the intermediary meaning within the conversation between the members of the social composition. For example; in this regard the sculptor Anish Kapoor (YouTube 2017) draws our attention to the fact that “a Japanese garden is not about this rock and that pool, but the conversation between them”. Yinka Shonibare claims that his work is more poetic than political “because it is trying to put different layers at the same time in the same space” (cited in Muller 2007:13).

In addition, Bourriaud (2009:4), in the exhibition catalogue of *Altermodern*, claims:

There are no longer cultural roots to sustain forms, no exact culture base to serve as a benchmark for variations, no nucleus, no boundaries for artistic language. Today’s artist, in order to arrive at precise points takes as their starting-point global culture and no longer the reverse. The line is more important than the points along its length.

While acknowledging the deterritorialization of cultures, porous boundaries, dispersed notions of identity and the globalized patterns of communication and resulting hybrid process of cultural translation, it is also important to consider the argument of one of the prominent figures in postcolonial theory. Homi Bhabha

(1994:216) in *The Location of Culture* explains that we have “failed to recognize the ‘in-between space’ of cultural globality”. He has further argued that the dynamic interaction between the local occurs within “double frames” and “in the nervous temporality of the transitional”. Bourriaud (2009:27) supports this and advocates that “We must move beyond peaceful and sterile coexistence or reified cultures (multiculturalism) to a state of cooperation among cultures that are equally critical of their own identity.” In other words, we must reach the stage of translation, interpretation and mediation.

I have been away from my own culture for almost two decades and exposed to people, groups and communities that use ‘systems of shared meaning’.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, my practice and my interactions encompass hybrid, heterogeneous and ambivalent perspectives. Pertaining to this, my hermeneutic articulation has led me to make comparisons between artworks that indicate similar notions and dichotomies as mine to justify hybridity as a conceptual framework and translation as a metaphor for understanding inter-related forms of cultural production.

### **1.3 THE RESEARCH PROBLEM**

Globalization has intensified the possibilities for interaction in the last couple of decades. “While globalization particularly stems from the economic transaction of goods and services, the migration and movement of people, as well as the representation and dissemination of knowledge have also been significantly affected” (International Monetary Fund (IMF) 2008). With economic and other shifts due to globalization, culture, particularly as a phenomenon, can be deemed as a process of continuous polarization and hybridization. Author Adrian Carton (2012:viii) argues that “hybrid subjectivity has become something of a synonym for the benefits of globalized culture”.

This could be one of the reasons that the global identity, at this juncture, is often explored and studied by employing interdisciplinary and multicultural approaches related to the concepts of cultural hybridization. The anxiety about the

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<sup>5</sup> See Papastergiadis (2007:123) “Communities are formed out of interaction. Even in the extremes of colonization or the most turbulent phases of globalization, there is the enduring tendency to form what Stuart Hall calls ‘systems of shared meaning’”.

*detrterritorialization*<sup>6</sup> of culture in the age of globalization is prompting thoughts about the destruction of specific cultural forms. The situation also raises a number of questions regarding deterritorialization and hybridity. The concepts of deterritorialization, hybridity and translation relate to the ambiguities and ambivalences of the diasporic conditions of migrant communities all over the world. Homi Bhabha (1990:308) poses rhetorical questions that dovetail precisely with the research inquiry of this dissertation:

How does one encounter the past as an anteriority that continually introduces an otherness or alterity within the present? How does one then narrate the present as a form of contemporaneity that is always belated? In what historical time do such configurations of cultural difference assume forms of cultural and political authority?

My own diasporic experiences and my racial and cultural difference have resulted in an ambivalent relationship with the theoretical and lived paradigms of the in-between-ness of cultural hybridity and its related conditions. This fact contextualizes the diasporic, migrant identities of the two selected artists for this study, Anish Kapoor (British, Indian, born 1954) and Yinka Shonibare (British, Nigerian, born 1962).

Papastergiadis (2007:74) claims that:

“[P]art of the unhappy contradiction of migrant sensibility is the chilling fear of having lost a certain sense of time and place (...) There is a part of the self that belongs only in another place and time, and no matter how hard one tries to recapture this identity, it never returns as a fully embodied self in the present.”

Kapoor and Shonibare have certainly experienced what Bhabha and Papastergiadis say in the quotes above about disparity in one’s subjective sense of time and place as a migrant. It is part of the incongruity of being a diasporic identity. Based on

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<sup>6</sup> “The concept of deterritorialization was first used by the theorists Gill Deleuze and Felix Guattari to locate the moment of alienation in language. Referring to Kafka’s unhomely relationship to German literature, Deleuze and Guattari stress that his radical practice of defamiliarizing the everyday and his distancing from the conventions of the dominant language facilitate a creative vision even as they heighten the experience of exile” (Papastergiadis 2007:117).

interviews with the artists, the critic Thomas McEvelley, and the authors of biographies on Shonibare, Rachel Kent and Robert Hobbs, confirm this.

Thomas McEvelley (1999: 222) explains that:

These tensions are internalized, in what Kapoor has called his “representational abstractions about the unformed,” and also surround them invisibly like unspoken implications. [...] Each of these frames applies, and is appropriate in some way, even though they may contradict one another.

Similar contradictions concerning his cultural identity can be observed in Shonibare, who also believes himself to be bicultural. Shonibare (cited in Kent & Hobbs 2008:24) states that:

Although I speak Yoruba well, I think in English and it’s rather strange, you know. You move from one way of thinking. Then you think in Yoruba: sometimes you think in English and you dream in English sometimes. It’s that kind of existence that in a way my work tries to talk about; my work is actually not about the representation of politics but the politics of representation.

The research problem, therefore, places a diasporic identity in the position of liminality, within the transformative space of cultural difference, in between-ness, or Otherness.

#### **1.4 INTENTIONS AND AIMS**

The main objective of this dissertation is to detect and evaluate the symbiotic relationship between cultural hybridity, translation and art. I endeavour to understand the behaviour and manner of advocacy for an individual or group in a location where the culture and its related systems are totally foreign to their youthful past experiences. Hence, in this research, I wished to determine how one’s previous cultural experiences manifest as instinctive understandings and have an effect on one’s new cultural configuration. My premise therefore contains the concept that translation is a device to comprehend these labyrinthine perceptions of dispersion and migration as signified by the semiotics of the selected contemporary artists. Professor Jay Lampert (1997:355), McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts, Pittsburgh, contends that:

Translation is more a work performed on the language the text is translated into than on the language it was translated from, since translation means that

the new language is made to validate a way of understanding the world that it had not previously been used for. The translator's task is both to make the alien familiar and to make the familiar alien, to let the translation show the distance between cultures.

Therefore, we can consider that translation cannot fully happen without considering the culture of the languages being translated into and from. To make sense and develop comprehensiveness of another culture, at least to a certain extent, one must attempt to see and understand the culture in terms of its people and how they approach and perceive certain issues, what motivates them and what the thinking is behind their actions and inspirations. Culture operates largely through translational activity. That is to say, translation is not just about words and grammar, but also about conveying meaning; for this to happen, the cultures involved have to be considered. Hence the term 'cultural translation' is used.

My argument is that in the process of this translation, not only hybrid cultures are born, but also hybrid art forms that go beyond words and grammar. It is perhaps above all a creative process that is rooted neither in one culture nor the other and is always in a transitional state. Culture operates largely through translational activity, since only by the inclusion of new texts into it can the culture undergo innovation as well as perceive its specificity, and so starts a dialogue. Here the question arises whether cultural translational activity is a form of art. Is the nature of art entangled in the subtleties of cultural translation? To answer these questions, a conceptual framework for cultural translation will be explored through an understanding of the relationship between different practices in philosophy and contemporary art.

Since the premise of this dissertation lies in the area of in-between-ness of culture I limited my inquiry within the context of contemporary migrant artists whose identities are entangled in cultural differences. My intention was to explore their artmaking practices under the microscope of translation and hybridity. I will elaborate on these concepts separately and in depth in the chapters to follow by effectively engaging theoretical and philosophical viewpoints from phenomenology, hermeneutics and postcolonialism, with particular focus on concepts such as the fusion of horizons as defined by Hans Georg Gadamer,

linguistic hospitality as defined by Paul Ricoeur, and third space theory from the work of Homi Bhabha.

## **1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The inquiry questions that guided my research originate from the title of this dissertation, *Translation as a creative act; Cultural hybridity in selected contemporary artists*, and are as follows:

1. What are the means by which various cultures exchange and interact with each other?
2. How do we translate cultural differences?
3. Can translation be considered a model for meaning in in-betweenness and hybridity?
4. Is translation the creative voice of in-betweenness? Is it a creative act?

## **1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This research consists of multidisciplinary theoretical study comprising phenomenology, hermeneutics and postcolonialism. The theories and postulations of Hans Georg Gadamer's fusion of horizons, Paul Ricoeur's linguistic hospitality and the hermeneutical phenomenology and postcolonial theorist Homi K. Bhabha's third space were applied to the individuated understandings and interpretations observed in the artworks by the selected artists and are either confirmed or disproved throughout the study. These theories have been supplemented by texts on cultural studies, sociological cosmopolitanism, migration and identity.

The outcomes are implemented and portrayed as a process of being-in-the-world in the phenomenological sense informed by my own state of heterogeneity as an artist and diasporic identity, and thus reflect on my personal interpretation of the phenomenon of cultural translation. All of the above aided in the exploration of the notion of translation as a creative act in a quest to determine whether it is significant in the contemporary globalized world of visual culture. To accomplish a comprehensive understanding of the given problem, the aforesaid academic aspects

follow a qualitative approach involving literature-based contemporary and historical research in order to form a foundation for my work. These are thoroughly investigated and analysed, and conclusions are drawn in connection with samples of works by the two selected artists.

In addition to the above, the artist Anish Kapoor's influences from Indian culture and philosophy are similar to mine and therefore comprise a fusion of Kapoor's and my own horizons, while my life in Botswana for almost two decades and close affinity with the African (*Tswana*) culture assists me in understanding the position of Yinka Shonibare as an artist with African roots. It is therefore appropriate to conclude that my body of work and the exhibition *Trajectories* (explained in Chapter 4 and the exhibition catalogue) comprise all the theoretical aspects described throughout this dissertation and represent my findings of the problem questions stated above (section 1.5).

## **1.7 LITERATURE REVIEW**

To investigate, specifically, the cultural hybridity and the concept of in-betweenness, this study explores the theoretical areas of postcolonialism, migration identity, culture, translation and interpretation. The relevance of the concept of hybridity is investigated in the context of the contemporary, diasporic world of globalization. However, the primary sources are Homi K. Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* (1994), Hans Georg Gadamer's *Truth and Method* (2006), Paul Ricoeur's *On Translation* (2006), and Nikos Papastergiadis's *The Turbulence of Migration* (2007). The sources have provided a synergy for the framework of my research on hybridity in its engagement with the postcolonial representations of contemporary visual art practices.

A seminal source that is used to understand and analyse cultural hybridity is Bhabha's *The Location of Culture*. This work is an assemblage of Bhabha's numerous significant essays on contemporary literary theory and argues persistently that hybridity results from different systems of colonization and has caused further conflicts and intercultural exchanges. Colonial structures in the process of building their subjects of servitude exerted power and "the trace of what

is disavowed is not repressed but repeated as something different – a mutation, a hybrid” (Bhabha 1994:111). Furthermore, the essays *Signs Taken for Wonders, Sly Civility* and *Articulating the Archaic* discuss the notion of the “in-between” specificity of hybridity and culture. These texts have supported my research pertaining to the definitions of authenticity, contamination and plurality, especially within the context of heterogeneity and in-betweenness.

The writings of key theorists situated in discourses on identity and contemporary culture, such as Stuart Hall (1996), Gayatri Spivak (1996), Nestor Garcia Canclini (1993), Arjun Appadurai (1996), Marwan Kraidy (2005) and Fred Dallmayr (2000) were useful as they all deal with various aspects relevant to this research.

Nicholas Bourriaud, who published *The Radicant* in 2010, was at the time a much-needed critical investigator about the connections between multiculturalism, postmodernism and cultural globalization and his text is still relevant. It has been useful for this particular research because Bourriaud interprets globalization from an aesthetic perspective and as a system of meaning in culture. *The Altermodern* (2009) has also served as a suitable reference because Bourriaud’s theory on altermodernism speaks directly about the phenomenon of globalization and how it affects the contemporary lifestyle and art. The works of Shonibare dealing with ambivalence, diversity, multiplicity and the heterogeneity of diasporic experiences and subjectivities reflect what Bourriaud describes as ‘radicant’ approaches. These modes of art practice use space and time as malleable mediums.

*Key Concepts in Post-colonial Studies* by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin was an invaluable source for this dissertation. It contains detailed descriptions of postcolonial terminologies. These terminologies and postulations were considered in relation to the work of the artists selected for this study.

A seminal text used throughout this endeavour is *The Turbulence of Migration*. It is a comprehensive study of the role of migration in contemporary societies and its impact on the movement of people, capital and ideas across the planet. Papastergiadis outlines modern trends in cultural analysis and relations between the stranger and migrant and critiques globalization. This resource provides theoretical

clarity in several areas of my own position as a diasporic identity who is constantly exposed to cultural heterogeneity. Indeed, if we are all hybridized subjects, but our encounters with otherness and our flexing of translations are not equal, “we may well need to return to a theory of ideology to demonstrate how the gaps and slants of representation have various effects on the subject” (Papastergiadis 2007:195).

The selected artists attempt to magnify conditions of belonging, displacement, duality, heterogeneity, singularity, strangeness, void, loss and contamination, which in turn inadvertently reflect the phenomenological philosophies of Gadamer and Ricoeur. The inquiry into the meanings in contemporary visual artworks was conducted through the viewfinder of hermeneutic phenomenology and its approaches of interpretation and translation. As will become clear as the dissertation progresses, I show that these interpretations depend not only on the social and cultural meaning of objects but depend largely also on the implicit knowledge of the artist as well as the viewer. Gadamer’s and Paul Ricoeur’s mentioned publications (positioning the artist as an interpreter and translator), while expanding the possibilities of multiplying their horizons, served as support for my enquiry. In addition, the concepts of the fusion of horizons (Gadamer), and linguistic hospitality (Ricoeur) assisted me in the appraisal of the role of the viewer. In this regard, Ricoeur (1981:107) asserts that “interpretation is the process by which, in the interplay of question and answer, the interlocutors collectively determine the contextual values which structure their conversation”.

For critical enquiry into the systems and structures of colonialism, the texts of Spivak and Bhabha were consulted as sources for understanding the complex experiences of colonized people and cultures. Spivak’s study of marginalization and Bhabha’s strategies of ambivalence, mimicry and hybridity exposed the deep-rooted contradictions of on-going systems of colonialism in society today. These pivotal sources were relevant for the analysis of the selected artist’s works.

Kapoor’s sculptures illustrate an aspect of Bhabha’s thought, which lies at the core of his conception of the disseminated nation, designating cultural formation that is always open to cultural translation (Teverson 2003:90). Shonibare’s works also analytically and inventively examine the legacies of colonial histories. He

constantly juxtaposes the impact of imperialism on the current social, political and cultural circumstances of diasporic identities in reference particularly to Africa and rest of the world. I refer briefly to the idea of '*postcolonial mimicry*' suggested by Bhabha's texts to develop critical understanding of Shonibare's sculptures. As Bhabha (1998:18) comments, "the work of diasporic artists must be authenticated through some sort of biographical/cultural reference". Bhabha also locates the in-between space in the cultural context of the postcolonial space. He argues that migrants like himself and Kapoor [and Shonibare] are toying with the boundaries that define space, time and culture.

The manipulation of space within Kapoor's work was explained by Bhabha and Pier Luigi Tazzi, who wrote an essay for a catalogue on the occasion of Anish Kapoor's exhibition at the Hayward Gallery in London (1998). This catalogue, titled *Anish Kapoor*, has been a good source of information because it reveals Kapoor's understanding about the relationship between his use of diverse media and the physical and the spiritual aspects as manifested in his works. *Sculpture in the age of doubt (aesthetics today)* by the critic on art and culture, Thomas McEvilley (1999) has been beneficial for my analyses of the work of Kapoor as it deals with the background of contemporary sculpture since the advent of conceptual art.

*Yinka Shonibare MBE* (first published in 2008 and updated in 2014) by the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, Australia, and the Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York has been my primary source on Shonibare's work. This publication, written by Rachel Kent, Robert Hobbs and Anthony Downey, is a comprehensive illustrated document of all his projects. It discusses his social commentary on the ambiguities of race, class, culture and identity and its relation to history. *Communicating in the third space*, edited by the academics Karin Ika and Gerhard Wagner with a preface by Bhabha (2009), has been valuable for providing insight into the philosophical, political, sociological and geographical aspects of our current transcultural society in relation to the concept of hybridity. This publication has informed my analysis of my own artworks and those of Kapoor and Shonibare.

Video recordings of their work, images, online catalogues and newspaper clippings, exhibition reviews from the Venice Biennale and American and British art journals supplemented the above list of sources concerning the artists.

All of the literature-based research in this dissertation is considered in relation to the practice-led research conducted during the creation of my own body of work for this study. The practical component of this study is reflected in my exhibition and catalogue titled *Trajectories*.

## **1.8 OUTLINE OF THE DISSERTATION**

The exegesis is structured as a progressive, contextual analysis of culture as a phenomenon, and its influences in the social construction of reality. The study enquires into the communicative aspects of culture through interpretation and translation and their relationship with art practice. Practice-led research is the principal methodology for this project. Authors Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt (2007:31) describe the weight of “the dialogical relation between making and writing...[that] reveals its own kind of tacit and praxis knowledge”. Therefore, I have examined folkloric experiences and idiosyncratic involvement in my own lived environment as a migrant whilst attempting to convey meaning about these issues through the production of cultural artefacts. Thus, the conceptual, philosophical and theoretical conversations in the dissertation are a vital force for the processual, material and the experimental aspects of my creative practices. I observed that these facets of my research were certainly reciprocal (for elaboration see Chapter 4).

**Chapter 2** is an investigation of various aspects of hybridity pertaining to cultural dichotomies in a range of contexts, such as history, globalization and art. This part of the dissertation explores concepts such as translation, interpretation and hybridity under abbreviated theoretical paradigms of phenomenology, hermeneutics and postcolonialism. Moreover, I analyse and explore appropriate theoretical extractions of the fusion of horizons, linguistic hospitality and the third space in relation to contemporary art.

**Chapter 3** explores how the chosen theories (fusion of horizons, linguistic hospitality and third space) and related debates inform and intersect with the contextual field of artistic practice in this venture. This chapter uses the specific examples provided by contemporary migrant artists such as Yinka Shonibare MBE (Nigerian-British) and Sir Anish Kapoor (British-Indian) to chart changing ideas and methods as creative responses to their lived experiences of hybridity as concepts in contemporary artmaking practices.

In **Chapter 4** I present and analyse my own creative work that emphasizes the notion of translation and hybridity. This chapter explains processual aspects of my studio practice as the primary means by which I creatively explore the complexities of my cultural-hybrid condition and my own ambivalent personal experiences.

**Chapter 5** concludes the dissertation by drawing together the results of the inquiry to justify my argument that diaspora artists resolve their irresolute experiences by creatively engaging in cultural translation and interpretation resulting in hybridity.

The practical component of this dissertation, presented as an exhibition entitled *Trajectories*, was exhibited in April 2017 at the UNISA Art Gallery. Please refer to the accompanying catalogue of the exhibition.

## CHAPTER 2

### HYBRIDITY IN CONTEXT

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I pay attention to hybridity as a concept in the context of culture, language and globalization. Contributory theories relating to this concept are also considered to establish key ideas around inter-cultural communication, translation and interpretation. These theories (supported by the researched academic literature) are discussed and analysed in relation to mainly three conceptual frameworks: the *third space* (Homi Bhabha), *linguistic hospitality* (Paul Ricoeur) and *fusion of horizons* (Hans-Georg Gadamer).

In this exploration of cross-cultural communication and interpretation, I am specifically concerned with the process and configuration of hybridity and how it intersects with translation, perception, intersubjective relations and art practice. Consequently, I will introduce the concept of *hybridity* in the context of cultural theory, not in the perspective of nineteenth century populist mythology of miscegenation and scientific racism.<sup>7</sup> I will present and contextualise the theories of the three authors mentioned above (described in this chapter) in order to analyse the creative acts of the selected artists in Chapter 3. However, hybridity must be considered as an evolving discourse, with perpetual reconsiderations to account for incessantly changing global contexts. These debates about cross-cultural communication with its links to post-colonialism, hermeneutics and phenomenology provide analytical tools, the vocabulary and the critical lens through which I can unpack and understand my own lived experiences, processual research and artmaking practices.

Furthermore, in the analysis of my own diasporic existence related to the contextual field of globalization, I intend to identify indications and commonalities linked to

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<sup>7</sup> “George Morton and other members of the American school of ethnology argued that each race represented a distinct species, and that supremacy was a ‘gift of nature’ that had not been bestowed on inferior races. To prove their argument, these scientists proceeded to gather data like historical variations in the thickness of skulls, breadth of noses and length of penises. Each physical measurement was interpreted as an indicator of intellectual development and moral stability” (Papastergiadis 2007:171).

the postcolonial theoretical notion of ‘in between-ness’. The complicated derivations and dynamism of cultural difference, exchange and transformation can be regarded as an important area of research and analysis revolving around postcolonialism. Professor Sanjiv Kumar (2011:118) believes the entire postcolonial diasporic literature exhibits ambivalence through the essential dichotomies marking the lives of *émigrés*.

Therefore, I have researched how Homi Bhabha, one of the foremost critical theorist in postcolonialism, established the key observations, arguments and descriptions in this field. Moving slightly away from the aspect of the history of culture to explore theorization of difference, I briefly examine the semiotics of culture, and particularly Mikhail Bakhtin’s idea of hybridization. I also consider the texts of a contemporary scholar on the topic of migration, Nikos Papastergiadis. He draws on a range of theories and disciplines to investigate the existing accounts of migration, a phenomenon which consists of endless motion shaping our experiences in contemporary society.

## **2.2 HYBRIDITY AND GLOBALIZATION**

Globalization is an important concept to consider for this dissertation because radical changes on the current societal platform are impacting on communal practices, culture in general and, for this dissertation; visual art in particular. John Tomlinson (2007:369) defined globalization as “the rapidly developing and ever-densening network of interconnections and interdependencies that characterize material, social, economic and cultural life in the modern world”. In addition to that, Malcom Waters (2001:5) described “[i]n a globalized world there will be a single society and culture occupying the planet (...) There will be no central organizing government and no tight set of cultural preferences and prescriptions (...) Importantly territoriality will disappear as an organizing principle for social and cultural life; it will be a society without borders and spatial boundaries”.

As discussed in Chapter 1, the effect of the restless vigour in our contemporary society, the boundaries of the community, as well as the general sense of belonging, have considerably changed due to globalization. To an extent, this globalized

condition brings about the awareness that the contemporary cultural landscape is contrasting with indigenous intercultural influences, which are being superimposed one after another. As the academics Linda Beamer and Iris Varner (2011:xii) explain, “all over the world, nations are trying to come to terms with the growing diversity of their populations. As migrations of workers and refugees have increased globally, some countries are trying to control diversity [...] to protect the cultural ‘mosaic’ pattern that immigrants bring”. We have recently seen BREXIT,<sup>8</sup> the imminent departure of United Kingdom from the European Union partially due to the notions that “successive UK governments have pandered to anti-immigrant sentiment rather than addressing the chronic policy failures behind it” (Tilford 2015:3). It is evident that the complex fusion of dissimilar cultural elements in various forms is widespread in the dynamics of contacts and exchange within the current intercultural, globalizing world. Aileen Pearson-Evans and Angela Leahy (2007:xv-xvi) define it as follows:

The ‘intercultural space’ is identified as a place where conventional norms and values can no longer be taken for granted, where there is the opportunity, and often the necessity, to challenge unexamined assumptions and existing structures. [...] ‘Intercultural spaces’, by their very nature, provide a meeting point for diverse ways of interpreting and being in the world. In such places difference is the norm, with minorities, and outsiders taking centre stage, and challenging the status quo and majority beliefs and values.

This evidence highlights that the characteristics of this intercultural space are a simultaneous engagement with multiple forms of cultural and social practices rather than gradual adaptation of one to another.

Another line of thought on this intercultural space pertaining to globalization and displacement demonstrates that migration from one place to another can be regarded as a negotiation of one culture with another. Settling or assimilating in this context may demand disposing oneself to conditions that involve complexities of

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<sup>8</sup> BREXIT: A portmanteau of the words “Britain” and “exit”, it is the acronym for the British exit from the European Union after the June 2017 referendum asking voters: “Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union?” (Taub 2016).

moving not only physically, but spiritually, emotionally and emblematically between places. Nicolas Bourriaud (2009:51) states that:

[T]he immigrant, the exile, the tourist, and the urban wanderer are the dominant figures of contemporary culture. ... one might say that the individual of these early years of the twenty-first century resembles those plants that do not depend on a single root for their growth but advance in all directions on whatever surfaces present themselves by attaching multiple hooks to them, as ivy does. Ivy belongs to the botanical family of *radicants*,<sup>9</sup> which develop their roots as they advance, ... It translates itself into the terms of the space in which it moves.

The strength of Bourriaud's concept of '*radicants*' is that it provides a framework to allow for an understanding of the multiple levels and diverse methods of cultural adaptation and cultural exchange in our contemporary world of global nomadism. The ideological message thus far is that a global intercultural world requires an increased awareness of the dichotomized culture. It impacts, not only on our perception of other cultures and people, but also on our perception and identity of our own self.

### **2.3 HYBRIDITY IN THE CONTEXT OF CULTURE**

Bourriaud (2010:184) adds to Beamer and Varner (2011:xii), quoted in 2.2 above, by stating that: "Our spatial imagination has undergone spectacular transformations due to the instantaneous nature of communication and of telepresence in its various forms". Comparable to the era of Western imperialism, a cultural identity crisis happens when the codes of the cultural history with which an individual identified himself/herself clash with the codes of the newly adopted culture. As Stuart Hall (1996:4) argues,

[I]dentities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and

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<sup>9</sup> "With its at once dynamic and dialogical signification, the adjective "*radicant*" captures this contemporary subject, caught between the need for connection with its environment and the forces of uprooting, between globalization and singularity, between identity and opening to the other. It defines the subject as an object of negotiation. ... The radicant develops in accord with its host soil. It conforms to the latter's twist and turns and adapts to its surfaces and geological features" (Bourriaud 2010:51).

positions. They are subject to a radical historicization and are constantly in the process of change and transformation.

Consequently, when an individual with a cultural alterity tries to adapt into another culture of unfamiliarity, his/her linguistic and spatial imagination may undergo transformations. The effects of this interaction within the 'contact zone'<sup>10</sup> by different cultures is known as transculturation<sup>11</sup> or hybridity. Bhabha (cited in Rutherford 1990:221) contends that, "identification is a process of identifying with and through another object, an object of otherness, at which point the agency of identification the subject is itself always ambivalent, because of the intervention of that otherness". The intricacies of the notion of Self and the Other become significant here because identification is the result of categorizing correlations and contrasts in one's cultural setting. That is to say, it is the possibility of articulating the Other in view of the genealogy of difference. Such articulation or reciprocity within the 'contact zone' is often deemed a mode of hybridity.

It can be argued that the complex idea of hybridity is one of the most extensively employed and debated terms in postcolonial theory. The term 'hybrid'<sup>12</sup> refers to the cross-breeding of two species, "an offspring of two animals or plants of different races". In social theory it is commonly referred to as the formation of new transcultural practices within the contact zone constructed through colonization.

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<sup>10</sup> "Contact zones" is a term coined by the theorist and critic Mary Louise Pratt, who borrowed the term from the sociolinguistic notion of a "contact language" – that is, a type of creole or pidgin that speakers of differing languages develop when forced into communication with one another. Pratt defines contact zones as "spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today" (Harris 1995:33).

<sup>11</sup> "The word was formulated in the 1940s by Cuban sociologist Fernando Ortiz. This term refers to the reciprocal influences of modes of representation and cultural practices of various kinds in colonies and metropolises and is thus 'a phenomenon of the contact zone', as Mary Louise Pratt puts it. The term has been used by ethnographers to describe how subordinated or marginal groups select and invent from materials transmitted to them by a dominant or metropolitan culture" (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 2007:213).

<sup>12</sup> See definition of *hybrid* in footnote 4.

## 2.4 ACCULTURATION AND IDENTITY

“The notion of ‘culture’ is not easy to define and is closely linked to identity. It is often involving shared behaviour, but it includes the process in which that behaviour is learned, evaluated and altered” (Lampert 1997:354). According to Stuart Hall (cited in Braidotti 1994:5), “cultural identity is always hybrid”. Jonathan Rutherford (1990:211) informs us that “all forms of culture are continually in a process of hybridity”. Hence, postcolonial literature can be observed as a product and an element of postcolonial culture, which is produced within the environment of hybridity. Postcolonial texts, therefore, are “a hybrid, a dynamic mixture of literary and cultural forms, genres, styles, languages, motifs, tropes and so forth” (Rutherford, 1990:xiv). Bhabha (1994:178) believes in the remedial power of a new conception in which he makes a "shift from the cultural as an epistemological object to culture as an enactive, annunciatory site”. In Bhabha’s new-found classification, culture can be understood as hybrid, and this hybridity offers the space from which subaltern agency can be enabled. The Indian literary theorist and critic Gayatri Spivak (2006:359) amusingly explains culture as “a package of largely unacknowledged assumptions, loosely held by a loosely outlined group of people, mapping negotiations between the sacred and the profane, and the relationship between the sexes”.

In addition, Charles Taylor (cited in Okoro 2009:187) defines culture as “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, customs, and all other capabilities and habits acquired by man [humankind] as a member of a society”. From the array of definitions mentioned above, the conventional understanding of culture as a phenomenon could be comprehended as being formed in a specific territorial relationship with well-recognized borders disconnecting from other formations of cultures. In the past these established territorial formats retained a distinct belief system that sheltered a logical and continuous awareness of connection and membership to the particular system. In that way, the uniqueness of a traditional culture could previously be defined in comparison to other cultures.

The characteristics of traditional cultures as Raul Pertierra (1995:50) sums up is “a given mode of life, a set of practices and beliefs characterizing a group of people”.

Cultures in such a form can be equated to a *solid-state* physical structure. However, according to Zygmunt Bauman (2006:6), this assumption of culture as ‘autonomous solid-whole’, particularly in a modern society, does not exist. Bauman (2006:6) argues that:

The “melting of solids”, the permanent feature of modernity, has therefore acquired a new meaning, and above all has been redirected to a new target – one of the paramount effects of that redirection being the dissolution of forces which could keep the question of order and system on the political agenda. ... Configurations, constellations, patterns of dependency and interaction were all thrown into the melting pot, to be subsequently recast and refashioned; this was the “breaking the mould” phase in the history of the inherently transgressive, boundary-breaking, all-eroding modernity (Bauman 2006:6).

This transgressive border-breaking ‘liquid modernity’ as described by Bauman can also be identified through the changes in the depiction of identity. Papastergiadis (2007:12) argues that “the shift in subjectivity is not only linked to a destabilization of the cultural codes that distinguish between places of origin and reverence, but to a border rupture in the sense of belonging and the perception of destiny within an individual’s life narrative”. I concur with Papastergiadis (2007:14), who (considering global migration) adds that traditionally “identity was defined in terms of a unique sense, ... the model of representation and boundaries are untenable in contemporary society”. According to Stuart Hall (1990:226), the debate about identity in a diasporic situation pinpoints an interesting dichotomy:

Cultural identities are the points of identification, the unstable points of identification or suture, which are made, within the discourses of history and culture. Not an essence but a *positioning*. Hence, there is always a politics of identity, a politics of position, which has no absolute guarantee in an unproblematic, transcendental “law of origin”.

Thus, cultural identity situated within a world of fluid modernity and space must be understood as a dynamic conception that is composed of interactions. The scope of explaining and analysing this interaction in various milieus offers wide possibilities and comprises a huge area for research. However, for this dissertation, this positioning is explored and limited to the context of cultural differences and notions of the foreign and the familiar with an emphasis on the idea of in-betweenness.

One of the useful concepts to unravel and accommodate the representation and meaning of cultural difference in identity is the concept of hybridity. Kraidy (2005:12) explains:

Communities throughout the world have experienced hybridity as a positive force that allows them to make sense of their identity, one that relates uncomfortably to established categories. This is manifest among immigrant communities, whose culture is a mix of their native and host cultures, in addition to influences from other immigrant communities with whom they share neighborhoods and destinies.

Being in a mix and not confined to a specific structural solidity, culture (and by implication a migrant's identity) can be understood as a concept that is constantly moving between spaces of meaning. It can be argued that culture is not simply in the impartial settings of the society, or purely in the subjective perception of an individual, but is in the alternating interactions between the two. Hence, culture can be identified with the characteristics of fluids, proposed by Bauman (2006:6) as quoted above, and may be considered in a state of hybridity. It is imperative for this dissertation to investigate the means by which people, but particularly artists, of various backgrounds establish patterns of communication across their contrasting cultural separations. To pursue that investigation, it is important to understand the dynamics of the ebb and flow of cultural hybridity, which are frequently hidden inside the conflicting theories of language and semiotics<sup>13</sup> of culture.

## **2.5 CULTURE, LANGUAGE AND HYBRIDITY**

Culture makes sense of the world mostly through the system of meanings that operate in language, because language bears the "repository of understandings that have settled into it" (Sokolowski 1997:228). Language is not only one of the sturdiest and most resilient channels for modelling cultural schemes but can also operate as exemplary for the understanding of the production of meaning and its transmission in a given culture (Papastergiadis 2007:127). A professor in Cultural Encounters at the Department of Culture and Identity, Roskilde University, Denmark, Karen Risager (2006:187), agrees and explains that "language is used not

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<sup>13</sup> Semiotics: "a general philosophical theory of signs and symbols that deals especially with their function in both artificially constructed and natural languages and comprises syntactics, semantics and pragmatics" (Merriam-Webster Online [Sa]).

just as a tool for the exchange of information, but as a symbolic system with the power to create and shape symbolic realities, such as values, perceptions, identities through discourse”. She adds that “Any language carries meaning, and in this sense any language carries culture”. Then, one may argue that language can be considered as the most important element of culture – as the medium of cultural construction.

The Ghanaian academic living in South Africa, Kwesi Kwaa Prah (1998:02), observes that:

It is in language that people find their mental home, their definitional relationship to the external world. What this also means is that people can hardly be themselves in an idiom in which they have difficulty understanding or expressing themselves. They can barely be creative and innovative in a language they have to struggle with in order to command expression.

Therefore, it is clear that languages and cultural texts enable people to express their culture and are the window through which they understand the world and are themselves understood. One who has mastered a language well expresses him/herself in relation to the world. Hall (cited in Papastergiadis 2007:188) argues, “the emergence of ‘other histories’ in contemporary discourse is synchronous with the radicalization of the notions of identity, history and language”.

Such radicalization is often characterised by an influx of new influences, shifts and amendments, and consists of transculturation, which echoes the third space or hybridity mentioned in section 2.6. The works of the artists Shonibare and Kapoor regularly manifest notions of a hybrid identity, history and distinct cultural semiotics. In theoretical discourse, hybridity has procreated several related terminologies, including terms such as diaspora, *métissage*, and creolization. Hybridization has been associated with various noteworthy ideas not only in cultural, political and racial debates, but also in linguistics. These comprise *pidgin* and *creole* languages as well.

Showing creative command of expression in the pidgin ‘language’ in which he finds his mental home, Kapoor’s work, *Untitled* (Figure 1) serves as a good example of transculturation. It consists of repeated rounded and pointed organic forms in their aureoles of powdered pigment on the gallery floor.



**Figure 1. Anish Kapoor, *Untitled* (1983).**

The American art critic Thomas McEvelley (1999:222) notes that “[i]n the yogic centres of India, the coloured powders that are used in Hindu folk ritual are encountered heaped up on tables or on the ground. They are used to mark certain elements of nature, such as stones, or places on trees where limbs have come and gone, which are associated with the goddess of fertility and the vagina”. Like all contemporary artworks, dependent on the viewer’s field of reference, Kapoor’s language or hybrid cultural semiotics can be better understood through the complexities of references that divide his works into two modes of cultural expression (the east and the west, the Indian and the British, Hinduism and Judaism).

A scholar of Slavic language and literature, Professor J Michael Holquist (1984:4), explains that “the Russian linguist and cultural theorist Mikhail Bakhtin used the term hybridization to indicate the disruptive and transformative power of multi-

vocal language and multi-vocal narratives”. Bakhtin (1981:358) defines hybridization as:

A mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter, within the arena of utterance, between two different linguistic consciousness, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation or by some other factor...we may even say that language and languages change historically and primarily by means of hybridization, by means of a mixing of various “languages” co-existing within the boundaries of a single dialect...

In Bakhtin’s theory and in Kapoor’s work the duality of hybrid opinions is constituted through a number of arguments that permit the language to be similar and dissimilar at the same time in a semantic field. This approach of Bakhtin has brought a turning point in the debates about hybridity, bringing out the subversive potential of language and its responsiveness towards difference. I argue that it is visible in the cultural text of Kapoor (Figure 1) as well.

The artist Shonibare’s work titled *Double Dutch*<sup>14</sup> (Figure 2) is a fine example to illustrate the efficacy of multi-vocal and transformative narratives, which Bakhtin theorised. It is neither pure nor autonomous but contaminated. “*Double Dutch* challenges the macho, heroic gesture of modernist painting. But Shonibare’s thinking does not end in this antithesis: his painting also subverts the minimalist grid by introducing bright colours and decoration” (Simola 2007:207). Apart from the direct reference in the title to confusion that may be caused by a translation of language, and the implied sarcasm (as explained in footnote 8), this work (seen in Figure 2) also refers directly to the politics surrounding Dutch wax print textiles, colonialism and cultural creolisation within contemporary consumerism. Shonibare’s work is multimodal and resonates with Bakhtin’s (1981:358) assertion that “[cultural] languages and meaning change historically and primarily by means

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<sup>14</sup> Due to the maritime history of wars between Britain and the Netherlands, Dutch was generally disparaged. From historic incidents of sailing ships at sea it is evident that ‘double Dutch’ was the linguistic equivalent of a badly coiled rope. “Most of the early citations of ‘double Dutch’ are in their full form ‘double Dutch rope coiled against the sun’”. What was meant by ‘double Dutch’ was probably ‘Dutch that is malformed and twisted’ rather than ‘Dutch, twice over’ (Martin 2018).

of hybridization, by means of mixing of various ‘languages’ co-existing within the boundaries of a single dialect”.

(Dutch wax fabric and its cultural and political connotations will be discussed further in section 3.3.3 of Chapter 3).



**Figure 2. Yinka Shonibare, *Double Dutch* (1994).**

It is helpful at this point to discuss the work of the Russian semiotician, Yuri Lotman, who has extended Bakhtin’s theory of hybridity into the semiotics of culture by delineating the dynamism of difference in culture. Lotman’s concept of semiosphere<sup>15</sup> encompasses the whole universe of senses and is brought close to the notion of culture. According to Lotman (1990:133) culture organizes itself in the form of a special “space-time” and cannot exist without it. This organization is realized in the form of the semiosphere and at the same time comes into being with the help of the semiosphere.

Thus, the semiosphere includes all systems of culture, and also the circumstances for the progression of culture. In his pivotal text on semiotic theory of culture, *Universe of the Mind*, Lotman (1990:131) stresses that “[e]very culture begins by dividing the world into ‘its own’ internal space and ‘their’ external space. How this binary of division is interpreted depends on the typology of the culture...”. I argue that this description is applicable to the contemporary issues of cultural identity and also partly supports the statement of inquiry of this dissertation. This explanation

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<sup>15</sup> Semiosphere can be considered as a space of various semiotic acts. “Lotman accentuates polyglottism and dialogicity as the unique features of human culture. Formulated in this manner, the concept of semiosphere is used as a conceptual framework for the study of human cognition as well as human cognitive evolution” (Semenenko 2016:494).

of Lotman indicates that the semiosphere is in a constant state of hybridity by oscillating between the concepts of internal space/identity and the external space/alterity such that it informs straight away the dynamics of difference in culture, which is evidenced by the artworks under discussion.



**Figure 3. Anish Kapoor, *Sky Mirror* (2010).**

In an interview with the French philosopher Julia Kristeva, Kapoor explains this notion of internal and external space within the context of his work *Sky Mirror* (Figure 3) (Kapoor & Kristeva 2015): “Skin is the membrane of joining, it is permeable and transparent. It contains and yet is a medium of the identity between inside and outside. What is inside it is as profoundly mysterious as what is in the cosmos and in many ways identical to it. Body, spirit and cosmos are both poetically potent and interdependent.” This resonates with the notion of the semiosphere by Lotman (1990:131) as quoted above.

## **2.6 HOMI BHABHA: HYBRIDITY**

As mentioned before, the robust arguments about the dynamics of difference in contemporary culture has broadly occurred within the realm of postcolonial theory. To further understand the role of hybridity in contemporary culture, this section

investigates the theoretical propositions of Homi Bhabha pertaining to the concept of the third space. Bhabha is “the foremost contemporary critic who has tried to unveil the contradictions inherent in colonial discourse in order to highlight the colonizer's ambivalence with respect to his/her attitude towards the colonized, the Other and vice versa” (Kumar 2011:119). In his influential text *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha (1994) postulates a theory of ‘cultural hybridity’ and the ‘translation’ of social difference which goes beyond the polarities of Self and Other. Bhabha has offered critical insights into the social and psychological organization of colonial thought after having been greatly influenced by the West Indian psychoanalyst and social philosopher Frantz Fanon, Austrian neurologist and psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud, and the French psychoanalyst and psychiatrist Jacques Lacan. Bhabha’s text *The Location of Culture* (1994) is complex and demands extrapolation with the help of poststructuralist and psychoanalytic concepts. Within this work, Bhabha considers ideas from authors and theoreticians of both the disciplines and presents an analysis of their perspectives. It is not my intention to oversimplify or discredit the diverse works of these complex authors or their disciplines, but instead my aim is to briefly set the scene for exploring the concept of hybridity (as it is specified in my problem statement). Intercultural communication through translation, and its interpretation in art, remains my main focus. For this purpose, I wish to explore how Bhabha’s work emphasizes the function of the *hybrid, in-between*, third space that underpins the environment of cultural familiarity and unfamiliarity.

The concept of hybridity occupies a central place in postcolonial discourse. Ankie Hoogvelt (1997:158) believes that hybridity is “celebrated and privileged as a kind

of superior cultural intelligence owing to the advantage of ‘in-betweenness’, the straddling of two cultures and the consequent ability to ‘negotiate the difference’”. This contrasts with the fact that within theories of human origins and social progression/regression hybrids have generally been conceived as contamination, impure and failure. In colonial discourse, hybridity is a term of abuse for those who are products of miscegenation, mixed-breeds. It is imbued in nineteenth-century eugenicist and scientific-racist thought (Young 1995:12). Robert Young (1995:5) adds that:

Hybrid is the nineteenth century’s word. But it has become our own again. In the nineteenth century, it was used to refer to a physiological phenomenon; in the twentieth century, it has been reactivated to describe a cultural one. While cultural factors determined its physiological status, the use of hybridity today prompts questions about the ways in which contemporary thinking has broken absolutely with the racialized formulation of the past.

Despite hybridity’s loaded historical past, “Bhabha has divorced the term hybridity from the context of miscegenation by placing it at once in both the semiotic field of discursive reconfiguration and in the socio-political domain of deterritorialized subjectivity” (Papastergiadis 2007:193). As mentioned earlier in this chapter (section 2.5) about the duality of opinions and the theories by Bakhtin in the linguistic field, Bhabha (1994:219) notes the sense of separateness and unity in a single semantic field. “Hybrid hyphenations emphasize the incommensurable elements – the stubborn chunks – as the basis of cultural identifications”. I argue that such ‘stubborn chunks of cultural identification’ manifest time and again as ‘hybrid hyphenations’ during the formulations of migrant artists’ works such as Kapoor’s, Shonibare’s and mine, as evidenced by Figures 1-10 discussed in this chapter.

Bhabha (2004: 269) illustrates the dialogism (of Bakhtin) as a reading that is “catachrestic: reading between the lines, taking neither him at his word nor me fully at mine”. In Bhabha’s initial usage of the term in his essay *Signs Taken for Wonders*, he clearly thought of hybridity as a subversive tool whereby colonized people might challenge various forms of oppression. It is noteworthy in terms of the artworks that will be analysed later in this document that Bhabha (1994:115) further contends

that the display of hybridity – “its peculiar ‘replication’ terrorizes authority with the ruse of recognition, its mimicry, its mockery”.

## **2.7 BHABHA AND MIMICRY**

In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha (1994) gives specific consideration to colonial and postcolonial application of mimicry. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (2007:125) explain that for Bhabha, “mimicry is important because it bears witness to ambivalent relationships between colonizer and colonized; specifically, when the colonized subject mimics the colonizer by adopting the colonizer’s cultural habits, assumptions, institutions and values”. Lacan (cited in Bhabha 1994:121) explains that:

Mimicry reveals something in so far as it is distinct from what might be called an itself that is behind. The effect of mimicry is camouflage ... It is not a question of harmonizing with the background, but against a mottled background, of becoming mottled — exactly like the technique of camouflage practised in human warfare.

This pattern of behaviour is looked at as opportunistic, through the viewfinder of colonialism and immigration, when one imitates the person of authority, because one hopes to achieve the same power as the authority. While mimicking the host culture or the master’s pattern of behaviour, one must deliberately suppress one’s own cultural identity for adaptation or recognition.

This tactic of adaptation can, in some cases, lead immigrants and colonial subjects to a state of confusion. However, it can be argued that it is because of their cultural confrontation with a ‘superior’ and unfamiliar culture that there may not be a well-defined pre-existing identity to suppress.

In explaining the concept of mimicry, Bhabha often refers to the British writer of Indian descent and Nobel Laureate who was born in Trinidad, V.S. Naipaul, whose work traces the origin and occurrence of postcolonial mimic-men, who are ambivalent due to the effect of “a flawed colonial mimesis in which to be Anglicised is emphatically not to be English” (Bhabha 1994:87). In postcolonial studies ‘mimicry’ can be observed as disturbing mock-ups that are typical of postcolonial cultures. It is a desire to sever the ties with ‘self’ in order to move

towards ‘other’. Salim, the hero of Naipaul’s novel *A Bend in the River*,<sup>16</sup> conveys his fondness for colonial mimicry when he wishes to abandon his roots. Salim confesses that his ambivalence and his confused affiliation with the ‘Other’ has eventually made his life more meaningless. He observes:

I was in Africa one day; I was in Europe the next morning. It was more than travelling fast. It was like being in two places at once. I woke up in London with little bits of Africa on me – like the airport tax ticket, given me by an official I knew, in the middle of another kind of crowd, in another kind of building, in another climate. Both places were real; both places were unreal. You could play off one against the other (Naipaul 1980:246).

Kapoor, Shonibare and I have experienced this sensation and incorporated it into our artworks (discussions to follow).

Regarding colonial mimicry and parody, *Diary of a Victorian Dandy* (Figure 4) is one of the numerous works created by Shonibare in the nineties in which the Dutch wax material is not used. Shonibare is, instead, wearing Victorian formal clothing. Unlike Shonibare’s paintings and sculptures, this particular work employs a deliberate and exaggerated theatricality to dissolve any sense of authenticity. The work develops through five narrative individual prints that are numbered to the hour at which each is set within the daily routine of the dandy.

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<sup>16</sup> *A Bend in the River* by the West Indian novelist VS Naipaul is set in an unspecified East African country that achieved its independence after civil war. The novel's central character is Salim, a Muslim of Indian family whose people have lived for several generations in a coastal town. Salim is a good man, impressionable and thoughtful, but not intellectual. Salim’s soliloquy about the Indian settlement in Africa goes like this: “Our way of life was out-dated and almost at a brink.” He is an outsider, observing with the outsider’s (diasporic identity) edginess, anxiety, exclusion and otherness (Howe 1979:[sp]).



**Figure 4.** Yinka Shonibare, *Diary of a Victorian Dandy: 11.00 hours* (1998).

The dandy gets up from bed at 11 am, attends his business at 2 pm followed by a billiards game at 5 pm, and enjoys an orchestra concert at 7 pm. The dandy then indulges his sexual activities at 3 pm. Shonibare (2008:40) has described “his attraction to the Dandy as an ‘outsider’ figure who ‘upsets the social order of things’”. Like Naipaul’s characterization of Salim, Shonibare (in Shonibare, & Downey 2004:34) elucidates that “[t]he notion of the ‘other’ has always been a fascination for the art world and artists who felt neglected”. *Diary of a Victorian Dandy* encompasses Shonibare’s curious affiliation with the ambivalent and confused state of being associated with the sense of exclusion (insider/outsider) and otherness in a postcolonial setting.

Bill Ashcroft (in Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 2007:116) explains the destabilizing effect of postcolonial mimicry as follows: “The mimicry of the postcolonial subject is therefore always potentially destabilizing to colonial discourse, and locates an area of considerable political and cultural uncertainty in the structure of imperial dominance”. Mimicry in this respect can be seen as the sign of a double articulation. “The effect of mimicry on the authority of colonial discourse is profound and disturbing (...) It is as if the very emergence of the ‘colonial’ is dependent for its representation upon some strategic limitation or prohibition within the authoritative

discourse itself (...) so that mimicry is at once resemblance and menace” (Bhabha 1994:86).

## 2.8 BHABHA: HYBRIDITY, THIRD SPACE AND IN-BETWEENNESS

Despite the immense movement of people and ideas between their territorial regions, it can be argued that there is a conviction about cultures, which still persists, that they are independent and systems of self-sufficiency. “In fact, the sign of the ‘cultured’ or the ‘civilized’ attitude is the ability to appreciate cultures in a kind of *musée imaginaire*; as though one should be able to collect and appreciate them” (Bhabha 1990:208). Bhabha emphatically contends that this perspective has failed to recognize the ‘in-between space’ of cultural globality. He further adds in his essay ‘How Newness Enters the World’ that “[c]ultural globality is figured in the *in-between* spaces of double frames: its historical originality marked by a cognitive obscurity; its decentred ‘subject’ signified nervous temporality of the transitional or the emergent provisionality of the present” (Bhabha 1994:216). To overcome differences and facilitate the beginning of new cultural identity, definitions and meanings, there is need to question and resist the established and rigid norms that provide limiting views of the Other. As illustrated by the examples in this dissertation, Shonibare and Kapoor are indeed questioning such restrictive norms and views.

Bhabha (1990:209) asserts that “with the notion of cultural difference, I try to place myself in that position of liminality, in that productive space of the construction of culture as difference, in the spirit of alterity or otherness”. It is precisely this interlude, which Bhabha calls a third space, within which associated elements encounter and transform each other.

Bhabha thus explains the third space as a *liminal*<sup>17</sup> *in-between space* where the conventional hegemonic and normalizing practices are confronted, mediated and

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<sup>17</sup> “The sense of the liminal as an interstitial or in-between space, a threshold area, distinguishes the term from the more definite word ‘limit’ to which it is related. The importance of the liminal for post-colonial theory is precisely its usefulness for describing an ‘in-between’ space in which cultural change may occur: the transcultural space in which strategies for personal or communal self-hood may be elaborated, a region in which there

re-enunciated. Ashcroft, Gareth and Tiffin (2007:118) suggest that “for Bhabha the liminal is important because liminality and hybridity go hand in hand”. This “interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy” (Bhabha 1994:4). I argue that Kapoor and Shonibare’s conceptualization (as seen in Figures 1, 2, 3 and 4) are firmly situated within the ‘third space’ as theorized by Bhabha. This space indicates a resistance to binaries, dichotomies and polarization. It is a space of liminality, in-betweenness, fusion that is fluid, exchange, and political contact. According to Bhabha (1990: 211):

The importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather, hybridity...is the ‘third space’, which enables other positions to emerge. This third space displaces the histories that constitute it and sets up new structures of authority.

Bhabha points out that while the third space is composed of ambiguities and ambivalences, it facilitates negotiation of inclusion rather than exclusion and becomes a demonstrative location for innovation, collaboration, and the construction of meanings.



**Figure 5. Anish Kapoor, *The Healing of St Thomas* (1989).**

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is a continual process of movement and interchange between different states” (Ashcroft, Gareth & Tiffin 2007:117).

In addition, Bhabha (1998:39) justifies this statement by elucidating Kapoor's work *The Healing of St Thomas* (Figure 5),

For Thomas, the ascent of Christ cannot be completely accomplished on the cross, *sub specie aeternitatis*. It is only achieved in the return of Christ, in the reopening of the wound by the oblique entry of the Thomas's finger ... In a similar vein, the truly made work does not consist in the triumph of the objecthood; it is only when the work enters that third space – a transitional space, an in-between space....

Here, 'the artist's doubt', as Bhabha says, is not coming from the material aspects of the work or the illusion that it creates; rather, it can be argued as the emergence of a space of intonation that signals difference. As Papastergiadis (2007:170) confirms, "Hybridity is both the assemblage that occurs whenever two or more elements meet, and the initiation of a process of change".

Bhabha (1990:211) contends that "the notion of hybridity comes from ... the genealogy of difference and the idea of translation [and] hybridity ... is the 'third space' which enables other positions to emerge". Furthermore, he maintains that:

Cultural meanings are always subject to intrinsic forms of translation. This theory of culture is close to a theory of language, as part of a process of translations using that word as before, not in a strict linguistic sense of translation as in a "book translated from French to English", but as a motif or trope ... for the activity of displacement within the linguistic sign (Bhabha 1990:210).

Therefore, by being alert to the fact that cultures are constituted in relation to *Otherness*, which eventually seems to result in hybridity, it can be argued that this cultural liminality/third space/in-betweenness opens up the possibility of articulating the Other through the process of translation.

## **2.9 THE ROLE OF HERMENEUTICS IN CULTURE AND TRANSLATION**

As maintained throughout this dissertation, defining the concept of 'culture' is an arduous affair. This is mainly because culture is comprised of collective behaviours together with all the processes of the behaviours themselves in terms of learning them, appreciating them and modifying them. We also know that culture comprises education, language, locale, belief systems and ethnicity. Conservation of such

behaviours is generally achieved through the formation of a border. For 18 years I have been living in a community and a culture that is varied and differs in almost all the practices and customs from my own culture; therefore, my visual identification of the resolution of these borderlines is acute. Yet, it is a fact that all *borders* generally have their points of arrival and departure. This permeating-membrane-structure of the border naturally creates situations of intermingling of cultures. Immigration laws, border control strategies and socio-political taboos remain simply as an established system. But cultures interact. Whatever lies beyond this border, the contact zone, the in-betweenness, the catalogue of difference and hybridity, I argue, is regarded as the Other.

This situation raises the question: how is it possible to open up and engage with the Other? How does one engage with dissimilarities? This is the zone of Shonibare and Kapoor. These questions can also be considered fundamental to the discipline of philosophical hermeneutics. I agree with Lampert (1997:353), who states that “cross-cultural interpretation requires ... the continuity of perspectives that can be found in historical interpretation. ... its possibility must be established without presupposing that cultures have readymade historical traditions in common”.

In corroboration with the theories of Bhabha, I introduce hermeneutics, a discipline in philosophy concerned with analysing the conditions for understanding. This requires a brief overview of concepts such as linguistic hospitality (Ricoeur) and the fusion of horizons (Gadamer). The most familiar practice of hermeneutics, as a discipline, is in the examination and interpretation of various literary forms, such as biblical scriptures. James F Brown (1978:54) explicates that “It is used as a basic tool for exegesis in examining the intended meaning of a text”. Wilhelm Dilthey (cited in Ablett & Dyer 2009:226) explains that “hermeneutics involves moving between different layers of meaning. Such meaning is not automatically given to sensory perception or common sense. It is only by entering the ‘hermeneutic circle’<sup>18</sup> with its ongoing reference between artefact and the context that our

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<sup>18</sup> The fundamental interpretive principle for Schleiermacher (1998:231) was that any particular element “can only be understood via the general”. In turn “the understanding of the whole is.... conditioned by that of the particular”. This principle is called the

understanding deepens”. According to the German philosopher Martin Heidegger (1962:165-6), understanding is ontological<sup>19</sup> in the sense that it is not just one human faculty among others, but the primordial mode of being, of *Dasein*<sup>20</sup>– ‘dwelling in the world’. Also, the German philosopher Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher (1998:3) defined hermeneutics as the “art of understanding”, with specific underlining of understanding “the ...discourse of another person correctly”. In addition, Gadamer (2004:389) explains that “the translator’s task of recreation is different only in degree from the general task presented for hermeneutics by all texts”. Taking his cue from German hermeneutic theorists such as Dilthey, Heidegger and Gadamer, the French-speaking Ricoeur elaborated on a complex set of inquiries and argued that “the meaning of Being (*Dasein*) is always mediated through an endless process of interpretations – cultural, religious, political, historical and scientific” (Kearney 2006:115). Therefore, Ricoeur’s (2003:374) basic definition of hermeneutics is the “art of deciphering indirect meaning”.

### **2.9.1 Paul Ricoeur: Linguistic hospitality**

Hermeneutics as postulated by Ricoeur befits this dissertation since the discipline is also concerned with language, translation and interpretation. Bhabha (1994:163) reminds us, “[I]n the restless drive for cultural translation, hybrid sites for meaning open up a cleavage in the language of culture ... both different and differential”. Ricoeur (cited in Brennan 2006:11) says that “the existence of a plurality of languages demands translation in order for you to relate to someone who is different

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“hermeneutic cycle”, which is reinforced in the fifth of Freeman Tilden’s six principles: interpretation should aim to present the whole rather than a part...” (Tilden 1977:09)

<sup>19</sup> Ontology –  
 1. A branch of metaphysics concerned with the nature and relations of being.  
 2. A particular theory about the nature of being or the kinds of things that have existence (Merriam-Webster Online [Sa]).

<sup>20</sup> “*Dasein*: an almost untranslatable German term, it refers to human existence and self-awareness. It is about automatic grasp of a situation, which triggers a response embedded in the context of the situation and is also based on referencing accumulated previous experience” (de Villiers 2008:6).

than you”. Ricoeur (2006:32) further adds that the reason for translation is the “curiosity about the foreigner”. The author Mark Godin (2013:158) explains that:

Creativity and curiosity undergird translation for Ricoeur, and similarly provide an impetus for interdisciplinary work: bringing together different methods of exploration, not only different texts but different ways of reading them, springs from both the desire to find new ways of speaking and the drive to converse with others.

In addressing difficulties of other areas of life where people are divided by intensified differences such as religion and diversity, Ricoeur (2006:24) suggests that:

It seems to me that translation sets us not only intellectual work, theoretical or practical, but also an ethical problem. Bringing the reader to the author, bringing the author to the reader, at the risk of serving and betraying two masters: this is to practice what I like to call *linguistic hospitality*. It is this which serves as a model for other forms of hospitality that I think resemble it.

Linguistic hospitality for Ricoeur is a notion that involves an ethical perception of difference and liberal co-existence. For Ricoeur this “poses an ethical problem, – it risks betraying author and reader, but it operates its practice of “linguistic hospitality, allowing the two texts to live side by side” (Munday 2012:254). Ricoeur clarifies the idea of linguistic hospitality, as a creative exchange, by integrating the notions of metaphor and interpretation in his threefold theory of *Mimesis*. Farquhar and Fitzsimons (2011:659), citing Ricoeur (1977:29), explain that:

[T]he first part of [Ricoeur’s] mimesis refers to the shared understanding of individuals or communities; the second to the reconfiguration of meaning in which metaphor plays the role of re-presenting meaning in new ways; the third refers to the act of readership “in which the author’s intention and the meaning of the text cease to coincide.

For Ricoeur, two different languages cannot be identical. He (2006: xvii) adds that “connotations, contexts and cultural characteristics will always exceed any slide rule of neat equations between tongues”. Ricoeur (2006:09) elaborates: “To function authentically, therefore, the translator must renounce the dream of a return to some adamantine logos of pure correspondences. [The] ideal of a perfect universal language was obliged to recognize the genuine resistances of cultural differences predicated upon linguistic diversities.” In other words, it can be

presumed that there will be a tension within the context of cultural parameters between the author and the reader. “For Ricoeur, such tension is not an insurmountable obstacle, but a fragile condition inherent in attempts at communication” (Farquhar & Fitzsimons 2011:660). Kapoor’s *Untitled* (Figure 1), the fragile *Sky Mirror* (Figure 3), and Shonibare’s *Double Dutch* (Figure 2) and *Diary of a Victorian Dandy* (Figure 4) all conceptualise this type of tension, by evoking multiple translations and implied cultures in their respective renditions of communication. The artworks in Figures 1, 2, 3 and 4 can be interpreted as expressions that encompass both linguistic hospitality as proposed by Ricoeur as well as the third space theorized by Bhabha.

The very idea has been reiterated by the French philosopher Immanuel Levinas in his publication *Otherwise than Being*, “...with more nuanced understanding of the work of translation. There is no longer a purely hospitable or inhospitable practice of translation, instead every translation is an irreducible pairing of the *Saying* and the *Said*, of *Welcome and Closure*, of *Fidelity and Betrayal*” (Scott Davidson 2012:13).

Translation as an exercise of hospitality initiates a practice of interaction and exchange with the Other, what Ricoeur refers to as linguistic hospitality: “the act of inhabiting the word of the Other paralleled by the act of receiving the word of the Other into one’s own dwelling” (Ricoeur 2006: xvi). Linguistic hospitality realizes an opening, a bridging<sup>21</sup> space, an in-betweenness for two distinguishable worlds where their distinctions may not necessarily harmonize but can mutually co-exist. Shonibare’s works *Mr and Mrs Andrews* (Figure 13) and the photographic series (Figure 20, 21, 22, 23, 24 and 25); *The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters* (Africa, Asia, America, Europe, and Australia) can be considered as good examples that emphasize Ricoeur’s notion of linguistic hospitality. He exposes and breaks down common stereotypes in contemporary society by visually representing the

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<sup>21</sup> I am thinking here of Heidegger’s notion of *Bridge* (1971:152) that “gathers the earth as landscape around the stream”. In Heidegger’s interpretation, it is a space that is not for dwelling within a certain boundary, where it becomes an in-betweenness that allows the end of one space that stops, and another begin to emerge. In a similar sense Sandy Farquhar and Peter Fitzsimons (2011:660) explain that “[t]ranslation is a bridge that creates out of itself the two fields of battle it separates”.

stereotypes in his work. Shonibare creates visual arguments through bridging the historical and contemporary while juxtaposing ambiguity and predictable demarcations through the signature use of the Dutch wax material. Hence, linguistic hospitality can be viewed as a model of translation that encourages and welcomes not only the Other's language but also the Other's culture. For Ricoeur (2007:31) "to translate is to do justice to a foreign intelligence [...] your language is as important as mine".

Kapoor's work *Svayambh* (Figure 6) is a 40-ton mass of wax, paint and Vaseline allowed to move slowly into the gallery through an installed track as an infinite shape. Here, the curiosity about the Other gets its definitiveness with the doors of the gallery, leaving an *eerie* deposit on the thresholds while the 3-meter-high block is reciprocally altered from its original rectangular shape to the confined shape of the arched doorway (an in-betweenness) and emerges into the Royal Academy gallery in London (Other's dwelling). This work is a perfect example that serves as the metaphor for the concept of translation and linguistic hospitality as explained above.



**Figure 6. Anish Kapoor, *Svayambh* (2007).**

The translational model of linguistic hospitality by Ricoeur, as mentioned earlier, is built upon the threefold aspects of *Mimesis*. Ricoeur (1997:29) clarifies that the third part of mimesis refers to the act of readership in which “the author’s intention and the meaning of the text cease to coincide”. In this section of his inquiry, Ricoeur follows a resolution of a problem about interpretation and argues that the entire process demands the incorporation of a theory of writing into a theory of reading and reception. To illuminate it further, Ricoeur (1984:77) draws on Gadamer’s concept of the fusion of horizons:

What is communicated, in the final analysis, is, beyond the sense of a work, the world it projects and that constitutes its horizon. In this sense, the listeners or readers receive it according to their own receptive capacity, which itself is defined by a situation that is both limited and open to the world horizon.

This third element of mimesis elucidates that narratives in the source language are not inactive and they are subjected to an active process of interpretation, which also happens between the artwork and the viewer and not only between artists and their concepts.

## **2.10 GADAMER: INTERPRETATION AND FUSION OF HORIZON**

Hans Georg Gadamer’s primary concern has been to resolve the question, how is understanding achievable? His observations on translation as a concept are presented mostly in the structure of his philosophy of language. For Gadamer (1989:443), “both our being-in-the world and the world we live in are primordially linguistic in nature due to the essential role of understanding in the formation of both our beings and our lifeworld”. Furthermore, to Gadamer (1970:13), “all understanding is linguistic in character”. The expansiveness of his intellectual work in this area is vast. In the following discussion, my intention is to focus only on the aspect of Gadamer’s philosophic hermeneutics significant for this dissertation, that is, how to extend cross-cultural understanding amongst different cultures by means of art. At this point, it is worth exploring a part of Gadamer’s concept of the fusion of horizons (*Horizontverschmelzung*).

The process of interpretation can be significantly complex. Gadamer (2007:59-69) explains that “our linguistic interpretation of the world is unchangeably something

primal in relation to thought and cognition. ... Language is the real mark of our finitude”. As a phenomenologist Gadamer’s thought that human beings are unavoidable historical beings who carry prejudice according to their past experiences is clearly explained through his concept of the ‘fusion of horizons’. One needs to remember that this is applicable to artists and their viewers (readers and interpreters of their works); it is a fertile terrain frequently tapped into by conceptual artists.

To understand the dynamic process of one interpreter compared to another, we have to understand the phenomenological concept of the horizon. Horizon, as Gadamer (1989:302) defines it, is “the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point”. We, as human beings, are singular with our own perceptions, preconceived notions and prejudices on processing information about unfamiliarity and its meaning (my identity and life-world as an Indian in Botswana is a good example here). This cognitive approach of understanding, it can be assumed, is happening from a viewpoint which has limited parameters and can be regarded as a horizon. Wang and Xu (2009:325) explain that: “One’s particular horizon is formed by one’s particular tradition. Ultimately it is a whole historical life-world – the world in which one lives out one’s life, web of meanings, beliefs, values, and norms”. Anything beyond the boundaries of this understanding/horizon then becomes a difficulty to perceive. In such a situation, interpersonal interpretation is the faculty one has to engage with to make sense, understand or construct outside this horizon. A horizon is limited and finite; but it also is essentially an open system, open to self-transformation and open to being understood. “To have a horizon means not being limited to what is nearby but being able to see beyond it” (Wang & Xu 2009:325).

Gadamer’s concept of *horizon* was devised out of the texts of two German philosophers: Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel’s (1996:135) ‘*Science of Logic*’ (“each limit ends at its outside and thereby points to what is other, beyond its demarcation, beyond my horizon at the limit of my life-world”) and Edmund Gustav Albrecht Husserl’s (1983:27) indeterminate actuality (“horizon is of an indeterminate actuality and is an empty mist of obscure indeterminateness”).

Neither of the ideas of horizon considers the concept as an impasse to the interpreter, but as potentialities that welcome understanding. They can be argued as the conceptual coordinates from which the interpreter/viewer of an artwork can project his/her interpretation and foresee also the other's meaning, along with the acknowledgement of the location of the engagement where the other's meanings are expressed outside the vicinity of the demands of the interpreter. I propose that the artists discussed in this dissertation seek to facilitate and extend such potentialities. Gadamer (2004:305) elaborates that to acquire a horizon means that "one learns to look beyond what is close at hand – not in order to look away from it but to see it better, within a larger whole and in truer proportion". Hence, for Gadamer, the understanding of the Other can be achieved by a '*fusion of horizons*', a fusion between the horizons of the interpreter and the interpreted, whereby the interpreter's horizon is enlarged and enriched in terms of the engagement with the horizon of the interpreted (Wang & Xu 2009:325). In this cross-bordering, de-centring of past and present conceptions, Gadamer (1989:273, 374) contends, lies the possibility of a '*fusion of horizons*' in which understanding shifts and the participants change. Examples that illustrate this idea well are Shonibare's *Double Dutch* (Figure 2) *Diary of a Victorian Dandy* (Figure 4) and Kapoor's *At the Hub of Things* (Figure 7) as well as *Svayambh* (Figure 6), where the participating components (wax and arched doorway) obviously shift and change at every encounter of this mobile work.

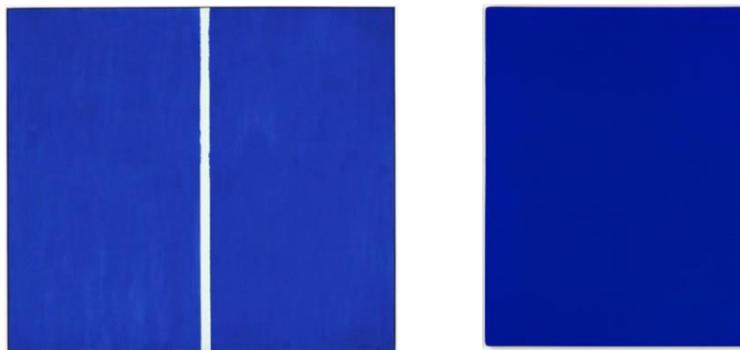
A person who has no horizon does not see further in depth, and hence overestimates what is close to him/her. Horizons do not confine us to limitations because of their possibility of shifting and expanding to construct a dialogical model.<sup>22</sup> Hermeneutical efforts hence demand expanding our perspectives through the fusion of horizons and I believe creative acts, like artmaking have the advocacy to do this.

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<sup>22</sup> Gadamer often employs dialogue as exemplary for interpretation. "To reach an understanding in a dialogue is not merely a matter of putting oneself forward and successfully asserting one's own point of view, but being transformed into a communion in which we do not remain what we were" (Gadamer 2006:371). Mutual orientation towards a single topic, hence, enhances the expansion of perspectives.



**Figure 7. Anish Kapoor**  
*At the Hub of Things (1987).*



**Figure 8. Barnett Newman (1953). Figure 9. Yves Klein, IKB79 (1959).**

The dichotomic perspectives of fusion of horizons as a concept can be observed in Kapoor's work titled *At the Hub of Things* (Figure 7). This abstract semi-circular fibreglass object can be interpreted as a reification of twentieth-century abstract painting by American artist Barnett Newman, French artist Yves Klein and a representation of the blue-coloured Hindu goddess *Kali* (Nicholas Baume, 2008:55).

It can be argued that this sculpture combines temporally and geographically distinct cultural motifs by collapsing the horizons of perspectives.



**Figure 10. Manu Manjesh Laal  
*Rebirth* (2016).**

In my own work titled *Rebirth* (Figure 10) (explained in Chapter 4, section 4.5.1) I have used a similar approach of exploring the notion of conceptually crossing borders whereby the magenta work with Indian inspired motifs metaphorically infers the step of fusing two cultures from my horizon as a ‘radicant’.

## **2.11 CONCLUSION**

For this chapter I have borrowed insights from Ricoeur (linguistic hospitality), Gadamer (fusion of horizons) and Bhabha (third space) and attempted to show some of the resemblances between their theories and contemporary artists’ life-worlds and works. I conclude that the significance of translation, interpretation and eventual hybridity as concepts goes beyond the ordinary concerns of actual linguistic translators and interpreters. Fred Dallmayr (2009:24) claims that

“cultures are semantic clusters”. Furthermore, he adds that he also seeks to “review some possible practical ‘applications’ of the hermeneutical perspective in the social and cultural domains, lifting up for attention certain parallels between hermeneutics and practical philosophy”. According to Antoine Berman (1992:4), “the essence of translation is to be an opening, a dialogue, a cross breeding, a de-centering” of a language. I consider these concepts as creative models not only for translation on a linguistic platform but also for understanding between diverse cultures and as instruments for artmaking. It has been partly demonstrated in this chapter that the selected artists’ methods are allied to the abovementioned devices and philosophies. I propose that Kapoor and Shonibare represent our contemporary transnational society. They challenge their audiences by seeking to reconfigure intersubjective meanings whilst attempting to metaphorically fuse horizons, offer ‘linguistic hospitality’ and create a third space comprising their own hybrid narratives.

**CHAPTER 3**  
**TRANSLATION AND HYBRIDITY:**  
**SIR ANISH KAPOOR AND YINKA SHONIBARE MBE**

**3.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter, I continue exploring the intersection between the concepts of hybridity (Bhabha), linguistic hospitality (Ricoeur), and the fusion of horizons by Gadamer. I will conduct a critical analysis and comparison between these concepts and the works of Kapoor and Shonibare. The aim is not to engage art merely for illustrating abstract theoretical points or vice versa, but to explore the way in which these diasporic artists, their works and their art-making practices are entangled in the dynamics of cultural translation. This is to substantiate my statement of inquiry for this dissertation regarding cultural influences, and communication through hermeneutic interpretations beyond geographical boundaries. Gadamer (2004:157) explains that “Every work of art, not only literature, must be understood like any other text that requires understanding has to be acquired. (...) *Aesthetics has to be absorbed into hermeneutics*”. It is thus argued that the artist’s approaches are individualized creative acts comparable to methods of linguistic translation.

Looking at the eclectic works of the abovementioned artists has been paramount to my research and studio investigations. Additionally, their works present a range of methods and strategies that inform ideas such as mixed heritage, in-betweenness, theatricality, singularity, duality, Otherness, transitionality, contamination and ambiguity. They creatively examine strategies within the variegated cultures to which they have both had to adapt. Some of these strategies have been catalysts for my own working methods, which I will discuss in Chapter 4.

Prior to developing the intersection concerning these concepts, it is important to investigate and determine the selected artists’ situatedness concerning the notion of hybridity, which in turn enables us to cross-examine the theoretical postulations. Considering the structure of the study, some repetition and cross-referencing is unavoidable as it is approached and established through a revisional continuum.

### 3.2 HERMENEUTICAL IN-BETWEENNESS: HYBRIDITY AND THE THIRD SPACE

Gadamer (2004:304) clarifies that the *fusion of horizons* does not involve:

Subordinating another person to our own standards; rather, it always involves rising to a higher universality that overcomes not only our own particularity, but also that of the other. The concept of “horizon” suggests itself because it expresses the superior breadth of vision that the person who is trying to understand must have.

The concept of fusion, then, can be assumed as a perspective of “higher universality”, not an inaccessible circle of understanding, but rather irreducible to either’s particularity. Such a meeting of psyches opens up, even generates, new histories, new events, new influences at the borders between the self and the Other (Lampert 1997:353-354). Like any experience, cultural experience is focused on magnifying interpretations, a fusion of horizons that convenes further interpretations between companions in an “interpenetrating dialogue” (Gadamer 2004:304-307). In the process of interpretation, the horizon “changes constantly, just as our visual horizon also varies with every step we take” (Gadamer 2006:61). Hence, as established in Chapter 2, the concept of the fusion of horizons can be argued as an interaction, a point of contact, an in-between space, a place of limbo, which also signifies the deficiency of pureness; that is to say, a space of contamination. Moreover, in this in-betweenness, myself and the Other view each other, and matters continuously change with every new encounter with new Others. This is visible in the careful articulation and the in-betweenness of material and non-material matters. It can be said that Kapoor endorses this notion of “fusion of horizons” as theorized by Gadamer, by means of the work called *Ascension* (Figure 11).



**Figure 11. Anish Kapoor, *Ascension* (2010).**

Kapoor (2006), in conversation with the Brazilian curator Marcello Dantas, explains: “In my work, what it is and what it appears to be, are often confused with each other. Take *Ascension* for example, what I am interested in is the idea of the immaterial becoming an object, which is what's happening in *Ascension*, smoke is becoming a column.” The materiality of the work is in an illusory form of in-betweenness, a fusion of appearance and then the actual.

Similarly, Shonibare’s quintessential material, the “Dutch wax prints”, can be observed as a material metaphor for ‘bridging’ (as mentioned in Chapter 2, section 2.6.1) similitude and differences concerning past and present, an in-betweenness of self and the Other (Papastergiadis 2007:98).



**Figure 12. Yinka Shonibare, *The William Morris Family Album* (2015).**

This notion is also extended in the portrayal of the multicultural ‘family’ in Shonibare’s rendition of *The William Morris Family Album* (Figure 12). He employs recognizable signifiers of African-ness and Englishness, subverting them to magnify his own and his viewer’s interpretations,<sup>23</sup> as seen in Figure 12. For example, the evocative visual clues of print fabric featured in Shonibare’s work serves as a metaphor of the bridge between Britain and Africa, the Empire and the colony. It is reminiscent of William Morris’s patterned designs for wallpaper and household fabrics in Britain, so there is a double translation, subversion and fusion of horizons here, not only in the mixed ethnicity of the family, but also in the bold ‘African’ patterning imposed on the garments. Apart from the abovementioned points of fusion, Shonibare’s choice of colour on these prints is reminiscent of the Pre-Raphaelite colour palette, a subtle reference to a certain notion of ‘Englishness’, an aesthetics that permeates past and present.

<sup>23</sup> William Morris (1834–1896) was an “English textile designer”, writer, translator, and socialist activist mostly “associated with the British Arts and Crafts Movement”. He was a “major contributor to the revival of the traditional British textile industry”. Morris was a member of the Pre-Raphaelites, a secret society of young creatives, founded in London in 1848, who were known for their liberal, bohemian life-style. “They were opposed to the Royal Academy’s promotion of the ‘ideal’ as exemplified in the work of Raphael”. Inspired by the theories of John Ruskin, they believed that art should contain serious and naturalistic qualities, but also express modern social problems (Tate [Sa]).

### 3.3 FUSION OF HORIZONS AND HOSPITALITY IN POST-COLONIALITY

In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer (2004:295) establishes the “in-between” as “the true home of hermeneutics”. Hermeneutics takes its position between the “strangeness and familiarity that a transmitted text has for us ... between being a historically intended separate object and being part of a tradition” (Gadamer 2004:295). Dallmayr (2000:831) adds that “[t]his locus [home of hermeneutics] is also important for the role of prejudgments, namely by sorting out productive from unwarranted or misleading prejudices.

Gadamer’s influence on comprehending the Other is very clear. It dismisses distorted judgements through his explanation of the fusion of horizons and offers a noticeable correspondence with Bhabha’s works on cultural hybridity and the notion of the third space. As I have explained in Chapter 2, section 2.4, theories of culture are strikingly parallel to theories of language. According to Bhabha (1990:210), “Cultures are only constituted in relation to that otherness internal to their own symbol forming activity which makes them decentered structures – through that displacement or liminality (in-betweenness) opens up the possibility of articulating *different*, even incommensurable cultural practices and priorities”. Bhabha (1990:209) maintains that with the notion of cultural difference he tries to place himself in that position of liminality, in a more productive space for the construction of culture. Furthermore, he adds that “hybridity is the third space which enables other positions to emerge”. This space can be argued as postcolonial since it “exists in-between the violent (the colonialist) and the violated (the oppressed turned anti-colonialist), the accused and the accuser, allegation and admission” (Bhabha 2009:x). I propose that for Gadamer, this is the dialogical<sup>24</sup> arena where the fusion of horizons materialises.

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<sup>24</sup> Gadamer (1989:347) explains that “in communication as conversation or dialogue, the roles of “sender” and “receiver” become fluid and reciprocal. There will be an exchange of preconceptions, signs and stories. This will only happen, of course, if both parties are prepared to listen and understand a horizon that is not theirs.”

For Ricoeur, this is where two worlds mutually co-exist (Farquhar & Fitzsimons 2011:660) and “forgo the lure of omnipotence”.<sup>25</sup> For Bhabha, this is the space of intercultural contact that is “unthinkable outside the locality of cultural translation” (Bhabha 2009:ix). I argue that Shonibare’s work *The William Morris Family Album* (Figure 12) inadvertently underscores the above viewpoints by Bhabha, Gadamer and Ricoeur.

It is vital to understand that this dissertation refers to *translation* for an understanding of the role of interpretation in hybridity as part of the diasporic displacement in a contemporary context. However, a diasporic identity’s interpretation of the Other or self in a new space is dependent on his/her horizon of understanding. Thus, hybridity is a significant notion for this research because of the processual nature of hybridization, which combines the elements from the past (home culture) with the elements of the present (host culture), as seen in Figure 12.

A home culture and host culture can never be totally interchangeable and, as mentioned in Chapter 2, (section 2.6.1) of this study, two different languages are also irreducible to each other. Ricoeur (2006:13) classifies two “paralyzing alternatives” to the real task of translation as follows:

Either the diversity of languages gives expression to a radical heterogeneity – and in that case translation is theoretically impossible; one language is untranslatable, *a priori*, into another. Or else, taken as a fact, translation is explained by a common fund that renders the fact of translation possible... this is the original language track.

In this case, the two alternatives nominated by Ricoeur consider the aspiration of a complete and perfect translation. In other words, both recognize the task of translation with reference to absolute equivalence, with the mere “illusion of a total translation which would provide a perfect replica of the original” (Kearney 2006:xvii). Papastergiadis (2007:144) confirms that “a translation constantly

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<sup>25</sup> “Linguistic hospitality calls us to forgo the lure of omnipotence: the illusion of a total translation that would provide a perfect replica of the original. Instead it asks us to respect the fact that the semantic and syntactic fields of two languages are not the same, nor exactly reducible the one to the other.” In his essay *The Paradigm of Translation*, Ricoeur proposes translation as a model of hermeneutics (Kearney 2007:151-152).

undoes and disperses the authority of the original ... the meaning of an original always shifts by the very process of being translated”.



**Figure 13.** Yinka Shonibare, *Mr & Mrs Andrews without their Heads* (1998).



**Figure 14.** Thomas Gainsborough, *Mr & Mrs Andrews* (1748).

In the open translation of *Mr & Mrs Andrews*, originally painted by Gainsborough in 1748, Shonibare once again deliberately dislodges the idea of perfect translation. Shonibare's sculptural work (Figure 13) displays the same English aristocrats as in Gainsborough's painting. However, the aristocrat couple have darker skins and are re-dressed in Dutch wax-print material with African motifs. In this process, it is evident that Shonibare's inversions and re-dressing translate the couple to an 'ordinariness' and become (apart from questioning authenticity) a provocative comment on our postcolonial global culture, revealing contemporary shifts between the centre and the periphery.

Gadamer (2000:184) in *Aesthetics and hermeneutics* comments that "there is a certain truth in the assertion that permanence is essential to every work of art – [but] in the transitory arts, of course, only in the form of their repeatability". This permanence lies in the ability of the artwork to reach "beyond any historical confinement" (Gadamer 2000:181). This appropriation of *Mr and Mrs Andrews without their heads* by Shonibare, effectively demonstrates that it is indeed an artwork communicating beyond historical confinement. The Andrews couple's ostentatious display of wealth and landownership has been stripped away whilst Shonibare transmits an alternative narrative insinuating historical domination and repression while humourously mocking the British establishment.

Shonibare's tactic unites here with the strength of Bhabha's approach regarding hybridity by equating it to the notion of a third space within the locality of historical as well as cultural translation. This concept further aligns perfectly with Gadamer's (2004:389) opinion that "the situation of the translator and that of the interpreter are fundamentally the same ... for every translator is an interpreter."<sup>26</sup> Therefore, it can be argued that recognizing the postcolonial space as a site for cultural translation facilitates comprehending it through intercultural hermeneutics.

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<sup>26</sup> "The interpretation of a translated text is a specific hermeneutical task – giving meaning to the written signs. It is the translator – as an interpreter – who brings the matter of the text to life. Gadamer (2004:388) compares this to oral translation, which facilitates reaching an agreement precisely because a measure of translation is present even during everyday conversation of people speaking the same language. Gadamer (2004:388) compares interpretation to conversation by saying that it is "a circle closed by the dialectic of question and answer" (Piecychna 2012:175-176).

Professor Nicholas Davey (2006:xiv) clarifies that philosophical hermeneutics “grasps understanding as an event, it proposes that understanding does not merely interpret the world but changes it. The ontological actualities underwriting understanding deprive hermeneutic consciousness of any certainty of interpretation.”

It is in such a dialogical encounter that we migrants (as the Other) can approach horizons from the perspective of our own life-world. We can make sense of understanding as an actual event; more specifically, as an event that is under perpetual change pertaining to horizons in which shifts are involved. This event of understanding “is constructed through the negotiation of difference, and ... the presence of fissures, gaps and contradictions is not necessarily a sign of failure” (Papastergiadis 2007:170). For artists such as Kapoor, Shonibare and myself, “it is not the combination, accumulation, blending or synthesis of various components, but an energy field of different forces ... within which other elements encounter and transform each other” (Papastergiadis 2007:170). More specifically, it is a hermeneutical encounter within the third space.

#### **3.4 TRANSLATION AS A CREATIVE ACT: ARTISTS AS TRANSLATORS**

The contemporary world with the advent of globalization can be better explained within the context of displacement. Deterritorialization as a concept has become the dominant typescript of contemporary screen-shots of culture since the 1980s. Like radicants (explained in Chapter 2, section 2.2), their survival is summarised by the awareness that life is a translation, an activity engrossed in the fusion of multiple horizons. It can be argued that displacement has become a contemporary method of depiction, predominantly when interchanges<sup>27</sup> provide the dwellings. Bourriaud (2009:51) proposes that today, “artists become semionauts, the surveyors of a hypertext world ... of their historical and geographical displacement”. Hence the expression or sensation of ‘topographical rootlessness’ perceived in some

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<sup>27</sup> Michael Serres (1997:61) argues that “If interchanges are now the basic units of a space through which we henceforth merely pass, how can one dwell there? Answer: we no longer dwell. Is it possible to conceive of, to draw a garden of wandering?”

contemporary artworks, which are translations of artists' hybrid experiences in their places of survival. I argue that inviting the viewer to embark on a "hermeneutic horizon", by employing the techniques of translation in their mode of evaluating the meaning of an artwork, particularly facilitates the works of diasporic artists (as elucidated in Chapter 4).

My aim here is to establish how the main postcolonial and hermeneutical theories discussed thus far engage with the concepts of representation within the artist's creative acts and whether they are similar to strategies applied during translation. This is further elaborated in the sections to follow.

As mentioned, cultural translation uncovers the opportunity but also the difficulties of an ethics of linguistic hospitality. Correspondingly, translational hermeneutics involves innovative approaches and without this understanding it is problematic. The French sociologist Emile Durkheim (1951:250) argues that, "individuals are unable to connect their own practices with the broader social values and are thus left in a state of relative normlessness" This is evidenced by the conceptual underpinning of some of the work of Kapoor, as is effectively demonstrated in the experience of the viewer of *Double Mirror* (Figure 15). Kapoor, in conversation with Bhabha (1993:[sp]), says his aim was to create a work "Where time and space are seemingly absent, at a standstill..., in that narrow passage, paradoxically there is a restlessness, an unease ... the void is not silent, it is a space of becoming".

Kapoor admits during this conversation with Bhabha (1998:[sp]) that his work is informed from his phenomenological perspective, and he asks, "[h]ow can the perceptual void be spoken?" This line of thinking connects to the international art writer Katlyn Davis (2018) who says: "Because of [his] exclusive education, combined with the diversity and forward thinking within his own family, Kapoor spent his childhood feeling like an outsider unsure of his identity within Indian society. In his late teens, his sense of not belonging developed into deep internal turmoil."<sup>28</sup> In the abovementioned conversation with Bhabha (1998:[sp]), Kapoor

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<sup>28</sup> Kapoor confesses: "I was seriously fucked up, full of inner conflict that I didn't know how to resolve." This resulted in 15 years of psychoanalytical therapy to assist him in coping with his inner struggle (Kapoor 2008).

stated that his aim is to “define means that allow phenomenological and other perceptions which one might use, one might work with, and then move towards a poetic existence”. He continues; “it's not my role to be expressive. ... But it is my role to bring to expression”. Based on this, one may assume that Kapoor takes his function as a cultural worker, translator and transmitter of meaning seriously. One of the primary research questions in this dissertation is to consider translation as a model for creating meaning about in-betweenness and hybridity. These words of Kapoor, together with Neubert’s parameters quoted below, indicate the answer.

The German linguist Albrecht Neubert (2000:7–10) explains that the parameters of competence within translation are as follows: language competence, cultural competence, subject competence, textual competence and transfer competence. Neubert (2000:5) adds that apart from these parameters, there are also contextual features of translation competence to be considered, such as the complexity and heterogeneity of the translator’s knowledge, as well as the open-endedness and the circumstances of a situation and a sense of the historicity of the material they are working with. I concur that “the power of language lies in its ability to create what is real: through image, metaphor and interpretation. Translation is, thus, a mode of power in which language creates possibilities for multiplicity and difference” (Farquhar & Fitzsimons 2009:653). Adhering to my premise, I argue that if artistic expression is equal to a text it may participate in the same mode of power to translate and comment on the multiplicity of difference and that the creative acts of Kapoor and also Shonibare uncover a symbiotic relationship between cultural hybridity, translation and art.

As explained in Chapter 2 (section 2.6), translation studies and hermeneutics are directly connected. Hermeneutics correspondingly engages translational analyses, which involves interpretation, understanding, language, meaning and explanations. The researcher and author Richard E Palmer (1969:33) points out that contemporary hermeneutics finds within translation and translation theory a special “reservoir” for exploring certain hermeneutical issues, and the phenomenon of translation is, in some ways, a key matter for hermeneutical studies and becomes

clear in the renditions of the selected artists. In the sections that follow, I explore the ideas in relation to the artists Anish Kapoor and Yinka Shonibare.

### **3.4.1 Anish Kapoor**

The work of the Kapoor, the British-Indian-Jewish artist, has been an important reference point for the development of my research and practice. Since the 1980s, Kapoor's works have been conceptualized to express heterogeneity. Although many of his sculptures seem formalist at an immediate glance, his cultural-hybrid background plays a covert role which is often unrecognized. As Bhabha (2004:234) reminds us, cultural difference initiates "the borderline moment of cultural translation". Bhabha (2004:247) continues that, for Kapoor, culture became "both transnational and translational – a strategy for survival". For Kapoor, culture is transnational, due to his combined Jewish-Indian parenthood, whereas culture as translation implies the displacement or migration that led him to the United Kingdom, where he studied visual arts at Hornsey College. Thereafter he relocated to the multicultural city of London, and studied at the Chelsea College of Art. However, the effect of this multicultural rootedness in his work is a task to uncover. Although he frequently mentions his Indian roots, he locates himself as a stranger in India. Journalist Marianne MacDonald (1998:2) reported that Kapoor "famously hates being called an Indian artist. In a conversation with Marcello Dantas, Kapoor (2006) mentioned: "I was born in India, my mother is Jewish, and we were brought up as much Jewish as anything else. We felt we were foreigners. I am used to it, being a foreigner". Asked by curator Andrea Rose about whether he thought of himself as being Indian, Kapoor (Kapoor, Rose & Hilty 2010) replied, "I just thought of myself as an artist". Kapoor opts to be known as an artist through creativity as a principal factor. In this context, it can be argued that the artist places himself in the postcolonial position of liminality or the third space. As said before, Bhabha (1990:209) explains it as follows: "I try to place myself in that position of liminality, in that productive space of the construction of culture as difference, in the spirit of alterity and otherness."

I argue that Kapoor creatively expresses the notion of the complexities of this cultural ambivalence, like a translator. For instance, in his work *Double Mirror*

(Figure 15) there is a set of concave mirrors set opposite each other. The reflective arrangement multiplies and at a certain point/angle, the image of the subject that enters the zone in between the mirrors is erased completely off the mirrors. Caught in between the contest of the large (2 metre), polished, concavity of the mirror-space, the subject (viewer) experiences a state of disjunction of his/her own existence and a tactile state of transition. In other words, the outline of the work is not situated in any of the mirrors, but where the viewer is located, in the liminal zone in between them, where the illusion of the difference (duality) collapses and is fused.



**Figure 15. Anish Kapoor, *Double Mirror* (1998).**

Based on my research of Kapoor and his work in the context of hermeneutics thus far, I believe my interpretation of this work goes beyond mere conjecture. What Kapoor has managed to do is to fully engage (himself and his viewer) in an aspect of the specificity of the act of translation, in the light of Gadamer's hermeneutical philosophy of language. Piecychna (2012:179) elucidates Gadamer's explanation of translation as follows:

Translation is a specific hermeneutical experience, and as such is as multidimensional as hermeneutical conversation. Translation is, first of all, a linguistic act involving individuals who, in most cases, communicate in different languages. Therefore, their communication is obstructed. Translation doubles the hermeneutical process and is a situation of a specific distance between the translator and the other party of the conversation.

Through the depiction and the possible interpretation of the notion of in-betweenness, Kapoor's works also illustrate characteristics of Bhabha's theories (the third space in particular). More specifically, the works speak of the dualistic interactive process between viewer and the artwork. The heterogeneity associated with the notion of presence (authority; in a postcolonial sense) is exposed through its reversal, which is the contrasting aspect of presence: void, the power without any presence. The creative tension between the binaries within the energy field of the third space (as explained in Chapter 2 section 2.8), ensures that the task of the translator is an endless one.

Richard Kearney (2007:147) takes up this idea in an explanation of Ricoeur's *Ethics of Translation* as follows:

The world is made up of plurality of human beings, cultures, tongues. Humanity exists in the plural mode. ... any legitimate form of plurality must always – if the hermeneutical model of translation is observed – find its equivalent plurality. The creative tension between the universal and the plural ensures that the task of translation is an endless one, a work of tireless memory and mourning, of appropriation and disappropriation, of taking up and letting go, of expressing oneself and welcoming others.

The endless plurality implied in the above analysis by Kearney is palpable in the reflective surfaces of Kapoor's *Double Mirror* (Figure 15).

### **3.4.2 Linguistic hospitality**

Ricoeur's account of translation, as also discussed in Chapter 2 (section 2.6.1), is embodied in the idea of linguistic hospitality; in fact, he practices philosophy as translation (Kearney 2006:vii-xx). Dr. Lisa Foran (2015:25) from Newcastle University contends that linguistic hospitality "ultimately runs the risk of putting everyone on the same level". She adds that Ricoeur's "account of the identity of the self as a pluralistic knot of narratives surely entails equal measures of expropriation and appropriation". In my view such ambivalence is exemplified when a viewer stands in front of the artwork shown in Figure 15.

Another work of Kapoor, *Marsyas* (Figure 17), is an example of such a complex pluralistic knot of identity and narrative, which translates, appropriates and expropriates freely. Concurrently *Marsyas* is exemplary of Neubert's (2000:5)

contextual features of translation competence such as creativity, complexity, heterogeneity, approximation, open-endedness, situationality, and historicity, as discussed in section 3.3. This work evokes the power of language in its ability to create an experience by extracting a myth using form and colour. The original painting is by Titian (Figure 16). Kapoor explains (in a 2017 YouTube interview) that, “Marsyas is a figure from Greek mythology, a satyr flayed by the god Apollo for daring to play a piece of music, on the flute, better than Apollo himself. There's a whole story there, in that artists don't dare make a piece of art more beautiful than the gods could make.” Kapoor (2003) adds that:

Mystery keeps us asking questions: how it is, why it is, also how is it done. These questions are simple, but the answers can be deep. The mystery is the surprising, the interpretation of the world as one is not expecting. That's what we're looking for. There is mystery in the metaphysical, but what is important is the way it connects with the real.

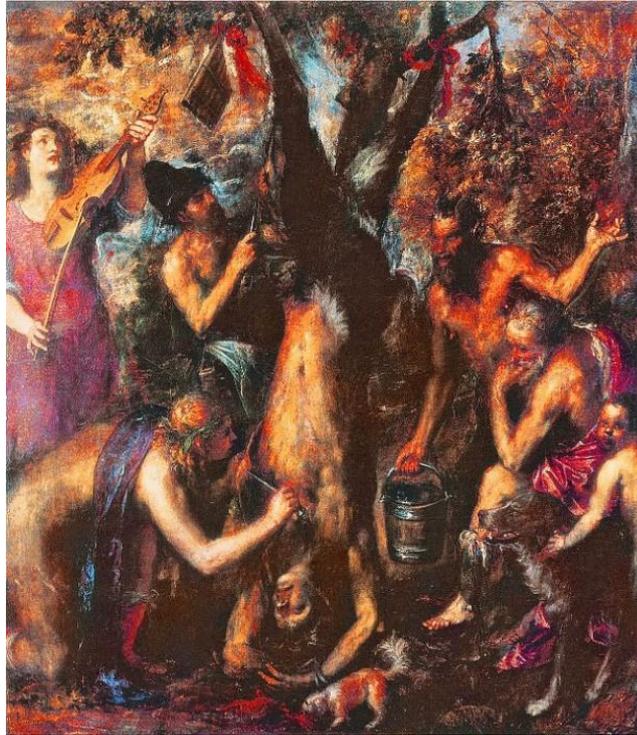
Connection with the ‘real’ (as Kapoor expresses it) can only be a hermeneutic occurrence. However, in this work, it can be argued that the myth as a subject is approached from a postcolonial<sup>29</sup> perspective, where the god (the authority) is questioned for an unreasonable punishment.

Marsyas was guilty, but in a sense threatening the sacred and harmonious hierarchical order of the universe. In a postcolonial context it can be argued that Marsyas, as a character, had become, in effect, an enemy of the state, and was brutally punished. Kapoor's sculpture comprises a red coloured synthetic skin material stretched on three big, metal rings that generate a sense of a flayed object, revealing a complex network of interior and exterior. The intensity of the red colour of the object that fills the vast interiority of the Tate turbine hall. It creates an experience of raining blood that accentuates mythology's inexhaustible richness of suggestiveness that stirs mythological recollections of the cruel flaying which Apollo brutally inflicted on the unfortunate satyr's body.

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<sup>29</sup> Susan VanZanten Gallagher (1994:14) argues that postcolonial literature “set[s] out to dismantle a specific historically grounded discourse in the hopes of demonstrating that an alternative discourse is possible”.

Ricoeur (2005:09) adds this critical point in the ethics of translation, that “the ability to recount the founding events of our national history in different ways is reinforced by the exchange of cultural memories. This ability to exchange has as a touchstone, the will to share symbolically and respectfully in the commemoration of the founding events of other cultures”.



**Figure 16. Titian, *Marsyas* (1576).**



**Figure 17. Anish Kapoor, *Marsyas* (2002).**



**Figure 18. Anish Kapoor, *Marsyas* (2002).**

Kapoor's competence as a translator is observable in this work. The identification of cultural memory, interpreting it as a mythological subject and appropriating it by using symbols of "structural tension ... create... a tight inner strength in the work" (McEvelley 1999:222). On the making of a 'thing' (artwork), Kapoor (1988:18)

avers that “a thing exists in the world because it has mythological, psychological and philosophical coherence”. That is to say, in the process of making, the work travels through linguistic, cultural, textual, and transfer capabilities, fulfilling all the parameters of translation competencies.

### 3.4.3 Yinka Shonibare

Shonibare’s life can be defined as a relentless swing between European life and Yoruba culture in search of the fundamental understanding of ethnic identity and Western contact. Nevertheless, his multicultural identity has been a coherent source for his artistic inspirations. As a student, questions about the absence of ethnic influence in his works (by one of his professors) is said to have haunted Shonibare<sup>30</sup> and made him eventually realise the possibilities within that criticism.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter (section, 3.1, Introduction), ‘diaspora artists’ can often be identified by dualistic viewpoints, which deal with and question the notion of singularity in ethnicity, culture and history. Shonibare’s artistic oeuvre can be regarded as a representation of explanatory aspects of such dichotomies in culture. As Papastergiadis (1997:40) himself maintains, “the idea of some kind of fixed identity, of belonging to an authentic culture, is quite foreign to my experience”. The pincer effect of this two-fold notion between being authentic or suspect<sup>31</sup> is echoed by Shonibare and his own attempt to shake off the ‘exotic’ label (Shonibare 1995:41). Papastergiadis (2007:136) elucidates:

The migrant by virtue of being dislocated from his or her context of origin in which certain conceptions of the world were secured, and being slightly adjacent to the given views in the new context, feels the gap between the semiotic and the symbolic all the more palpably. It is this process of translating the previously known together with the unknown into something that is

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<sup>30</sup> Yinka Shonibare (in Kent 2014:43) says that, “When I was at the college in London, my work was very political ... my tutor upon seeing this work, said to me: You are African, aren’t you; why don’t you make authentic African art? I was quite taken aback by this, but it was through the process of thinking about authenticity that I started to wonder about what the signifiers of such “authentic” Africanness would look like”.

<sup>31</sup> Yinka Shonibare (1995:41) imparts that, “what I have found, making work in Britain, is that when you make work about your origins, all it can be about is your origins. But if you don’t make work about your origins, people will say you’re an African artist who doesn’t make work about African subjects, so your identity becomes suspect.”

knowable that creates a slippage between naming and associations and engenders new meanings.

*Double Dutch* (Figure 2) formulates such a slippage by its minimalistic approach of seriality and repetition that contrasts the European approaches towards grand narratives.<sup>32</sup> With the purposeful use of African fabric, with its colonial history<sup>33</sup>, Shonibare draws attention to the constructedness of its origins. By reframing and representing them with fresh connotations, like a translator, Shonibare goes beyond their traditional function as cultural signifiers. Bhabha (2004:240-250) writes:

How does the deconstruction of the 'sign', the emphasis on indeterminism in cultural and political judgement, transform our sense of the 'subject' of culture and the historical agency of change? If we contest the 'grand narratives', then what alternative temporalities do we create to articulate the differential (Jameson), contrapuntal (Said), interruptive (Spivak) historicities of race, gender, class, nation within a growing transnational culture? Do we need to rethink the terms in which we conceive of community, citizenship, nationality, and the ethics of social affiliation?

By deconstructing the symbol of culture's particularity, Shonibare has introduced into Britain Derrida's concept of indeterminism, an ephemerality around the symbol of contemporary culture as liquid (as explained in Chapter 2, section 2.4) and its shifting signifying categories. I argue that, using Dutch wax-print fabric as a (translational) medium, Shonibare's work raises questions about race, class, complex histories, authenticity and postcolonialism.

Theatricality is an important device for the enquiries contained in both Shonibare's and Kapoor's works. Kent and Hobbs (2008:41) clarify: "it is a way of setting the

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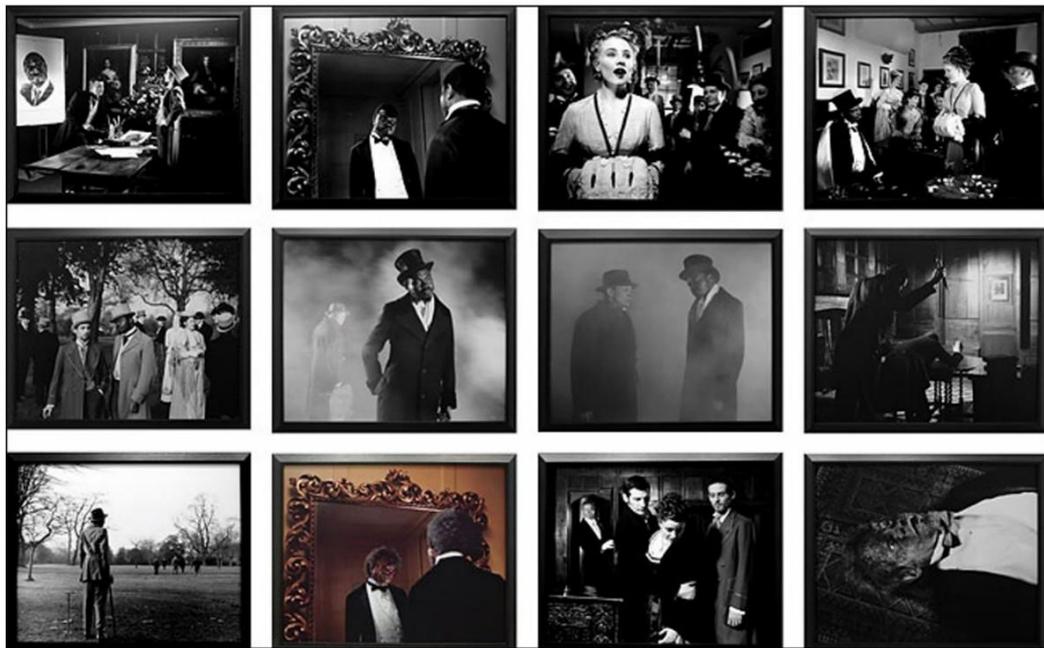
<sup>32</sup> Shonibare in Kent and Hobbs (2008:40) mentions his influences derived from Jacques Derrida's writings. In Derrida's *Grand Narrative's* "postulate of the fundamental indeterminacy and undecidability of meaning in all linguistic entities: every linguistic entity, by virtue of its being embedded in a polysemic network of differential/'differential' relations, has an overabundance—a surplus, an overload—of signification whose various elements are at odds with one another, thus preventing univocal meaning from being determined and decided."

<sup>33</sup> Shonibare uses African fabric that has a colonial history; this type of fabric, very popular in Northern parts of Africa and Nigeria is generally believed to have originated there. In reality, the material was produced in Indonesia and, interestingly, the Indonesians discarded it because of the unacceptable design quality of their patterns of attraction, but these very 'imperfections' found favour on the colonial African Gold Coast. First exported to England and then to Netherlands and then sold to African merchants (Picton & Hynes 2001:66).

stage; it is also a fiction – a hyper realistic, theatrical device that enables you to re-imagine events from history. There is no obligation to truth in such a setting, so you have the leeway to create fiction or to dream”. One might certainly view Shonibare’s mannequin installations as the drama of static theatre. The theatricality of Shonibare’s work has direct pointers to European history and the uses of signifiers to reference the issues that he is underpinning in the work. His artworks often consist of traditional theatrical strategies such as satire (commentary on the presupposition of uniform moral standards) and irony (feigned ignorance and inversion to provoke the reversal of expectation) as well as parody (exaggerated peculiarity for comic effect) (de Villiers 2008:83, 84). Furthermore, in response to the undercurrent of estrangement, he translates and hybridizes – blending fact and fiction derived from contemporary culture. In an interview for the Bomb Magazine with Anthony Downey (2005), Shonibare explains the irony, parody and satire found in this work:

So, the idea of the theatrical for me is actually about art as the construction of a fiction, art as the biggest liar. What I want to suggest is that there is no such thing as a natural signifier, that the signifier is always constructed. In other words, that what you represent things with, is a form of mythology.

Shonibare’s creative process of integrating theatricality through *tableaux-vivant* also contains a fictional mythology through unexpected confrontation between self and the other. *Dorian Gray*, based on the novel with the same title by Oscar Wilde, was Shonibare’s second photographic collection reflecting late Victorian literary creation.



**Figure 19. Yinka Shonibare, *Dorian Gray* (2001).**

The novel tells the story of a handsome young man who sold his soul to the devil in order to remain forever young. In 1945, it became a Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer film. It is this black and white film strip adaptation which triggered Shonibare's own photographs essentially as the original Wilde novel. Shonibare selects black and white story-board format for all but one of his photographs, unlike the colourful Victorian Dandy photograph (in Figure 4, Chapter 2, section 2.7). One may surmise that because the narrative of *Dorian Gray* revolves around the topic of narcissism Shonibare, with his penchant for mimicry, artifice and disruption, accentuates his own photographic image in front of the mirror by rendering it in colour. Shonibare narrates the same dualistic notion as the black and white film medium. In a second transposition, Shonibare substitutes a black man for the original nineteenth-century white Englishman. American novelist and social critic James Arthur Baldwin (1984:167) noted:

When, beneath the black mask, a human being begins to make himself felt one cannot escape a certain awful wonder as to what sort of human being it is. ... one of the ironies of black-white relations that, by means of what the white man imagines the black man to be, the black man is enabled to know who the white man is.

It can be argued that Shonibare's characters are successful creations of ambivalence inseparably linked to the artist's idea of authenticity and contamination. If Shonibare sees an element of himself in characters such as Dorian Gray and a Victorian Dandy, then the contaminating process of the hybrid's identity formation can be connected to Ricoeur's idea of the plurality embodied in inter-linguistic hospitality (see section 3.3.1). Shonibare uses vocabularies and strategies of translation and hybridity that contribute to identity-construction, thereby confirming that disguise is a necessary social mechanism for the expression of outrage (Klein 2007:70).

#### **3.4.4 *The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters*: Fusion of horizons, third space and linguistic hospitality**



**Figure 20. Goya, *The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters* (1790).**



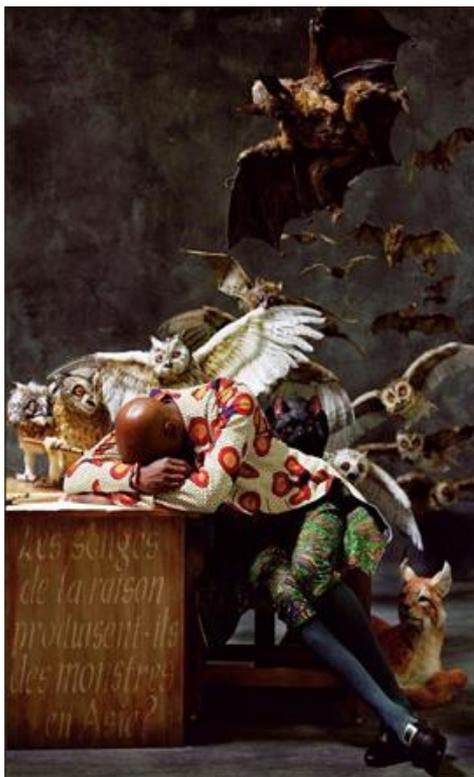
**Figure 21. Shonibare, *The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters (Africa) 2008.***

Shonibare's photographic series, *The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters* (Figures 20-25), employs the aspect of theatricality combined with three-dimensional *tableaux-vivants*.<sup>34</sup> This work is a series of five variations in an open translation of Goya's *Los Caprichos*. Correlating with Kapoor's *Marsyas* (see section 3.3.2), I would like to explore the translational approaches (which Kapoor also employed in translating *Marsyas*) by means of which Shonibare has engaged with the original work of Goya<sup>35</sup> (Figure 20).

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<sup>34</sup> *Tableaux vivant* is a silent scene that used to be regarded as an amusing pastime. "Translated from French, *tableaux vivant* means 'living pictures'. The genre peaked in popularity between 1830 and 1920" (Ironically during the height of the scramble for Africa) (Murphy 2012).

<sup>35</sup> Goya's work (Figures 20–25) is number 43 in the print series of *Los caprichos*. The etching expresses a seated artist. Menacing creatures hover over the figure. The image implies that when reason is unhinged the artist is able to free his imagination, unleashing torments usually held in check by rational thoughts. Goya seems to question whether the artist is a victim of dark, uncontrollable forces or the beneficiary of redemption, with extraordinary vision, comparable to the nocturnal creatures around him (Art Gallery NSW: [Sa]).



**Figure 22. Shonibare, The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters (Asia) 2008.**



**Figure 23. Shonibare, The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters (America) 2008.**



**Figure 24. Shonibare,  
The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters (Europe) 2008.**

His sculptural installations were developed by setting up different literary scenes with live actors and then photographing them. It is apparent in this case that, like a text, art history provides plentiful subject matter for Shonibare. As in Goya's work, there is a central male figure in Shonibare's photographs. But in the case of Shonibare's images, each photograph is unique, while keeping the background theme common in all the photographs, the figures are dressed up in his signature Dutch wax fabric. Each figure's costume varies in its pattern and colour for each photograph. As in Goya's work, the face is concealed by the hand of the sleeping figure. Comparable to the aquatint of Goya's works, grey samples are used with a slight tinting visible in the background.

Basically, Shonibare translated and decoded what Goya did in his etching, adding a twist by creating a living sculptural *tableaux-vivant* photograph, with Dutch wax

fabric juxtaposed to historical European costumes. It is noticeable that Shonibare deliberately applies his interpretation tactics by altering the title of the work and nationality (in French) with the physical identity of the seated figure in each photograph. For example, the European-looking figure is placed with the title: *Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters in Africa* (Figure. 21).

Rachel Kent (Kent & Hobbs 2008:20-21) declares that “Shonibare’s satirical work, *The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters*



**Figure 25. Shonibare,  
*The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters (Australia) 2008.***

breaks down grand narratives and the contamination of ideas”, which the researcher Jennifer Stavrianou (2017:9) sees as presenting the viewer with “the representation of racial and national binaries”. This underlines my argument that one has to consider the social situatedness of the artist. Artworks, like texts, can be ambiguous and open to diverse interpretations. Any translation is relative and dependent on the social environment, as Belgian political theorist Chantal Mouffe explains in

Mouffe & Holdengräber (1989:44):

We are in fact always multiple and contradictory subjects, inhabitants of a diversity of communities (as many, really, as the social relations in which we participate and the subject-positions they define), constructed by a variety of discourses and precariously and temporarily sutured at the intersection of those subject-positions.

Diversities of the nature described by Mouffe can be situated in a postcolonial space of hybridity, a space of tension and conflict, of a reciprocal recognition of the Other, a third space of shared understanding, and cannot be reduced to a single translation (see also Ricoeur's *mimesis-I*, discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.6.1). This is the site where one can experience one's own historicity (Gadamer 1989:357) through a process of transmission in which past and present are constantly mediated (Gadamer 1989:290).

Kent and Hobbs (2008:21) state that "each figure in the work claims a nationality that is not only different from the title of the piece but that is also in turmoil with the nation that the photograph is titled for". The figure varies with the nation or the continent that Shonibare represents. That is to say, an African man for Asia, a white man for Africa, presumably an Asian man for America, and so on. Apart from a comment on moral values and colonialism the work plays on diverse strategies of interpretation and questions the representation of 'reality' as represented in history. Shonibare creates ambiguity in the title of the geographical locations, whether his point of reference is to a nation or a continent. For instance, Australia is a country as well as a continent. Africa is collectively positioned as a country, but in reality it is a combination of fifty-seven countries with a vast diversity of tradition, culture and language. So is the case of America.

Although the methodology that Shonibare used in this work generates a sense of ambiguity, I argue that this is typical of *modus operandi* rooted in postcolonial approaches. As Bhabha (1998:211) explains, "the importance of hybridity is that it bears the traces of those feelings and practices which inform it, just like translation, so that hybridity puts together traces of certain other meanings or discourses". Then

for Shonibare, a nation<sup>36</sup> or a geographical boundary becomes what Bhabha (2004:01) calls “the realm of the beyond”, the beyond as a third space, “the borderlines of the present” (Bhabha 2004:07). He continues; “...the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion. For there is a sense of disorientation, a disturbance of direction, in the beyond” (Bhabha 2004:02).

This third space, in which Shonibare’s work can be located, is arguably a postcolonial condition, overloaded with ambiguity, in which knowledge is structured in terms of oppositional categories (please refer to Chapter 2, section 2.2). Shonibare (in Kent & Hobbs 2008:30) himself expresses his objection about racist stereotypes as subjects that his art could probe and critique: “I realized, that I didn’t have to accept my designation as some sort of a doomed other, I could challenge my relationship to authority with humor and parody in mimicking and mirroring.” This quoted comment of Shonibare endorses Bhabha’s notion of postcolonial application of *mimicry* (as explained in Chapter 2, section 2.7).

Through the active negation of the other, Shonibare clarifies his translational position in the third space. I can therefore argue that Shonibare’s work *The sleep of reason produces monsters* is an example set in mimesis (as also indicated in a different context in Chapter 2, section 2.7). This is a phase which Ricoeur (1984:71) explains as “the intersection of the text and the world of the hearer or the reader [viewer]”; a stage in the process of the act of readership in Gadamer’s fusion of horizons, where Otherness helps constitute the self (1984:03). It can be argued that by creating ambiguity through the juxtaposition of Otherness with the self and artfully employing theatricality with his signature medium of Dutch wax fabric, Shonibare creatively translates historical claims of ‘purity’ into an appropriate and comprehensible ‘contamination’, which matters in present-day issues surrounding

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<sup>36</sup> Ernest Renan (in Bhabha 1990:19) defines: “A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle. Two things, which in truth are but one, constitute this soul or spiritual principle. One lies in the past, one in the present. One is the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories; the other is present-day consent, the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in an undivided form”.

multicultural societies.

### **3.4.5 Conclusion**

In the analysis of the various texts and artworks it has become clear that culture influences the social and personal construction of *Dasein* (Being). It can be deduced from the artists' output, considered in this chapter, that they apply a process of comprehending the unfamiliar through the familiar, the Other through the self, the present through the past, and the outside from the inside through creative acts of translation. Gadamer's fusion of horizons, Ricoeur's linguistic hospitality and Bhabha's third space provide a suitable hermeneutical framework to appraise the present-day diversity in cultural citizenship. This is an in-between place, the liminal zone of creativity where artists as translators attempt to resolve the ambivalence of existence by embracing sensory thresholds. It is evidenced in the selected artists' creative approaches that translation (their creativity) is an endless process and hybridity (their identity) an endless search.

This endless relationship between hybridity and translation forms part of my own art praxis and is discussed in the next chapter. I will draw parallels between my own work and that of Kapoor and Shonibare and explain the relationship between my practice-led approach, materials and techniques and the theoretical research contained in this dissertation.

## CHAPTER 4 TRAJECTORIES

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I will analyze how the theoretical discourses that I have researched facilitate understanding of the physical position of ‘in-betweenness’ that informs my own creative practice. I will also trace how the studio research decodes and uses methods of translation to incorporate concepts such as cultural encounters, poetic ambiguities, and emblematic fusions against the backdrop of my own diasporic experiences.

This dissertation was written in conjunction with my exhibition held in April 2017, titled ‘*Trajectories*’.<sup>37</sup> My artworks can be regarded as trajectories resulting from my intercultural communication and counter-hegemonic beliefs. As said in Chapter 1, the motivation for this exhibition and research comes from an innermost impulse to understand my own existence as a migrant from Kerala, Southern India to Botswana, Southern Africa. In addition, I am constantly exposed to heterogeneous experiences as a participant in cosmopolitan global culture. The artworks in the exhibition were a personal expression of ambivalence and complexities situated in postcolonial and contemporary global conditions, as described throughout all the chapters in this dissertation.

Based on the above research and reinforced by the artworks illustrated in this dissertation, it is my conviction that Shonibare, Kapoor and I are actively engaged in a hermeneutical process. I propose that we as artists translate, allocate meaning and justify our experiences through the agency of the self. It has become increasingly clear to me that as a consequence of my diasporic experiences (for the past 18 years) my art practice gradually began to incarnate my *Dasein* – being in

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<sup>37</sup> UNISA Art Gallery, Kgorong Building, Pretoria – 01/April/2017.

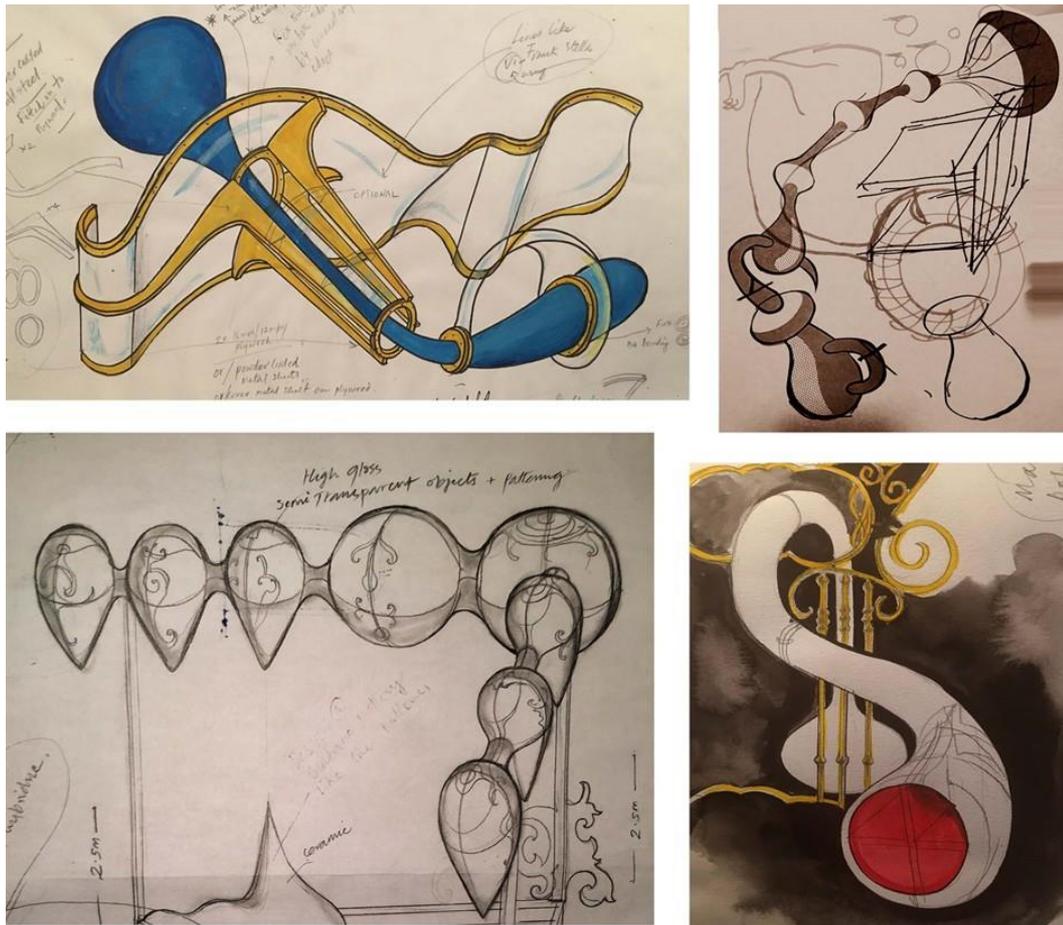
Through my previous degree studies in physics I learned that “a trajectory is a physical phenomenon associated with the equilibrium or motion of objects”. In geometry it is also defined as a curve or a family of curves at a constant angle. However, the word is also associated with “the way that something continues to happen, develop, or make progress and is impossible to stop” which can be equated to migration and multiculturalism (Merriam-Webster Online:[Sa]).

the world. The authors of *The Responsibility of Hermeneutics*, Lundin, Thiselton and Walhout (1985:32) explain that:

Hermeneutics is about a retrospective search for latent meaning, a self-conscious interpretation and a justification of human existence beyond the superficial. It concerns the reappraisal of the individual's situation and his/her sense of perception of daily routines and how this perception triggers a very personal response that facilitates understanding, however erroneous or ambivalent it may be.

The visual interpretation of my hermeneutic search for meaning, as presented in this chapter, has resulted in intercultural pairing and configurations that tend to complement, echo and juxtapose each other. In my drawings and sculptures there are allusions to musical instruments and African calabashes (Figures 26 and 34), suggesting a blend of rhythmic ciphers, phrases, and semantics which in turn contextualize the notion of translation. The concept is further expressed by multiple materials and reflective surfaces prompting interpretation by the viewer. Superimposed Indian patterning, and the contours of hybridized African receptacles and calabashes often assimilate to become united as one. These unions inadvertently result in unexpected sensuality and, as the theorist Gayatri Spivak (cited in Landry & Maclean 1996:269-270) proposes: "The ideal relation to the Other is an embrace, an act of love".

Spivak's definition of such an "ideal relation" resonates in my belief that my personal contact with new ethnicities and racial and cultural permutations does not sublate my own culture, but is a reciprocal arc, offering new experiences that enrich my artmaking and present alternative concepts, materials and technical probabilities. Hence the primary focus of my exhibition was on the process of inter-relatedness, transfiguration and the resultant convergence or 'fusion of horizons' which often results in hybridity.



**Figure 26. Preparatory drawings (2017).**

Through intense appraisal of the relationship between the symbols and materials used, I created a body of works that represents my own interpretation of cultural intersections, reciprocity and their conceptual correlation with art. These creative explorations have expanded my knowledge of hybridity as a concept and articulated my own diasporic experiences. The technical approaches and the subjective rootedness that emerged in my studio have contributed to a conscious shift in my methods and concepts to align them with translating my own in-between experiences as a diasporic entity.

## **4.2 PROCESS**

In art, narrative arises through the process. Sometimes the object doesn't need to say anything. The process allows narrative and meaning to arise (Kapoor & Kristeva 2015).

As mentioned in Chapter 1 (section 1.7), this study was carried out as practice-led research. It is admitted that the body of work as well as the conception of ideas grew, improved and transformed as the processual artmaking practice continued. These two aspects of my research are hence to be understood as equally important and complementary to each other.



**Figure 27. Presentation of processes, *Trajectories*, Unisa Gallery (2017).**

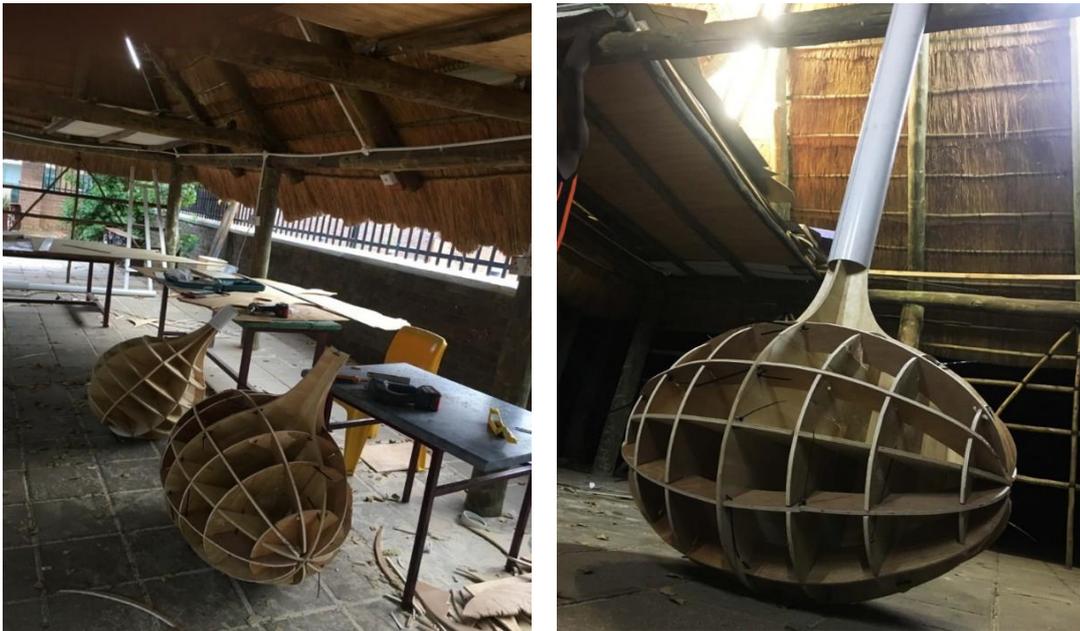
My studio practice also involved distinct varieties of materials and techniques during the developing process. I use drawing as my fundamental approach and then extend the practical research into exploration with wood (Figure 28) and thereafter progress into different mediums and materials (more specific elaboration concerning my creative processes follow later in this chapter). Hybrid and diverse methodologies are crucial to my investigations as they also metaphorically reflect my diasporic and personal ‘in-between’ ways of seeing, which eventually take me to the third space as theorized by Bhabha.

As mentioned above, all formative influences and the responsive and perceptual development of my work were analyzed through interpreting my own phenomenological *Dasein*<sup>38</sup> and intrinsic experiences of being in my life-world.

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<sup>38</sup> Dasein is explained in another context earlier in this dissertation, the German word Dasein is usually left untranslated in English writing; it refers to “a pre-reflective understanding of being from within a concrete situation that has an intrinsic relation to the interpreter’s past and future” with specific application to human existence and self-awareness (Wollan 2010:32-33). By extension, Dasein points to grasp of a situation, which triggers a response.

The hermeneutical circle (as explained through Chapter 2 and Chapter 3), particularly in the interpretation of the works by Shonibare and Kapoor, is also part of my own value system. Furthermore, the understanding and the meaning of my work is underpinned by the concepts of the fusion of horizons, linguistic hospitality and the third space. However, I have attempted to extend reciprocity/fusion/hospitality and in-betweenness to include the viewers of my works, as explained later in section 4.4.



**Figure 28. Process, Plywood (2017).**

During the preparation of *Trajectories*, my objectives, personal situatedness as a diasporic identity, as well as my research findings made me even more aware of my own in-betweenness. This immersion facilitated a comprehensive knowledge of my social and symbolic situation within this globalized world of now. Anish Kapoor's Indian cultural connection, akin to my own, has prompted me to make work about my ethnicity.

My 'sense of place' and deep personal political involvement in Botswana have developed my awareness of the African culture and influenced my conceptual cognition and artmaking practice immensely. I concur with Papastergiadis

(2010:19), who says: “there is no bridge that connects art and politics. Bridging<sup>39</sup> is part of the politics of art”. I believe that this situatedness can be recognized in the works created for this study. The following section explores my horizon as an artist based on medium, exhibition space and artworks.

### 4.3 MEDIUM

#### 4.3.1 Termite-hill clay, fragility and culture



**Figure 29. Process, *Mafoko a Utlwetse*, Termite-hill clay (2017).**

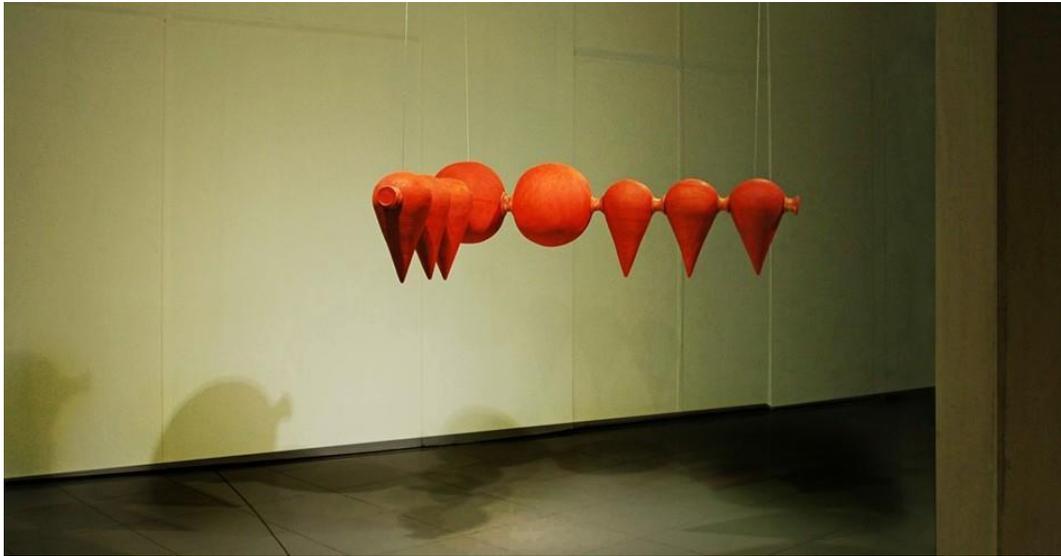
During the initial stages of my practice-led research, I focused on the selection and process of my medium and artmaking practice. The termite-hill clay for the process of the work *Mafoko a Utlwetse* (Figure 29) was chosen because of its cultural connectivity. My intention was to create an artwork that had fundamental rootedness in the Tswana culture.<sup>40</sup> For this specific reason, I decided to incorporate traditional pottery methods, but I came across one problem. Unfortunately, in our globalized world most of the commercial potters in Botswana use imported clay from neighbouring countries like Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa. After several meetings with old-style potters, one particular traditional potter in Botswana

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<sup>39</sup> This metaphor of a bridge and one’s private perception has similarities to Heidegger (1971:152), quoted in footnote 21 in Chapter 2.

<sup>40</sup> First-world countries who are engaged in self-sustaining programmes in Africa often focus on the importance of keeping traditional pottery skills alive. Rural communities who excel in pottery are frequently selected for empowerment and assistance. Social aid workers encourage the elders to pass on their skills to the younger members of the group (Contemporary African Art, 2016).

could assist me with the processing of termite-hill clay. It is a material that is formed in the vast wilderness of Botswana.

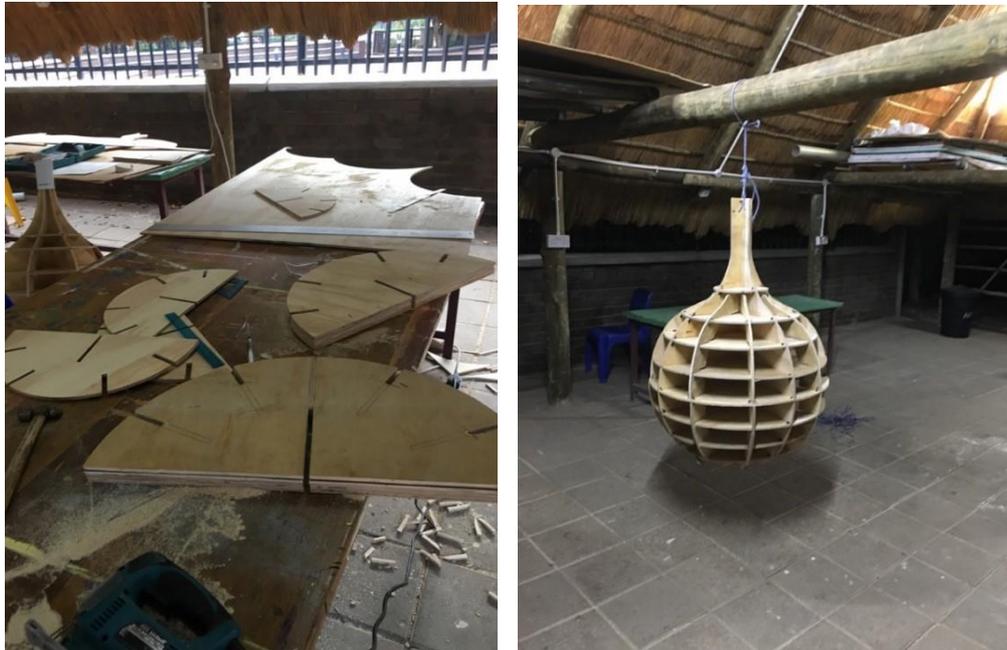


**Figure 30. Manu Manjesh Laal, *Mafoko a Utlwetse*, Installation view, *Trajectories* (2017).**

Using a traditional thrown-pot technique (that I teach my multicultural school students), I created the work following several stages of production associated with conventional ceramic techniques. The sculptures were bisque-fired in the kiln and assembled to achieve the desired results. With these processes and the use of the specific and unique medium, I aimed to connect and relate my work to the essential aspects of tradition and culture by employing the use of clay from the African earth which reminds us of the particular location of culture. This work, as shown in Figure 30, was installed in the gallery space by hanging it from the ceiling. Elevating the sculpture and suspending it evoked a large string of beads and/or a musical instrument (during the exhibition an African visitor could not resist creating pulsating ethnic sounds by tapping on the components). However, the heavy and precarious installation also creates a certain tension due to the scale and fragility of the material, metaphorically emphasizing the fragility and loss of

indigenous cultures in a period of globalization.<sup>41</sup> More specific elaboration about my processes will follow later in this chapter.

### 4.3.2 Wood, structural kernels and translation



**Figure 31. Process, wood (2017).**

By using wood as a medium to create the basic structural form for almost all my sculptures, the fundamental understanding of the symbolism indicates structural kernels<sup>42</sup> (as in semiotics). They are figuratively ‘slowly developing zones, which are in contrast to the dynamics in the peripheral areas’. This idea of ovoid shapes,

<sup>41</sup> In 2012 UNESCO placed Ceramics of Botswana on the List of “Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding”. The “Botswana practice of earthenware pottery-making skills [uses] clay soil, weathered sandstone and other materials to make pots of different forms, designs and styles that relate to the traditional rituals and beliefs of the community. Pots are used for storing beer, fermenting sorghum meal, fetching water, cooking, ancestral worship and traditional healing rituals. Shards of pottery found by archaeologists in ancient sites tell us that pots were being made as early as 7000 BC in Africa. The practice is at risk of extinction because of globalisation, the decreasing number of master potters, low prices for finished goods and the increasing use of mass-produced containers” (Intangible Cultural Heritage 2012).

<sup>42</sup> Semiotics, translation and kernels: 1. “Center (kernel) – denser place, where grammar rules”. 2. “Periphery – a space composed of less structured semiotic world (less dense, with flexible structures in it)”. 3. “Frontier (membrane) – a bilingual mechanism by which the external [data] is been [sic] filtered and translated from non-messages to messages (i.e. to information); the frontier means demarcation between proper and alien, inner and outer” (Trendafilov 2010).

Pods or seeds with inner and outer shells, symbolically developing in different time zones, fascinated me from the beginning of my preparations for the exhibition because it contextualized my concept. I endeavoured to communicate the premise of my study and took up the challenge of determining how one's previous cultural experiences manifest as instinctive understandings and have an effect on one's new cultural configurations.

The use of wood in my sculptures was suitable material to meet that challenge and also to reinforce the relationship between my research, materials, concept and processes. Historically, wood has been an important part of human civilization. Colonialism thrived on the sustainable flow of wood resources and economic progress. It can be argued that wood was the main material during the colonial period for structuring and creating mobility such as vehicles for transport ships and infrastructural requirements of colonial rule.<sup>43</sup> Amongst numerous other places in the world, Botswana and India continue to create ceremonial artefacts such as decorative masks, carved tools, musical instruments and totems from wood.

Because of ecological awareness, plywood or laminated wood has become the most common wood product in the current globalized, consumerist world. In Botswana, laminated wood is also used in various aspects of human life. The intention to use laminated wood in my work was a conscious decision, primarily because of its foreignness. Its criss-cross layering reminds me of the cultural layers in contemporary society as mentioned by Bhabha (1990:308) above. Laminated wood functions in the process of sculpting similar to the process of translation, as Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi (1999:2) explain: "translation is a highly manipulative activity that involves all kinds of stages in that process of transfer across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Translation is not an innocent, transparent activity but is [like sculpture] highly charged with significance at every stage."

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<sup>43</sup> "During the period of 1800–1870, in order to facilitate the empire's excessive need for timber and related products, colonial authorities were "imposing restrictions on the access of the natives to certain timber trees .... Having exhausted oak forests in their own country and losing [sic] supplies from American colonies the British were compelled to depend upon wood supplies from India" (Kumar 2012:245).



**Figure 32. *Interstices, Process; Drawing, Wood, Fiberglass, and Vinyl (2017).***

More obviously, laminated wood is a particularly good sculpting medium that helps me to catalogue and manipulate diverse marks for construction, deconstruction and reconstruction at different stages in a process that corresponds to a linguistic translation. Additionally, it allows me to translate my two-dimensional drawings to three-dimensional sculptural forms, as shown in Figure 32.

### 4.3.3 Fibreglass, unity and in-betweenness



**Figure 33. Process, Fibreglass (2017).**

This is the in-between stage of the sculptural production. The final sculpture is created by casting into the mould after applying gelcoat for smoothness. Automotive paint is used over the gelcoat-finished fibreglass and I complete the process with a polyurethane clear-coating. A hybrid composition of fibreglass, gelcoat and automotive paint with polyurethane coating completes the creative process. In certain sculptures, I have applied cultural patterns and ‘skins’ over the final coating for further enhancement and meaning.



**Figure 34. Indian musical instruments, Sitar and Veena and African Calabashes.**

In creating my artworks, I explored the formal and aesthetic qualities of African calabashes and traditional Indian musical instruments such as sitar, veena and tanpura (Figure 34). This is a way of addressing my paradoxical responses to social, symbolic and spatial dynamics, resulting in configurations of translation, in a unity of rhythm and time, and which was made possible with the use of fibreglass.

#### **4.3.4 Skin, horizons and linguistic hospitality**

The compulsion to engage ideas such as the fusion of horizons, linguistic hospitality, the liminal third space, and cultural difference finds expression in my works by the incorporation of vinyl skins. I have used specific skins to cover the exterior of the sculptural objects. In two sculptures the entire surface of the object is covered in highly reflective metallic vinyl skin. Vinyl is a material that has intense adhesion to any smooth surface and is difficult to handle skilfully, especially on a curved surface. It has the ability to transmit properties of tremendous artificiality, so the entire sculpture generates a sense of Otherness in the presence of the viewer. (This creation of otherness is particularly important to me. See below and the elaboration under exhibition space, section 4.4.)

The implicit use of material – vinyl-skins – in my sculptures contextualizes them in terms of Otherness. ‘Skin’ is one of the major phenomenological developments of this body of works in *Trajectories*. Skin, the outer layer of the object, constitutes the surface layer of the object; conversely, the peripheral contour, and figuratively marks the beginning of the journey into the structural kernels of the core. Skin is the in-between of the interiority and the exteriority of an object. Politically, skin has played a vital role concerning ethnic identification in a postcolonial space. As mentioned in Chapter 3, section 3.2, it is arguably the home of hermeneutics, the position between strangeness and familiarity, and the locus that distinguishes the productive from “unwarranted or misleading prejudices” (Dallmayr 2000:831).



**Figure 35. Application of skins in *Co-Disappearance of Meaning* and *Bahir-Gamana*. (Detail) (2017).**

Skin is also the dialogical arena for materialization of the fusion of horizons (Gadamer 1989:347), the peripheral point where the possibility of articulating *difference* exists (Bhabha 1990:209). As Ricoeur (in Farquhar & Fitzsimons 2011:660) sums up, “where the two worlds mutually coexist”.

In addition, the vinyl skins as well as the high-gloss automotive paint surfaces have the capacity of reflectivity. The sculptures reflect the surroundings whilst distorting whatever approaches them, which resonates with an authentic mode of translation. During the process, the sculpture engulfs the exterior into it, creating a hybrid. In a sense, reciprocating between the outside and the inside, the mirror surfaces convert the Other to the self, make the unfamiliar objects familiar because of the reflection of the self, and become a fine example of hospitality, generating an important and unconditional integration – creating a ‘third space’.

In two of the works, *Rebirth* (Figure 37) and *Bahir-Gamana* (Figure 42), I have used vinyl skin as patterning, which appears on the high-gloss surfaces. They contain a juxtaposition of my own hybrid designs derived from Dutch wax fabric motifs in Shonibare’s works and African batik patterns as seen on cloth in Botswana. By appropriating cultural patterning and applying them to both of these artworks in a personalised manner, I noticed the emergence of an immediate

Otherness. Both the works, *Rebirth* and *Bahir-Gamana*, suddenly accentuated my personal cultural heterogeneity, the love of colour and ornamentation.

#### 4.4 EXHIBITION SPACE: *TRAJECTORIES* AS FUSION OF HORIZONS

One dimension of the rationale behind the body of sculptures in *Trajectories* was the anticipation of the instinctive response stemming from the viewer's encounter with the unfamiliarity/foreignness of my structures in the gallery space. I envisioned the subsequent ambivalence, which would also eventually link my audience to the artworks. That is to say, I wanted to emulate, in a given moment, the experience of the foreign, unknown or unfamiliar, which creates an element of precariousness during a first connection with an Other. Such an encounter demands an ultimate fusion of horizons between the viewer and the stranger/artist/artwork. Such a confrontation can be (to a certain measure) equated to the experience of one's displaced identity, where a person slips into the 'third space' of in-betweenness, a *limen*, as mentioned in Chapter 3 (section 3.1). The understanding of the artworks in *Trajectories*, (like all conceptual art) involves interpretation, which occurs in a certain place – sometimes an unfamiliar space (literally and metaphorically) for some viewers.

More specifically, in my studio practice I constantly cross-examine an artist's position, as a translator, from the point of dislocation. At that phase, the artwork is considered as a text that has the potential to provide a feeling of 'displacement' (that allows the viewer to read 'in between the lines').



Figure 36. *Trajectories*, (2017). (Installation view).

In my exhibition, I obviously also attempted to expose aspects of hybridity and my own translational efforts from the platform of a diasporic artist. This is analogous to the selected diaspora artists Shonibare and Kapoor, whose creative acts also negotiate the transcendence of binaries and accentuate cultural exchange and hybridity.

To establish a specific horizon and a phenomenological *Dasein* for the viewer, I activated the exhibition space in a particular manner. Whilst installing *Trajectories*, I was aware of and attempted to somewhat duplicate what I have experienced as a migrant, consistent with the geographer and critic Doreen Massey's (in Papastergiadis 1997:146) theories about exclusion and geography. She explains about socially constructed space that "space is both a transformative force and a field that is transformed by the interactions that occur within it".

Another aspect of my exhibition was induced by Shonibare and Kapoor, who both create a distinguishable mood of theatricality for their exhibitions and thus accentuate their intention and horizon in which an artist wishes the work to be interpreted. It could therefore be said that when entering the space in which my work (*Trajectories*) was exhibited, I aimed for the viewer not only to reverse or inverse the dichotomy of the foreign and the familiar (own culture and multi-culture) but also to reconsider the reciprocation between the particular placement of sculptures within the space.

## 4.5 ARTWORKS

### 4.5.1 *Rebirth*: the mimetic perception concerning the liminal

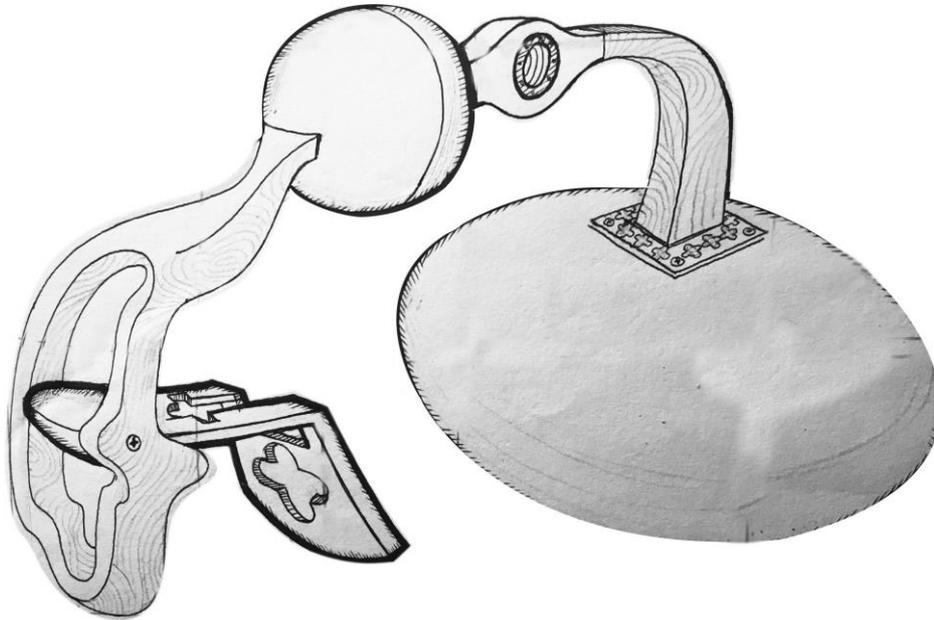


**Figure 37. Manu Manjesh Lal, *Rebirth* (2016)**

**Medium: Fibreglass, Automotive paint, Vinyl, Dimension: 120cm x 100cm x 60cm.**

*Rebirth* was the first artwork that I made as part of my master's project. I created this work after consecutive trips to India. In 2014, it was already fourteen years since I had left my home in India and I unexpectedly had to attend several cultural functions in India that year. There was a sense of distance I felt deep inside me while I was attending the ceremonies. I probed into the disorientation happening within me. It is this inquiry that I have eventually conceptualized as *Rebirth*, infusing the theoretical aspects of diaspora. The displacement in my own life (after an absence of fourteen years of living in Botswana) had changed my life in many dimensions, particularly in cultural point of view. Essentially, I felt like a stranger in India as well as in Botswana. *Rebirth* is this in-between, liminal stage in the life of a diasporic identity. De Villiers (2008:108) explains that the artist Marina Abramović believes that "this liminal, in-between state is where the mind is most open, we are alert, we are sensitive, and destiny can happen". This chimes with the

view of Homi Bhabha that the liminal third space is a “productive space” (Bhabha 1990:209).



**Figure 38. Initial drawing of *Rebirth* (2015).**

The work *Rebirth* originally started as a complex grouping of objects unified to become a singular object, as shown in Figure 38. Later, I decided to discard all the other parts of the assemblage and reworked the primal form of the sculpture, the egg. The form of the egg itself signalled the potentiality to express the conceptual stance I originally planned for the project: a rebirth into a new cultural setting or a symbolic death of the culture one belongs to. *Rebirth* is a direct representation of the Hindu symbol of ‘*punar-janma*’ or re-incarnation. In Hinduism the egg symbolizes the origin, cradle of life and the entire creation. The word *anda* (egg) is also used to denote the sperm sac, reproductive organ, source of reproductive power, Brahma and Shiva.

According to the Chandogya Upanishad<sup>44</sup> in the beginning there was nothing. Then the primal egg (*andam*) manifested. It remained dormant for a year. Then

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<sup>44</sup> “Upanishad, Sanskrit (Connection), one of four genres of texts that together constitute each of the Vedas, the sacred scriptures of most Hindu traditions. Each of the four Vedas—the Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda, and Atharvaveda consists of a Samhita (a collection of hymns or sacred formulas); a liturgical, descriptive prose called a Brahmana; and two appendices to the Brahmana—an Aranyaka (‘Book of the Wilderness’), which contains esoteric doctrines meant to be studied by the initiated in the forest or some other remote

it broke open into silver and golden shells. The silver part became the earth, the golden part became the heaven. The space between the two became the mid-region. Its outer skin became the mountains, and the vacuous material became the mist with the clouds. Its veins turned into rivers and the embryonic fluid into oceans (Jayaram V [Sa]).

I used this metaphor to create *Rebirth*. For me, the most interesting part of the mythological explanation within this emblem is the period of dormancy, the in-between period subsequent to the manifestation of the egg after the emptiness. The egg is a liminal expression of life where the possibility of another life is kept as a residuum within, arguably in a ‘third space’. An important aspect of the life of a diasporic identity is debriefed in *Rebirth*.



**Figure 39. Patterning details, *Rebirth* (2015).**

The fibreglass sculpture has a highly refined, polished surface. The reflections of the surroundings accentuate the space that the egg occupies, in other words, the space of the host. Resembling an attempt at translation, it reciprocates the environment, whether it is placed inside the gallery or in a space outdoors. Over the painted, glossy surface, I have overlaid a vinyl design as a pattern (Figure 39) that depicts the mythological aspects of the coitus.<sup>45</sup> The continuous patterns

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place, and an Upanishad, which speculates about the ontological connection between humanity and the cosmos” (Olivelle 2017).

<sup>45</sup> In Hinduism, sexual intercourse is considered neither evil nor sinful. Sex is divine, and the basis of creation and preservation. The manifested universe itself is a product of the union between the male and female parts of the Supreme Being, who is believed to be both male

representing celestial intercourse is a deliberate attempt to emphasize the notion of synthesis, a rhythm of fusion of horizons. *Rebirth* metaphorically infers the step between two cultures in displacement. Every step of this way has been marked by a death to a former 'self' and a consequent and immediate "rebirth" as "another man/woman" (Coomaraswamy 2007).

#### ***4.5.2 Co-Disappearance of Meaning***

The concept for the work *Co-Disappearance of Meaning* derives from the archetypal example of demarcation between *Us* and *Them*, a non-relationship in which the Other is defined by the logic of the inversion, the presence of the Other who speaks a different language within a semiosphere. The interaction within a semiosphere, as explained in Chapter 2 (section 2.5), happens during translation and facilitates dialogue. The presence of the Other means there is no mutual semantic correspondence within a single semiosphere. It affects the process of translation and brings asymmetry in the communication. In *Co-Disappearance of Meaning*, the two objects are divided, and joined, although the entire sculpture appears as a singular structure. The aim was to create a visual allusion to musical instruments that produce resonating sounds of unity irrespective of differences or similarities. There is a hollow space at one side in which a column opens into the entire object, as if in a musical instrument, to resonate a singular sound from the object. The membrane, which covers both the objects, is the same copper skin, irrespective of the silver metallic ring placed in-between.

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and female in one cosmic body. The Upanishads suggest that the pleasure arising from sexual union is a faint reflection of the blissful nature of the Supreme Self. This blissful state is considered to be billions of times more ecstatic than what humans experience during their sexual union.



**Figure 40. Manu Manjesh Lal, *Co-Disappearance of Meaning* (2017).  
Medium: Fibreglass, Copper Vinyl Skin, Dimension: 200cm x 220cm x  
120cm.**

The circles/disks at the centre negate the dichotomy of the objects. Lotman (1990:131) explains that “every culture begins by dividing the world into ‘its own’ internal space and ‘their’ external space. How this binary division is interpreted depends on the typology of culture”. The sculpture as a whole, thus, communicates as a singular unit in its interiority. It returns to my initial interest in the relationship between kernels and semiotics (discussed in section 4.3.2) and toys with the idea of “the frontier as demarcation between proper and alien, inner and outer” (Trendafilov 2010).

#### **4.5.3 *Interstices***

This work was immensely influenced by the notion of us as artists, who consider ourselves the producers of discourses, meanings and ciphers. In my own case, particularly for this exhibition, I was operating within a postcolonial space of interculturalism. I regard *Interstices* as a very personal metaphor – the biography of a transcultural artist. Alienation and belonging may appear divergent, but in reality, they reflect the locus and configuration of a hybrid identity.

Simultaneously, this work playfully resembles a vacuum pump that can extract the condensed air within, from one side to the other and vice-versa, and thus represents an illusory movement. The lengthy tube between the two blue orbs makes a conspicuous turn between a right angle (90°) and an obtuse angle (>90°). This tubular structure carries inherent references to the polarities at both ends and sustains the boundary between the two.

Mediation between these polarities is accentuated in the sculpture by using a bright-yellow wooden structure as an interstice. In my view, what actually happens in the interstices and the in-between of encounters, translations or interpretations is neither a simple interaction nor consensual or disensual feature of two polarities. However, the introduction of a 'third element' hints at the tussle with one's duality of the self or one's cultural provenance. It is not a space of inversions or reversals of polarities or values or hierarchies. It is the space where we (as transcultural artists) become much more aware of how boundaries or identities consist of complex negotiations. In addition, this sculpture is a response to the researched texts of Bhabha (2009), Gadamer (2007) and Ricoeur (2006) quoted throughout this dissertation and paraphrased in the above rationale and artwork.



**Figure 41. Manu Manjesh Lal, *Interstices* (2017). Medium: Fibreglass, Wood, Automotive paint, Vinyl, Dimension: 200cm x 80cm x 40cm.**

#### 4.5.4 *Samsara-Gamana*: Departure from one meaning to the other

*Samsara* means “life” and *gamana* means “journey”. In Dharmasastra<sup>46</sup> (the Hindu religious law), it is the travel of a soul from one body to another. According to Samkhya philosophy, the body itself is divided into two; the consciousness (Purusha) and material essence (Prakriti). *Samsara* in the Hindu religious law depicts the material essence and its transformation through life and death, whereas *gamana* is the journey of the consciousness from one body to another. The term ‘*Samsara-gamana*’ in simple Hindi language means ‘the journey of life’. Samkhya philosophy, according to the art historian Partha Mitter (2008:118), also resonates in Kapoor’s pigment works such as *1000 Names*.



**Figure 42. Manu Manjesh Lal, *Bahir-Gamana* (2017). Medium: Fibreglass, Automotive paint, Vinyl motifs  
Dimension: 200cm x 80cm x 30cm.**

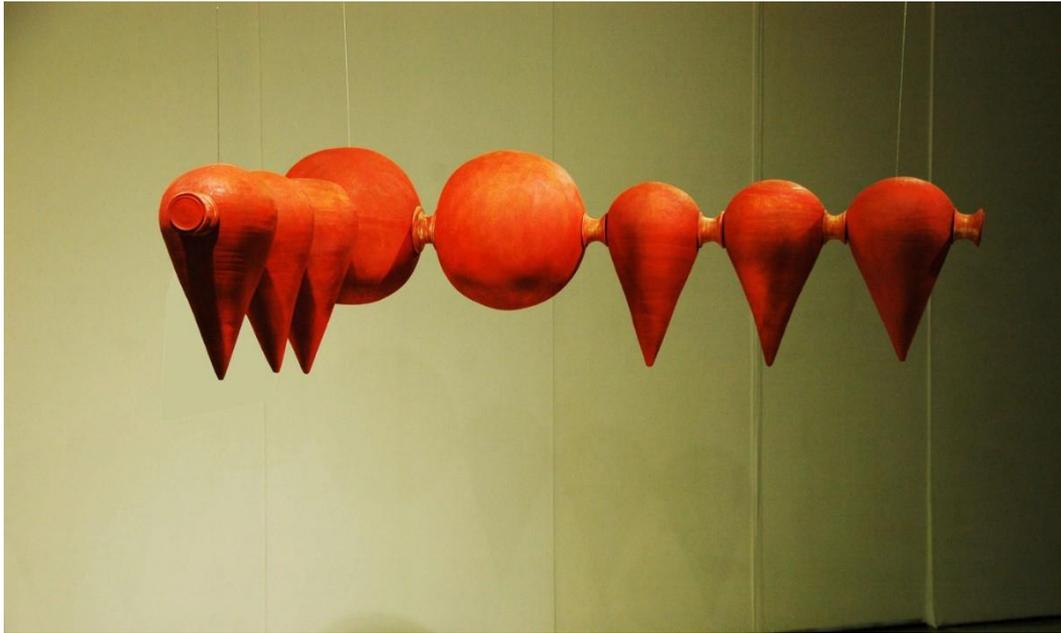


**Figure 43. Manu Manjesh Lal, *Bahir-Gamana* (2017). Installation view at Nirox Sculpture Park Gauteng, RSA.**

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Notions of the direct and residual effects of leaving one's sense of home, the place of invulnerability, in search of his/her livelihood is explored in this work. The work represents the initial unstable moments or beginning of a journey. I intended to depict the imminent 'perched' state in the life of a diasporic identity. It evokes the moments in which he/she understands what a dual entity is, the duality of belonging and alienation. The French sociologist Émile Durkheim proposed the term '*anomie*' to address the circumstances in which individuals are unable to connect their own practices with broader social values and thus are left in a state of relative normlessness, a continuous state of imbalance, inner conflict and uncertainty, as mentioned in Chapter 3 (section 3.3). The work is a hybrid of two distinct objects; the levitated and the gravitated. These components are in a continuous, rhythmic state of dissension, yet united as an object of singularity. Patterns of objects evoking celestial bodies float and move as abstract symbols on the surface. They were applied as additional skins on the white membrane of the sculpture, further alluding to the transcendental character of the object, an in-betweenness – between one place and another. Bourriaud (2009:51) talks about the migrant artist as "a surveyor of a hypertext world", thus the sculpture leans forward, not unlike some outlandish receptor or sound equipment investigating or recording its new life-world.



**Figure 44. Manu Manjesh Lal, *Mafoko a Utlwetse* (2017). Medium: Processed Termite mount clay, Steel tubing Dimension: 250cm x 80cm x 30cm.**

#### **4.5.5 *Mafoko a Utlwetse*: Words that have fallen into my ears**

*Mafoko a Utlwetse* translates from Botswana's national language Setswana into English as 'Words that have fallen into my ears'. This work developed from my immense affection for Botswana. I have heard so many good stories, tales, poems and histories there. I do not know if I have interpreted them well enough to clearly articulate my understanding. One of the major problems of translation (as discussed throughout this dissertation) is that since translation involves interpretation, cultural aspects of understanding come into play and influence the process of interpretation. During the procedure, the person interpreting will be thrust into an in-between 'third space'. The interesting point in this process is that a single word can be understood in completely different ways.

I appropriated this aspect of translation into a sculpture using the traditional methods of pottery (as explained earlier in this document), creating it with a material that is rooted in Tswana culture – termite-hill clay. I have used a similar concept to that of a game that we used to play as children called the 'broken-telephone'/Chinese whispers/telephone, in which the first person whispers a message to the ear of the next person, and so on, until the last player is reached, who announces the message to the entire group. The first person then compares the

original message with the final version. Although the intention is to pass around the message without it becoming distorted along the way, part of the enjoyment is that this usually does happen. Misinterpretations typically accumulate in the retellings, as they tend to do in translation and interpretation. Hence the content that the last player receives significantly changes from that of the first player, mostly in a completely different way.

Furthermore, the subject matter of the work *Mafoko a Utlwetse* recalls Ricoeur's third ethical principle of translation; *narrative plurality* and the uncertainty of meaning in translation. Swedish Professor Bent Kristensson Uggla (2010:51) explains that to partially resolve or at least deal with the uncertainty in conflicting interpretations, a Ricoeurian critical/dialectical hermeneutics can be considered "that incorporates an encompassing dialectic involving both listening and suspicion, understanding and explanation, the hermeneutics of tradition as well as a critique of ideologies".

The work not only represents the pitfalls in interpretation and translation, but also in the visual formation alludes to a cultural object similar to crafted beadwork. Each conical shape rendered in clay and bisque fired is joined with other shapes with an in-between connector in the middle and ultimately forms an 'L-shape'. The installation of the work was also important to reinforce my concept that underpins the work. The elevated placement creates a gravitational pull, causing an undeniable tension and a sense of fragility, metaphorically accentuating the insecurity and loss of indigenous cultures in a period of globalization.

#### **4.6 CONCLUSION**

As discussed throughout this chapter, my work has aimed to explore in-betweenness and hybridity. By exploring a variety of cultural, interpretational and translational aspects, the body of works emphasizes the influence of social construction and contemporary communication. My own diverse, ambivalent and diasporic experiences have been translated into the creation of *Trajectories*. As Gadamer (1989:61) clarifies: "what is experienced is always what one has experienced oneself", in a particular moment of time. Consequently, my experience

of seeing and creating artworks has happened hermeneutically within my own understanding of the world.

The theatricality and ambiguity created for *Trajectories* was aimed at inciting a sense of in-betweenness to demonstrate aspects of ‘third space’-lives lived by migrants. I desired to emulate Bhabha’s assessment (1998:20) that “the truly made work find its balance in the fragility of vacillation. It is the recognition of this ambivalent movement of force, this ‘doubleness’ or ‘otherness’ of the literal and the metaphoric and their side-by-side proximity that inhabits in the work.”

To reiterate, theoretical aspects of intercultural communication and postcoloniality contributed to the conceptual frameworks for the works in *Trajectories*. Meaning was constructed by considering the cyclical nature of hermeneutics. I concur with Kearney (2007:151) that it is an illusion to try and find a total translation which would provide a perfect replica of the original. Linguistic hospitality, fusion of horizons and the third space initiate creative acts, which call us to waive the lure of omnipotence.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

Hybridity as a concept has gained its potential beyond its historical racial and scientific links by being established theoretically as an in-between space where multiple forces encounter and develop new dimensions of cultural progression. This Masters study, *Translation as a creative act: Cultural hybridity as a concept in selected contemporary artworks*, has critically explored the potential of the concept of hybridity within the context of contemporary culture. The exegesis focused on the complexities of ‘cultural hybridity’ and its relationship to contemporary art practice. In Chapter 1, the research premise locates the situatedness of a diasporic identity in the position of liminality and asks how one “encounters the past as an anteriority that continually introduces otherness or alterity within the present” (Bhabha 1991:308). Thus, the theoretical research and the artworks I have made are a response to the complexity of articulating one’s cultural past and one’s cultural present as a configuration of contemporaneity. I have pursued ways to comprehend and traverse dissimilar cultures, postcolonial experiences and globalization for the creation of meaning through cultural products such as art.

Contact between people with cultural differences is not a new phenomenon. Since pre-history, humankind has travelled from their dwellings for various reasons, either in search of food, to trade, to conquer and colonize, to escape from subjection and calamity, for economic purposes or simply in search of adventure or fun. This is especially visible since the advent of digital media, and cheaper, more convenient travel. These activities have contributed to the meeting of peoples with miscellaneous backgrounds and cultures and obviously resulted in intercultural exchanges and communication. These processes and histories have led to changes in the original patterns of life and altered the cultures of the people concerned, as well as resulting in the formation of new societies. By analysing phenomena such as contemporary globalization, in this study I have argued that societies are in a constant state of flux, culminating in multiculturalism, which is concurrent with the continuous evolution of cultural hybridization. Consequently, I have delved into

my supposition concerning the existence or formulation of a ‘vernacular’ and a cross-cultural dialogue within present-day culture and specifically art.

As stated, this study has been propelled by my aspiration to apprehend my own diasporic experiences within the productive space of liminality. I have searched for a counterpoint where culture and its differences are considered positively and analysed within the spirit of tolerance concerning alterity and otherness. Theoretical analysis of the discourses in postcoloniality was helpful in the process of recognizing the postcolonial space as a site for cultural translation and a non-coercive dialogue. Bhabha’s notion of the third space, inbetweenness and hybridity thus laid a foundation for this dissertation. All these concepts were further explored and discussed in relation to cultural and linguistic translation within a hermeneutical and phenomenological framework. In tracing this theoretical context, I have also argued and established the direct and indirect connections between translation studies, hermeneutics and the artmaking practices of the selected artists.

The transnational, intercultural and social situatedness of these artists has been studied and it is evidenced that artworks are similar to those of texts. Likewise, they can be ambiguous, open to diverse interpretations relative and dependent on the social environment of the author/artist and the viewer. I concur with Kapoor (2017), who believes “the viewer’s experience reveals the meaning of the work”. This obviously involves some manner of translation. Accordingly, it has been identified that translation theory is a potent reservoir for exploring hermeneutical issues that involve language, interpretation, explanations, metaphors and understanding for art. Thus, based on the selection of linguistic, social, postcolonial and hermeneutical theories discussed in this dissertation, I have determined that artists engage with the concepts of representation and processes of creating meaning and that their creative acts are similar to strategies applied by translators and interpreters.

Hence, this dissertation has referred to translation extensively with reference to intercultural hermeneutics for an understanding of the role of interpretation and hybridity as part of diasporic displacement. It is noted that competency in the intricacies of translation complements creativity and similarly incorporates

heterogeneity, approximation, open-endedness, circumstances of a situation and also includes historicity. The power of translation was therefore explored in this study within the context of artists who accommodate multiplicity and difference in their art to address reterritorialization.

The fusion of horizons theorized by Gadamer, linguistic hospitality theorized by Paul Ricoeur and the third space theorized by Homi Bhabha were studied and integrated in the analysis of artworks of the selected artists to draw together and justify my argument that diaspora artists resolve their irresolute experiences of hybridity by creatively engaging cultural translation and interpretation. It emerged that not only their subject matter and the relationship between concept and medium, but also the placement within exhibition spaces are used to influence the translation and interpretation of artworks. Such tactics are often comparable to the artist's own experiences and encounters in the third space of heterogeneity. Hence, artistic minds rely on methods, strategies and approaches to generate and transmit notions of ambiguity and 'contamination'.

The selection of diasporic artists for this research emphasized hermeneutical aspects and various interpretations about their societal, transnational, intercultural and personal experiences and has highlighted how such experiences influence the respective artists and their cultural products. It is evident that their understanding within cultural liminality is creatively constructed through the negotiation of difference. Thus, I deduce that within our complex contemporary environment the presence of strategies such as mimicry, provocation, disparities, interruptions and contradictions are not necessarily a sign of failure, but stimulate creative options and are a sign of progress and intercultural hospitality.

For example, the prevalence of Otherness is maintained by Kapoor, Shonibare and I, through the use of pre-determined subject matter and devices so that it directly or indirectly connects to our cultural hybridization. The artworks are created using mediums that engender duality and are frequently exhibited in a distinct space to accentuate theatricality and provoke a conceptual sense of hybridity, an in-between/third-space experience for the viewer, thus attempting to replicate and justify the artist's own existence of hybridity. The intercultural exchange and the

significant hybridity found in the discussed artworks emphasize the ambiguous plurality of human beings, cultures and tongues that have become the salient feature of liquid contemporaneity.

Practice-led research has been one of my foremost intentions for this study, therefore situatedness as described above has informed my own artmaking practice, providing insight into a range of critical discourses and conceptual and curatorial approaches. This research has enriched the experience of hybridity in my personal life, facilitated my creative acts of translation and moreover allowed for diverse revisions and interpretations by viewers, which made me realise the essence of multi-dimensional hermeneutical conversations. Hence it can be concluded that the state of transitionality, the visual experience and the hermeneutical conversation together mediate the process of understanding. For me, this has been an important policy/device for not only better understanding my studio processes, but also in recognizing the potential for creative inquiry to participate and confront the intricacies encountered at the intersection of contemporary art and discourses on hybridity.

My intention at the commencement of this study was to gain a better understanding of my artmaking practice and its connection with the theoretical and creative practices within an academic context. This research has lead me to several perceptions concerning my own artistic practices and those of Kapoor and Shonibare. I have taken cognizance of the key fields of theory about migration, hybridity and in-betweenness expressly pertaining to the role of artists in this significant debate.

Because of the limited scope of this study I preferred to focus on cultural hybridity and the symbiotic relationship found within creative practice and not on the serious political difficulties of migration. My research question was limited to radigrant artists and how they negotiate the multiplicity of difference to construct transformative models of meaning and create new cultural configurations. No one is qualified to provide all the answers, but hopefully artists can create an awareness and understanding concerning diasporic in-betweenness and identity.

### **Suggestions for future research**

There are research constraints due to the demands for encapsulating any study within a certain boundary. Whereas this project mainly centred on hybridity within the context of art and culture, for future research it might prove valuable to investigate hybridity in the context of scientific and technological innovations related to art. The culture of hybridity and plurality arises from the genealogy of difference; hence it is already ambiguous and inconsistent. The proliferation of profile data in the social media and other internet communications validates hybridity's characteristics of unpredictability. The fusion of virtual and real elements and the subsequent cyberspace of artificiality has the potential to create displacement and dissolve borders of human-machine exchanges. The possibilities of such hybridizations are endless and require an extended assessment of knowledge. In such a space of scientific possibility, technical and aesthetic experiences can become an extra-territorial, in-between, hybrid space for further creativity and may be worthwhile investigating.

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*Attached Below - TRANSLATION (Afr) – 1 page\*>*

**For**

**TRANSLATION AS A CREATIVE ACT: CULTURAL  
HYBRIDITY AS A CONCEPT IN SELECTED  
CONTEMPORARY ARTWORKS**

by

**MANU MANJEESH LAAL VAZHOORETH RADHAMONY**

Student Number: 37385399

Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of

**MASTER IN VISUAL ARTS**

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**SUPERVISOR: CELIA DE VILLIERS**

June 2018

## **Opsomming**

### **Titel:**

Vertaling as 'n kreatiewe daad: kulturele hibridisme as 'n konsep in geselekteerde eietydse kunswerke

### **Opsomming:**

Die gaping tussen uiteenlopende kulture wat in 'n geglobaliseerde wêreld woon, is nóg onversetlik nóg pretensieloos veerkragtig. Hierdie ruimte is 'n arena van ongelykhede en korrelasies wat lei tot interaksies wat ongewone verwagtings ontketen. “Kulturele hibridisme” word duidelik in die eietydse samelewing weerspieël. Nuwe metodes en benaderings word vereis om die werklike ervarings van toenemende ontheemding te verstaan. Hierdie navorsing spoor die trajektorie van migrasie, identiteit, self en ander vanuit die oogpunt van eietydse diasporiese kunstenaars na. Idees rondom etnisiteit, egtheid, identiteit, transnasionaleiteit, enkelvoudigheid en tweevoudigheid word teen die agtergrond van die kreatiewe praktyke van Anish Kapoor en Yinka Shonibare bespreek. Hierdie verhandeling, wat geïnspireer is deur Homi K. Bhabha se konsep van die derde ruimte, asook teorieë van hermeneutiese verplasing deur Georg Gadamer en Paul Ricoeur, ondersoek op 'n kreatiewe en kritiese wyse die dubbelsinnighede en teenstrydighede in hierdie ondersoekveld.

### **Lys met sleuteltermes:**

Kuns; Kultuur; Ontheemding; Globalisering; Hermeneutiek; Heterogeniteit; Hibridisme; Kapoor (Anish); Andersheid; Postkoloniale; Shonibare (Yinka); Verplasing

*Attached Below is the - TRANSLATION (Setswana) – 1 page\*>*

**For**

**TRANSLATION AS A CREATIVE ACT:  
CULTURAL HYBRIDITY AS A CONCEPT IN  
SELECTED CONTEMPORARY ARTWORKS**

by

**MANU MANJEESH LAAL VAZHOORETH RADHAMONY**

Student Number: 37385399

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**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**SUPERVISOR: CELIA DE VILLIERS**

June 2018

## **Tshobokanyo**

### **Setlhogo:**

Phetolelo jaaka tiragatso ya boithlamedi: motswako wa ditso jaaka mogopolo mo ditirong tsa botsweretshi tse di tlhophilweng tsa sešweng

### **Tshobokanyo:**

Sekgala magareng ga ditso tse di farologaneng tse di tshelang mo lefatsheng le le susumetsanang ga se a tsepama le mme ga se obege bonolo. Sebaka seno ke serala sa dipharologano le dikamano tse di lebisang kwa dikgolaganong tse di tlhosetsang ditsholofelo tse di sa tlwaelegang. Tota 'motswako wa setso' o bonala sentle mo setšhabeng sa sešweng. Go tlhokega mekgwa le selebo se sentšhwa go tlhaloganya maitemogelo a phuduso e e oketsegang. Patlisiso eno e lebelela motlhala wa bofudugedi, boitshupo, jwa sebele le jo bongwe go tswa mo mogopolong wa batsweretshi ba sešweng go tswa mo mafelong a bofudugedi (diaspora) Go ganetsanwa ka megopolo ya lotso, boammaaruri, boitshupo, boditšhaba, bongwefela le bobedi go lebeletswe ntlha ya ditiragatso tsa boithlamedi tsa ga Anish Kapoor le Yinka Shonibare. Thesisi eno e e theilweng mo mogopolong wa ga Homi K. Bhabha wa sebaka sa boraro, le ditiori tsa saense ya boranodi ka Georg Gadamer le Paul Ricoeur, e batlisisa ka boithlamedi le ka tshekatsheko, ketsaetsego e e mo lephateng leno la dipatlisiso.

### **Lenane la mareo a botlhokwa:**

Botsweretshi; Setso; Phuduso; Tshusumetsano ya batho lefatshe ka bophara; Saense ya boranodi; Seemo sa go farologana (heterojeneiti); Motswako; Kapoor (Anish); Pharologano; Morago ga bokoloniale; Shonibare (Yinka); Phetolelo

# Trajectories

Manu Manjesh Lal



## Exhibitions

College of Fine Arts Exhibition, 1998  
Government College of Arts, Kerala, India.

Naval Base Art Exhibition, 1999, 2000, 2001  
Kochi, India.

Artists in Botswana, 2005, 2006, 2007  
Gaborone, Botswana.

Unisa Gallery, 2007  
Advanced Diploma Exhibition  
Pretoria, South Africa

Open Lab 2017  
NIROX, Gauteng, South Africa

'Sticky-Time' ROOF-TOP IX, 2017  
Brooklyn, South Africa.

Art as Destination: Co-creation of Culture, 2018  
Pretoria, South Africa.

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## Education

2018  
Masters in Visual Arts  
UNISA, Pretoria, South Africa

2012-13  
Diploma in Education  
North-West University NWU  
Mahikeng, Republic of South Africa

2007-2008  
Post Graduate Diploma in Contemporary Art  
Unisa, Pretoria RSA

1994-1998  
Bachelor of Fine Arts : BFA  
University of Kerala Trivandrum, INDIA

1990-1993  
BSc PHYSICS  
University of Kerala, Trivandrum, INDIA

1988-1990  
Pre Degree Course  
St' Stephen's College  
Pathanapuram  
Kerala INDIA

# Trajectories

Manu Manjesh Lal



The catalogue is produced in conjunction with the requirement for Masters in Visual Arts degree and is accompanied by a dissertation and forms part of the exhibition 'Trajectories'.

UNISA Art Gallery, Pretoria  
01 to 22 April 2017

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# Artist's statement

“Translation is not a matter of words only:  
It is a matter of making intelligible a whole culture.”

Anthony Burges

Conventionally we accept that an individual is constantly affected by his/her living conditions and environment. Considering the increase in modern day travel, employment opportunities as well as worldwide political disruptions causing dispersions, questions arise such as; what part would globalization contribute to the change in one's outlook? How would such changes translate itself in one's behavior and cultural products?

It seems that in our current multi-cultural society individuals subject themselves to a never-ending process of adoption and adaptation in the subconscious desire to 'fit-in'. Circumstances warrant the necessity to change 'outside-in' and 'inside-out' due to external pressure. In this regard the cultural theorist, Nikos Papastergiadis (2007:12) explains that currently “the shift in subjectivity is not only linked to a destabilization of the cultural codes that distinguish between places of origin and reverence, but to a border rupture in the sense of belonging and the perception of destiny within an individual's life narrative”. So, with this exhibition I have tried to touch upon the pulse of change and the sense of belonging in our contemporary society.

Therefore my artworks are trajectories resulting from my own exposure to post-colonial and contemporary multicultural communication and counter hegemonic beliefs. The motivation for this exhibition and research comes from an innermost impulse to understand and translate my own existence, as a migrant (from Kerala, Southern India to Botswana, Southern Africa) because I am constantly exposed to heterogeneous experiences as a participant in what is commonly known by the term - 'cosmopolitan global culture'.

Accordingly, the visual interpretation of my hermeneutic search for meaning has been manifested by artworks in this exhibition, which are a personal expression of the ambivalence and the complexities of abovementioned conditions. As a consequence of my diasporic experience, my art practice gradually began to incarnate racial and cultural permutations. This mainly involves my Indian heritage and the African influences of Botswana. My view is that new experiences enrich artmaking because they offer alternative concepts, materials and technical probabilities; augmenting what we already know.

My concept is further expressed by multiple materials obtained world-wide. The layers of processed plywood, at the core of most of these artworks is a contemporary wood of convenience that seems for me to accentuate the layered cosmopolitanism of today's multicultural society. Furthermore the limitation of the trapped space, underneath and inside all the sculptures, becomes a metaphor for the person trapped in a foreign situation. The wood is still there (as part of the process whilst forming the surface layers) thus metaphorically the person's heart, soul and heritage remains partially hidden, even if the cavity is covered by a veneer or camouflage of paint and gloss. Via this body of work I have tried to demonstrate how, for a migrant, cultural translation happens from the 'inside-out' and the 'outside-in'.

I visually interpret my intercultural pairing as 'forms or shapes' that tend to compliment, echo and sometimes juxtapose each other. In my drawings and sculptures there are allusions to Indian musical instruments suggesting a blend of rhythmic ciphers, phrases, and semantics which in turn contextualises the notion of translation. Superimposed patterning, and contours of hybridised African receptacles and calabashes often assimilate to become united as a gesture of reciprocity, fusion and hospitality.

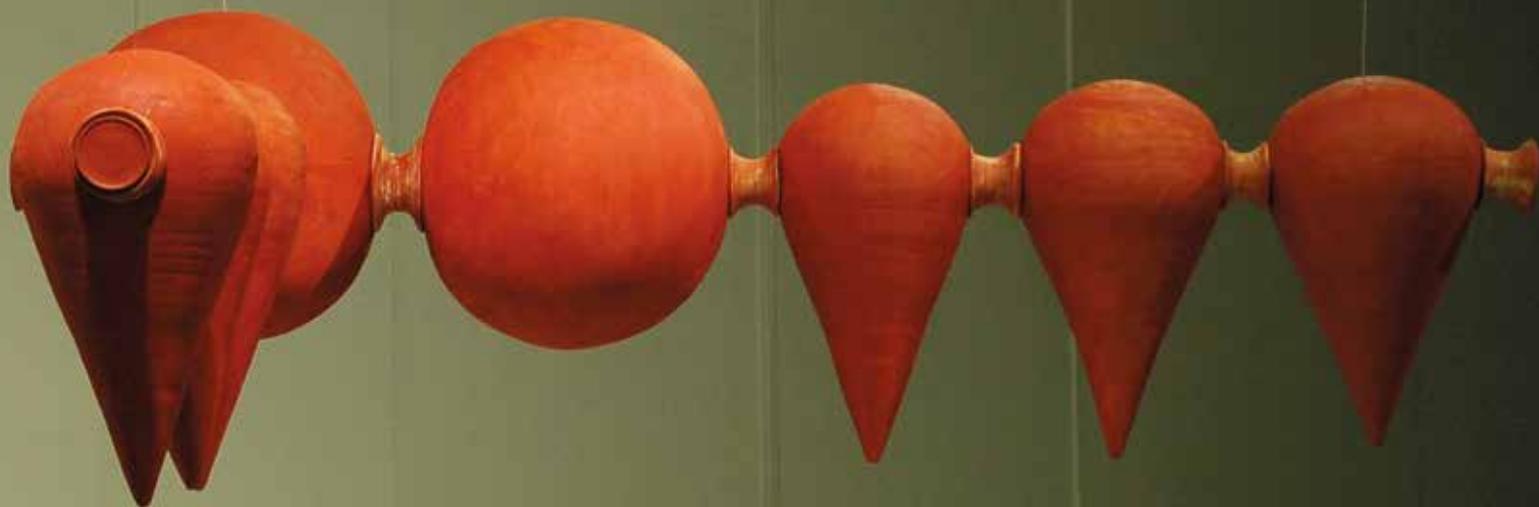
As a strategy I applied glossy automotive paint and reflective membranes, over the fiberglass to prompt the reflections of the surrounding location as well as the viewer. I have hoped to emulate, in a given moment, the experience of the foreign, the unknown or unfamiliar, through the encounter between the viewer and my works to create an element of precariousness like a first connection with an Other. Not only by the distorted reflections of the viewers, but also through the incongruity of the hybrid structures. Such an encounter demands a mental shift and an ultimate fusion of horizons between the viewer and the stranger/artist/artwork. Such a confrontation can be (to a certain measure) equated to the experience of one's displaced identity, where a person slips into the 'third space' and a moment of in-betweenness, a limen.

The creation of in my sculptures inadvertently result in unexpected sensuality and, as the theorist Gayatri Spivak (cited in Landry & Maclean 1996:269-270) proposes: 'The ideal relation to the Other is an embrace, an act of love'. Spivak's definition of such an "ideal relation" resonates in my belief that my personal contact with new ethnicities and racial and cultural permutations does not sublimate my own culture, but is a reciprocal arc. Hence the primary focus of my exhibition was on the process of inter-relatedness, transfiguration and the resultant convergence or cultural hospitality and the fusion of horizons which often results in hybridity.





Trajectory- exhibition view



## Mafoko a Utlwetse

Mafoko a Utlwetse translates from Setswana language into English as 'Words that have fallen into my ears'. The concept of this work addresses the influence of culture and the resultant misinterpretation. The idea of narrative plurality and the uncertainty of meaning in translation is visually represented in this work as similar as in the children's game of 'broken telephone'- Chinese whispers. The sculpture is a series of clay pots (made of processed termite-hill clay), connected in a visual formation that alludes to a cultural object similar to crafted beadwork.

## Bahir-gamana

The notion of the state of duality of belonging and alienation of being is explored in the sculptural work Bahir-Gamana.

Comprising a hybrid of two distinct objects; the levitated and the gravitated, the work is in a continuous, rhythmic state of dissension, yet united as an object of singularity. The work evokes the moments in which one understands what a dual entity is. It is similar to the concept of 'anomie' that address the circumstances in which individuals are unable to connect their own practices with broader social values and thus are left in a state of relative normlessness, a continuous state of imbalance, inner conflict and uncertainty.

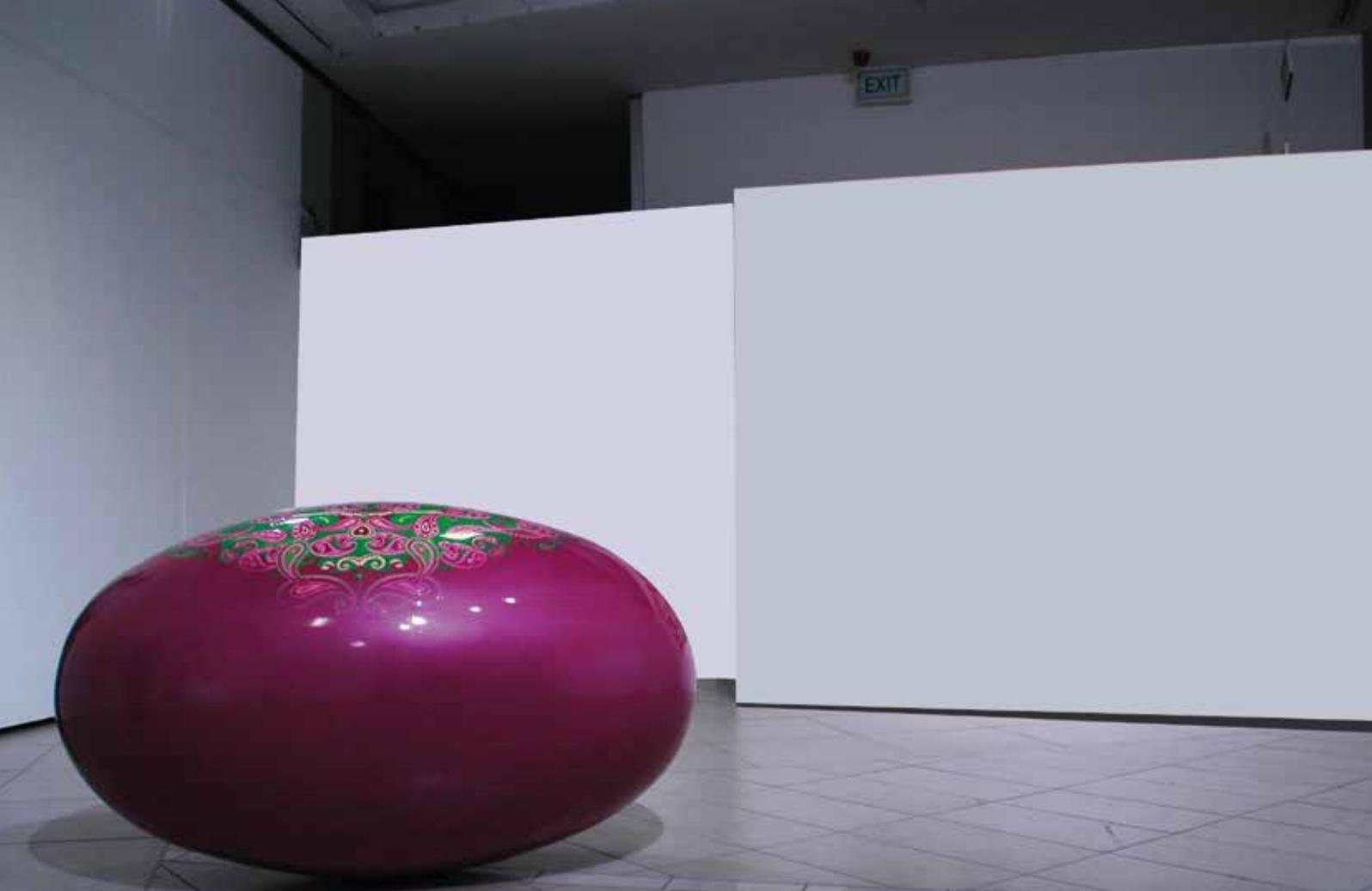
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## Interstice

Interstice , playfully resembles a vacuum pump that can extract the condensed air within, from one side to the other and vice-versa, and thus represents an illusory movement. The lengthy tube between the two blue orbs makes a conspicuous turn between a right angle and an obtuse angle. This tubular structure carries inherent references to the polarities at both ends and sustains the boundary between the two. The bright yellow wooden piece mediates between these polarities and accentuates the interstice in the sculpture. In my view, interstices are neither a simple interaction nor consensual or disensual feature of two polarities. Interstice as a work, is an attempt to create an awareness of boundaries and its complex negotiations.



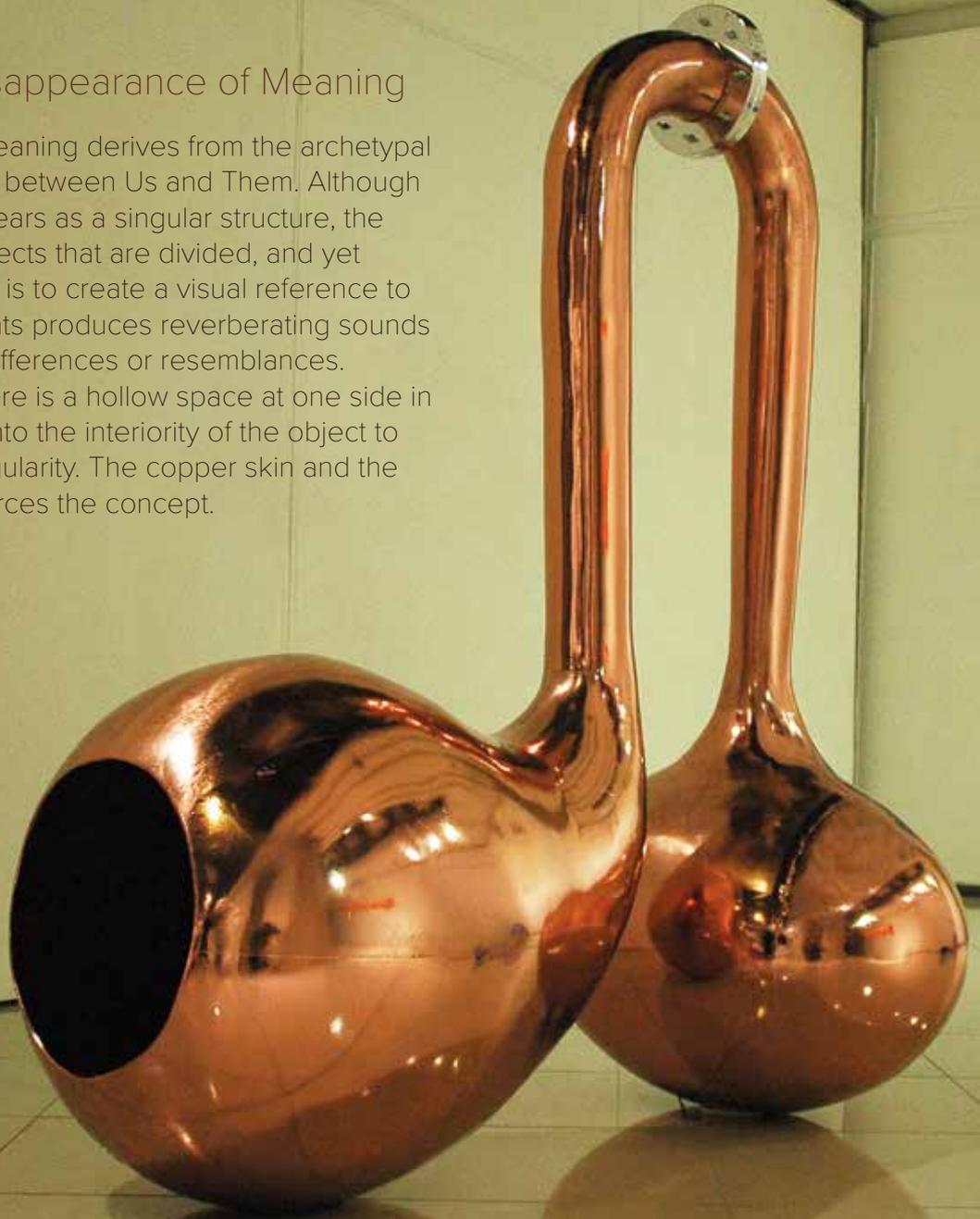


## Rebirth

Rebirth is a direct representation of the Hindu symbol of 'punar-janma' or re-incarnation. In Hinduism the egg symbolizes the origin, cradle of life and the entire creation. I used this metaphor to create this sculpture. The egg is a liminal expression of life where the possibility of another life is kept as a residuum within, arguably in a 'third space'. An important aspect of the life of a diasporic identity is debriefed in Rebirth. Resembling an attempt at translation, it reciprocates the environment, whether it is placed inside the gallery or in a space outdoors. I have overlaid a vinyl design that depicts the mythological aspects of the coitus as an emblem of potential. Rebirth metaphorically infers the step between two cultures in displacement.

## Co-Disappearance of Meaning

Co-Disappearance of Meaning derives from the archetypal example of demarcation between Us and Them. Although the entire sculpture appears as a singular structure, the work consists of two objects that are divided, and yet joined together. The aim is to create a visual reference to music. Musical instruments produces reverberating sounds of unity irrespective of differences or resemblances. Similarly, in this work, there is a hollow space at one side in which a column opens into the interiority of the object to resonate a sense of singularity. The copper skin and the silver metallic ring reinforces the concept.



## List of illustrations

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- Page 10 Mafoko a Utlwetse (2017). Medium:  
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- Page 12 Bahir-Gamana (2017). Medium:  
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- Page 13 Interstice (2017). Medium: Fibreglass,  
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