

**BECOMING THE OTHER THROUGH INTERCULTURAL IDENTITY: A
PRACTICE -LED-BASED AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC JOURNEY OF BEING A
RASTAFARIAN**

by

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Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF VISUAL ARTS

in the subject of

ART

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

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FEBRUARY 2025

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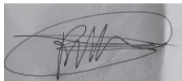
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FEBRUARY 2025

DATE

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my children. Thanks to my sister, who was very supportive and understanding, as well as my brother, my mother and my father and my supervisor, who pushed me hard until I realised my potential.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I take this opportunity to thank God, the universe and my ancestors for their strength and guidance. It was not an easy journey, and I am thankful I have made it this far. I want to thank my children for their patience and understanding because we could not bond and have fun. I am grateful to my sister Nangamso for always reminding me of my studies and assisting me here and there. My deepest gratitude goes to my mother, Nontombi Mpayipheli, who is always happy for every beautiful step I am taking and for her words of motivation, and to my father, Mntuzulu Mpayipheli, the last man standing, enkosi Mawawa.

I want to thank my supervisor, Professor Mam' Nombe(ko) Mpako, Queen Mother. She has always been there for a lot of us since the nineties. She stood her ground as my supervisor even when it was difficult working with me. Her guidance and patience are beyond limits; I am thankful for your dedication to your work; uyintsimbi ayigobi Zotshokazi!!

I want to make mention of Mr Thandi Stompie, Sibongile Nkinki, Somila Stompie and Miss Ntando Ndlazi and to every one of you good people for believing in me. I will always remember your role in helping me with my studies.

I must say thanks to everyone who supported me, and may the Lord bless you all. I think I should also thank myself as well for this journey.

**TITLE: BECOMING THE OTHER THROUGH INTERCULTURAL IDENTITY: AN
 AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC JOURNEY OF BEING A RASTAFARIAN**

ABSTRACT

This study is an autoethnographic representation of the researcher's journey as a Rastafarian and is expressed through visual metaphors. It interrogates the predisposition and vulnerabilities caused by being othered through stereotypification within intercultural identity existence. Otherness in this study is explored as a complex and multivalent term defined by differences through outside markers and internal characteristics within cultural identities. It outlines the psychoanalytic and philosophical origins of othering and stereotyping among different cultures, their present-day practice and selected criticisms. It further argues that ethnic minority cultures like South African Rastafari are bound by intercultural othering through the formation of stereotypes, discriminating against cultural groups' representation of the self and the other and religious othering. Lastly, it maintains that othering defines the power arrangements in cultural hierarchies and the representational significances, such as identity construction. It aims to reveal that Rastafarians take pride in their Africanity, acknowledging Ethiopia from where it originated and that this is one country in Africa that was never colonised. This research is both practice-led and based, and it culminated in a solo exhibition and is framed within the concepts of othering and stereotyping and the post-colonial theory of Liminality. Phenomenology and autoethnography are used within a qualitative paradigm to unearth and explain emergent knowledge, which is also presented in the practical works forming an integral part of this research.

KEY TERMS:

Otherness; Stereotypification, Intercultural identity; Liminality theory, Rastafari, Nicholas Hlobo, Gerald Machona, Xhosa culture, Autoethnography, Phenomenology

**ISIHLOKO: UTSHINTSHO LOKUBA NGOMNYE UMNTU NGOKUSEBENZISA
UBUNI BEENKCUBEKO EZAHLUKILEYO: NGOKWAMAVA
OMPHANDILWAZI UKUQONDA IMICIMBI YEZENTLALO EKUBENI
LIRASTA**

ISISHWANKATHELO

Olu phandolwazi lubonisa indlela yophandontyilazwi apho umphandilwazi asebenzisa amava akhe obuqu ukuqonda imicimbi yezentlalo kuhambo lwakhe nanjengeRasta kwaye lubonakaliswa ngezafobe ezibonakalayo. Luhlalutya ukuba sesichengeni nokuba semngciphekweni okubangelwa kukuchazwa ngenye indlela okanye ukwahluka kusetyenziswa iingcinga ezigwenxa ngokuba nobuni beenkcubeko ezahlukileyo. Ukwahluka kolu phandolwazi kuphononongwa nanjengegama elintsonkothileyo nelibanzi elichazwa kukwahluka ngokweempawu zangaphandle nezangaphakathi ngaphakathi kwiimpawu zobuni ngokwenkcubeko. Luchaza imvelaphi yokufihlakeleyo engqondweni nefuthe lako ekuziphatheni nakwiinkolelo zokuchazwa ngenye indlela nangokweengcinga ezigwenxa phakathi kweenkcubeko ezahlukileyo, inkqubo yazo yanamhlanje kunye nezigxeko ezikhethekileyo. Lukwaxoxa kwakhona ukuba iinkcubeko eziligcuntswana okanye ezincinci zobuhlanga ezifana neyamaRasta oMzantsi Afrika ziqingqwe kukuchazwa ngenye indlela okanye ukwahluka ngokwenkcubeko ngokwakhiwa kweengcinga ezigwenxa, ucalucalulo lokuzibonakalisa kwamaqela eenkcubeko ezahlukileyo ukuba ngubani omnye komnye kunye nokuchazwa ngenye indlela okanye ukwahluka ngokwenkolo. Okokugqibela, olu phandolwazi luxhasa ukuba ukuchazwa ngenye indlela okanye ukwahluka kuchaza ukuhlela ngokwamanqanaba enkcubeko kunye nokubaluleka kokumelwa, okufana nokwakhiwa kobuni. Injongo yalo kukuveza ukuba amaRasta ayazingca ngobuAfrika babo, lusamkela iEthiopia apho ubuRasta buvela khona kwaye eli lelona lizwe eAfrika elingazange libe phantsi kobukoloniyali. Olu phandolwazi lukhokelwa kwaye lusekelwe kumsebenzi owenziwayo wezandla, luye lwafikelela kumboniso owodwa kwaye luqulunqwe phakathi kwesigama sokuchazwa ngenye indlela okanye ukwahluka kwabanye abantu nakwiingcinga ezigwenxa kunye

nengcingane yasemva kobukolonyali yoqingqwa kweenkcubeko okanye iqela elithile labantu i-*post-colonial theory of Liminality*. Kusetyenziswe uphandolwazi ngokwamava oluntu kwezentlalo kunye nendlela yophandontyilazwi apho abaphandilwazi basebenzisa amava abo obuqu ukuqonda imicimbi yezentlalo (i-*autoethnography*) zisetyenziswa ngaphakathi kwindlela yophandontyilazwi ukubhentsisa nokucacisa ulwazi oluvelayo, olukwabonakaliswe kwimisebenzi eyenziwayo eyenza inxalenye ebalulekileyo yolu phandolwazi.

AMAGAMA ANGUNDOQO:

Ukuchazwa ngenye indlela/ukwahluka; lingcinga ezigwenxa, Ubuni beenkcubeko ezahlukileyo; Ingcingane yasemva kobukolonyali yoqingqwa kweenkcubeko okanye iqela elithile labantu , ubuRasta, Nicholas Hlobo, Gerald Machona, Inkubeko yamaXhosa, Indlela yophandontyilazwi apho abaphandilwazi basebenzisa amava abo obuqu ukuqonda imicimbi yezentlalo, Uphandolwazi ngokwamava oluntu kwezentlalo

**THAETLELE: GO BA YO MONGWE KA BOITŠHUPO BJA GO AKARETŠA DITŠO:
LEETO LA OTHOETENOKRAFI LA GO BA LERASTA**

KAKARETŠO

Nyakišišo ye ke kemedi ya othoetenokrafi ya leeto la monyakišiši bjalo ka Lerasta gomme e tšweletšwa ka ditshwantšhišo tša go bonwa. E botšološiša tshekamelo le mafokodi a go hlolwa ke go ba yo mongwe ka go swantšha ka gare ga go ba gona ga boitšhupo bja go akaretša ditšo. Boswananoši ka gare ga nyakišišo ye bo nyakišišwa bjalo ka lereo la mohola ye mentši leo le hlalošwago ke diphapano ka maswao a ka ntle le dimelo tša ka gare ka gare ga boitšhupo bja setšo. E hlaloša mathomo a tshekatsheko ya monagano le ya filosofi ya go dira tše dingwe le go dira dilo tše di sa swanego gare ga ditšo tše di fapanego, mokgwa wa bona wa sebjalebja le ditshwayatshwayo tše di kgethilwego. Gape e bolela gore ditšo tša merafe ye mennyane go swana le Marasta a Afrika Borwa di tlangwa ke go akaretša setšo se sengwe ka go bopa dikgopolotee tše di sa swanego, go kgetholla kemedi ya dihlopha tša setšo tša boithati le yo mongwe le go ba ba bangwe ga bodumedi. Sa mafelelo, e tlišetša gore go ba bangwe go hlaloša dipeakanyo tša maatla ka go tatelano ya setšo le bohlokwa bja kemedi, go swana le kago ya boitšhupo. E ikemišeditše go utolla gore Marasta a ikgantšha ka Boafrika bja ona, a amogela Ethiopia moo e thomilego gona le gore ye ke naga e tee ka Afrika yeo e sa kago ya dirwa dikoloni. Nyakišišo ye ke ya bobedi go etwa pele le go thewa godimo ga mokgwa, gomme e feleleditše ka pontšho ya go ba noši gomme e foreimilwe ka gare ga dikgopolo tša go dira tše dingwe le go dira dilo tše di sa swanego le teori ya ka morago ga bokoloniale ya Liminalithi (Liminality). Fenomenolotši le othoetenokrafi di šomišwa ka gare ga mmotlolo wa boleng go utulla le go hlaloša tsebo ye e tšwelelago, yeo gape e tšweletšwago ka mešomong ye e šomago yeo e bopago karolo ye bohlokwa ya nyakišišo ye.

MELAWANA YA BOHLOKWA:

Botho bjo bongwe; Bokgopolotee, Boitšhupo bja go akaretša ditšo; Teori ya liminalithi, Lerasta, Nicholas Hlobo, Gerald Machona, setšo sa Sethosa, Othoetenokrafi, Fenomenolotši

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

This study is an autoethnographic representation of the researcher's journey as a Rastafarian and is expressed through visual metaphors. It narrates the gradual evolution of self-conception and self-perception within the birth cultural group. It interrogates the predisposition and vulnerabilities of otherness and stereotypification through interaction within the framework of visual explorations. Otherness, in terms of subcultural differences and its visualisation through the arts, becomes the central subject of this study. Thus, the research is inevitably bound to the concept of selfhood. Otherness in this study is explored as a complex and multivalent term defined by differences through outside markers and internal characteristics within cultural identities. This study is meant to be the voice of those who cannot echo their concern - the marginalised. It also intends to question the role of Western influences in African matters and to discover reasons for bluntly adopting Eurocentrism and using it as a benchmark for what is right. This research studies the impact of othering on the South African Rastafari cultural subgroup and its identity construction. This leads to questioning the universal nature of dogmatism and intolerance amongst various cultures and religions through a visual interpretation, with specific reference to my experience as a Rastafarian in South Africa.

Thus, this study outlines the psychoanalytic and philosophical origin of othering and stereotyping among different cultures, their present-day practice, and selected criticisms. Furthermore, it argues that ethnic minority cultures like South African Rastafari are bound by intercultural othering through the formation of stereotypes, discriminating against cultural groups' representation of the self and the other and religious othering. Lastly, it maintains that othering defines power arrangements within cultural hierarchies and representational significances, such as identity construction. It aims to reveal that Rastafarians take pride in their Africanity, acknowledging Ethiopia from where it originated and that this is one country in Africa that was never colonised. It is considered one of the oldest monarchies on earth, even older than the British monarchy. To put Rastafarian ideology into perspective, one has to dig into its background. Although largely unknown

to many in South Africa, this West Indian movement is based on an ideology that makes Africa its central theme. Its great symbol of hope is Ras Tafari, better known as Haile Selassie, the late Emperor of Ethiopia. Although he is no longer around, his “divine” spirit is in and broods over movement members who, in his honour, call themselves Rastafaris (Oosthuizen: 1990).

The Rastafarian Movement emerged as a potent weapon to reclaim and refuse colonialism, oppression, inequality and Africa’s economic exploitation whilst agitating for the liberation of slaves in the plantations and Africa, their homeland, since they were brought in the Americas through slavery. Amy Jacques Garvey, in her book, proclaims that Marcus Garvey, more than anyone, is the historical inspiration of the Rastafarians (Jacques-Garvey 1969:125). The main basis for the relationship between Garvey and the Rastafarians is found in Garvey’s prophecy, “Look to Africa, when a Black king shall be crowned, for the day of deliverance is near” (Lewis 1979:14). This prophecy was linked to Ras Tafari’s crowning as Emperor of Ethiopia, after which he took the name Haile Selassie. This enhanced Garvey’s position as a prophet and visionary among Rastafaris, although they maintain that the initial source is to be found elsewhere (Vincent 1976:227). The Rastafarians often wanted to remain unbleached by the modern Western idea of beauty and to remain with their African identity. Being so critical and resistant can be viewed as a big chunk of a broader decolonial discourse that shakes the pillars of European colonialism and its influence on African people’s identity and culture. This movement may be referred to as a sub-culture. However, it is still one of the main tourist attractions in the Caribbean islands because of Bob Marley, the Reggae music icon, who was also a Rastafarian, and Marcus Garvey for his contribution and influence in and outside Jamaica.

This research is both practice-led and based, and it culminated in a solo exhibition of artworks developed during this study entitled “Kuqhawuka Kuhlangu: Kwasa Saxhixha Kwasa Safak’thwathwa”, an isiXhosa idiom meaning “Disconnecting and Connecting

simultaneously” or “Breaking up and Making up”, and it refers to a pandemonium or quagmire. It is framed within the concepts of othering and stereotyping, as well as the post-colonial theory of Liminality. Phenomenology and autoethnography are used within a qualitative paradigm to unearth and explain emergent knowledge.

[\https://acrobat.adobe.com/id/urn:aaid:sc:EU:841e207f-f7ba-467e-af56-a0c30a1b0f6d

(Click on this link to open the catalogue)].

1.1 THE STUDY’S CHAPTER OUTLINE

Chapter One introduces the general layout of this study and how it presents a cohesive argument, starting with the rationale and background of the aims and objectives. It introduces the proposed theoretical framework, introduction to the creation process of emergent artworks, and methodological processes of both data collection and analysis.

Chapter Two presents the literature review and theoretical framework supporting the study’s argument. The literature review unpacks culture and intercultural identity formation, other aspects associated with Christian faith indoctrinations and domination, discrimination through othering and stereotyping, and the theory of liminality and its constructs as a theoretical framework, arguing that people who are discriminated against continuously find themselves in a liminal state.

Chapter Three first presents the artistic influences and how the selected artists’ works have been used to frame both the conceptual and creation processes of the artworks emerging from this research. The second section of this chapter articulates this study’s methodology, including Phenomenology and Autoethnography as the data collection and interpretation processes that informed this research.

Chapter Four is a discursive interpretation of this study’s emergent knowledge, focusing on the exhibition visuals, which constitute part of this research study, and is supported by

Artists who address similar issues of exclusion through othering and stereotyping towards self-acceptance and self-actualisation.

Chapter Five is the conclusion, which coherently refers to each section/chapter, validating the significance of this study. Finally, this chapter also recommends some solutions and further follow-up studies to consolidate and expand the argument this study espouses.

1.2 RATIONALE AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

According to Jean-Francois Staszak (2008:2), otherness happens when a dominant social, cultural or religious group constructs out-groups by stereotyping a difference that reflects negatively on the identity of such a group. This classification leads to discrimination and division into “them” and “us”. The superior group believes that the out-group lacks identity, sets itself apart from such groups and becomes the only group with an identity. The specific focus of this study is based on my direct experience of becoming the “other” through being a Rastafarian or convert in Mdantsane, a township outside East London in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa, my place of residence and where I was born and bred. It was only after 1994, during the advent of democratic government and after the demise of the Apartheid regime, that Rastafari became an organised movement in South Africa (Oosthuizen 2012:164). This was when I first knew about Rastafari after mingling with a group that had visited a friend near my home. It was when dagga or marijuana or weed or ganja was prohibited, and the Rastafarians were known for smoking the weed. Many were getting arrested, hence the bad publicity of the movement. I soon learnt that the stigmatisation of marijuana smoking foreshadows most of the other Rastafarian teachings, some of which I found constructive; hence, I subsequently joined the movement.

For example, I associated the Nyabinghi sessions, which is the smoking of ganja (*Intsangu* in isiXhosa language) and drum playing with the burning of *impepho* (sage) by traditional healers and incense by the Christian church as a sign of a people’s prayers rising to God

as in Psalm 141, “Let my prayer come like incense before you”. *Imphepho* is a type of wild plant that grows naturally, and it is believed by South African black people, especially traditional healers, that it invokes or awakens the ancestors’ presence during times of need. The Rastafarians’ Nyabinghi gathering, where they smoke Ganja, refer to it as a reasoning sessions and time of prayer. But I knew very well that the *impepho* (sage) and ganja (herb/marijuana) were not doing the same purpose even though at some point I thought so. As a liberator of feelings and ideas, ganja has through the ages been, and continue to be, a great force in our cultures and civilizations, and each of it has named it uniquely, bhang and ganja in India, kabak in Turkey, takroui in Tunisia, kif in Algeria and Morocco, Maconha in Brazil, and Marijuana in Mexico and the United States (Clarke 1994: 46-47). The above quote shows that the smoking of Ganja has been important in many cultures and through many civilizations. The difference perhaps between those communities and Rastafarians is that it is more central in the lives of Rastafarians than in any known community in history. Ganja features in almost every aspect of their lives. It is most importantly utilised for sacramental purposes as well as a ritual during the process of reasoning (Gondwe 2002: 10).

After several years of association with several groups of Rastafarians, such as Nyabinghi, the Twelve Tribes of Israel, African Unity, Covenant Rastafari, Messianic Dreads, See Gold Empire, and the Selassian Church, I decided to join as a member of Bobo Shanti. Unlike other Rasta groups, the Bobo Shanti is the most conservative wing of Rastafari, unbendingly ruling that scalp and facial hairs should not be cut but kept in dreadlocks, and scalp and hair should be covered in a turban. This makes the turban the most important part of the Bobo Shanti’s outfit, over and above the bright colours and white outfits. Thus, Rastafarian outfits and dreadlocks distinguish them from the community in which they reside, making them prominent and look different.

In this study, othering is treated as a contemporary action explained as a struggle for authority between different cultural, social, and/or religious groups. The othering

experienced by the Rastafari minority in Mdantsane, where I live, seems to reflect various postmodern concepts of othering and presents geography as a producer of otherness through confinement, territorial constructions, exotism and post-colonialism. The study also investigates the difficulties or complexities Rastafarian children and new converts of Mdantsane face because of their looks and way of life. This research does not promote uneasiness between the two intercultural groups but seeks to understand and accept both ideologies towards a harmonious cohabitation. Mdantsane is one of the biggest black townships, about 25 kilometres outside East London.

I have grown to understand that there is who you are and what you are. To put this into perspective, I can proudly say that I am umXhosa, who I am, and then being a Rastafarian is what I am. To make it simple and understandable, one has to know that religion is an adoption of principles. This is evident because our parents and great-grandparents were not Rastafarians; it is new and strange in our households. Some people relate it to *izangoma* or traditional healers. In fact, there are similarities because Rastafarians practise self-taught herbalism in addition to the ganja smoking movement as a way of life.

Religious principles or any ideology can be adopted, and a person can change his/her affiliation at any time he/she wishes. The crux of the matter is that your DNA or bloodline cannot be something that one can just get rid of as we can with religions. In understanding and accepting who we are lies our true identity and the true knowledge of the self. Being a Rastafarian is important, but being umXhosa is more important to me. Undeniably, the Rastafari movement heralds some good values that can make a better person out of anyone who practises it because of its principles and what it offers holistically. It cannot go unnoticed that a lot in Africa has been christened and colonised, and our ways of life as Africans are neglected. Our narrative is placed under the carpet or deemed as non-existent. In the Bible, most parables reference the white race, or Europeans, the white God and Jesus Christ, and white angels, and the names of biblical apostles and churches are in European languages.

According to Young Yun Kim, intercultural identity is used to identify an individual's ability to grow beyond their original culture and encompass a new culture, gaining additional insight into both cultures in the process (Kim 1992). This is another point of interest as both cultures gain insight into each other's culture through interaction. This study also unpacks the many challenges the Rastafarians encounter within their communities. The challenges are diverse and include discrimination, prejudice, stereotypes as well as being labelled with many names. They use names like "AmaGrigamba," mostly used to describe expatriates such as Ethiopian and Somali refugees. The word "Grigamba" alone is a discriminatory weapon used to insult the Ethiopians or anyone who looks different. Some of the Rastafarians were nearly attacked during the xenophobic outbreaks in South Africa in May 2008. Most of the Rastafarians in Mdantsane are affiliates or devotees of the Bobo Shanti sect, identified with turbans and robes as their dress codes. Groups such as Orthodox Jews have a strong visual identity that is important to their religion or culture. These groups often find themselves targeted by other members of society who persecute people who choose to look different (O'Connor 1997:11). The nature of cultural othering is universal; hence, it needs to be questioned. It is common for minority groups to be labelled and even persecuted; however, through intercultural tolerance, people can live in harmony.

1.3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

This research portrays how intercultural identity intolerance can lead to unnecessary othering, affecting the social well-being of those being othered. Through the artworks that were presented in the exhibition, which formed a major part of this research, it reveals the negative effects of this type of cultural intolerance and proposes open-mindedness and the acceptance of different ideologies. It aims to put Rastafarian ideology into perspective, revealing that Rastafarians take pride in their Africanity, acknowledging Ethiopia as the place from which it originated. The main objective is to question the universal nature of discrimination, stereotypes, and cultural and religious othering permeating minority cultures and religious practices. It seeks to echo the Universal Declaration of Human

Rights issued by the United Nations in 1948, that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

1.4 THEORETICAL APPROACH OF THE STUDY

Different theoretical concepts are unpacked to give a better understanding and identify gaps to situate this study. These are Psychoanalytic theory, Otherness, Liminality, and Intercultural identity. In psychoanalytic theory, 'the other' and otherness are central to the development of the self. The self requires 'difference'- the other- to become a formed presence and a (social) human being. The other (that which is not self) must be differentiated and cast out from the self for the infant to become a distinct person. In describing and grasping otherness, one also produces it, reshaping it to reflect one's image (Bauman 1991). In other words, 'otherness' is like an inborn concept that is very complex. It needs to be examined carefully and cast aside, as it really cannot harness the power of cultural differences and identities. This inability to harness such power gives way to discrimination and prejudice.

Postmodern theories like analytic philosophy, phenomenology and structuralism argue in common that there is no special, objective vantage point outside the social context from which social life can be accessed or explained. Instead, they focus on local, fragmented ideas of social life. Postmodernism came into fruition in the 20th century as a philosophical movement that was largely a reaction to the philosophical values of the modern period of the West, specifically European history (Carlton 1990). Tribal people have developed self-sufficient and extraordinarily diverse ways of life, but they are portrayed as backward and primitive simply because of their different communal ways (Cobo 1987). The newly converted Rastafarians of Mdantsane may appear negatively resistant as they struggle to construct their new identity within the prevailing disempowering intercultural identity dynamics. This may affect their consciousness in their quest for development in the newly found culture. The traditions and rituals are new

and seem strange to the outsider or the society, which sometimes creates a negative attitude against the group practising them.

1.4 CREATIVE PRODUCTION

By art alone, we can get outside of ourselves and know what others see of this universe, which for him is not ours, the landscapes that will remain as unknown to us as those of the moon (Marcel Proust *Time regained* 1999). My investigation of the interaction between these two intercultural subgroups has not brought about any change in the predisposition or fears that the society has with the presence of the other group, the Rastafarians, within the same environment. One of the things the Xhosas are concerned about is personal growth, which involves having a wife and children, which are seen as signs of being an adult. In their culture, the use of cannabis is seen as a silly boyish habit; its involvement in the Rastafarian culture leaves them with a serious concern. In my studio practice, I visually portray some of the concerns that the parties involved are concerned about.

The idea of the artworks was that of simplified human figures with writings on them expressing this otherness and exclusion, which is felt within the interaction between the two groups. I decided that the idea would be better expressed with poles. As I was contemplating the idea, I came across the Totem poles. Totem poles are sculptures carved from large trees, such as the Western Red Cedar. In North America, totem poles are part of the cultures of many indigenous peoples of Northwest Indian Tribes located on the Pacific Northwest Coast in British Columbia and southeastern Alaska. They created them to convey stories and meanings of cultural pride and wealth. Sometimes they differ from tribe to tribe. My studio practice is not about making a repetition of the Totem poles but only to be inspired by them.

I refer to my poles as hard and soft sculptures because of the use of wood and fabric, paint, marking pens and found materials. I bought foam rods known as swimming pool

noodles because they are light and suspended them from the ceiling, imitating the wooden rods/poles to represent the in-between and the liminal situation I and other Rastafarians always find ourselves in. The totem poles are of great influence as they relate to cultural othering and are a perfect medium of expression given the reasons they were created, which was to represent the many Rastafarian encounters I have come across throughout my life since embracing the Rastafari faith or way of life.

1.5 THE PROPOSED RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Interpretive phenomenology, developed by Martin Heidegger (1927/2011), takes into consideration the researcher's prior knowledge or experience of the phenomena under investigation as an integral part of the study. Autoethnography is a research method that uses personal experience (auto) to describe and interpret ("graph") cultural texts, beliefs, and practices ("ethnic"). Auto-ethnographers believe that personal experience is infused with political/cultural norms and expectations. They engage in rigorous self-reflection - typically referred to as "reflexivity"- in order to identify and interrogate the intersections between self and social life" (Boschner & Ellis 2006:111). Fundamentally, auto ethnographers aim to show "people in the process of figuring out what to do, how to live, and the meaning of their struggles" (Boschner & Ellis 2006:111). Steve Pace, a Senior Lecturer in digital media, states that autoethnography is qualitative research that combines characteristics of ethnography and autobiography and is gaining momentum within the creative performing arts as a research tool, partly because of the opportunity it provides for writers, artists, performers and others to reflect critically upon their personal and professional creative experiences. In recent years, analytic autoethnography has been proposed as an alternative to traditional evocative autoethnography for researchers who want to practice autoethnography within a realist or analytic tradition. However, questions remain about how this alternative method should be applied in practice. This dissertation takes some steps toward answering those questions by exploring how ethnographers in the creative arts can employ analytic strategies from the grounded tradition in their work. This methodological discussion might benefit artist-researchers

who identify as autoethnographers but want to use analytic reflexivity to deepen their theoretical understanding of their creative practice.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

As a minority group, Rastafarians are often seen as unusual and strange individuals, which leads to them being seen as menaces to society and a tendency not to be taken seriously. This perception harmed the movement in many quarters, and members were seen mainly as lazy, violent and lawless scoundrels who used religious phrases to hide their laziness and bad habits (Cashmore 1979:3). The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa recognises and advocates freedom for the practice of all religions and ways of life in the country. This study is significant because it focuses on the issues of uncertainty, indecisiveness, liminal boundaries and intercultural identity dilemmas. The effects of this dilemma and indecisiveness are a result of the Rastafarian living between two cultures and trying to infuse them. This dilemma results in the Rastafarians feeling like they are being held to ransom because they have taken a drastic step by deciding to give reverence to both entities. The whole scenario is full of psychological and social factors, which all affect the growth and development of this movement, especially for the new converts.

Haile Selassie was said to have emphasised that the Rastafarians had to liberate themselves before they directed their thoughts towards Africa. Nevertheless, the movement moved out of the religious context into the political arena (Barret 1977:219). Most Rastafarians in Mdantsane are from the Xhosa culture, which forms part of their DNA, and perform rituals similar to those of any other group. At some point, one has to consider the importance of their upbringing and their role as Xhosa men and women within their family and the community. This factor becomes a limitation on its own, which makes the issue interesting, yet it also does not stop the perpetuation and findings of this study. I concur with the opinion that my own journey is inspired by both Xhosa and Rastafari. I

also respect the boundaries of both cultures, but I am also breaking some in accordance with what is expected from both sides.

Art has been used in this study to confront liminal boundaries and stereotypes against Rastafarians in Mdantsane and elsewhere. The paintings and poles used in the main installation were to unleash the inner turbulence caused by indecisiveness and discomfort because of the pressure involved. On the other hand, art can also be used as a great tool to express the self in many situations. It is also used in this study as a tool to narrate its visual language, which is also therapeutic in its nature. The artmaking process helps victims revisit and express trauma and transforms and represents abstract trauma and feelings into physical forms or objects (Sintinicolas 2018). By exploring my experiences using art, I see it as a form of finding tranquility in my life and healing from some of the unpleasant moments. One can only hope to find another study of this nature that can be used or seen as a method of expanding knowledge about cultural diversity and the importance of shunning ignorance towards our fellow human beings regardless of race, colour or creed. The validation of this study is paramount to the perpetuation of another of this kind.

Because it prioritises subjective insights over empirical validation and its conclusions often mirror the researcher's experiences, this self-centred approach may introduce bias. However, the critical review of relevant literature, as well as various artistic interventions, has neutralised the biases in one way or another, making the study authentic.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study focuses on cultural and intercultural identity issues emanating from personal choices and beliefs towards self-acceptance and self-actualisation. It argues that some of our personal choices result in societal exclusion or being othered due to socially constructed stereotypes. Given the autoethnographic and phenomenological nature of this study, the literature review is presented to integrate my life story with the various views in the literature. The study also focuses on the predisposition towards the “other” through intercultural interaction, as well as questioning the universal nature of discrimination and prejudice against cultures and religions. The chapter also unpacks the researcher’s upbringing as a Xhosa boy who was initially affiliated with the Christian faith and then chose to be a Rastafarian convert. It unpacks the formation of culture and inter-cultural identity, Christian faith indoctrinations and domination, discrimination through othering and stereotyping, and cultural construction and mimicry. It makes the argument that discrimination through othering and stereotyping places the subject in a perpetual state of liminality, and it concludes by unpacking the theory of liminality and its constructs informed by relevant literature of Arnold Van Gennep, Victor Turner and Homi Bhabha.

2.1 CULTURE AND INTER-CULTURAL IDENTITY

Cultural identity refers to the attribution of a set of qualities to a given population, who act as cultural beings. The meaning of culture is related to power relationships, and it is also composed of conflicting representations (Bhatia 2007: 49). As individuals experience it, cultural identity is equivalent to ethnicity, another concept which is congested today (Brubaker 2006). Fred Dervin (2012) argues that “a review of the concept of cultural identity as a whole shows first of all that it is a ‘floating signifier’, which seems to encompass many different things. The concept of cultural identity is really congested with many aspects and ideas. It makes it difficult to define or digest the interaction between culture and identity because they are both congested with issues that create an interesting dialogue. Our identity is at once plural and partial. Salman Rushdie, in his ‘Imaginary

Homelands' states that, sometimes we feel that we straddle two cultures and at other times, we fall between two stools, but however ambiguous and shifting the ground may be, it is not an infertile territory for a writer to occupy (Rushdie 15). As an essential aspect of human experience, identity is difficult to define neatly (Strauss 2017). It is a sensitive aspect of every human being, which seems to have a different meaning for each group of people or an individual. Additionally, identity constitutes "[w]ho or what a person or thing presented to or perceived by others, a set of characteristics or a description that distinguishes a person or thing from others" (Oxford English Dictionary 2023). The interaction between the original culture and its emergent subsidiaries or subcultures creates an interesting dialogue, as they have somehow experienced dislocation and confusion.

Intercultural identity, on the other hand, is how a person develops their self-perception and self-concept within different cultural and social groups. It also involves learning to relate to others from different cultural and social groups in an intercultural way. The Xhosa culture, like many other cultures, has and still experiences the condition of being dislocated when infused with other different cultural influences either through the process of acculturation or just from intermingling with different people with different beliefs or ways of life. Acculturation refers to a cultural modification of an individual, group, or people by adapting to or borrowing traits from another culture. Intercultural identity allows for ever-widening circles of self-other definition without diminishing one's cultural roots (Kim 1994:18).

The intercultural identity can be viewed to be based not on belongingness, which implies either owning or being owned by culture, but on a style of self-consciousness that is capable of negotiating ever new formations of reality. He is neither totally a part of nor totally apart from his culture; he lives, instead, on the boundary (Adler 1982: 391).

Thus, the emergence of the Rastafarians within any society dislocates the culture within which they are associated. The interaction within these two ideologies (Xhosa and

Rastafarians) gives way to multi-cultured individuals who, in the process, learn different things, which sometimes are common to theirs.

In dealing with such a delicate concept as cultural identity, we are faced with the immensely challenging concept of culture. But culture cannot be but plural, changing, adaptable, constructed ... (Clifford & Marcus 1986). A culture that does not exchange with other cultures is a dead culture. The exchange also affects even the language and trade routes, from food, goods, spices, and clothing. German print fabrics were introduced to the Xhosa through trade, but now it is one of the fabrics adopted and commonly used by the Xhosa people. Sometimes, through interacting, we often realise commonalities within our different cultures. Another aspect of culture which should be reviewed is the fact that cultures should be less defined as a certain number of characteristics and cultural traits than relations and interactions between people and groups (Abdallah-Pretceille 2003:15). The relations and interactions should really be the most important part, like meeting a new friend or lover in person instead of phone calls only. Regarding the concept of cultural identity, it is easy to see how such a concept can be problematic and difficult to define.

Many post-modern phenomena are confusing for the individual, the retreat of Nation States, the speed at which things occur, the transformation of human relations ("new families", new sociality), and confusing changes which often appear to be uncontrollable identity crises. These all trigger in our liquid individuals (to borrow Z. Bauman's definition of contemporary individuals) a tendency to "group around primary identities" such as "religious, ethnic, territorial, national and thus a reduction of complexity around them" (Castells 1996:3). The issue is almost the same with the Xhosa and the Rastafarians of Mdantsane with some of the Xhosa seeing their relations as confusing. The reason may be that they are not used to this transformation. People feel secure with their way of life. Genuine fears are about affective attachment. People share common values and beliefs with their 'own' and desire to keep things that way. Fear generates strong ambivalence towards other cultures (Clarke: 520). Thus, we have a very strong notion of cultural

identity that is incompatible with other cultures. It is the fact that you do things differently than the other that makes the other 'the other'.

Predisposition may be one of the fears that construct fear. Žizek (1993:201) introduces us to the idea of the Theft of Enjoyment, arguing that the power that holds a community together is a shared relationship to a 'Thing'. Our relationship with our Thing is structured by fantasy and is what people talk of when they refer to a threat to 'our' way of life. This nation thing is not a clear set of values to which we can refer but a set of contradictory properties that appear as 'our' Thing (Žizek 1993:201). His work highlights the role of myth and fantasy in the construction of cultural and national identity and, more importantly, the way in which identity is imagined or perceived rather than grounded in some reality. Žizek (1993) notes that what we cover up by accusing the other of the theft of our enjoyment is the 'traumatic fact' that we never possessed what we perceive has been stolen in the first place. This is also evident between the Rastafarians and the Xhosa, but they mostly fear the deconstruction of their children's future. That is almost like stealing their enjoyment. This is sometimes caused by the fear of the unknown or predisposition.

We always impute to the 'other' an excessive enjoyment that he wants to steal our enjoyment (by ruining our way of life) and/ or he has access to some secret, perverse enjoyment. In short, what really bothers us about the "other" is the peculiar way he organises his enjoyment, precisely the surplus, the "excess" that pertains to his way, the smell of their food, 'their' noisy songs and dances, 'their' strange manners, 'their' attitude to work (Žizek1993:203).

In some sense, in constructing our cultural identity both socially and psychologically, we tend to construct, play with and destroy the identity of others (Sheshadri-Crooks 2000). With this said, it seems both cultures have to be aware of such phenomena to avoid having unnecessary conflicts when interacting. The other is furthermore a symptom of the process. The construction is an alienation process inalienable from the requirements of colonialism and nationhood (Ayling 2015). Most of the time, it is the postcolonial effects that make one's identity get mixed with others or somehow get lost along the way. Hence,

othering has been portrayed as a constituent part of colonialist and imperialist projects (i.e. the need to subjugate the Other) (Said 1978) and can entail symbolic or material detriments, which may include discursive or purposeful discrimination, social ostracism, socioeconomic disenfranchisement, and societal stigmatisation and oppression (Powell 2017; Staszak 2009). It is political actions and unstable situations that make migrant populations intensify the self or be classified as the other. Nevertheless, just like the concept of identity itself, these distinctions may not always be fixed and can situationally fluctuate (Skovgaard –Smith et al. 2020).

Othering can manifest itself in many guises and proliferate stereotypes and prejudices based on divergence (either real or perceived) between social entities (Staszak 2009). The influence of cultures may bring about different situations as it could mean a beautiful intercultural identity. The reality is that people move from country to country, town to town and so forth, which may result in a strong cultural diversity. It is this notion that brings new knowledge and connections within the broader culture, and sharing becomes the norm. In other cases, the intermingling may end up in relations, resulting in intermarriages, which mostly give us intercultural identities. Until the philosophy which holds one race superior and another inferior is permanently discredited and abandoned, until the colour of a man's skin is up no more significant than the colour of his eyes (Haile Selassie in one of his speeches about war and the human conditions). Internationally, similar patterns have been observed during the COVID-19 pandemic, where Thommer and colleagues examined how minority ethnic groups in the United States had higher unmet psychiatric needs than White Americans (Thommer et al. 2023). It seems favouritism and inequality between nations have always prevailed without any consideration for the other. The intermingling of cultures has always been something that has been going on, with nations sharing and battering since the world began and with others seeing themselves as better than others. Using the United Kingdom as an example, Black adults have been found to exhibit the lowest treatment rates of all ethnic identities (6% compared to 13% of White British individuals) (McManus et al. 2016;

Wallace et al. 2016; NHS Digital 2022). That on its own can create uncertainty, with individuals not knowing where they stand as citizens of that particular country or ethnicity. It is highly likely that such individuals will feel like outsiders within that kind of environment. Individuals who identify as Black or Black British were detained over four times more than White people, and Blacks are four times more susceptible to receive restrictive interventions, including isolation measures (NHS Digital 2022).

2.2 CHRISTIAN FAITH, INDOCTRINATIONS AND DOMINATION

The arrival of White people and their colonialism and religion seem to have left potholes in our path as Africans. They arrived and regarded many of our customs and traditions as paganism, and they disregarded the ways of our ancestors. This is not to say Christianity is a bad religion, but it is the superimposing that became a blunder, and it remains so. “It appeared to me that Christianity was more than a plot by the settlers to try to make imbeciles of African people (Mgidlana1997:22). Christianity is one of the religions that make you feel good and can also make you feel like you are in trouble for being alive. The thought of burning in hell always makes me cringe, and deep down in my heart, I know there is no such thing.

The advent of European imperialism and colonialism to Africa brought in its wake the phenomenon of white domination, whether visible or invisible, which is characterised by the political oppression, economic exploitation and social degradation of the indigenous African masses. Throughout this historical epoch, the age of white domination, whenever the spokesmen or representatives of white domination have sprouted a conscience, they have referred to the phenomenon as the “spread of Western civilisation” or “the extension of Christian trusteeship”. The undisguised truth is that White domination has grounded the status of man and stunted the normal growth of the human personality on a scale unprecedented in human history. White domination was established by the sword and is maintained by the sword (Sobukhwe [Sa]:22). During my upbringing, I realised that there was this second-best phenomenon contrary to my Xhosa culture, and that was

Christianity. We used to go to church on Sundays, and there we would attend Sunday school. We recited Psalms from the Bible, and inside the church, there were pictures of white people whom we were taught about in the Bible during the Sunday school sessions. I always wondered why there were only white figures who represented God or something holy. We were also taught about Jesus, who was also a white man, which also brought a lot of questions to my mind. Even when I asked the elderly people, I could not find the answers I wanted, and I felt a little dissatisfied. I could not help but think that white people were superior beings as my elders continued to speak highly of Jesus, who looked like white people.

As a child, I also felt the need to be white because I saw it as the best thing, and everyone's hero, who was Jesus, was white. I recall that in my mother's countryside, there were farmers who used to sell milk, sour milk, and vegetables, and elders often referred to them as 'baas' or bosses. It did not matter what age they were, or whether it was the farmer or his son, they were called baas (boss). It became crystal clear to me that the white people held higher authority. In the introduction of his book 'Black Skin White Masks', Frantz Fanon, warns us about this underlying problem. In Fanon's own words, he contests, "I am obliged to state it: For the black man there is only one destiny. And it is white" (Fanon). From Fanon's observation, it became clear that his fellow men and women were drifting away culturally. It is common in our Black communities to be seen as a misfit if you do not follow certain European standards of living, including religion. It is easy to be labelled as a pagan or heathen if you do not follow Western religion. If you do not abide by their standards, you are labelled as a rebel, and it becomes easy to be excluded. After all, Bhabha says that "the menace of mimicry is its double vision" (source). The crux of the matter is that it is only black people who are busy bleaching their skin and wearing fake blonde hair to look like whites. It is sad to know that the fake hair industry is making billions through black people, particularly women. It is the likes of Marcus Garvey, Malcolm X, Phillip de Kgosana and many more that some of us are regaining what we

refer to as our “black pride”. Marcus Garvey, in his book ‘Fact and Opinions of Marcus Garvey’ states that:

The time has come for the Negro to forget and cast behind worship and adoration of other races and to start out immediately to create and emulate heroes of his own saints, create our own martyrs, and elevate to positions of fame and honour black men and women who have made their distinct contributions to our racial history. Sojourner Truth is worthy of the place of sainthood. Alongside Joan of Arc, Crispus Attucks and George William Gordon are entitled to the halo of martyrdom with no less glory than that of any other race. Toussiant L’overture’s brilliancy as a soldier and statesman outshone that of Cromwell, Napoleon and Washington; hence, he is entitled to the highest place as a hero among men. Africa has produced countless numbers of men and women in war and in peace whose lustre and bravery outshine that of any other people Marcus Garvey (Jacquire-Garvey, [Sa] 23).

During the 17th century, there was a Xhosa Prophet by the name of Makanda, a freedom fighter as well, who had a young friend, Jakot Msimbithi, an interpreter for both black and white people. They met in captivity in the Grahamstown stockade and spent time together with other detainees at Robben Island. Makanda told the young man about his youth when he went to school at the famous mission station at Bethelsdorp. He had put his faith in the missionaries, Read and van der Kemp, because they were both liberals. They spoke of the equality of all people, and they made enemies of many whites when they took black brides. He took them seriously for years, but then he saw how they stood with their hands together, praying, when the white soldiers came and pushed the Xhosa out of their fatherland, first across the Sunday river, then across the Bushmen’s river, then across the Great Fish river. Disillusioned, Makanda abandoned the white man’s faith and dedicated himself to the liberation of his people (du Buisson 1987:31). The mission of the White men became clear to Makanda, and it was for their personal gain rather than equality. Prof Sobukwe espoused similar views when he first wrote about white domination. After the emancipation of the slaves in 1833, many joined the mission societies. However, when their material position did not improve, they founded or joined movements that used Afro-religious elements in their approach (Oosthuizen 1990:8). The

above statement proves that the Christian missionaries were not to be trusted because they were doing the same thing in America.

We were taught to respect the Bible's teachings and uphold Christian values. The Christians share the same message of love, respect, and forgiveness, and the list of commonalities is endless. Since many people were moving into urban areas, it became a norm for people to start losing their values and traditions, which form part of their identity. They became caught up between their own and the new European traditions and got comfortable neglecting what they knew better (as the elders say). The power of liminality and mimicry mingled together to form what came to be known as people without their own identity. The gospel of the Christians was also slowly dragging them away from their own, making them see themselves as illiterate and not fit for the kingdom of God and heaven. The preachers, the pastors, and the reverends were preaching about heaven for those who were good and accepted the kingdom of God and torment in hell for those who did not accept their message. Our ancestors' ways were seen as primitive and pagan and could not be tolerated as they were barbaric. In his quest to dominate, the coloniser brought a situation that would make the colonised feel inferior and accept its dominance without a second thought. Colonial power produces the colonised as a fixed reality that is an 'other' and yet entirely knowable and visible (Bhabha 1996). The past generations had no choice but to bow to the status quo, and our parents had to follow suit because our great-grandparents were already under siege. This is not to say that there were no rebels, because they existed a long time ago, even to this day.

2.3 RASTAFARIAN PHILOSOPHY AND ITS DENIGRATION

Over the years, as I was researching the Rastafarian faith, I realised that there is a thin line between this faith and Christianity and Judaism. Despite the fact that numerous Ethiopian priests are black and Christian outwardly, they claim to be the descendants of Jewish Levites, and they practice elements of Judaism in their Christian worship (Tolossa[Sa]:5). The Rastafarians do not really relate to present-day Christianity as they

say it is full of confusion and contamination. Some use the words of His Majesty Haile Selassie I in his declaration about the Ethiopian bible's version.

We in Ethiopia have the oldest version of the bible. It is quite true that there is no perfection in humanity. From time to time, we make mistakes. We do commit sins, but even as we do that, deep in our hearts as Christians, we know we have a chance of forgiveness from the Almighty. To live this healthy life, a Christian life, is what makes me follow Jesus Christ (Haile Selassie I [Sa]:45)

With that being said by Emperor Haile Selassie I, Rastafarians continue to say it is a fake replica or a mixture of the Roman culture created by Emperor Constantine of Rome on his deathbed. In one of Haile Selassie's speeches, he states that "no one should question the faith of others, for no human being can judge the ways of God". It is not a matter of Rastafarians questioning the faith of others but rather a fact affecting anyone. None of us is innocent of that. They use their knowledge and history to back up their sayings. They also question the fact that the King James version of the Holy Bible consists of 66 books, and the Ethiopian bible consists of 81 books. They question the very fact that it was censored.

In as much as the term or the name Rastafari is always associated with marijuana and laziness, most Reggae singers made it known internationally as a peace-loving sub-culture rather than a bad cult. I recall that when I was growing up at home, they used to play vinyl and tapes of reggae music and other genres. I must also confess that I fell for the culture and reggae music ever since I came into close contact with some of the Rastafarians during my younger days. I noticed that they were something totally different from what I used to hear. They always spoke about the greatness of their King Haile Selassie I (also known as Jah Rastafari), the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, Conquering Lion of The Tribe of Judah, the one who was later crowned as an Emperor of Ethiopia in 1930. Flip the pages of your Bible to Genesis 49:8-10. We read, "JUDAH, Thou art He whom thy brethren shall praise. Thy Father's children shall bow down before thee. Judah is a Lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up. The sceptre shall not depart

from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes; and unto HIM shall the gathering of the people be". The sceptre was returned to Judah, Shiloh Selassie I at His Coronation (1930). The king of England, George V, sent His son Edward VIII (Duke of Gloucester) to Ethiopia, the Throne of Israel in Addis Ababa (New Jerusalem), with a sceptre they had stolen. He bowed low at the feet of The Lion of Judah, saying, "Master Master! My Father has sent me to represent him. Here is the sceptre that we stole from Sheba hundreds of years ago. We promise to serve the Lord to our end". He then recited Psalm 9 ... Extracts from a Paper by Ras Carlise A. Kelly (It was after his coronation or crowning that the people) who later came to be known as Rastafarians started to recognise HIM, as the king Marcus Garvey spoke about in one of his speeches, that he would bring forth redemption of the black man. Marcus Garvey, more than anyone, is the historical inspiration of the Rastafarians born into a poor family in 1887 in the town of St Ann's Bay, Jamaica; he was the youngest of 11 children. According to his reminiscences, he discovered only in his fourteenth year that there was a difference between the races (Jacques-Garvey 1969:125). He was very much aware that the Negroes in America and others scattered in the world were tracing their roots back to Africa. Many Rastafarian leaders emerged, namely Leopold Howell, who took it to the streets to tell the people about the divinity of Haile Selassie. In the formative years of this movement, there were three Rastafarian mansions: Nyhabighi, Twelve Tribes of Israel and the Bobo Shanti, also known as Ethiopia Africa Black International Congress (EABIC), with their leader Prince Emmanuel Charles Edwards. Bobo Shanti is the most popular group of Rastafarians in Mdantsane, and they wear bright garments and head wraps.

Here is one of Haile Selassie's speeches addressing the United Nations on October 6, 1963:

Where are we to look for our survival, for the answers to the questions which have never before been posed? We must look first to Almighty God, Who raised man above the animals and endowed him with intelligence and reason. We must put our faith in HIM so that He will not desert us or permit us to destroy humanity, which He created in His image. We must look into ourselves, into

the depths of our souls. We must become something that we have never been and for which our education, experience and environment have ill-prepared us. We must become bigger than we have been, more courageous, greater in spirit, larger in outlook. We must become members of a new race, overcoming petty prejudice, owing our ultimate allegiance to nations and to our fellow men within the human community (JAHUG vol7, [Sa]:1).

The above speech or statement clearly sends a good message about Rastafari's personality as a ruler. In fact, it is also about encouragement and growth for the community at large, more like a passage of greater adventure and growth with all dignity, dominion, and prosperity. I find the Emperor's words always fruitful; his philosophies make me eager to do good and to have good conduct amongst other fellowmen, young and old, rich or poor, masculine or feminine.

The basic question confronting the African people is identical to that which has faced mankind from the beginning of time itself and the problem of a man's relation to his fellow man. It is the question of how man shall live in fellowship, in harmony and in peace. In as much as mankind has evolved and become civilised centuries and centuries, it is still difficult for human beings to live in good relations. We have fought many wars over many different things like land ownership, minerals, and so forth, and even though all these are in abundance, mankind still fights in the name of greediness. Man moves and has his being in the social environment. In the absence of social life, the economic question would fall away. His primary deeds determine man's relation to his fellow man. The social question, whose structural foundations are to be found in economic determinism, arises within the framework of social relations.

Man is, therefore, a social being and not an economic ANIMAL. To live in harmony with his fellowmen, man must recognise the primacy of the material and spiritual interests of his fellowmen. He must eliminate the tendency on his part to uphold his own interests at the expense of those of his fellowmen. It is only within such a set-up that the human personality can be developed, and that respect for it can be fostered (Sobukhwe [Sa]:26).

It is that level of understanding that can create a better environment and concrete social relations without exclusion of any group or fellowmen. Thus, it becomes everyone's responsibility to make sure that we live in harmony with each other without any prejudice or discrimination of any kind.

Most of the general community sees the Rastafarians as just a subculture, religion, stoners, illiterate individuals, the good for nothing, and the world's well-known vegetarians. Some people say the Rastafarians are exotic and seem to live an extreme life. I remember we used to be humiliated by the police for the use of marijuana, especially if they found it in our possession. You could be arrested and charged, but these days, the government allows us to carry a certain amount of it. On the day of 18 September 2017, Judge Zondo, who was Deputy Chief Justice, decriminalised marijuana or herb under the Chapter 9 clause of the right to privacy. The stipulation was that we could use it within our households, as we normally use it for prayers and recreation. As a result, the government and other stakeholders, as well as the Rastafarians and other planters, are working on developing hemp and cannabis for economic purposes. A lot of Rastafaris were chased away from their homes after they 'threw away their combs' to grow locks and converted to the Rastafari way of life. Individuals who have been rejected report hurt feelings (Leary & Springer 2001). People have all sorts of negative reactions, ranging from a loss of self-esteem to increased existential angst to being rejected or ostracised by virtually everyone (Williams 2007: [sp]). In my opinion, many people would be surprised to know the impact of King Rastafari on world affairs and the status he held. He was a leader of the Organisation of African Unity, working hand in hand with the then-African Presidents and Prime ministers such as Dr Nkwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, and Sam Nujoma of Namibia, to mention just a few. The considerable number of honorary titles and degrees conferred upon Haile Selassie I (Rastafari) by institutions worldwide pays tribute to His work, His high moral character and deep Humanity as a mark of the highest esteem in which He is held universally (JAHUG Vol7 [Sa]:65).

Many saw the Rastafarians or Rastaman type as a mentally retarded, spirit-possessed “crackpot” who would have a degrading effect on the moral order if not checked. In Jamaica, the middle-class white and black Jamaicans, as well as the Americans, generally avoided the Rastafarians since they considered the “cult” to be not only mentally deranged or psychopaths but also criminals of the most dangerous type because some of their leaders concealed weapons and explosives (Oosthuizen:1990[sp]). Some repelled these general accusations against the Jamaican Rastafarians. Barret stated that “the Rastafarians must be seen above all else as the champions of social change on the island” (Barret, [Sa]:225). This is also not strange to the Mdantsane new-born Rastafarians as they also encounter such difficulties, yet they are part and parcel of the tourist attraction. They are seen as an element of surprise, making them seem weird and ostracised by other groups. The Rastafarians have faced many tribulations, with their children being chased away from school due to their dreadlock hair and turbans. This is what makes some of the people who want to convert to this culture shy away. I consider “othering” an imperfection in humans rather than just a group or social phenomenon. Othering based on skin colour is legally and socially banned, yet other forms do and will exist (Diana [Sa]:459). This shows that othering does not only exist between different races but occurs even with people of the same ethnicity, and it is another weak point within the human race. Otherness and identity seem to be inseparable sides of the same coin. This has been found when people have been ostracised by not being thrown a ball in a triadic ball-toss game (Williams & Sommer 1997: [sp]) and by not being included in a chat room conversation (Williams et al. 2002[sp]).

2.4 DISCRIMINATION THROUGH OTHERING AND STEREOTYPING

Othering is a process that goes beyond ‘mere’ scapegoating or degradation but denies the other those characteristics of the ‘same’: reason, dignity, love, pride, heroism, nobility and ultimately any entitlement to human rights. Whether the other is a religious group, a gender group, a sexual minority or a nation, it is made rife for exploitation, oppression and indeed genocide by denying its essential humanity (Gabriel 2012:[sp]). This psychological

tactic may have had its uses in our tribal past. Group cohesion was critically important in the early days of human civilisation and required strong demarcation between our allies and our enemies. To thrive, we needed to be part of a close-knit tribe that would look out for us in exchange for knowing that we would help to look out for them in kind. People in your tribe who live in the same community as you are more likely to be closely related to you and share your genes (thermooother.wordpress.com 2011).

“Othering”, means any action by which any individual or group become mentally classified in somebody’s mind as “not one of us” (Rorty 1993:124). Rather than always remembering that every person is a complex bundle of emotions, ideas, motivations, reflexes, priorities, and many other subtle aspects, it is sometimes easier to dismiss them as being in some way less human and less worthy of respect and dignity than we are (thermooother.wordpress.com 2011). Richard Rorty asserts that “everything turns on who counts as fellow human beings, as a rational agent in the only relevant sense – the sense in which rational agency is synonymous with membership of our moral community” (Rorty 1993:124). Rorty seems to be of the opinion that it is the accountability of the individual to inspire others to see “others” as equals of the human race. Mankind is endowed with knowledge, wisdom, and understanding, which are the very things that separate it from the beasts of the earth.

Children of different ethnicities or races can grow up together for a while, unaware of racial prejudice and discrimination until they are taught to hate, as a result of racial signs filling up the city or seeing the interaction between adults. For instance, there was a time in South Africa when the natives were not allowed to mingle with the white race. There were signs that were restricting Blacks from entering certain spaces, even sitting in the same place in public transportation.

The emergence of freedom during the nineties was part of the political transition facilitated by a Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA). Through a negotiated political

settlement between the apartheid regime and liberation organisations, CODESA delivered the first democratic elections, which, in 1994, brought political power to the African National Congress, led by Nelson Mandela. Two of the key political initiatives that immediately followed were the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), which was inaugurated in 1995, and a new Constitution and Bill of Rights, which was endorsed in 1996.

The process of othering may be initiated by an encounter between civilisations that have no previous tradition of contact or understanding (Gabriel, 2012[sp]). The situation between the Xhosa and the newborn Rastafarians has elements that are synonymous with the latter statement. Both cultures are new to each other, although some Rastafarians are converts from this community. When it comes to othering, there are no boundaries. It can occur anytime, anywhere. However, othering can also take place between groups that know each other well and have lived in close proximity for centuries, as the genocide of Rwanda and the ethnic cleansing of Bosnia remind us (Gabriel, 2012[sp]). There could be many factors that lead to such outcomes.

Predisposition and mistrust issues can burst into othering. In other cases, othering may be prompted by what Freud (Freud 1921 and 1930) referred to as 'narcissism of minor differences'. The person or group that is 'othered' is the one in closest physical and symbolic proximity, as it seems to present a major threat to one's identity and pride, which is precisely what happened to Freud and hundreds of thousands of Jews in Germany and Europe. The aftermath of this phenomenon can be harmful, considering the German Holocaust and the fury between the South African Zulus and the Xhosas in Thokoza (Eddings 1990[sp]). The implications, which only started as petty fights between these two groups, had many fearing an outbreak of a civil war.

2.5 CULTURAL CONSTRUCTION AND MIMICRY

Bhabha, in his definition of “mimicry”, says, “... colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognisable ‘Other’, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite” (Bhabha [Sa]:86). Like a child who is emulating their parents’ ways without giving recognition to or understanding of their own identity. However, Bhabha explains ‘mimicry’, as a complex phenomenon that is more than just an imitation of human behaviour. Rather, it is an attitude or temperament. In the case of a formerly colonised nation like ours, we are affected by the hangover of colonisation, leaving some of us feeling displaced and not intact with our own identity. Many things in our culture are passed on through word, sound, and physical interaction, so we learn by listening and watching.

The formative years of my life were spent under the guidance of many different people, just like any typical African child. As the African proverb says, “it takes a village to raise a child”. It was between urban and rural life. In rural areas, most people practice Xhosa traditions and rituals, but this does not mean that Xhosa-speaking people who live in urban areas do not do so. My parents made sure that they slaughtered a goat for me as a newly arrived member of the clan or family, fulfilling a ritual called ‘*imbheleko*’. The ritual is meant to welcome a family addition and introduce him/her to the ancestors, and this ritual is regarded as very important by the Xhosa-speaking people. Things have changed a lot since some are no longer doing practices like welcoming a child, and some would only do baptisms in church. As I was growing up, we attended rituals and ceremonies of other family members and within the community, such as neighbours and distant relatives. We used to travel to distant places sometimes just to attend these rituals and ceremonies, to show responsibility and support, as my parents would say. It is still a common phenomenon to be part of these gatherings, as some of these rituals are made to keep the family intact and for its well-being, as well as to show regard to the ancestors. Back then, a lot of households had livestock, and so did mine. It was our responsibility as boys to make sure that the goats and cows were at home in the evening. It would be a big deal

if the cows were not home when they were supposed to be inside the kraal at sunset. Lest I forget, there were also fields to be ploughed, and in the days of the yoke, you had to lead the cows sometimes. If you made a mistake, you would get some of that leather strip tied on a long reed, smashing your tinny, dry legs. That is how we were taught to be responsible individuals from an early stage. We also had time to go hunting game, rabbits, monkeys and other animals, and we slew birds with slings and stones.

There were many adventures like swimming in rivers and dams and climbing trees for jungle fruits. As boys, we were also naughty. We would steal fowls and cook them inside an ant hill so that no one would notice the smoke. We would normally do that in the jungle because we knew we would be beaten mercilessly if we were caught. It was in times like these that my grandmother would chant her idioms, making sure that your conscience was eating you up. My parents and maternal and paternal grandmothers all kept the Xhosa and Christian traditions. It was because of the influence of the white missionary schools, as some elders would say during certain conversations. My family is a mixture of AmaQaba, generally known as the 'illiterate' and stubborn ones, as well as AmaGqobhoka, the 'learned' ones with Western influence, yet still keeping and sometimes letting go of some of the Xhosa traditions. Back then, some of the learned people used to pay a bitter price, for such was associated with the white man's Western influence. According to Nagarajan([Sa]:187), the act of letting go of your own traditions was associated with the process of trying to fit in with the Western world or the white men's culture, and "...this colonialist ideology created colonial subjects who behaved in the way the coloniser had programmed them. They willingly accepted the superiority of the British and their own inferiority. "It produced a 'cultural cringe', so to speak" (Nagarajan, [Sa]:187).

I grew up moving between rural and urban areas, and most of the time, our Xhosa ceremonies and rituals were done in the countryside. Thus, my identity construction embraced the moral values of both the Western and traditional Xhosa culture. This is due

to the fact that Mdantsane Township, where I grew up was close to East London with Western or modern lifestyle influence. By the time I reached my late teenage years, I had to undergo circumcision, from boyhood to manhood, as a rite of passage. “Liminal experiences are evidently part of any culture” and are associated with various stages of human development (Bjorn Thomassen 2014:[sp]). Attending Circumcision School in our Xhosa culture does not only mean growth and a lot of responsibilities as an adult but is synonymous with progressing to the next stage. It is called a school because one goes there to learn many things that will help one as he begins a new journey to manhood, and this also involves enculturation through mimicry. The new young men are expected to show new characteristics that will prove their maturity as they thrive into adulthood.

2.6 THEORY OF LIMINALITY AND ITS CONSTRUCTS

The term ‘liminality’ comes from the Latin ‘limen’ meaning ‘threshold’. Liminal space is the in-between location of cultural action, in which, according to various cultural theorists, anthropologists and psychologists, meaning is produced. The idea was introduced to the field of anthropology in 1909 by Arnold Van Gennep in *Les Rites de Passage* (The Rites of Passage). Van Gennep described rites of passage as a three-part structure: separation, transition (liminal period) and incorporation. The terms ‘liminal’ and ‘liminality’ gained popularity through the writings of Victor Turner in the second half of the twentieth century. This study applies the theorisation of liminality by Arnold Van Gennep, Victor Turner and Homi Bhabha. Bhabha has particularly stressed the importance of border locations as the threshold environment. In *Location of Culture* (Bhabha 1994: [sp]), he refers to liminality as a transitory, in-between state or space characterised by indeterminacy, ambiguity, hybridity, potential for subversion and change. The term ‘liminality’ is particularly important in post-colonial theory since it identifies the interstitial environment in which cultural transformation can occur and new discursive forms are constituted, as Arup Ratan Chakraborty explains. Thus, liminality is that moment ‘when the past has lost its grip, and the future has not yet taken its definite shape’ (Chakraborty 1992: 133). For Turner, liminality is like the snake shedding its skin for the new layer to

be visible but is not yet visible. While it may be a moment of restlessness unleashed by an unknowable future, it is also “an expanded and ex-centric site of experience and empowerment” (Bhabha 2004:6) revealed in the possibilities of dissonance and dissidence in the life of the initiate. It is a time of uncertainty for the initiate, who may feel spiritually dislocated from the self. Due to certain cases and situations, it may be difficult to adapt.

Thomassen states that liminality is a universal concept: cultures and human lives cannot exist without moments of transition and those brief and important spaces where we live through the in-between. Such transitions mark us; they stamp our personalities, and that is how they will always be (Thomassen 2006:323). The latter statement made by Thomassen gives us a reflection of what many cultures and human stages entail. “This interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibilities of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy” (Bhabha1994:4). The Xhosa culture is by no means different to other cultures in terms of growth or stages. Yet, it is not really the same, hence cultural diversity. In the Xhosa enculturation, knowledge is passed from generation to generation through word and sound and thereafter retained by memory. I belong to that generation that used to gather around the fireplace, listening to our great-grandmother narrating to us old stories, including family stories and fairy tales.

I still remember our great-grandmother using fairy tales to warn us about life and its tricks, which we encountered in this journey called life. Because some of us were not mature enough to understand all those parables, she also knew that she would clarify them for us sometimes. Nevertheless, she played her part willingly; sometimes, she would phrase her idioms when something was wrong. You would hear her say ‘kungaqhuma kubasiwe’, meaning ‘where there is smoke, there is fire’. This means that there is always a reason for something that happens. She had a strong resilience for our culture and believed that the church is good and God is the doer of everything. I was brought up among these two

ideologies, which also brought some uncertainty, as the Christian faith seemed unfamiliar or sneaky within our history. Culture is like Heimlich's manoeuvre (a process of helping someone who is choking on food), with its disciplinary generalisations, mimetic narratives, homologous empty lines, seriality, progress, customs, and coherence (Bhabha 1994:136). Within a culture, we are taught things and learn various ways of doing things and belonging, and at the same time, we question these things and sometimes disagree and want to do things differently. This was also common with the Christian beliefs within our upbringing as the Xhosa-speaking people and in the present day. It is unclear to everyone, and it seems like this has been like this for centuries. However, cultural authority is also unheimlich (unfamiliar); for it to be distinctive, significant, influential and identifiable, it has to be translated, disseminated, differentiated, interdisciplinary, intertextual, international, and interracial (Bhabha 1994:136-7). The church and the state may hold this kind of authority that makes authoritative judgements about the nature of the whole community.

CHAPTER THREE: ARTISTIC INFLUENCE AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter first presents two artists who have influenced my studio practice and my thoughts towards both the conceptualisation and creation processes of the artworks presented in “Kuqhawuka Kuhlanguana: Kwasa Saxhixha Kwasa Safak’thwathwa” exhibition. The second part presents my artworks in relation to the two artists of influence, and the third, the methodology used for collecting and analysing the emergent data. The two artists’ works are discussed in accordance with my creation process, and elements of their art that are similar to mine are unpacked. These are Nicholas Hlobo, a South African artist who became more popular after winning the Standard Bank Young Artist Award in 2009, and Gerald Machona, who is originally from Zimbabwe but presently resides in South Africa.

Hlobo is a renowned South African sculptor known for using rubber from car tyres, soft ribbon, leather and wire, but he also makes drawings and is a performance artist. His works are concerned with Xhosa culture and heritage, gender and sexuality, race, gender and ethnicity. I focus on Hlobo’s artwork, ‘*Umtshotsho*’, because it resonates with my transitional journey of self-perception and self-concept within my community. Gerald Machona is also a performance artist who uses sculpture, new media, photography, and installation. Machona explores issues of migration, trans-nationality, and social interaction, as well as issues of xenophobia and geographic othering. Due to him being a foreigner from a neighbouring country, he is inclined to be treated as the other, which is relevant to the subject of this study. Both artists share common genres in visual arts, but their styles are distinct, and their approaches are different. In my creation process, I also use both installation and paint. Hlobo’s work is used in this study in relation to my transitional journey and Machona’s to unpack matters associated with othering. My body of work presents my struggles with an identity crisis. It expresses my continued state of liminality within my journey of transitioning from Xhosa ideologies to the Rastafarian way of life using various visual metaphors.

3.1 NICHOLAS HLOBO'S UMTSHOTSHO SERIES

Nicholas Hlobo draws strongly on his Xhosa heritage in his work, invoking the rich idioms of the Xhosa language. He is also a voice against prejudice, which is exacted to homosexuality in black society, and addresses this issue in his artworks. His works usually deal with identity issues, and he titled them in his native tongue, which is isiXhosa. I regard him as an artist of note since, in my studio practice, I also address issues of concern within black society, such as cultural identity, religion, and spirituality. The fact that he is using his native tongue for his artworks resonates with my artwork titles as I deliberately title them in isiXhosa, which is also my mother tongue.

Hlobo's installation entitled *UMTSHOTSHO* (2009), Figure 3.1, was chosen because it makes reference to a very significant Xhosa event associated with the transition and its visual presence. This installation delves into matters affecting young adults who are curious and trying to realise their selves and develop into adulthood, making it relevant to transition issues and intercultural identity. His work concerns gender and sexuality, race and ethnicity, and, according to him, "anything that people find embarrassing in society". Hlobo's approach to art is intriguing as he can break boundaries and produce work that leaves one wondering yet fascinated. His work is not like a straight and simple path, but it is challenging and unconventional, and it leaves one to ponder.

He declares, "We were told at tech (Wits Technikon) "that art had to improve on the old ideas. There has to be some sense of intervention. I am writing a story about South Africa, but I also have to challenge the convictions of art making. Does a sculpture have to be rigid?" (Gevisser 2009[sp]). In this artwork, *Umtshotsho*, Hlobo's approach towards the subject matter proves that his visual ability is massive as he uses tyres and ribbons to express many issues, including sexual-related issues. He has used this unusual material, everyday objects and items that have been discarded or are no longer of use to make a statement about the children's curiosity and growth in his own way. The term *Umtshotsho* basically refers to a traditional party for young people. It focuses on the time when children

are beginning to think like adults and explore what adults do, such as the desire to go out at night and drink and face all the consequences. Umtshotsho is no longer the way it was in the old days, and the young have found alternatives. In general, Hlobo's art also involves a search for identity, a way to accept and celebrate the self.

The process of stitching is a way of subtracting and adding. Trying to find your identity is about cutting things off and bringing them back; sometimes, you don't know what you want to keep. The methods and techniques that I use in my art talk is about rebuilding ... As time went by, [my art] grew into my celebrating being a South African and all the baggage I carry ... I developed this pride in all that I am all the things that have built me. So my art became a playful way of celebrating myself." (Corrigal 2009:[sp]).



Figure 3.1: Nicholas Hlobo, *Izithunzi* (detail) and *Kubomvu*, 2009

Hlobo makes it clear that he is also concerned about his transition and identity and that of his fellow South Africans as he speaks about subtracting and adding, cutting things off and bringing them back. This is what is occurring in my decision-making as a Xhosa and Rastafarian. I am not sure, at times, whether I am drifting in the right direction, and many

of us are going through that. I must confess there is a relationship between his approach and mine as he celebrates being South African through what we see as pain and a burden. I believe there is no use in wailing instead of getting up and living life and taking it as it comes. Thus, as he stated in his interview with Gevisser in 2009, art has to improve on the old ideas, and that he therefore wants to add value and improve the manner in which we approach art.

The very core for any creative process or product to be done completely is dedication, which yields better outcomes. This installation, *Umtshotsho*, with figures referred to as *Izithunzi* (shadows) resembling jellyfish, pumpkins or ghosts in a pinkish-dark red room, gives you a notion of a club or bar given the fact that the youths belong to this era of night clubs. Hlobo's creation process includes different mediums of expression, including painting, sculpture and drawings. These shadows or sculptures are made with wires, ribbons, and inner tubes of tyres. Some stand freely; some are suspended, and others are seated on a sofa. His approach is subtle and leaves a lot to be investigated. Like the jellyfish figures, one can think of uncertainty. In this case, one can associate these with fear and anxiety that creep in when you are about to do something unusual.

Hlobo is a very innovative artist who improvises, seeing that he takes old stuff and makes something out of it. His use of ribbon to sew things together can also be seen as a medium of healing the broken nation. The tyre he uses, and the tubes have a history of being in places near and far. In the case of *umtshotsho*, *izithunzi* may represent many things because, at nightclubs, youngsters sometimes get involved in promiscuous activities that they would not be proud of at a later stage. During these dates and outings, the curious young adults may gain good experience, or they may meet with the wrong company.

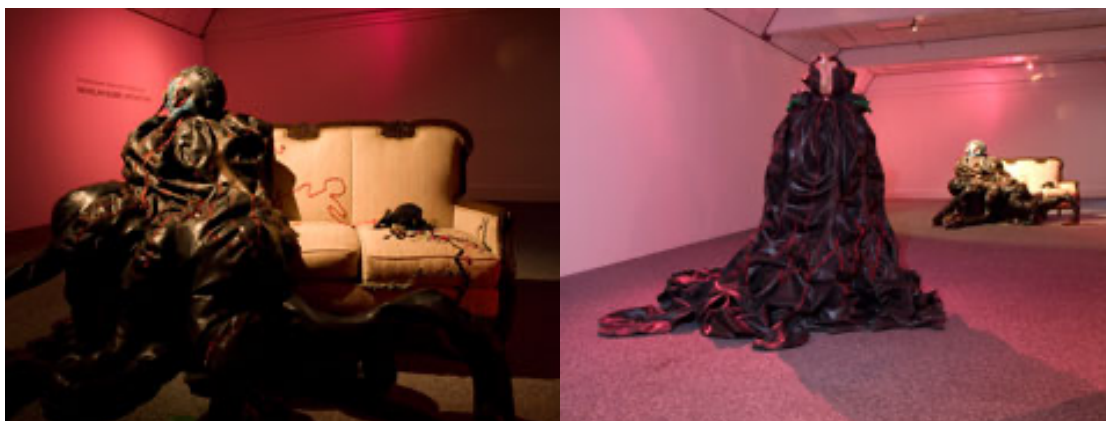


Figure 3.2: Nicholas Hlobo, *Izithunzi (detail) and Kubomvu, 2009*

Some of these *Izithunzi* (shadows) make you think of a scary situation because when we are about to do something we are unfamiliar with, especially in identity matters, fears possess us in one way or another even though we try to suppress the feelings. In as much as Hlobo is a successful artist, he still explores Xhosa and African traditions and gender issues with an emphasis on masculinity and rituals. In his playfulness about his art and social issues, in *Umtshotsho*, he is not aware of the old ways but just an idea and what he is being told. The fact that he calls them shadows could have a deep meaning, almost like saying the *imitshotsho* the elders used to attend are but just a memory. There is an old isiZulu phrase, “zohamba izinsizwa kusale izibongo”, loosely translated to mean “many men will depart, but their clan names will be remembered”.

Hlobo advocates for many things, including embracing his native tongue, but tradition does not allow him to do certain things. He is not afraid to break the norm and challenge issues that have never been challenged before. By using sewing, he does not limit himself in his art, even in communicating issues that are regarded as taboo. On the other hand, these jelly-like shadows or ghostlike figures resemble creatures that live under the seawater. What water does is to lift you if you let it, but if you do not, you may drown if you are not sure. Hlobo is noticeable for the materials that he uses, as well as his soft sculpture, which leaves you amazed at his craftsmanship. The figures or shadows in

Umtshotsho emerged from a material that was somewhat different from the sculptures he had done before. Every culture has events or ceremonies that mark milestones or important points in a person's life, which Hlobo highlighted with his *Umtshotsho* installation. Like some of his South African art contemporaries, he made a mark. His love for Xhosa culture and its exploration is but an easy subject, as he was brought up in the Eastern Cape.

Creating my artwork for my exhibition, "Kuqhawuka Kuhlangu: Kwasa Saxhixha Kwasa Safak'thwathwa", started as a struggle with transition and intercultural identity and being treated as the 'other'. My interest grew since I noticed that many of us Rastafarians have this urge to come out of the transitional trap. The one thing that was a bit of a burden was that I had to be creative enough to figure out how I would find metaphors and symbols to address my argument visually. As I contemplated my symbolism and the medium I would use to express myself, I came across the didgeridoo musical instruments that look like reed pipes. The idea developed until I thought of trying fence poles to execute my ideas. I also thought of painting the wooden poles and covering some of them with *isishweshwe* (German fabrics), which I used as a symbol for the Xhosa people. I used the poles for fencing, demarcating, or even preventing someone or something from entering the property or area beyond the fence. Thus, like Hlobo's *Umtshotsho* installation, which symbolises the transition, including prohibited things, such as the things teenagers do when not under the guidance of elders, my poles seek to portray the prohibited decisions I had to take during my conversion journey. The paddles and splashes of my life are a conglomeration of emotions, as seen in Qhusaka, Figure 3.2.

Throughout my artworks, I seek to portray my life struggles of paddling various emotions, even though I have accepted my decisions. I sometimes feel like a jellyfish that is continuously manipulated by the sea tides and thrown from pillar to post due to the fact that my Bobo Shanti Rastafarian appearance makes me look outstanding, even to the other Rastafarians with dreadlocks, but without a turban.



Figure 3.3: Phumezo Mpayipheli, Qhusaka, 2024

This is because dreadlocks have since become fashionable and are not necessarily worn only by Rastafarians. Still, the Bobo Shanti turbans and their style of wrapping them into an upward bundle that resembles a pole cannot be mistakenly associated with fashion, especially when it is worn by a man.

This social stigma has made me to be always ready to defend myself, making me feel like an outcast in my own community. Similarly to how homosexuals are always seen as outcasts, the Rastafarians are no exception. Hence, Hlobo's visual concepts resonate with me. All the unresolved issues that are associated with being the other because of my inner uncertainty, resulting from being in transition for the longest time as the community does not change their views about us (the Rastafarians) even though we have been living harmoniously within our respective communities. Thus, my exhibition title,

“Kuqhawuka Kuhlanguana: Kwasa Saxhixha Kwasa Safak’thwathwa”, refers to a continuous and daily pandemonium. My works titled iNgxwaba-ngxwaba (uproar or chaos) and Qhusaka (chaotic situation) speak directly to my lived experience since becoming a Rastafarian. In my works, I also use simple and mundane symbolism that sometimes camouflage the continuous painful and challenging daily life struggles, as seen in Qhusaka Figure 3.2. In this painting, the smiling woman represents a beautiful life, a camouflage, like watching a beautiful duck floating on the dam or river without showing its aggressive paddling feet. The splash of colours is represented harmoniously with the rest of the image, merging well with the smiling face and the woman’s entire adornments.

3.2 GERALD MACHONA’S PERFORMANCES ON OTHERING

The study also makes reference to geographical othering in Machona’s performances, where he works with his Zimbabwean identity crisis in South Africa and addresses issues of xenophobia. Machona is also popular because of his use of decommissioned currencies as well as the Zimbabwean dollar, foam, padding, fabric, wood, Perspex, rubber, plastic tubing, nylon thread, and gold leaf. Most of these materials were used in his artwork known as Ndiri Afronaut (I am an Afronaut) 2012. The term Afronaut is taken from Astronaut, referring to a person who travels in space. Thus, an Afronaut is a traveller of African descent who travels through space in a way similar to an Astronaut. The Oxford Dictionary describes an Astronaut as a person who is trained to travel in space using a spacecraft. Through the image of the Afronaut, the artist is using his creativity to delve into political issues such as freedom, injustice, and oppression whilst safeguarding his/her future in one way or another. For Machona, being an Afronaut is more than just travelling or flying in space; it is more about his bravery, enthusiasm and artistic intelligence. He has a good ability to use unpredictable metaphors to tell his story. Most contemporary black artists have already begun using art as a safe space or way of making a statement, some as activists for various social concerns and issues.

The artwork Ndiri Afronaut (2012) inspired me more about Machona and had me wondering yet amazed the first time I saw it. It had me questioning what the reason for such a performance was. What was more intriguing was the costume worn by the artist. I decided to follow up because of my curiosity. Upon hearing the reason behind that, I realised he was a very innovative artist. In this performance, he is walking through the streets of Cape Town wearing a costume that looks like that of a spacecraft person or an astronaut. The attire makes him look outstanding, making you feel like an alien from space outside Earth. With this work, he commented on the treatment he received and that of other fellow Africans who are migrants in South Africa.

As a Zimbabwean and foreign national, he uses art to express his situation and that of the collective. In one of his shows, *People from Far Away* (2012), Machona explores feelings of estrangement associated with the experience of “foreignness” while living in South Africa. The Zimbabwean nationals were amongst those who faced xenophobic attacks in May 2008. The South Africans who were perpetuating these attacks were using certain criteria, such as South Africans’ lighter complexion and fluency in some of the Indigenous languages, to discriminate against Zimbabweans. That statement on its own is not true because there are many Zimbabweans who have been staying here and are fluent in our Indigenous languages. It is unfortunate that some of the victims were South Africans. One of my cousins, who was working in Cape Town at that time, was attacked by a mob just because he is dark in complexion. If there were no one who knew him amongst them, he would have died in their hands. Even to this day, he wants nothing to do with Cape Town and refers to that event as a traumatic experience.

This had complicated things: who is to be considered an “insider” or “outsider” in South African society? These ‘xenophobic’ attacks also saw some of the Rastafarians nearly attacked as they were suspected to be foreigners because of the dress code that included turbans and robes. The act of being treated like a foreigner in the place where you grew up is out of this world. It is one of the reasons that I chose Machona as one of the

inspirations in my art practice, as we share similar issues, particularly being treated as the other because he is from a neighbouring country and me because I look different. Machona's concern is not only about people from Zimbabwe but even other fellow Africans. Many South African natives fear the migration that is legally and illegally taking place within its borders, which seems to be out of control, as most of those migrants do not have permission to settle. This issue of Africans fearing other fellow Africans is what Machona refers to as 'Afrophobia'.



Figure 3.4: Gerald Machona, Ndiri Afronaut, 2012

Gerald Machona is a foreign artist living in South Africa who is making a mark for himself in the visual arts, focusing his attention on different social issues. Among other issues he is dealing with are migration, xenophobia, trans-nationality, and identity. The decommissioned Zimbabwean currency (Zim Dollar) is his signature, as he also commented on the economic collapse and hyperinflation that faced Zimbabwe in 2008, leaving the currency devalued. It is one of the main reasons that Zimbabweans came in

numbers to look for greener pastures in neighbouring countries and many in South Africa. This is because living conditions were no longer favourable for them back home.

With the Rastafarians, the situation is a bit different as they are treated like they are in diaspora whilst they are home, and it is easy to notice it, as it has been going on for a long time.

Journeying for survival in a search to better understand oneself or even for love is not a foreign concept in tracing nomadic or migration patterns in Africa. But due to a past marked by segregation, South Africa has been shaped [by] a culture of mistrust and suspicion amongst its citizens' expatriates (Machona 2018).

In his exhibition 'Greener Pastures' (2018) Machona explores the notion of nomadic life or movement in search of a 'better grazing land' and love in his case, which has always been something our African ancestors have been doing for centuries. This exhibition shows Machona's eagerness or yearning for a greater adventure or a new life with a promising future ahead. This performance is also about his journey as a Zimbabwean of Shona heritage, marrying into a Zulu family. According to Machona, the very notion that people can be 'naturalised' into a family, ethnicity or as citizens of a country through marriage contradicts any purist notions of national or ethnic identity rooted in indigenusness. What it points out, however, is that identities are in User experience (UX) and are constantly navigating across national and ethnic boundaries. Machona has noticed that certain traditions, such as lobola gift-giving ceremonies, transcend national and ethnic boundaries. It seems there is a need to deconstruct certain post-colonial notions of individual and collective identity since nationality and citizenship are no longer based strictly on indigenusness. There have been stories surfacing that a lot of men from neighbouring countries have been buying or paying particularly black South African women to marry them for citizenship. There is something common between his journey and mine: being willing to override every obstacle that hinders one's own or collective progress.



Figure 3.5: Gerald Machona and Sethembile Msezane, Love in a Time of Afrophobia II

In this artwork, Figure 3.5, he is not only questioning the nature of two people marrying. However, they are from different ethnicities, and he is also breaking a boundary by not only engaging with a Zulu girl but also with the era. Inasmuch as he knows the mistrust among South Africans and Africans from neighbouring countries, he still preferred to tie the knot with a Zulu woman. I chose this artwork for different reasons, and one of them is that the artist does what he feels is right despite the odds. The fact that I am Xhosa, embracing Rastafarian philosophy and continuing to infuse the two cultures without apologising to anyone and at peace with myself, shows my resolve in my beliefs. Similar to Machona, who has brought two ethnicities and families together despite being labelled as the other, my works address the dynamics of intercultural identity interactions. The artwork's title not only captures the relationship between the couple but also occurs when Africans fear each other. It also shows the artist's zeal to persevere. The situation may seem uptight, but Machona is also enjoying himself along the way and taking strides and good risks. My journey into the Rastafarian way of life is similar to his. Needless to say, the transition is tough, but the journey is a classroom on its own. In this case, one cannot help but wonder what tomorrow is going to bring. The presentation of the artwork speaks

volumes, and it is as if it is asking how much the groom has to pay. Also, we should know that some traditions remain unchangeable. These traditions do not change even when adversity is the norm, and the rules around the dowry remain even during the time of gender equality.

While thinking and creating my exhibition, I had many ideas running through my mind, and I was unsure which ones to let go of or keep. I had to be creative enough to reach a stage where I could think of different metaphors and symbols to tell my story without being too literal. Just like Machona's Greener Pastures, my thinking evolved around new avenues of creativity. I wanted to see the other side of my creativity, get out of my comfort zone, pushing myself to greater limits or without limitation. It came to a stage where I knew I had to be innovative, knowing very well that I had to use my creative thinking process to find the material that would amaze me, too. The process of transition is like trying to accommodate two different individuals from different spaces and making sure that they get along well, knowing very well that it will take time to get along. It is such a great idea that Machona is using an Afronaut costume to address sensitive issues like freedom, ethnic boundaries, identity and foreignness to make the outcomes of his creative process amazing. Living a good life and moving on to greater achievements is a dream for almost every individual. During my creation process, I came up with Sanundishiya Figure 3.6, an artwork translated as 'Don't leave me behind'. This piece is about when I first joined the Rastafarian faith. The piece is reminiscent of a time when I was eager to be part of this group of people whom I felt were vibrant. It was a time when I started reading books about Rastafarians, watching videos and surfing on the internet. In this piece, I used a big hen with wheels as a metaphor to express this idea of looking for growth.



Figure 3.6: Phumezo Mpayipheli, *Sanundishiya*, 2024

For me, it resonates with Ndiri Afronaut (Figure 3.4) because it illustrates an interest in expanding and the whole process of moving to new spaces, spiritually and physically and tasting greener pastures. It is refreshing to break boundaries and limitations and challenge the norm and the usual undisturbed terrain. My studio practice also helped me in navigating my life's narrative as a Rastafarian and helped me remember that I submitted to the faith. Hence, I came up with 'Ukuzinikela', which means accepting or giving in or being submissive to the Rastafarian call.

3.3 EXPLORATION OF SELF THROUGH IN-DEPTH PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH

Phenomenology is an umbrella term encompassing both a philosophical movement and a range of research approaches. The phenomenological movement was initiated by Husserl (1859-1938) as a radically new way of examining philosophy. Later theorists, such as Heidegger (1889-1976), have recast the phenomenological project, moving away from a philosophical discipline which focuses on consciousness and essences of

phenomena towards elaborating existential and hermeneutic (interpretive) dimensions (Finlay 2009).

Phenomenological approaches are based on a paradigm of personal knowledge and subjectivity and emphasise the importance of personal perspective and interpretation. As such, they are powerful for understanding subjective experience, gaining insights into people's motivations and actions, and cutting through the clutter of taken-for-granted assumptions and conventional wisdom.

Langdridge (2007:4) defines phenomenology as a discipline that aims to focus on people's perceptions of the world in which they live and what it means to them; a focus on people's lived experience. She further clarifies that phenomenology, as a qualitative method, focuses on human experience as a topic in its own right. It is concerned with meaning and the way in which meaning arises from experience (Langdridge 2007:4). According to Berrios (1989), the term phenomenology refers to a set of philosophical doctrines loosely sharing:

- assumptions as to what the world is like (ontological) and how it can be known (epistemological); and
- strategies relating to such a world.

They all strive to capture experiential essences, which are but higher forms of knowledge, with the phenomenologists expecting to reconstruct reality on a firmer footing. Phenomenology has been conceptualised as a philosophy, a research method and an overarching perspective from which all qualitative research is sourced (Maykut & Morehouse 1994 [sp]).

A more simplistic definition of phenomenology is offered by Grbich (2007), who states phenomenology as an approach to understanding the hidden meanings and the essence of an experience. Max van Manen (1990), another noted name who considers phenomenology as the most appropriate method to explore the phenomena of

pedagogical significance, explains phenomenology as a response to how one orients to lived experience and questions the way one experiences the world. Phenomenological research has overlaps with other qualitative approaches, including ethnography, hermeneutics and symbolic interactionism. Pure phenomenological research essentially seeks to describe rather than explain and to start from a perspective free from hypotheses or preconceptions (Husserl 1970). Thus, the visual metaphors presented in the exhibition are records of personal lived experiences, and they become a thorough testament of this autoethnographic representation of the researcher's journey as a Rastafarian and his predicament of being the other.

3.4 AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC APPROACH THROUGH PERSONAL NARRATIVES

My study entails a journey of a lived experience of being a Rastafarian, infusing it with my Xhosa cultural identity within the same community I grew up in. Autoethnography is an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyse (graphic) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience. This approach has been used by many researchers to tell their stories on a personal basis while having respect for others. Autoethnography, as described by Jones, Adams and Ellis (2013), is a unique and compelling method that includes:

- disrupting norms of research practice and representation;
- working from insider knowledge;
- manoeuvring through pain, confusion, anger, and uncertainty and making life better;
- breaking silence / (re-) claiming a voice and “writing to the right” (Bolen 2012); and
- making work accessible.

Although autoethnographies are categorised under the same methodology and serve the same purpose as stated above, there are variations in the types of autoethnographies one can do.

CHAPTER FOUR: A DISCURSIVE INTERPRETATION OF A RASTAFARIAN AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC JOURNEY

This chapter presents a discursive interpretation of my artworks, providing context for the visual metaphors depicted in my exhibition titled “Kuqhawuka Kuhlangana: Kwasa Saxhixha Kwasa Safak’thwathwa”. It puts together various aspects emanating from the study’s objectives and argument being made, and makes reference to other relevant artists and sources to validate the significance of this research. Thus, it is a reflection on my own practice as both an art practitioner and researcher. It articulates the manner I have used in creating artworks that reveal my inner turbulence and struggles of being a Rastafarian who is infusing cross-cultural beliefs within the culture of birth. The artworks are conceptualised and created to mirror the artist’s experiences and his feelings of being indecisive and miserable with unresolved issues, causing inner uncertainty of always being in a state of liminality but hoping for a better future at the same time. Autoethnography makes provision for evaluating research, which reflects on pivotal lived experiences in a researcher’s life (Cooper & Lilyea 2022:197). This phenomenological approach presents both personal and collective struggles within the framework of exclusion and less regard as a member of society. Autoethnographers and Phenomenologists researchers utilise subjective and collective narratives from the lived experiences of the researcher as the subject of the research with his/her associated sub-culture to explore studies that build on narrative messages and self-study/autobiographical and memory work to construct stories of their own experiences.

4.1 VISUALISING A RASTAFARIAN JOURNEY THROUGH AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

The exhibition was used to explore and understand the artist’s uncertainty as he goes through the passage of transformation between two different life beliefs while finding his true identity. The healthier people are those who identify their preferred identities and ways of living and pursue them, and during the pursuit through meaning-making, have the

ability to forgive themselves when the storyline moves from mere muddles to malfunctions (Dekruyf 2008:447). This happens when we make choices that affect us in one way or another, and we make mistakes and ought to live with the consequences, especially when we know what we want. As an essential aspect of human experience, identity is difficult to define neatly (Strauss 2017[sp]).

The exhibition presented my life journey, consisting of my Xhosa influential upbringing up to my new identity as a Rastafarian and various personal struggles of trying to exist peacefully within cross-cultural ideologies. The journey is constructed with 100 colourful poles epitomising the Australian Aboriginal musical instrument called the didgeridoo. The journey begins with the poles forming a guard of honour as they are placed on each side, allowing viewers to walk between them from the base of the staircase leading to the second floor, the middle room of the gallery, right through to the third floor. The poles first enter the room situated on the second floor, while some continue in the same manner to the upper room on the third floor. The poles in the middle room are displayed to form a circular structure representing a Xhosa kraal. The Xhosa people, who form one of the four tribes of the Nguni people, and live in the southern region of the African Continent, adore their kraals like an altar, especially during the performance of rituals. A kraal is one of the most important structures in their homesteads, as they believe it is a dwelling place for their ancestors. The most visible aspect of this set-up is the shorter pole dressed in a Xhosa male initiate's attire, referred to as *lkrwala* in the isiXhosa Language. The figure (*lkrwala*) is placed in the centre of the circular structure (the kraal) as if he is being overwhelmed by the taller poles surrounding him.

While this set-up depicts the Xhosa narrative denoting the artist's cultural identity, the placement of this figure in the centre of the kraal also suggests the crossing over or being in between two stages. *Intsika*, the title of this installation, refers to a pillar or a support structure or a tower of strength, and thus, this set-up denotes the foundation of my identity as a Xhosa individual. That is, despite all the struggles I found myself in for the decisions

I have taken regarding my Rastafarian way of life, I still proudly embrace my Xhosa identity. The initiation, which is a rite of passage from boyhood to manhood, *ikwrala* in itself presents a liminal state characterised by new responsibilities and entering a new terrain. Thus, it is unsettling, hence the depiction of being lost, overwhelmed, at the crossroad, imbued with fear and uncertainty. Therefore, the title of this exhibition tells the complicated life story of being “othered”, frowned upon and seeing yourself as an outcast and at an edge or a threshold, as expressed throughout the artworks showcased.



Figure 4.1: Phumezo Mpayipheli, *Intsika*, 2024

According to Chakraborty (2016), the literal meaning of ‘threshold’ needs no specification. It is the sill of a doorway, which has to be crossed when entering a house. It indicates the point at which the public outside world ends, and the private, familial inside world begins.

In as much as Chakraborty (2016) describes it simply in psychological terms, it becomes a narrow path that is not easy to travel or pass. Humanity involves a lot of emotions like anxiety, fear, doubt, rejection, indecisiveness, and so on. “This interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibilities of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy” (Bhabha:1994 4). What Bhabha is saying is actually true: no culture remains in its pure form, because as time passes by, it slowly or rapidly evolves, but it seems hybridity is a weapon used by the colonisers to translate the identity of the colonised or the other.

The second part of the journey in the upper room showcased both paintings and the colourful poles; some are suspended from the ceiling also depicting liminality, and others perform various roles, as in Figure 4.2. This installation is entitled *Ukuthweswa*, which means being ordained, accepted, or welcomed.

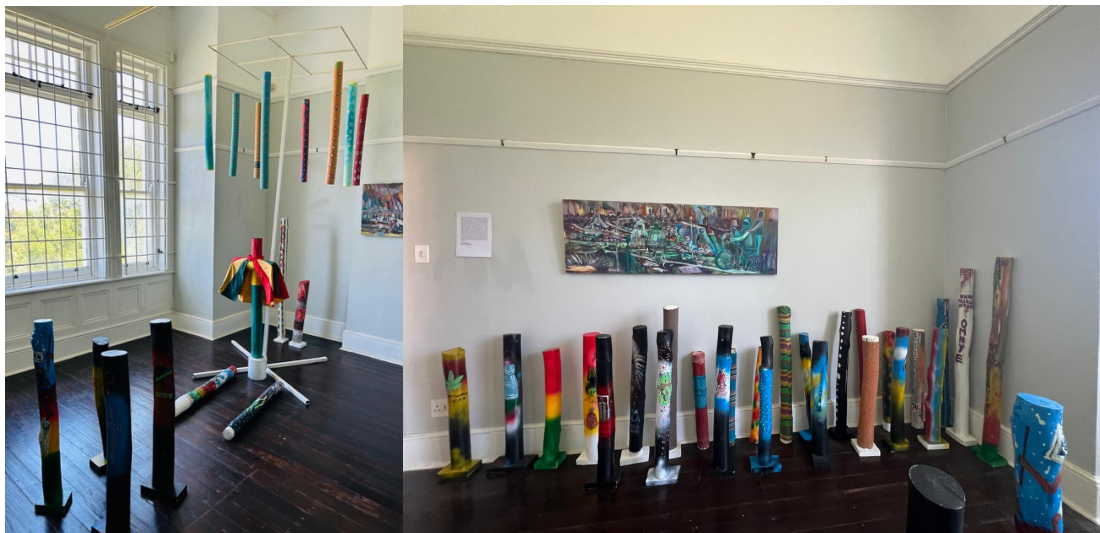


Figure 4.2: Phumezo Mpayipheli, *Ukuthweswa*, 2024

The epitome of this study is the construction, deconstruction and reconstruction of the artist's life, the influence inside and outside the home, and the outcomes of such. It is about my transformation from having been encultured into Xhosa cultural identity to my passage into adopting the Rastafarian faith and its practices. It also highlights my lived

experience of always being treated differently or as the other by my own family and the community at large for choosing to live a different lifestyle. Sometimes, people may not even be sure how to approach you when you look different from others. Groups, such as orthodox Jews, have a strong visual identity that is important to their religion or culture. These groups often find themselves targeted by other members of society who persecute people who choose to look different (O'Connor 1997:11). People have all sorts of negative reactions, ranging from a loss of self-esteem to increased existential angst to being rejected or ostracised by virtually anyone (Williams 2007[sp]). This has been found when people have been ostracised by not being thrown a ball in a triadic ball-toss game (Williams & Sommer 1997[sp]) and by not being included in a chat room conversation (Williams et al. 2002). These negative reactions occur even when the ostracisers are despised (Gonsalkorale & Williams 2007[sp]) or when being ostracised is financially beneficial (van Beest & Williams 2006[sp]). Chapter two of the constitution of South Africa, containing the Bill of Rights, states that everyone has the right to freedom of religion, belief and opinion. Section 9, the equality clause, prohibits unfair discrimination on various grounds, including religion; however, this still happens in all fronts of our modern society.



Figure 4.3: Phumezo Mpayipheli, didgeridoo 2024

The colourful poles were each painted with various visual narratives; some carried text messages, and others were covered with different types of fabrics. The visual metaphors on these poles communicated various messages of faith, solidarity, resistance and self-acceptance.

The exhibition itself is an experience of my journey, mostly as a Rastafarian, my upbringing as a Xhosa and Christian boy, and my transition to the Rastafari faith. It is my narrative as a Rastafarian and the ups and downs I faced along the way, but it also represents the commonly felt factors affecting other Rastafarians in my environment and elsewhere. I always look at life as a passage to the door as we cross the daily threshold. The whole phenomenon of life is full of transitions. It is amazing. As a Rastafarian, I have faced humiliation, criticism, tribulations, disrespect, discomfort, uncertainty and so on. In reality, it is not gloomy all the time, but joy and happiness have been part of the journey, too. In the midst of the ups and downs mentioned above, there were individuals who believed in me and my capabilities. I must confess that Rastafarians are known for many things, one of which is that they are peace-loving people. Many saw the Rastafarians or Rastaman type as mentally retarded, spirit-possessed “crackpots” who would have a degrading effect on the moral order if not checked (Oosthuizen 1990:31). Some people think that Rastafarians are lazy people who like to embrace poverty. The Rastafarian motto uttered by Haile Selassie is, “We have said that whoever doesn’t work is poor. We have said wealth has to be gained through hard work. We have said those who don’t work starve” (Haile Selassie 1963[sp]). With that being said, I am glad to say that there are a lot of Rastafarians doing well in life as designers, engineers, art teachers, chefs, lawyers, farmers, and nurses; the list is endless. It is sad that everyone with locks on the head will be identified as a member because that is not the case. Rastafarians claim to avoid the lower type of jobs. Instead of picking bananas or chopping sugar cane, they work as motor mechanics in their own workshops, carve wood, play music, dance, act, farm and teach. They have as their motto, “Work is good, but slavery not” (Oosthuizen 1990:14).

The exhibition also sought to paint a better picture of this movement or faith, religion, or way of life as the members affectionately refer to it. As much as I am affiliated with the Rastafari faith, I still identify myself as a Xhosa. Being a Xhosa is who I am, and being a Rastafarian is what I am. The reason for the latter statement is that my parents are Xhosa, and I take it that being a Xhosa is in my DNA, contrary to being a Rastafarian. I can wake up tomorrow and say I adopted Islamic, ZCC beliefs and so forth.

The exhibition shed light on my journey with others and made it known that I am aware of cultural diversity, and I accept that we are from a neo-colonial state. We need to live in harmony with each other and work hand in hand without any discrimination and prejudice. The charter of the United Nations expresses the noblest aspirations of human beings: abjuration of force in the settlement of disputes between states; the assurance of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion; the safeguarding of international peace and security (Haile Selassie 1963: 68).

The artworks are but a percentage of what I would like to tell or write about and the least of what takes place in my everyday ins and outs. The paintings that accompanied the poles expressed various encounters, and my interpretation of them is through visual metaphors. The artwork titled 'Sanundishiya' translates as 'Don't leave me behind' depicts a big hen with aeroplane wheels and newborn Rastafarians chasing after it. This painting is about my interest in the Rastafari culture as I began expanding my knowledge about the faith. The fact that I was around certain Rastafarians at some point led to the research I undertook for myself, which involved a lot of questioning. There was the urge that I felt like I was being left behind in what I felt was a good and vibrant culture. I began reading material about the Rastafarian faith from magazines and books and watching videos that I could find. There were also doubts emerging as my immediate and extended family did not welcome this with warm hands. I must say that I became the black sheep of the family, even in my workplace, there was some uneasiness. Despite all that, I still

wanted to be part of this newly found culture while still embracing my original Xhosa identity.

The Rastafari culture seemed like a significant one worth emulating as it posed symbolism resembling African practices in its appearance. The movement carries a back-to-Africa theme, which is desirable to those seeking cultural re-appropriation, as many Africans were made to abandon their cultures. The only problem I had was that some of the Rastafarians were against the traditional Xhosa or African practices, referring to them as paganism. This became a constant and disturbing thought for me as it hindered my progress in my decision to become a Rastafarian. The whole scenario made me have many questions and uncertainty as I felt that I was standing at a crossroads and doubting which side to take.

On the other hand, I felt like I was exploring myself, coming out of my comfort zone and going back again. Amidst all this, I felt like I was being delayed or left behind. In reality, there was no one leaving me behind, just the thoughts playing in my mind, and it seemed I was in a liminal space. The eighth edition of *A Handbook to Literature* describes liminality as “The state of being on a threshold in space or time” citing the anthropological studies of Arnold Van Gennep and Victor Turner ([Sa] 291).

One of the paintings is entitled ‘*Ukuzinikela* I’ and translates to ‘giving myself in or Being submissive’, indicating that I have submitted myself to the principles of both doctrines, the Xhosa and Rastafari cultures. This artwork represents my willingness to avail myself of the mission of Rastafari, which is freedom, redemption and international repatriation. The canvas presents a cloth stitched onto it, representing my connecting and disconnecting identity and the bride’s image, which represents being submissive. In the Xhosa culture, it is a well-known idea that the bride should be submissive to her bridegroom and her family as a sign of respect. The wearing of locks in the Rastafari culture is another sign of being submissive and is seen as a sacred symbol. Many Rastafarians associate it with

the Nazarite vow in the bible as it is written in Numbers 6 verse 5, “All the days of his vow of separation there shall no razor come upon his head: until the days be fulfilled, in the which he separate himself unto the Lord, he shall be holy and shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow” (King James Version 1611:125). In the background of the *Ukuzinikela* I’ painting are images of both Xhosa and Rastafari people representing the two communities.

Ukuzinikela II is also about being submissive to this newly found culture of Rastafari and conforming to its principles. The painting shows individuals riding a motorbike on a rope like those in a circus show. This rope connects and disconnects in some sections, representing the artist’s life as a newborn Rastafarian struggling to find solace in his choices. The journey is fascinating and tricky, having the founding Xhosa culture within me and also familiarising myself with the Rastafarian belief system. The environment is still the same, but the principles are old and new, which creates inner turbulence. It makes the whole transition take a long time to manifest, as some decisions are hard to digest. The Rastafarian cultural set-up allows an individual to grow at their own pace, so they may really consider their decision, as this is a lifetime journey. When I joined the Rastafarian community, I was told that this culture may take more than five years to understand, and I fully agree with that notion. The mere fact that I conform to my old identity as a Xhosa and the newly found culture makes the transition slow and interesting at the same time.

Another painting is entitled ‘*iNgxwaba-ngxwaba*’ (Figure 4.3), which is loosely translated as pandemonium or commotion or unrest, showing an image of four human figures that look like boxers engaging in a boxing fight. This artwork is trying to show what actually happens to some of the Rastafarians and their families when they practice this belief system. In a normal boxing match, there are usually two boxers against each other and the referee, but in this image, there are four boxers and no referee. The whole scenario is chaotic, and it represents an abnormal situation. In other cases, the parents may feel

that they have failed to raise their child correctly when practising this faith. Because of the stigma that has been placed on this movement or culture, many people may feel that their loved ones have 'lost it'. Some parents would ask their children to choose between staying home and continuing to be a Rastafarian outside of their gates or homestead. At some point, it is the way that the new convert has represented him or herself as a Rastafarian to their family which may create such tension.



Figure 4.4: Phumezo Mpayipheli, *Ingxwaba-ngxwaba*, 2024

The parent/s, in the dilemma of trying to save the situation, may end up taking drastic actions against their child, not because they hate them but because some are supportive from the beginning. Those who become supportive and grant their children the benefit of the doubt are the ones who do their own research and are clear or somewhat have a better understanding of what is happening. All in all, this artwork shows some of the stages of transitioning as a Rastafari convert, and sometimes it gets better, especially when perseverance is part of the package.

In Qhusaka Figure 3.2, a smiling woman with fading human figures in the background and splashes of colourful paints represent a bed of roses situation, which appears to be beautiful from a distance, but it has thorns. It is just like a duck that floats nicely on top of the water, but it is paddling hard underneath. The image also shows an overlay of paint with patches of contrasting colours, which looks almost like a splash of thin liquid paint. The idea behind this piece narrates a situation that seems unresolved, which, in this case, represents my ups and downs and my doubts since choosing this Rastafari way of life. I must honestly confess that it really felt chaotic when I started to join this Rastafarian movement, and it still feels like that at times. The reason is this whole phenomenon of juggling between my Xhosa identity principles and my Rastafarian belief system. It is great that sometimes, out of the chaos, one may find something good as one engages with the ins and outs of life and both cultural beliefs. I sometimes hear people say, 'Out of every dark cloud, there is always a silver lining'. In as much as I experience the chaos and the hardships of life, my dreams remain constant, and I am raising my offspring with a right and steady mind.

In the Xhosa culture and in most African cultures, those ancestors who are no longer with us in the flesh continue to live. Thus, the work entitled '*basathetha*' derived from the Xhosas saying, that '*belele nje basathetha*', meaning even though our ancestors are asleep, they still communicate with us in different modes. This is also well-articulated by Ogbu Kalu (2000:54), that "those who are dead are never gone: the dead are not dead". The main focus in this imagery is a human figure sitting on a waterfall and a Rastaman in water with open arms. This artwork reveals my understanding of the connection and submission of the self to these two entities. With this painting, I am saying that I am a Xhosa man and belong to the kraal of AmaMpinga ooMawawa, my clan name, even though I am affiliated with the Rastafari faith. The latter statement proves that transition existed or still exists in my life, like somebody standing on the threshold of a household. Just like complimentary colours that blend together easily when you are looking at them

from a distance. The teachings that my parents gave me about my roots as a Xhosa and African child still linger within me, and like a necklace around the neck, I still wear them. I was taught to revere the young and old, the elders in the neighbourhood, the living and the dead, as they are also a part of us. It is sometimes the teachings of the elderly that keep me from forgetting who I am and where I come from. On the other hand, such teachings make me remain in a liminal state, not in a hard way or a delay, but as a means of nurturing respect for the self and others.



Figure 4.5: Phumezo Mpayipheli, Siyaphahla, 2024

In the good old days, Xhosa houses were mainly rondavels made of mud and grass. Inside the hut, there was a place called umsamo. This place was used as a place to reminisce, explain dreams and communicate with the ancestors. This process was called *ukuphahla*, and as Rastafarian, it is something that we continue to do as we burn our sage. This act is no longer popular with many people as most solely depend on prayers,

which are more church based. I do both in my world, though I see that even my parents are no longer keen to do so because my mother is a woman of prayer. The whole scenario keeps me living in a twin world, embracing both the Xhosa and Rastafari ways of life. This is where, most of the time, the feeling of being on a threshold occurs, and the infusion of both cultures creates such feelings. I must confess that I get a lot of questions from people about whether I am really a Rastaman or not. In many instances, they come to their own conclusions about who I am and what I am. At some point, you will find others making insults, saying, 'You are a half-baked Rasta', all because of how I decided to approach this cultural identity crisis. However, I am slowly finding the right way to deal with some of the questions I usually have about myself and the situation at hand. In plain reality, what I am doing is nothing strange as most Xhosa Christians blend these two together and continue with their lives.

In some of the artworks in this exhibition, I used chicken and eggs as a symbol of taking refuge through smoking Ganja. Similar to the mother hen, when nurturing the eggs until the little chicks are born, this time, she sits under a shrub of Ganja in a process called *ukuqandusela* (hatching). Thus, in '*Qandusela*' artwork hatching is associated with the growth of the Rastafarian sect in Mdantsane Township where I live and work. The painting has a young Rastafarian in the background and hatching eggs in the foreground with newborn Rastafarians coming out of them. The painting depicts the progress and growth of this faith in Mdantsane, defying all odds. The Rastafarians were seen as a group that would quickly perish, but the truth is that they have multiplied instead. It was some of the sayings as well as the treatment by the police in the community that created an element of doubt for newborn Rastafarians like me. Rastafarians want people to be their selves without fear, to defend their dignity and to know who they are and where they came from (Oosthuizen 1990:12). The Rastafari movement was an effort by the black youth to establish their identity since they were different from the predominant culture around them, to maintain their exclusivity and utilise it as a dynamic force against the adversary. They had to rediscover themselves in a context where they could realise the "past and future"

(Cashmore 1979: 147). It has always been a matter of identity for the black African child who has had their history disturbed by colonisation and slavery.

In 'Qandusela II', a newborn Rastafarian emerges from the water stream and crawls around, filling the space. There is also a huge figure of a newborn Rastafarian from a hatching egg, symbolising their presence. There also appears a man wearing a mask, which symbolises the unpleasant situation that I and other Rastafarians find ourselves in because we are practising this faith despite what the South African constitution is saying about religion and livelihood.



Figure 4.6: Phumezo Mpayipheli, Qandusela 1, 2024

In 'Umthunzi Weenkukhu', which translates to chicken or fowls' shade, the name the Xhosa people call Ganja/marijuana. This name is used as the chickens literally hide under the cannabis tree as their shade when it is hot. This work is made up of fabric stitched

onto the canvas, and some text in the background reveals the different benefits of this herb and the stigma surrounding its use. The other popular name is *icuba* laBathwa (Bushmen's tobacco), and it was used as if it is only meant for them and harmful to other human beings. The South African government has since decriminalised dagga/Ganja, and it is no longer illegal, and one is not allowed to sell it. The herb is available in pharmacies and is being sold, but you are only allowed to do so when you have permission or a certificate.

Another artwork worth mentioning is entitled 'Ndiyekeni Hayi Kakubi' loosely translated as "don't bother me and I am saying this, not in a bad way", and it is a plea for peace and love, understanding of cultural diversity and free will to live in Jah (God's) love. Life is full of positive and negative energies from different things, from human beings to machines, and drastic situations can drain our energies. These are the things that make transitions difficult, but when we live freely and have fewer judgments of each other, things flow naturally.

Thus, the artworks presented in the exhibition "Kuqhawuka Kuhlanguana: Kwasa Saxhixha Kwasa Safak'thwathwa" were meant to be therapeutic as they bring a lot of things into remembrance, and I could apply forgiveness where it is due, for others and myself in the process. It is a way of saying that in the midst of all the confusion surrounding my life, I am still determined to factor in good faith and defy all odds. Most of all, it is about infusing my Xhosa culture and Rastafarian beliefs, principles, and knowledge while still balancing my livelihood.

4.2 ARTISTIC INTERVENTION

Artistic intervention has been used by several artists to interrogate societal concerns and issues. In this research project, it is used to address issues surrounding exclusion and resistance to the processes of othering and stereotyping. It allows individuals to confront and deconstruct the external narratives that seek to marginalise or silence them. Through

creative expression, artists can navigate these social constructs, ultimately leading to self-acceptance and self-actualisation. Artworks, especially when embedded with carefully chosen mediums, materials, and metaphors, offer a transformative platform for individuals to reclaim their identity, assert their presence, and engage in a deeper, more profound understanding of their environment and others (Bhabha 1994; Fanon 2008). In the context of my own practice, and through the examination of works by renowned artists like Steven Cohen, Hassan and Hussein Essop, and Peter van Heerden, I have come to recognise how art not only reflects societal dynamics but also actively participates in reshaping those dynamics. These artists use their practice as a form of resistance, intervention, and, ultimately, self-actualisation (Deleuze & Guattari 1987; Hall 1997).

One such example is Steven Cohen, whose performance art challenges notions of identity, sexuality, and societal expectations. His often provocative works utilise the body as both the subject and the medium, a choice that forces audiences to confront the complexities and contradictions inherent in societal norms. Cohen's body-based performances, laden with metaphor and often deeply uncomfortable in their intensity, act as interventions against the performative roles dictated by society (Cohen 2004; Taylor 2012). By exposing the body's vulnerability, Cohen brings forth the internal struggles of marginalised identities, providing a space for dialogue and reflection on the limitations imposed by culture, gender, and social structures. Through his performances, Cohen transforms pain, alienation, and exclusion into a powerful assertion of selfhood, where societal rejection is met with both defiance and acceptance (Schupbach 2015).

Similarly, Hassan and Hussein Essop use photography as an intervention to address the ways in which individuals and communities are constructed and perceived through the lens of stereotyping. Their collaborative works, such as the Immigrant Series, present a nuanced narrative of the immigrant experience in South Africa, a theme often relegated to the margins of mainstream discourse (Essop & Essop 2008; Eze 2010). Through surreal and hyperreal imagery, the Essop brothers engage with questions of identity,

belonging, and cultural displacement. Their work uses the act of self-portraiture, often placing themselves in situations that defy conventional expectations, to challenge how cultural and racial identities are framed and how stereotypes persist. Through this defiance, they reclaim agency, refusing to be the passive subjects of others' perceptions. The Essops' photographs, rich in metaphor and symbolism, create a critical space for the viewer to reconsider the prejudices embedded in the societal imagination and the cultural boundaries that seek to define who belongs and who is considered the 'other' (Bhabha 1994; Said 2003).

In his installation work, Peter van Heerden further exemplifies the use of artistic intervention in confronting societal narratives. Through repurposing everyday objects, Van Heerden's practice engages with themes of identity, the passage of time, and collective memory (Van Heerden 2013; Koseff & Diko 2009). His use of familiar, often discarded materials transforms them into potent metaphors for the complexities of cultural identity and the ways in which personal and collective histories are constructed. In pieces such as *The Forgotten Objects* (2016), Van Heerden's installation of decontextualised household items invites the viewer to reconsider their inherent value and significance. By reworking these objects, he questions how material culture reflects societal exclusion and the erasure of histories (Harrison 2011; Irwin 2009). The act of 'reclaiming' these items becomes a metaphor for self-empowerment and resistance to marginalisation. By giving new life to objects that were once overlooked or discarded, Van Heerden's work encourages the viewer to challenge their own perceptions of value, identity, and belonging (Baker 2013).

What binds the practices of Cohen, the Essops, and Van Heerden is their shared commitment to using art as a tool for both personal healing and societal intervention. Their works create spaces for reflection, not only on the self but also on the external forces that seek to shape, define, and confine it. These artists engage in acts of resistance through their chosen mediums and materials, urging the audience to confront the exclusionary

mechanisms that govern societal interactions. The materials themselves become metaphors for healing and transformation—just as Cohen’s body and Van Heerden’s repurposed objects serve as sites of personal and collective reclamation, Essops’ photographic works invite an introspective confrontation with the ways in which identity is both imposed and negotiated (Hooks 1990; Dube 2007). The use of these materials and mediums and the underlying metaphors woven into the work speak to the therapeutic nature of artistic practice in overcoming adversity. Art becomes an avenue for releasing suppressed emotions, articulating experiences, and understanding the multifaceted nature of identity. In this sense, art is not merely an aesthetic expression but also a method of healing, both individually and collectively (Mirgain 2016; Lundstrom 2018). This interventionist approach to artmaking offers a means of resistance to the external forces of marginalisation while simultaneously contributing to the artist’s personal journey of self-actualisation.

For me, the exhibition *Umtshotsho* by Hlobo has profoundly influenced my approach to art as a process of both resistance and healing. Through Hlobo’s use of neglected materials—stitched together in a process of reconstitution—I have come to understand how art can serve as a form of catharsis, where broken or discarded elements can be reassembled to create something new and meaningful (Koseff & Diko 2009; Lundstrom 2018). Hlobo’s work demonstrates how the creative process can mirror the therapeutic journey of self-acceptance, as the artist takes what is fragmented and redefines it into a cohesive whole. The exhibition’s exploration of liminality—youth, growth, and the barriers that impede progress—has helped me navigate my own experiences of societal exclusion and othering, especially within the context of my cultural background and identity. The weaving process, the taking in and letting go of elements, is a powerful metaphor for how one must sometimes release parts of the past in order to move forward and embrace the fullness of one’s potential (Mirgain 2016; Taylor 2012).

Through my own practice and through the lens of these artists, I have come to realise that art is not only an act of creation but also an act of self-liberation. It is a space where exclusion is challenged, identities are reclaimed, and transformation becomes possible. In this way, artistic intervention serves as a tool for self-expression and a means of collective resistance—an ongoing journey of healing, self-acceptance, and self-actualisation (Bhabha 1994; Hooks 1990).

4.2.1 Resisting Exclusion through Stereotyping and Othering

Art is a vehicle that has helped me question and resist what does not resonate with me and gain some sort of understanding of my environment and fellow beings. The poles and the paintings I have been working on have been like writing an inspiring song and singing it and gaining knowledge about the self in the process. As much as this was an academic journey, it has revealed much about me and my life for the past 24 years. Gone are the days when I would create art for art's sake; the narrative has grown and expanded. With art, I could connect with my most vulnerable emotions and decide my own meaning while finding ways to self-soothe and regulate my emotions as I expressed them (Malchiodi 2013; Pizzaro 2004).

In Figure 4.6, Steven Cohen strikes a performance wearing a costume glued with 4.5 kg of dagga stems and pips. Cohen's costumes require painstaking and laborious construction. His often gruelling performances demand stamina and determination. In this piece, Cohen was dressed in a marijuana-beaded corset with a glittering Hindu bindi on his penis (Samuel Mateu 1997:[sp]). He is notable for his choreographic stance and performances. As a visual artist, he has orchestrated interventions in public places, art galleries, or stages ... (Samuel Mateu 1997:[sp]). Here, in this piece about dagga, I think he is sending a message of unease as the system is making it hard for those who use it and even for those who consume it for medicinal purposes. It is not some herb that you can use freely, and the Rastafarian community has been suffering for many years at the hands of the police and judicial system. The government has given us an opportunity to

use it on a small scale without selling it and has also used it as a weapon to exclude us, the Rastafarians. It has made many of us feel like we do not belong because of the stigma around it. Cohen played a very important role in this performance as he was also doing it for the marginalised who do not have the privilege to make such a statement in a public space. I am keen on the fact that he made a statement about dagga using art.



Figure 4.7: Dagga is an alarming problem, Steven Cohen, 1997.

<https://steven-cohen.com/en/creations/1997-dagga-is-an-alarming-problem/>

This artwork/performance is inspiring to me as even other reggae artists like Peter Tosh, a Rastafarian, used his art/music to educate people about marijuana and its healing properties. In one of his songs: Bush Doctor, Peter Tosh 1979 says:

*Warning
The Surgeon General warns
Cigarette smoking is dangerous, dangerous*

*Hazard to your health
Does that mean anything to you
Dem legalise marijuana
Right here in Jamaica
Dem say it cures Glaucoma
I man a de bush doctor
So there'll
No more smoking, and
Feeling tense
When I see dem a come
I don't have to jump no fence
Only cure for asthma ...
Peter Tosh, 1979.*

The use of marijuana has always been one of the issues that kept me and some of the Rastafarians at the threshold, the reason being that there is a stigma around its use, particularly for the Rastafarian community. Some believe that we are using the Rastafarian faith as an excuse to smoke marijuana.

In my practice, I have created an artwork that speaks about marijuana and its many uses. For so long, I have been humiliated for consuming this herb, but now I am using it as something more like art therapy. During the creation of this painting, “Umthunzi weenkukhu” (Figure 4.7), there was a lot going on in my mind, and for some reason, I enjoyed working on it. When I created the artwork, I felt a lot of relief, as I used a lot of texts on the painting to educate many who did not understand its benefits.



Figure 4.8: Phumezo Mpayipeli, Umthunzi Weenkukhu, 2024

Steven Cohen has been breaking boundaries, challenging the norms, doing the unusual and flaunting the fact that he is gay for a while. As a gay Jewish man, Cohen has himself been subjected to much marginalisation, and his performances aim to challenge perceptions about gender, race and sexuality (Mateu 2001:[sp]). Cohen is living the life he chose despite being labelled as the other and humiliated. He is an artist of great courage, intervening in places you never thought that an artist could pull such a stunt. These include Cohen's early performances and public interventions, the seminal *Chandelier*, in which Cohen, dressed in vertiginous heels and an illuminated chandelier tutu, interacted with residents of a squatter camp in Newtown, Johannesburg, South Africa. He did this performance as the squatter camp was in the process of being destroyed in 2001. Another intervention took place during the 1999 general election when

Cohen queued to vote wearing fetish shoes onto which he had grafted metre-long gemsbok horns. Another one, titled *Golgotha*, was performed in Wall Street, Times Square and Ground Zero, to mention just a few (Michael Stevenson 2012).



Figure 4.9: Steven Cohen, (STILLS FROM) Chandelier, 2001

<https://steven-cohen.com/en/creations/2001-chandelier-en/>

Artists have always painted the social concerns of their time, and by my moving in a chandelier-tutu through a squatter camp being demolished and filming it that's what I'm doing too, a digital painting of social reality, half beautifully imagined, half horrible leaf – where Hollywood glamour meets concentration camp horror. I am trying to shed light on what is seldom seen by creating amid destruction. What I always do is a question- going to a squatter camp in a chandelier is asking the question, what will happen if I wear an illuminated chandelier-tutu into lightless squatter territory? with no intention of resolving anything- it's not like I'm going to wear a chandelier and go to a squatter camp and fix things – I am not a well-intentioned political plumber My art is about trying to articulate the results of an experiment while it happens (Steven Cohen 2001).

With so many itches and issues in my heart of hearts, I am still grateful that I have art as my refuge and a doctor that I can visit anytime when I am not feeling well. I used art to turn my doubts into creativity and record the joys and pains that I have endured as a Rastafarian. This road of indecisiveness left many questions and doubts about whether to continue to live as a Rastafarian, since there was so much disapproval around and being treated as the other. It is the power of thought behind my studio creation that has led me to be able to question issues pertaining to Rastafarians and healing from humiliation against me and other members of this minority group. I believe in finding something positive in every situation, even when things do not make sense.



Figure 4.10: Hasan and Husain Essop, 2012

https://www.artnet.com/artists/hasan-and-husain-essop/thornton-road-Dkn-Cyst3VM_gHIdyVU0ZA2

Hassan and Husain Essop are twin brothers who question the clash of cultures caused by Western influence and imagery that depicts Muslim identity. In Thornton Road (Figure 4.9), they portray themselves as Muslim youth on the Cape Flats wearing long white tunics (variously called swabs, jubbator, galleries) and framed in postures of rebellion and protest. However, the dominant part of this image is a Coca-cola sign and the

consumption of the drink. Rebellion against power juxtaposed with consumption or subjection to the most famous global brands is a central contradiction of Muslim youth politics, and this is what this work seems to be saying (Sue Williamson 2009:302).

Taking familiar scenarios, the Essops comment on the contradictions that consume contemporary Muslims (Jeppie 2008:48-49). The twins use a non-reactionary approach to the situation by working towards remaining unblemished by Western influence. Their photographs act as a self-representation of the Muslim community that does not want to conform to foreign ways.

4.2.2 Self-Acceptance through Self-Actualisation

Self-acceptance and self-actualisation are deeply intertwined in psychological development, forming the foundation for both personal growth and the flourishing of the creative spirit. This section explores how self-acceptance—recognising and embracing one's identity—relates to self-actualisation, the fulfilment of one's true potential. Through this lens, self-actualisation becomes the process of accepting and living authentically despite societal pressures or barriers, allowing individuals to reach their highest level of functioning and creativity. It is through the recognition of one's own worth and potential that an individual can truly engage with their environment and contribute meaningfully to the world.

Self-acceptance involves unconditional acceptance of oneself—acknowledging one's strengths and weaknesses without judgment or needing external validation. The importance of self-acceptance has been widely discussed in psychological literature, with scholars asserting that it is foundational to emotional health and psychological well-being (Neff 2003). Rogers (1961) highlights that self-acceptance is essential for growth, as it allows individuals to fully engage with their true feelings and potential. When people are able to accept themselves, they no longer need to conform to the external pressures or expectations imposed by society. Self-acceptance is significant in the context of art

because it allows artists to express themselves freely without fear of judgment. Artists often face societal pressures regarding their identities—whether those pressures are based on race, gender, sexuality, or social class—and these pressures can affect the ways in which they create. However, by embracing self-acceptance, artists can transcend the fear of societal rejection and create from a place of authenticity. According to Cunningham et al. (2005), self-acceptance is a critical step for individuals in overcoming feelings of inadequacy or alienation, allowing them to develop a healthy relationship with themselves that fuels both personal and artistic expression.

The journey toward self-acceptance is often one of resistance against societal norms that categorise or marginalise identities. Artists who engage in themes of racial or gender identity, for instance, can use their work as a way to challenge stereotypes and reframe their self-image. This resistance is crucial for their development and the larger social fabric, as it allows marginalised voices to be heard. In doing so, they offer society an opportunity to engage with alternative viewpoints, helping to redefine collective identity and social norms. As Maslow (1943) described, self-actualisation represents the realisation of an individual's fullest potential, becoming the best version of oneself. It is a process that extends beyond mere survival and meets higher-order psychological needs, allowing for the expression of creativity, truth, and personal growth. According to Maslow, self-actualisation is not a destination but a continual process of self-discovery and personal evolution. In the context of art, self-actualisation involves the artist's development and the exploration of their identity through their craft. In the arts, self-actualisation can create work that reflects the artist's true experiences, beliefs, and vision, free from external expectations or constraints. As the artist engages with their art, they undergo a personal transformation, aligning with their authentic selves and allowing their creativity to flourish. In this way, the artistic process becomes an integral part of their self-actualisation, as it provides the means to fully express their innermost thoughts, emotions, and reflections.

Artistic self-actualisation can also involve resistance against societal exclusion and stereotyping, as artists often use their work to reflect on and challenge the cultural and political forces that shape their identities. Deci & Ryan (2000) mentioned that self-actualisation is closely tied to autonomy and intrinsic motivation. When artists are able to create from a place of inner truth and authenticity, their work reflects a self-determined vision that transcends the external pressures imposed by society. Art functions as a vehicle for self-acceptance and self-actualisation, providing artists with a medium to communicate and explore their personal narratives. In the works of South African artists such as Steven Cohen, Hassan and Hussein Essop, and Peter van Heerden, art serves as a tool for self-exploration, healing, and resistance, with materials and techniques offering additional layers of meaning.

Steven Cohen, known for his provocative performances and visual artworks, uses his body and materials to reflect on identity, marginalisation, and transformation. His performances often address the complexities of gender, race, and sexuality, challenging societal norms and pushing boundaries of what is socially acceptable. Through his art, Cohen navigates his self-acceptance process as he confronts societal rejection issues and embraces his full identity. His use of materials such as costume and makeup allow him to reshape his identity visually while simultaneously questioning the cultural and political forces that seek to define him (Cohen 2014).

Similarly, Hassan and Hussein Essop use photography to explore themes of identity and belonging. Their collaborative works often juxtapose personal stories with societal issues, particularly in relation to post-apartheid South Africa. Their work engages with self-actualisation by framing their identity within the context of broader societal forces such as migration and cultural displacement. The Essops use their photographs as a way to reclaim their narrative and challenge dominant cultural stereotypes, addressing questions of race, migration, and identity through their lens (Essop & Essop 2007).

Peter van Heerden is another artist whose work engages with self-acceptance and self-actualisation, particularly through his exploration of memory, race, and identity. His use of found objects and everyday materials challenges societal norms and invites viewers to reconsider value and identity assumptions. By using discarded or marginalised materials, van Heerden's art becomes a metaphor for reclaiming rejected identities and narratives, asserting that even what society deems as "waste" can have intrinsic value. This process of recontextualisation allows him to reflect on his personal journey towards self-acceptance, reclaiming aspects of his heritage and identity that have been historically sidelined (Van Heerden 2012).

The choice of medium, material, and metaphor is fundamental to the process of self-acceptance and self-actualisation, as these elements deeply influence how an artist expresses his/her identity. Each material holds its own symbolic significance, and the way in which it is used can reflect personal histories, emotional states, and cultural contexts. According to materials theory, objects and materials are not neutral but carry emotional and symbolic weight that influences the artist's connection to them (Dant 2004). For instance, Cohen's use of textiles and body modification allows him to address themes of transformation and identity, while the Essops' photographs use composition and colour to question the boundaries of belonging. Similarly, van Heerden's use of found objects serves as a metaphor for the reclamation of discarded identities and experiences, demonstrating the healing potential of re-appropriated materials. These materials and methods reflect artists' transformative journey toward self-acceptance and self-actualisation, enabling them to externalise their inner struggles and triumphs in a physical form.

4.2.3 Mediums, Materials and Metaphors

The interplay between medium, material, and metaphor in art is an essential component of my own practice, which seeks to explore themes of identity, exclusion, and the decolonising process. Much like how I utilise materials like canvas, sewing, and poles to

engage with the metaphors of exclusion, memory, and transformation, the artists Steven Cohen, Hassan and Hussein Essop, and Peter van Heerden employ distinct materials to evoke powerful socio-political narratives. These artists challenge traditional artistic norms, and their work actively engages in a dialogue about societal boundaries, the transformation of identity, and the resilience of the human spirit.

Cohen's performances utilise the body as a material to engage with issues of gender, identity, and societal expectations. The animal skins, glitter, and other materials Cohen incorporates become metaphors for both vulnerability and resistance. His work forces a confrontation with the body as a site of marginalisation and transformation. As Rosalind Krauss (1998) noted, the body in performance art often acts as a site for challenging cultural norms and conventions. Cohen's work, in particular, emphasises the fragility of identity in a context that marginalises the queer body (Poyner 2006). This confrontation with the body as a metaphor for societal exclusion can be seen as part of a larger dialogue about the physicality of identity in the post-apartheid world. Similarly, the Essops' use of props and clothing in their surreal photographic narratives speaks to cultural hybridity, memory, and the ongoing negotiation of identity within post-apartheid South Africa. Their staged photographs, where the artists are often dressed in symbolic, almost ceremonial attire, highlight the complex and contradictory processes of cultural assimilation and resistance (Essop & Essop 2005). As artists working in a space shaped by the remnants of apartheid, their works question the constructed nature of identity and how objects, such as clothing, play a role in the presentation and negotiation of self (Ndebele 1991).

Peter van Heerden's use of found objects, such as discarded metal and wood, evokes themes of renewal, loss, and the potential for transformation. His works often involve a process of re-contextualizing everyday objects, turning them into symbolic materials that reflect on the fragility of identity and the historical weight of objects in the postcolonial South African context. Van Heerden's work is closely tied to the concept of "art as survival," where recycling discarded objects becomes a metaphor for resilience and the

reimagining of identity (van Heerden 2009). The discarded materials become an archive of the past that is re-fashioned into something new, much like the process of self-reinvention and decolonisation that South Africa continues to experience.

Like van Heerden, my own practice employs materials to convey the tension between erasure and reconstruction. The use of sewing, for example, becomes a metaphor for stitching together fragmented identities, while poles suggest both boundaries and points of support in the process of identity formation. Through the combination of different materials, these artists and I navigate the complex terrain of cultural and personal transformation, offering space for reflection on the negotiation of identity in a world that continues to grapple with its past. Their works underscore how materials can express personal history and communicate collective socio-political struggles, reinforcing the idea of art as both a personal and public act of healing and resistance.

4.2.3.1 Performance as Metaphor for Identity and Resilience

Steven Cohen's medium of choice is deeply entrenched in performance art, often involving elaborate costumes, public interventions, and multimedia installations. Through his performances, Cohen explores themes of marginalisation, gender identity, and societal exclusion. His work, such as *Chandelier* (2004) and *The Cradle* (2012), features the artist performing in intricate, often absurd costumes, using his body as a site of transformation, vulnerability, and strength. The costumes Cohen wears are loaded with metaphors—they are not merely garments but are emblematic of cultural dislocation and a complex relationship with identity. As performance theorist Peggy Phelan (1993) discusses, performance art creates a temporal space where identity can be contested, transformed, and redefined. Cohen's works, such as *Chandelier*, evoke this space by blurring the boundaries between spectacle and self-representation.

The body becomes a battleground, a vessel for confronting trauma and rebuilding selfhood, which closely aligns with the metaphor of "mending" that I engage with in my

own practice through sewing and stitching. Cohen's performance art critiques the societal structures that enforce rigid identities, using his costumes as metaphors for both cultural oppression and personal empowerment. In works like *Chandelier*, the costume itself acts as a "shield" that protects the artist while also making him an object of public spectacle. Cohen's works challenge the notion of the body as an unchanging entity, instead using his costume and body as mutable forms. This act of transformation echoes Judith Butler's (1990) theory of gender performativity, where identity is not inherent but is something that is constructed through repeated acts.

The metaphor of "protection through fragility" in Cohen's work resonates with my use of sewing, where the act of adding thread onto fabric acts as both a defence against fragmentation and a way of rebuilding a fractured identity. This ongoing process of transformation within Cohen's work mirrors my exploration of visual metaphors for the decolonisation of personal and collective identity. Just as Cohen's performances allow him to reconstruct his identity through performance, my practice involves the process of reassembling fragmented materials to explore the construction and reconstruction of identity. The metaphor of sewing as healing aligns with Cohen's embodied performances, where the costume itself, like fabric, is both an armour and an expression of vulnerability.

The layers of material—whether fabric, paint, or performance—suggest that identity can be reconstructed, just as exclusion and oppression can be resisted and redefined. In Cohen's works, the use of costume and the body together creates a dialogue about the fluidity of identity and its performative aspects. As he constructs new realities on stage, the audience is forced to reconsider their assumptions about the body, identity, and the boundaries that divide us. Similarly, my own practice challenges the viewer to consider the permeability and fluidity of identity through the act of reassembling material fragments, much like Cohen does with his costumes. The costumes are a potent metaphor for how identities are constructed and reconstructed, especially when placed in opposition to dominant cultural narratives.

4.2.3.2 Photography as a Tool for Cultural Memory and Identity

The photographic practice of Hassan and Hussein Essop is a pivotal example of how material and metaphor function in contemporary African art. The Essops' series, such as *Khumbulekhaya* (2009), *The Arab Spring* (2011), and *Remembrance* (2012), directly confront the complexities of cultural identity in a post-colonial context. Their photographs are visually rich with layers of meaning, often using traditional garments, landscapes, and staged scenarios to explore the tensions between the individual, cultural history, and memory. According to visual culture scholar Paul Gilroy (1993), contemporary African photography challenges fixed notions of identity and culture by engaging with historical narratives and personal experiences, and Essops' work embodies this approach. In *Khumbulekhaya*, the Essops use elaborate staging to present historical and cultural narratives, reclaiming African heritage through a contemporary lens.

The costumes and props that the Essops employ in their works are symbolic of the intersection between heritage and modernity, illustrating the weight of cultural inheritance while suggesting the possibility of transformation. The Essops' juxtaposition of traditional African attire with urban, often global, environments underscore the tension between past and present, tradition and modernity, which is central to postcolonial African identity. The photographic medium allows them to freeze moments in time, inviting the viewer to reflect on the implications of history and the possibility of cultural regeneration. As curator and scholar Okwui Enwezor (2009) argues, the photographic medium serves as a powerful tool in exploring the complex nature of memory and identity, offering a way to navigate and document the evolving state of cultural consciousness.

Similarly to most artists who portrayed *The Arab Spring* (2011), Hassan and Hussein Essop chose scenes that did not only bring people together and spread the message of the revolution but sought to amplify voices and depict the horrors of war in all the places that were affected by this event (the Arab Spring).



Figure 4.11: Hassan and Hussein Essop, *The Arab Spring, Yemen, 2011*

The Essops' use of costume in their work functions similarly to my own use of sewn fabrics: both engage with the layering of history and the reimagining of cultural identity. The works of the Essops are steeped in symbolism and materiality. Their use of photography as a medium becomes a metaphor for memory-making—just as I layer paint and stitch onto fabric to form a visual narrative. The Essops use photographic images to piece together fragmented histories. In this way, their photographic works echo the arguments put forth by art historian Anne Hamilton (2006), who emphasises the role of art as a means of constructing and reconstructing memory and identity. The Essops' process of layering cultural symbols and history within their photographs is not dissimilar to the act of stitching material layers together, aiming to reconstruct a fractured identity and sense of belonging.



Figure 4.12: Hassan and Hussein Essop, *Silat Mulut*, 2014

Remembrance, on the other hand, offers pride of place to belief, history, language and culture in the formation of a subjectivity that relies on freedom in the imaginary (Salley 2015).

The specific impossibility apparent in the Essops' artworks points to an ontological resistance. This resistance to the status quo produces an expanded conditioning of possibility that opposes extant discourses framing this or that thing as lawless or ungovernable. New possibilities remember and rebuff neurotic oscillations between acceptance and denial. Remembrance offers pride of place to belief, history, language and culture in the formation of a subjectivity that relies on freedom in the imaginary (Salley 2015:17).

The notion of cultural memory, which the Essops actively reconstruct through their work, aligns with my process of deconstructing and reassembling visual fragments to create a more cohesive understanding of identity. Both of our practices encourage an active engagement with the past to rethink and reclaim the present. In their exploration of memory and heritage, the Essops are part of a larger conversation within African contemporary art, where artists seek to reframe colonial histories and identities, as noted by art theorist Olu Oguibe (2002). By presenting a nuanced vision of African identity, they

offer a space for healing and redefinition, which resonates deeply with my own artistic process of transformation and reclamation.

4.2.3.3 *Materiality, Trauma, and the Politics of Memory*

Peter van Heerden's work is centred around the exploration of materiality, particularly through the use of objects such as metal, wood, and fabric, to symbolise the heavy burden of history, trauma, and memory. His sculptures and installations are characterised by a visceral presence that evokes the weight of historical trauma and collective memory. Van Heerden's manipulation of these materials—often through labour-intensive processes like bending, welding, or wrapping—suggests a deep engagement with the materiality of both personal and collective histories. As art historian Robert Rauschenberg (2000) noted, artists who engage in materiality, such as Van Heerden, aim to confront not only physical but also emotional and historical wounds, using materials as metaphors to "carry" the weight of their content.

The metaphor of burden is central to Van Heerden's practice, evident in works like *Memorial to the Disappeared* (2007), where the material itself becomes a testament to the weight of historical erasure. The use of industrial materials such as metal, often bent and shaped through manual labour, speaks to a collective history of struggle and survival, confronting the viewer with the harsh reality of the past. In this way, Van Heerden's work engages in the act of remembrance with materials that serve as both witness and memorial. His work is situated within the tradition of South African art that engages with trauma and memory, much like the works of artists like William Kentridge and Sue Williamson, who also use materials to evoke a layered understanding of South Africa's fractured history (Williamson 2004).

Van Heerden's use of physical labour to manipulate metal and wood resonates with my use of poles in my own work. Like Van Heerden's sculptural forms, my poles act as metaphors for both support and limitation, reflecting the tension between endurance and

collapse. The materials—the metal, wood, and fabric—become physical embodiments of the trauma and weight of history, which can be carried or confronted. As art theorist Mieke Bal (2001) suggests, the physical presence of materials in art can become a tool for re-imagining the past, allowing both artist and viewer to confront the burdens of history in tangible form.

Just as Van Heerden uses materials to reflect the emotional and physical weight of history, I, too, engage with materials that evoke memory, resilience, and the process of healing. My work uses poles to suggest both restriction and potential for transformation. The juxtaposition of the harshness of the material and its functional purpose mirrors my own process of confronting exclusion and the construction of new identities in my art. In *Memorial to the Disappeared*, Van Heerden's labour-intensive transformation of cold, industrial materials into sculptures of immense emotional weight offers an analogy for my use of pole structures. While the materials I use may initially seem rigid and confining, they are imbued with the potential for growth and redefinition. This process of material transformation is a metaphor for the resilience and capacity of identity to evolve from trauma. Like Van Heerden's exploration of collective trauma, my work acknowledges that the past's weight cannot be erased but must be transformed, and in this transformation, there is a space for healing and rebuilding.

4.2.3.4 *The Power of Medium and Material in Identity Formation*

Steven Cohen, Hassan and Hussein Essop, and Peter van Heerden each use distinct mediums and materials to address themes of identity, exclusion, and transformation. Cohen's performances highlight the fluidity of identity through costume, the Essops use photography to preserve and transform cultural memory, and Van Heerden's sculptures embody the weight of history and trauma. In my own practice, I similarly employ materials like paint, sewing, and poles as metaphors for reconstruction, identity, and resilience. The metaphors embedded in the materials used by these artists mirror the concerns of my research, where the process of artistic creation becomes a vehicle for examining personal

and collective histories. Through the intentional manipulation of material, these artists bring attention to how history, identity, and memory can be preserved and transformed. As I continue to explore the themes of exclusion and the politics of identity, their practices serve as a rich source of inspiration and dialogue, reinforcing the belief that art can act as a means of healing and re-imagination.



Figure 4.13: Peter van Heerden, Totanderkantuit, 2004

Van Heerden's artistic practice draws on Apartheid's nation-building strategies, such as the 1820 Settler Monument, an icon of Afrikaner identity, around which he constructs his

performative rituals. These rituals allude to volksfeeste (folk festivals), celebrations of Afrikaner language and culture associated with its sacred history (Grundlingh 2013:78). Thus, artistic intervention stands as a profound means of confronting both societal inclusion and exclusion, stereotyping, and the processes of othering, creating transformative spaces for self-actualisation and personal healing. Through the works of artists such as Steven Cohen, Hassan and Hussein Essop, and Peter van Heerden, we observe how art functions as a form of resistance and a therapeutic tool for reclaiming agency, identity, and belonging. These artists employ a range of mediums, materials, and metaphors to produce works that challenge societal norms and provide a platform for marginalised voices. Cohen's provocative performances disrupt established norms by confronting themes of race, gender, and identity. The Essops' surreal photographic narratives provide a lens into the complexities of identity and belonging in post-apartheid South Africa. Van Heerden, on the other hand, recontextualises discarded materials, speaking to the possibilities of transformation and reclamation.

Through the live art installation TOTANDERKUNTUIT, I hope to engage South Africans in a new cultural dialogue around issues of national identity. I will finally identify the notion of *saamtrekking* as a means to aid in the process of achieving Ubuntu, a new practice from which I can locate and hopefully define a new African identity. TOTANDERKUNTUIT gave South Africans an opportunity to come out and dialogue, through practice, a space was created which initiated some type of dialogue. In light of this journey, this trek, the explication is sectioned into five intervals, each interval becomes an 'uitspan', a refuge on the journey where practice can be consolidated to ensure communication and interaction (Van Heerden 2004:3-4).

Thus, through their diverse practices, these artists create interventions that critique cultural, racial, and gendered boundaries and offer a reflective space for those rendered invisible by society. Their works encourage viewers to reconsider the assumptions and meanings ascribed to identity, value, and belonging. At the same time, they provide healing and self-empowerment to both the artists and their audiences, making art a powerful catalyst for personal and collective transformation.

In my practice, the exhibition Umtshotsho by Hlobo has played a pivotal role in shaping my understanding of artistic intervention as a process of healing and resistance. Hlobo's use of neglected materials as metaphors for personal and collective catharsis has influenced my approach to art as a self-acceptance and societal transformation tool. The liminality, youth, and growth themes within Umtshotsho have deepened my engagement with how art can navigate cultural and personal boundaries. By letting go of what no longer serves me, I find a way forward, both personally and in my practice. Ultimately, through its materials, processes, and the stories it tells, art becomes an essential tool for resistance and self-liberation. It offers both the artist and the viewer an opportunity to confront the forces of exclusion while simultaneously opening pathways towards healing, self-empowerment, and self-actualisation. The practice of artistic intervention invites us to resist societal marginalisation and reimagine the possibilities of identity and belonging in a world that often seeks to divide us. In this light, art stands as a transformative force, capable of reshaping the very fabric of society and empowering those who engage with it.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents the summary of findings, highlighting that othering and stereotyping are not only imposed from outside, but sometimes they require the affected or excluded individuals to navigate and negotiate within themselves ways to survive and move towards self-emancipation and self-actualisation. It also presents intercultural dynamics of negotiating subcultural identity formations and how to overcome being othered through stereotypes while reframing one's self-image and chosen identity. This chapter further highlights the ongoing conversations surrounding cultural and religious minorities in South Africa, particularly within the context of Rastafari. This is done by blending personal experiences with theoretical inquiry in understanding the intersections of race, culture, religion, and identity, particularly shifting the focus of Rastafarian faith from an exotic portrayal within the global discourse to a local, grounded understanding of how the movement is lived and expressed in a South African context.

5.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This study has been a personal and academic exploration of my journey into and within the Rastafarian community in South Africa, situated in Mdantsane, Eastern Cape. In researching the lived experiences of South African Rastafarians, I aimed to engage with the complexities of identity and othering through visual metaphors. The process of autoethnography enabled me to examine how deeply entrenched historical forces, such as colonialism, racial stereotyping, and cultural marginalisation, continue to impact religious and cultural minorities, specifically Rastafarians. My findings demonstrate how, despite being misunderstood or misrepresented, the Rastafarian community in South Africa consistently reclaims its identity through practices of cultural resistance and spirituality. At the heart of this study is the realisation that othering is not just something imposed from outside but something that individuals navigate and negotiate within themselves. The Rastafarian community in South Africa is deeply invested in transcending the stereotypes that attach themselves to the movement, particularly those

that stem from Western ideas about religion, race, and lifestyle. The findings also showed that Rastafarians are not a monolithic group but rather a collection of individuals who resist a singular identity imposed upon them by dominant cultural forces. Their journey involves a constant negotiation between the need to belong and the demand to maintain their cultural authenticity.

The study brought to light how Rastafarians in South Africa are positioned at the intersection of various global and local identities. On one hand, they adhere to a global Rastafarian ideology rooted in the rejection of colonialism and the embracing of Ethiopia as a spiritual homeland. On the other hand, their lived experience is shaped by the specific socio-political and racial dynamics of post-apartheid South Africa. The juxtaposition of these two spheres of influence creates a nuanced, hybrid identity that speaks to the broader African diaspora's struggle to define itself in the face of historical oppression.

Another critical finding is the role of visual culture in this process. Art and visual metaphors became important for expressing the internal complexities of belonging, exclusion, and cultural pride. Through my own artistic expression and the work displayed in the exhibition, "Kuhhawuka Kuhlanguana: Kwasa Saxhixha Kwasa Safak'thwathwa", I found that art offers a language that transcends the limitations of verbal communication, allowing for the articulation of complex, multifaceted identities. These artworks served as a form of resistance to the dominant, often reductive, narratives imposed on Rastafarians by society. They provided a way to both challenge and reconstruct the ways in which Rastafarian identity is perceived.

5.2 INTERCULTURAL DYNAMICS OF NEGOTIATING SUBCULTURAL IDENTITY FORMATIONS

In today's globalised world, the blending and clashing of cultures have become commonplace, leading to the emergence of subcultures that navigate the intricate co-

existence and maintenance of distinctiveness and integration into broader societal frameworks. Subcultural identity is not just about belonging to a niche group but the ongoing negotiation between individual expression and collective cultural norms. Subcultures are groups that differentiate themselves from the larger culture to which they belong, often through distinct styles, behaviours, and beliefs. These groups provide members with a sense of belonging and identity, especially when mainstream culture does not fully resonate with their experiences or values. Hebdige (1979) emphasised that subcultures often arise as forms of resistance, challenging dominant societal norms and offering alternative ways of being. When individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds come together within a subculture, a unique set of intercultural dynamics emerges. These dynamics involve negotiating identities, values, and practices to create a cohesive group identity. Jackson (1999) explored how cultural identities are negotiated in intercultural settings, highlighting the fluidity and adaptability required to maintain harmony within diverse groups.

Identity negotiation is a continuous process where individuals balance their personal identities with the collective identity of the subculture. This involves adapting behaviours, adopting new symbols, and sometimes redefining one's self-concept to align with the group's ethos. Cupach and Imahori's (1993) Identity Management Theory delves into this process, explaining how individuals manage their identities in intercultural interactions to achieve relational harmony. For individuals belonging to multiple cultural backgrounds, navigating subcultural identity can involve "cultural frame switching", where they alternate between different cultural frameworks depending on the context. Benet-Martínez et al. (2002) discussed how bicultural individuals switch between cultural frames, adapting their behaviours and attitudes to align with the prevailing cultural context. Negotiating subcultural identity within intercultural contexts is not without challenges. Misunderstandings can arise from differing cultural norms, communication styles, and value systems. Ting-Toomey and Kurogi (1998) highlighted the importance of "face" in intercultural communication, emphasising the need for individuals to manage their self-

image and that of others to maintain mutual respect and understanding. Effective communication is pivotal in navigating the intercultural dynamics of subcultural identity. Open dialogues allow members to express their perspectives, share experiences, and build mutual understanding. Gudykunst (2003) emphasised the role of mindfulness in intercultural communication, encouraging individuals to be aware of their own cultural assumptions and remain open to others' viewpoints.

Adaptation is a key component in the negotiation process. Berry's (1997) model of acculturation outlines how individuals adapt to new cultural environments, balancing the maintenance of their original culture with the adoption of the host culture's practices. This might involve blending elements from various cultures to forge a unique group identity in subcultural contexts. Subcultures often emerge as forms of resistance against dominant cultural narratives. Fiske (1992) discussed how subcultures resist mainstream culture by creating alternative meanings and practices. This resistance can be a way to assert identity and challenge existing power structures. Thus, subcultural boundaries are not static but evolve as members negotiate their identities and as external cultural landscapes shift. Clarke et al. (1976) noted that subcultures continuously redefine themselves in response to societal changes, technological advancements, and internal dynamics. Therefore, the intercultural dynamics of negotiating subcultural identity involve a complex interplay of adaptation, communication, resistance, and redefinition. As individuals navigate these dynamics, they contribute to the rich tapestry of cultural diversity, challenging norms and fostering innovation within society.

5.3 OVERCOMING BEING OTHERED THROUGH STEREOTYPES WHILE REFRAMING SELF-IMAGE

The process of being othered is an underlying experience for marginalised individuals and communities, shaped by historical structures of power, representation, and discourse. The act of othering, which involves positioning certain groups as different, inferior, or outside the norm, is deeply tied to the construction of stereotypes that reinforce exclusion

and limit self-determination (Said 1978). However, individuals and communities continually resist these imposed narratives through acts of self-representation, reclaiming agency, and reframing their self-image in ways that challenge dominant perceptions (Hooks 1992; Fanon 1967). Othering is a discursive and social process through which individuals or groups are marked as fundamentally different from an assumed norm, reinforcing power imbalances and exclusion (Spivak 1988). Stereotypes, as part of this process, are simplified and generalised representations that reduce individuals to fixed characteristics, often based on race, gender, class, or other identity markers (Hall 1997). Stereotypes function as mechanisms of control, shaping public perception and justifying structural inequalities (Lippmann 1922). Research has shown that stereotypes impact how marginalised groups are perceived and shape their lived experiences through self-fulfilling prophecies (Steele & Aronson 1995). The internalisation of negative stereotypes can lead to diminished self-esteem, restricted aspirations, and increased psychological distress (Dovidio et al. 2010). However, resisting these narratives involves a process of cognitive and cultural redefinition—what Stuart Hall (1996) describes as the struggle for identity formation against imposed meanings.

Reframing self-image is a crucial strategy for overcoming othering, allowing individuals to assert their agency and reclaim their narratives (Du Bois 1903). This process can take many forms, including artistic expression, activism, and counter-storytelling (Solórzano & Yosso 2002). Art, literature, and media play a central role in challenging stereotypes by offering alternative representations. Scholars such as Bell Hooks (1995) argue that self-representation is a means of decolonising the gaze, countering the misrepresentation of marginalised identities in mainstream discourse. For example, African artists and filmmakers have increasingly used their work to challenge Eurocentric narratives and reclaim historical memory (Diawara 1992). Language itself can be a site of both oppression and liberation. Frantz Fanon (1967) analysed how colonial languages were used to reinforce racial hierarchies, while Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986) advocated for the decolonisation of language through the use of indigenous tongues in literature and

education. Reframing self-image often requires reclaiming linguistic agency by asserting control over the words and symbols that define one's identity (Pennycook 2007). Collective resistance is a powerful tool in overcoming othering. The formation of cultural movements, social organisations, and grassroots activism provides marginalised communities with platforms to assert their self-image and disrupt dominant narratives (Crenshaw 1989). Movements such as Black Lives Matter and Indigenous land rights campaigns have redefined public discourse by centring the voices of those traditionally silenced (Taylor 2016).

Overcoming stereotypes and reclaiming self-image requires both cognitive restructuring and emotional resilience. Research in psychology suggests that developing a strong sense of self and affirming one's identity in the face of negative stereotyping leads to improved mental well-being and social empowerment (Oyserman & Harrison 1998). Studies on stereotype threat indicate that affirming personal and cultural strengths can mitigate the negative effects of being othered (Cohen et al. 2006). Counter-narratives—stories that challenge dominant stereotypes—serve as vital tools for fostering self-worth and empowerment (Delgado 1989). Media representation significantly impacts self-image. Research has found that exposure to positive, diverse portrayals of marginalised groups can boost self-esteem and counteract the effects of internalised racism and sexism (Ward 2004). Conversely, the continued absence or misrepresentation of these groups in media reinforces exclusion and erasure (Collins 2000). Overcoming being othered through stereotypes requires a multifaceted approach, encompassing self-representation, cultural production, community empowerment, and psychological resilience. By reframing self-image, individuals and communities resist imposed identities and assert their agency in shaping their own narratives. The process of deconstructing stereotypes and reclaiming identity is an ongoing struggle but remains fundamental to the pursuit of justice, dignity, and self-determination.

5.4 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

This research adds a vital voice to the ongoing conversations surrounding cultural and religious minorities in South Africa, particularly within the context of Rastafari. By blending personal experience with theoretical inquiry, the study presents a distinctive approach to understanding the intersections of race, culture, religion, and identity. It shifts the focus of Rastafari from its often exoticised portrayal in global discourse to a local, grounded understanding of how the movement is lived and expressed in South Africa. One of the most significant contributions of this study is its emphasis on the power of visual culture in shaping and reclaiming identity. The role of art, particularly in marginalised communities, is often underappreciated in academic studies that focus more on theory than practice. By centring visual metaphors in my analysis and interpretation, this study sheds light on how artistic expression can serve as both a tool for personal liberation and a mechanism for collective resistance. The study suggests that for communities that have been historically silenced, visual culture provides a platform through which these marginalised voices can speak and challenge dominant narratives.

Furthermore, this research contributes to the broader field of decolonial art practices in South Africa by offering a case study that connects the decolonial struggle with everyday cultural and religious experiences. Through the Rastafarian community's engagement with symbols, rituals, and visual art, this research expands our understanding of how art can function as a form of decolonisation. It becomes clear that art is not just a means of aesthetic expression but an active participant in the ongoing decolonial project. Additionally, this study contributes to the theoretical understanding of othering, particularly in relation to religious minorities. Othering is often examined as a passive experience; however, the Rastafarians in South Africa demonstrate that othering is an active, ongoing process. They continuously negotiate their identities in the face of exclusion, asserting a sense of belonging while simultaneously resisting the identities imposed upon them. This dynamic process of identity construction challenges simplistic understandings of race and religion and offers a more complex view of cultural resilience.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

While this research provides a rich and nuanced understanding of Rastafarian identity in South Africa, there are several areas that future scholars can explore to deepen and broaden the discussion. My work here is just a starting point, and there is much more to be done to fully understand the complexities of the Rastafarian community and its place within the larger socio-political landscape of South Africa. One key area for future research is the exploration of Rastafarian communities in other regions of South Africa, particularly in urban areas such as Johannesburg and Cape Town. By expanding this study to include different geographic locations, researchers can better understand how regional socio-political dynamics shape the Rastafarian identity. This would provide a comparative analysis that could further highlight the nuances and diversity within the Rastafarian movement in South Africa.

Another valuable area for further investigation is the gendered experience of Rastafarianism. This study focused on the male experience of Rastafarian identity, but the role of women in the community is equally important and deserving of attention. How do female Rastafarians experience othering, and what role do they play in creating and negotiating identity? Future research could also explore the intersection of Rastafarianism and feminism, examining how Rastafarian women navigate traditional gender roles within a religious movement that is often associated with male leadership.

The study also opens up an avenue for examining the role of music in the formation and expression of Rastafarian identity. While this study touched upon the spiritual and ideological underpinnings of the movement, reggae music—especially the influence of figures like Bob Marley—plays a central role in how Rastafarianism is understood both locally and globally. Future research could explore how music functions as a form of cultural and spiritual expression within the Rastafarian community and how it contributes to the resistance against colonial and post-colonial structures.

Additionally, the relationship between visual culture and other forms of cultural production (such as literature, performance, and film) warrants further exploration. This study highlighted the role of art as a means of resistance, but future research could extend this inquiry into other creative domains to explore how Rastafarianism and other marginalised identities are represented and reimagined in contemporary cultural production. This research could also explore how new media and digital platforms have impacted the way Rastafarians and other marginalised groups present themselves and their cultural practices to the world. Finally, an important avenue for future research lies in exploring the psychological and emotional effects of being "othered" within society. While this study briefly touched on the psychological aspects of othering, future researchers could delve deeper into how individuals within the Rastafarian community—particularly the youth—navigate the emotional and mental challenges of living with such a profound sense of difference. This would provide a more holistic understanding of the human impact of othering and help inform strategies for healing and empowerment.

5.6 CONCLUSION

This study has been a journey of both personal discovery and academic inquiry, aiming to shed light on the complexities of Rastafarian identity in South Africa. Through an autoethnographic approach and the use of visual metaphors, I have sought to explore how Rastafarians in South Africa navigate the dynamics of othering, resistance, and identity construction. The study has shown that while marginalised by dominant cultural narratives, Rastafarians continue to reclaim their identities with resilience and pride. The findings contribute significantly to our understanding of how cultural and religious minorities resist exclusion and assert their place in society.

Finally, this research has demonstrated the importance of art as a tool for both personal and collective resistance, offering a space for marginalised communities to express themselves and challenge dominant narratives. Through the exploration of the

Rastafarian way of living, this study provides a critical lens through which we can understand the ongoing struggles of marginalised communities and the power of cultural expression in the fight for justice and recognition. Therefore, this research offers a step toward greater understanding and empathy for those who have been historically marginalised, emphasising the importance of acknowledging and celebrating cultural differences rather than reducing them to stereotypes. Future research can further illuminate the complexities of identity in the post-colonial world by continuing to explore the intersections of race, culture, religion, and art. As a researcher who has, by all means, pushed hard enough to explore and reveal a better understanding of the Rastafarian movement or culture, I also hope an exploration will take place continuously.

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