Angolan Body Painting Performances: Articulations of Diasporic Dislocation, Postcolonialism and Interculturalism in Britain

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<div align="center">**DECLARATION AND STATEMENTS**</div>

DECLARATION

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted for any degree to any other University or Institution.

Signed: (candidate)

STATEMENT 1

This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated.

Other sources are acknowledged in explicit references. A reference is appended.

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The composition of the thesis is my own work.

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Dedication

Dedicated to my adorable mother Maria Odete Sebastiao and the memories of my father José Fernando Antonio and beloved sister Necas Manuela Issala Fernando to whom I am eternally grateful for providing the guiding light that illuminated the path for inspiration and the reassurance that all things are possible with spiritual enlightenment

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Abstract

This 'practice-informed' doctorate research is the beginning of a creative investigation, integration and unification of theory and practice as a method of analysis of ideas about my performances, and the context it emerged from: my experiences of the postcolonial and intercultural relationship between Angola and Britain. It focuses on the trajectories of the self that are 're-invented' as a process of evolution and as a result of migration and dislocation in the British diaspora. It looks deeply at the complex interplay of my practice of body painting, as a symbolic ritual and dance in relation to notions of "origin" and "identity" and other sources of influences.

The roots of Angolan cultural traditions and the veneration of the Angolan ancestral spirit when I perform play an important part in my work and this research strives to simplify my ideas of body and spirit, material and aesthetic. However, this research analyses, investigates and interrogates Angolan contemporary arts and artists and the progress of their practice in the Britain postcolonial and intercultural setting. At the core of this research is a comparative interrogation of contemporary art practices, artists and their influences on my work in order to contextualise my own practice and its implications and generative potential. I describe the main artists that influenced my practice (Pablo Picasso, Jean-Michael Basquiat and Fela Ransome Anikulapo-Kuti). I compare my work with the works of other non-western artists (Coco Fusco, Guillermo Gómez-Peña and Fani-Kayode) who work with reference to ancient traditions as a fictional and racial identity.

Furthermore, it is suggested by Gen Doy that artists working with ancient traditions and producing these types of works in the west are stereotyped and their works are considered backward and unsophisticated; their works suffered and continue to suffer "discrimination on the grounds of race…" (Doy, 2000: 15). In other words, this takes place when these artists attempt to present their works in mainstream western galleries, shows and festivals. I argue that much ancient Angolan tradition has lost its voices through the

process of modernisation, civilisation, colonialism and capitalism. The key issue I am addressing is that my performances and the works of these artists use the body to explore notions of 'primitivism' and 'ethnicity' and ritual to address personal and cultural concerns. In this light, through the dialectics of practice and theory, this thesis is searching for more attention to be paid to works derived from concepts of 'primitivism' and 'tribalism' that are considered inferior within the western parameters of modern art. At the very core of this thesis, I propose that the practice of body painting and 'primitivism' and 'tribalism' are under recognised in the west because of western ideas of racial superiority, civilisation and colonialism (Darwinism).

List of Performances

DVDs

Light in the Dark, Galerie-Lecoq, Berlin (2007)

Transformation, Area 10 Community space in Peckham, London (2007)

Audience Painting Chikukuango, Anominous gallery, Leamington Spa, Birmingham (2006)

Green-man, Streets of Central London and Brixton (2001)

Photos on CDs

Identity and Parliament Square Performance, Westminster Parliament square, London (2009) photographer: Simon Rendall

Encounter with Rosalie, Islington, London (2007) photographer: Sebastian Andrews

Light in the Dark, Galerie-Lecoq, Berlin (2007) photographer: Diyambi-Yves Ngoy

Cross-Roads Ritual, Sydenham Hill Park, South London (2007) photographer: Savinien-Zuri Thomas

Transformation, Area 10 community space in Peckham, London (2007) photographer: Savinien-Zuri Thomas

Audience Painting Chikukuango, Anominous gallery, Leamington Spa, Birmingham (2006) photographer: Sarah Holt

Chikukuango and Albert, British museum, London (2005) photographer: Savinien-Zuri Thomas

R*ed, Mask and Wig*, Quicksilver studios, Wood green (2002) photographer: Simon Rendall

Green-man, Streets of Central London and Brixton (2001) photographer: Savinien-Zuri Thomas

Green, Red and White, Lambeth College, Photography studio, London (2001) photographer: Hatt Lee

conversations I had with the postgraduate students in the department made me feel part of a strong and sincere art community.

Simon Rendall has been always a good performance partner, a colleague, friend and a source of inspiration. Rendall supported me to materialise my vision, he facilitated my continuing process of exploration of the self as a performance artist in my relation between Angolan and British culture; he played such an important role in the accomplishment of this research project.

Savinien-Zuri Thomas, my collaborator, who generously gave me shelter and comfort when I needed it, his tireless support in taken photos of my performances in events around London, his generosity in sharing with me his knowledge and experiences; the frequent emotion, sad and happy conversations we had about African and African diaspora, religion and history.

My gratitude also goes to Osita Okagbue in the Drama Department at Goldsmiths College and Dr. Charles Gore and Dr. Charlotte Holyck in the Art and Archaeology Department at SOAS-University of London for their artistic input, commitment, support and disposition, for sharing their knowledge and expertise on African theatre and performance. I was privileged to work alongside those teachers. I am grateful, particular to Dr. Okagbue for providing a platform for me to express my work through his publication of a review in African performances and conferences. Also, I cannot forget to mention Iniva-Institute of International Visual Arts and Live Art Development Agency for the opportunity they gave me to do my research in their library.

Thanks also to my dyslexia teacher Jan Bradstreet and the staff in the disability and dyslexia service, Emily Coote, Debbie Dyson and Trudi Hale for being supportive and encouraging throughout my research. They have been very understandable in terms of my work even in the most difficult circumstances; they gave me extra time to develop my work before correction, in my complex journey during this research.

I truthfully thank the staff in the libraries at Brunel University and SOAS (University of London) for their support and expertise, their ability to find books I needed and the many conversations I had with librarians. Without their knowledge the scope of my research and its achievement would not be possible.

I am very thankful for the help I had from the Angolan artists and spiritualist I have interviewed over the past five years, the insight they provided to further my understanding of Angolan history of music, politics and religion. A special thanks goes to Alberto Juliao (Beto), Walter Republicano, Tingana Victor (Mandingo), Garcia Francisco Baxe (Kekas), Ney Corte Real, Tello Morgado (Telling), Caló Pascoal, Branca Miguel da Silva, Joao Mendonça de Carvalho, Barceló de Carvalho (Bonga Kuenda) and Helder Tavares (Derito).

I would like to thanks my family: my brother Jose Antonio Fernando, my sisters Denise Odete Fernando, Amalia de Lourdes and Miriam Isabel, my aunt Isabel Mucupa for their affection and appreciation and my friends Diyambi-Yves Ngoy, Toyin Adepoju, Helly Chabal and Sur Alan. Thanks as well to all that I have not mentioned that in one way or another gave me advice in my accomplishment of this project.

My mother Maria Odete Sebastiao deserves a very special acknowledgement in this thesis. She is my inspiration and motivation, my success is based on the way she raised me, this thesis and my hard work is

dedicated to her and the memories of my father José Fernando Antonio and my sister Necas Manuela Issala Fernando.

Introduction

This thesis focuses on my "invented" symbolic painted body and ritual, and the way in which my body is interpreted through performance in the 'British context' (Ranger, 1984: 211). This research comes as a result of my experiences of civil war in Angola and living in Britain as a refugee. Through this research, I investigate how the politics, history and culture of Angola play an important part in my creation of live performances, my hybrid body becoming the vehicle to communicate and narrate personal concerns about the Angolan and British cultures. I use the term 'British context' as a central focus to describe where my work emerged and is situated. The 'British context' is what gives the ground to the existence of my work in its totality where the culture and environment influenced my explorations of the painted body, aesthetic choices, performance making approach and constructions of ideas. The theoretical analyses I utilise in this research in relation to my practice reflect the context and place where I now reside; that is to say 'British context' reflect a hybrid cultural form that impacted in the performances I made that are the practical work which constitute this research. The performance pieces I created reflect my feelings and ideas in relation to the context, place and physical environment while engaging with an audience.

By the same token, I am arguing that the 'British context' makes my practice possible, which would be different in other parts of Europe or the world in terms of the creative development and audience reception, perception and interpretation of my body painted on display. In the British setting as a multicultural space my practice contributes to the representation, understanding and dissemination of non-Western culture and tradition. I am using the term "live art" as a theoretical model and framework where my practice through my body is expressed. My creative action of

performing live in front of an audience is an expression of 'live art' through the use of my body. In the context, of my practice of painted body 'live art' is a platform for where my ideas and concepts are articulated. "Live art" is new manifestation which reflects British modern hybridised environment.

My purpose in this 'practice-informed' thesis is to validate Angolan cultural traditions, dance, music and ritual as a creative source in the context of a British multicultural and multiracial environment. I used these traditions as a strategy to articulate and create my new identity. By doing this I am the first Angolan to focus on the traditions of Angola by using the painted body in Britain. My research is unique in the sense that it brings together the Angolan historical events of colonialism, revolution, civil war, trauma, violence, exile, relocation and nostalgia with art, music, poetry, ritual and dance as a form of reconfiguring personal and collective historical experiences and identities. By doing this in the British environment, my research investigates and interrogates the theoretical framework of war/trauma, interculturalism, multiculturalism and postcolonialism as appropriate reference points where my arguments, ideas and principles are centralised in relation to my practice of body painting, Angolan history of civil war and cultural traditions of 'primitivism' or 'tribalism', my experience of exile and hybridity in Britain and diaspora situation resulting in a re-invented identity. In relation to the Angolan (African) traditions of the body as a cultural practice of identity and religion in the context of postcolonial theory, John Mbiti's (1969, 1975 and 1991) work gives an important background and context for my live performances and symbolic rituals in Britain.

My creative progression and methodology reflects upon contemporary cultural 'hybridity' in Britain, through drawing attention to a range of intersections between life, art, religion, fiction and Angolan history. As someone who currently lives in Great British, my practice is a fictional re-invention of the self that relies on Angolan traditions; through my body the physical and spiritual traditions of Angola become manifest in my engagement with the audience.

I am using the term cultural 'hybridity' in Britain to reflect my experience of a lack of fixed identity and my sense of the fluidity that comes from the mixing of cultures and peoples. Visually this informs the creation of my live performances; my body marginalised and considered as 'other'. Cultural theorist Homi Bhabha has emphasised the concept of 'hybridity' as a practice existing in the cultural interstices between 'other' and the dominant culture and the creation of "the in-between spaces of the centre and the margins" (Doy, 2000: 209). Further, in this research 'hybridity' is an experience and artistic element in which reflects my identification with the politics of the diaspora; something that results in the sort of aesthetic production that transcends conventional values and boundaries.

This thesis is a 'practice-informed' research rather than 'practice-based' research. This is because my past performances are key sources for my investigation. I draw upon my personal analyses and theoretical and cultural understanding of my own background and my Angolan history to give a context to my practice and approach to making work. My 'practice-informed' approach interrogates interculturalism and diaspora as cultural constructions. However, the reason I am using 'practice informed' research is because I am not carrying out research through performance work, but rather I was reflecting upon what was at stake in the work afterwards.

The meanings of the terms (in this section of this chapter) will be further described in the course of this thesis. Each chapter is designed to contribute further to an overall understanding of this new area of research. My original contribution to knowledge is my retrospective analysis and investigations of my body painting symbolic performances and rituals. In this process, I contributed to knowledge through my findings within the performance pieces I analyse, which reflects my current situation and experience of postcolonialism and interculturalism.

The general aim of this research is to provide an original theoretical framework and provoke fresh discussion of the emerging practice of Angolan body painting in Britain. One of the goals in this research is to bridge the gap of understanding of the creative processes and mode of expressions between the Angolan and the British cultural traditions of performance and to expand the articulations of theory and practice as an important intersubjective method of knowledge and dynamic. That is to say, my aim is to reveal and create a deeper understanding and awareness of body painting as a live performance within the context of performance, theatre and drama studies. Nonetheless, in this process, my practice allows me to elaborate certain aspects between the Angolan and the British cultural traditions and to elucidate elements of performance of body art and symbolic ritual within the framework outlined in this thesis.

As pointed out above, the theoretical methods I used in this research as a conceptual examination of postcolonial and intercultural theories are the centre of the analysis of my practice of body painting and live art. When I am performing the act of having my painted body, my embodiment of Angolan cultural tradition of ritual, my contact with the audience and my perception of the live experience while performing act as a mechanism of re-inventing the self and identity in

relation with my origin and roots as nationalism and this refers to theoretical ideas of "imagined communities" of Benedict Anderson (2006: 3) and "invention of tradition" Terence Ranger (1984: 212) and "Afrocentricity" Molefi Kete Asante (1996: 256). In relation to my painted body performing live in front of an audience the theories of Anderson, Ranger and Asante gives a contextual grounds to the nature of my performance practice and its understanding, considered the fact that in Britain my body while performing to an audience give connotations of being the 'other', 'primitive(ism)' and 'tribal(ism)' and an 'outsider'.

In the frame of the thesis I am refereeing to the concepts of 'primitivism' and 'tribalism' to comment on the importance of Angolan traditional culture and art form as a source of my re-invented diaspora identity and experience. This is a very rich practice and source of information and inspiration. But, as a result of the colonial and imperial encounter this practice has been suppressed and marginalised. As a result of this, in the postcolonial era this practice does not seems to be recognised in the West and considered uncivilised and unsophisticated. In Britain, my practice draws from the traditions of 'primitivism' and 'tribalism', for this reason; in the context of the thesis I am referring to these artistic notions to challenge the Western postcolonial attitude, perception and view of these ancient practice and tradition.

An additional element of this research has been an investigation of my earlier formative experiences living in Angola and the sort of activities I took for granted either as a participant or as an observer in the culture, but which I have come to understand have played an important role in the person I have now become and subsequently it has clearly had an impact on the work that I make as an individual currently living in Britain.

The performances I carried out in London and (one) in Berlin since 2001 will be the focus of this investigation. As an artist who has a very strong background in making performances, I encountered a number of problems conducting this research because I am not used to writing about the responses of audiences in an objective manner. I learnt to apply a more critical and analytical perspective to my work. In this light, my first person methodology is intended to contribute to knowledge rather than merely creating an autobiographical work. My findings might relate to the broader interdisciplinary context of performance, theatre, drama and visual culture studies. This is because of the nature of my practice, and of being a diasporic and dislocated individual creating a fictional relationship with an ancient tradition and practice and the notions of 'primitivism' and 'tribalism'.

In this thesis, I am using the term "performance arts" to give a context and distinction of the type of art I express through my body and creativity. "Performance arts" represents a theoretical model of a manner of expression. Using my body to express my ideas in theatrical way is a performative articulation. But, "performance arts" is a new setting of contemporary art where individuals explore and communicate conceptual ideas through the use of the body to express feels, ideas, emotions, concerns and as a form of narrative and identity.

The history of Angola is very complex, complicated by the past experience of slavery, colonialism, revolution and civil war. Being at the forefront of Angolan art in Britain, I am privileged to initiate an important new field of academic research, which crosses boundaries by combining an interdisciplinary approach. When I am performing painted, the presence of my body does not just express its aesthetic in a mere visual encounter presented to the public

audience, but engages the audience in an experience of interaction. Audiences participate in the performance through physically painting my body or playing drum, I do this to fully create an atmosphere of active engagement between me/performer and audiences. Through this process my intention is to opens up different creative possibilities and dynamic during the encounter, whereby the audience is involved physically and visually as an integrated process and transformation unique to participate and observe in comparison to conventional theatrical choreographic pieces.

I will use the term "body practice" as a theoretical reference to contextualise my practice. My body is the practical object that I utilise as a mechanism to investigate and analyse in order to gain information. At the same time, through "body practice" I am creating a relation with an ancient tradition of the body, where the body is device to express and pass down cultural tradition. "Body practice" is a direct and simple way to communicate and connect with people/audience, considering that in the physical world everyone has a body.

However, a consideration of Angolan performance traditions has not so far been taken into academic study in Britain. Currently, not much attention has been paid to this practice. My work aims to redress this, exploring these traditions and my contemporary inflections of these practices in the context of 21st century Britain.

I faced many difficulties in accessing information, books and articles; this is because little has been written in English or Portuguese about these practices and traditions. I also found it difficult to find Angolan artists practising in Britain. There is a gap of information in history, specifically

from the period after independence (1975) until the end of 1980s when the country had a higher level of military violence in the major cities, and political and governmental instability.[1] In order for me to resolve this research problem and give an Angolan perspective to this research I selected and examined the very few existing books and articles from Angola in the English language to make this project possible. There is very few Portuguese literature available, I used the very little available. But, this literature has a Portuguese colonial perspective, which is problematic for the nature of my research. With this in mind, it was necessary therefore to analyse carefully the relevant materials in order to extract pertinent information, which elucidated characteristics of Angolan history and cultural tradition in relation to art, music, poetry, ritual and dance, as this potentially could provide me with a better understanding of Angolan performances in Britain. Conducting this research was not an easy task taking into consideration that the Angolan nation suffered deeply from the colonial experience (1575-1975) and the brutal civil war (1975-2002), there is not much information about Angolan culture in English and qualified Angolan scholars in the diaspora with a comprehensive knowledge of its art, culture and history.

The visual cultural narrative and theories proposed by the Nigerian scholars in the diaspora such as: Olu Oguibe & Okwui Enwezor (1999) and Osita Okagbue (2009) therefore serve as a reference and as a point of departure. Their works contributed and made this research project possible by providing intersubjective knowledge for an exploration of Angolan traditions of the body and ritual. Even though their works reflect Nigerian culture, in the case of this thesis they

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[1] It is important for me to state that, because of the difficulties I had in accessing information and reference in English, many important Angolan: artists, musicians, politicians, anthropologists and poets were not mentioned in this thesis, but I am interested to include their names and works in future research, considering the fact that my work on the Angolan political and cultural history is ongoing.

have also been used as guidance and a model to provide knowledge and critical analysis and illustrations of dimensions of cultural practice and methods of articulation pertinent to the Angolan diasporic people and situation (Oguibe and Enwezor, 1999: 14).

Nigerian cultural traditions are much more fully explored and documented by scholars and well situated in the context of African performance scholarship. Even in the diaspora Nigerians have the largest amount of published material focused on validating aspects of their traditions, history, art and religion, Osita Okagbue, *African Theatres and Performances* (2007) is a good reference; Paul Carter Harrison, *Black Theatre 'Ritual, Performance in the African Diaspora'* (2002) is also a useful reference point in terms of addressing issues of black experience, particularly in Chapter 6 where I focus on my work in the British context.

To make up for the lack of written history I conducted a series of interviews with Angolan artists, journalists and cultural critics living in Portugal and Britain as primary sources of information and mode of knowledge for this research. Interviews helped me to gain access to little known information of historical and social events unknown to the Angolan general public. A considerable proportion of this research relies on these first-hand accounts. All interviews were carried out in London, and in total, I interviewed eleven Angolan artists and one spiritualist.[2] The artists I interviewed are the first generation in Britain, which means they often struggle to settle and make ends meet in their everyday life in a busy city like London, an additional difficulty was they often cancelled or postponed interviews, leaving me disillusioned.

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[2] Only one of the people I interviewed was a woman; I made a repeated attempt to track down female Angolan spiritualists, artists and historians in Britain and so far I am only be able to locate this one individual, but I am continuing to look.

Another complication arose out of fear, a number of Angolan artists were afraid to be interviewed. There was a sense of resistance from them because they felt that they could not speak about the social and political issues of Angola that they are not happy with because they feared prosecution and imprisonment in Britain, even though there is little evidence to support such fears. This shows that Angolan artists in Britain are still traumatised and psychologically affected by the political and social situation in Angola, particularly because of the case of governmental killings of groups of artists and activists while attempting a revolutionary coup in 1977 (Birmingham, 2002: 153).

The problems I had and the mistakes I made at the earlier stage must be seen as part of the learning process. This made this research process difficult, while engaging in an exercise of proposing new theoretical grounds and ideas focused on the culture and the body as a strategy of narration and communication. In other words, in this thesis the Angolan culture and my body are explored as new sites of resistance and transformation in a global encounter with people from different countries.

I arrived at the conclusion that there is much to be investigated in Angolan art, culture and traditions in the diaspora and its relationship with Britain, but for the purpose of this research I limit myself to investigating the traditions of body painting and its relationship to my own body performance and identity. I encourage and invite new researchers to further investigate this field of study. In the conclusion chapter of this thesis I clearly outline the particular and the most pertinent areas where there is an urgent need for research and investigation.

On one level this research is also personal creative process which represents my journey as a performance artist and a researcher. It reflects my interest in understanding the position and function of the body in a diasporic context as a narrator of culture, tradition and identity in a transnational environment and landscape.

Chapter divisions

Chapter one outlines my method I have used to write this thesis. In this chapter I outline all the steps I took in the process of making this research project, in this I include the main reason why I started this research, which reflect on many years of producing performances of body painting. This provides the catalyst for investigating Angolan history, and particularly, the Chokwe cultural tradition. In this chapter I indicate the scope of my research questions and what I have investigated. It addresses the method I used to combine performance practice and theory. I examine the writing of Nigerian scholars to find material evidence to create a model for my research. I demonstrate that Angolan art and literature suffered during the postcolonial period. To supplement the gap in knowledge I conducted several empirical interviews with Angolan artists in Britain as oral, historical narrative of first-hand evidence. These interviews for the purpose of this thesis helped in terms of a better understanding of Angolan history and my performance practice in particular positioned them in a new setting. In order to locate my work as a contemporary artist, I carried out a comparative study with three other established artists as a methodological approach to position my practice within the performance study discourse. I was motivated to choose these particular artists because I am interested in their explorations of ritual practice and their notions of identity in the diaspora.

Chapter 2 provides a background and a context for a better understanding of my performances in Britain by considering Angolan cultural and political history (1960s-1980s) and the contribution of art, poetry and music to the fight for independence (1975) from the Portuguese colonial regime and during the country's civil war (1975-2002) (Hodges, 2004: 4). I discuss the social and political situation in the post-independence and postcolonial period. The role which the different political parties and the governmental leaders took during the transition to independence which resulted in a brutal civil war; I will show that from this period under the leadership of the MPLA political party the country became corrupted and badly governed, whereby political opportunism became prevalent by the appropriation of national wealth and resources (Angolan patrimonialism) for personal and political gains (Hodges, 2004: 170). Through this situation of appropriation of natural resources information became censored as a governmental strategy to keep the general population ignorant. In this case, I will argue that this is one of the reasons that there is a lack of information about Angolan history, because a great part of the country's important information continued to be censored even at this time of writing this thesis. This is a governmental manipulation for political power and authority. I also propose that the entire media outlets are controlled by the leaders. I want to demonstrate the level of oppression, discrimination and lack of freedom of expression in Angola. Particularly, there are many cases of journalists that lost their lives in the fight for justice or challenge the system. My position in Britain in exile partly reflects my dissatisfaction with the governance of the country and the political lines currently adopted by the leaders. By addressing these issue of the history I want to indicate the social-cultural and socio-political conditions in which I lived, which subsequently affected my artistic practice and the person I am currently in Britain.

Among the Angolan diaspora, community, and artists there are still many affected by this experience. As a result they normally abstain from political engagement and military activism in public (Birmingham, 2002: 152-3). I will argue that even though they are living in Britain, they still have a sense of belief that the same system is operating in Britain. In some ways this concept is manifested in my practice, because I am embodied with a post-traumatic syndrome of civil war experience.

This chapter also looks at the impact made by particular musicians after independence and during the Angolan civil war. I will explain these musicians were my role models, provided reference points and made a significant impact on the way I thought about myself – in the diaspora – and my own culture and history. I was influenced by these artists, not through the aesthetic of their works but through their songs, life experience and the diaspora conditions we share, given the fact that I listened to their music all my life and considered them as an icon.

The events in Angolan society, culture and history detailed in this chapter impacted on the lives of my family. For this reason, I wrote this chapter particularly from a perspective of how my family saw and experienced it, but not from a larger social, cultural and historical perspective, but with reference to the trajectories of my own family. By doing this, I am not attempting to postulate or generalise Angolan history because my arguments presented in this chapter express my family experience which correspond to some of the elements that happened in the bigger social, cultural and political frame. What happened to my family was in fact typical of many Angolan families at the time. It is important to state that my argument in this chapter is referring to my family (parents) as a reflection of this particular society, culture and political history.

Throughout this chapter I emphasise the importance of Angolan cultural and political history and its relationship to body painting and art, symbolic ritual and dance, which I utilise in my performances. I frame Angolan history in relation to how it composed my past. It represents the beginning of my trajectory as an individual performance artist now in Britain.

Chapter 3 looks at the history of the Angolan artists who emigrated to Portugal (1990s) and Britain (1993) and the reason for their migration, the construction of their art and music production and its relationship with my practice. I will focus mainly on the music and art composition of these artists in Britain such as: Tello-Morgado, Helga Gamboa and Ney Corte Real as a way to demonstrate how it links with the Angolan cultural traditions in an evolutionary process and as a re-location of a creative practice. The work of these artists are based in the Angolan roots of identity in a similar way to mine, but my work is very different compared to these more established practices that emerged initially in Angola, as my work emerged as a result of particular conditions of my experience as a refugee in Britain.

The fact that Angolan artists had to leave Angola during the turbulent period of civil war, clearly affected on the development and quality of their production of art and music, which during the course of this research project I could see some challenges in their artistic process, especially during the time when I conducted interviews and documented their creative experience of performing live. I only focus on their creative process and the influences these works take from Angolan cultural tradition. The quality of their art and music production was not my focus at the time, as it goes beyond the scope of this research. This chapter also highlights the fact that Angolan art in the diaspora is very new and because of this there is lack of Angolan scholars

knowledgeable of the tradition, culture and history to write books and articles about the recent history and experience of the country and diasporic people.

Chapter 4 focuses on the roots of the traditions of body practice (painting) in Angola, particularly the Chokwe culture and religion and its cosmological beliefs. I explain how body practices impacts on the lives of the people and Chokwe community as a tool to translate the culture history, nature and environment. It is used as a ceremony, as entertainment, to educate moral values and principles, to pass on religious ideas and critique social life. This chapter traces my attempts to embody Angolan cultural tradition, physically and spiritually. It brings to the forefront of discussion the value I give to my ancestral religious tradition through veneration and libation in my symbolic rituals and dances as performance dialogue between the past and present. I examine the tradition as a medium which enables narration and communication as a process of cultural exchange. In addition, in this chapter the meaning of body practice is studied as a way to illustrate the metaphorical symbolism of a manifestation of the Angolan ancestral spirit embodied in dance and drama pieces. In this chapter, I describe the works of two Angolan artists, Licau Daniel and Tingana Victor (Mandingo) who explore the concept of ancestral spirit in their works which is the union of the physical and spiritual interconnectedness. I propose that their works contribute to a better understanding of the metaphorical use of the ancestral spirit in ritual, dance, performance and theatre works.

Angolan body practice (painting) is linked to thousands of years of ancient tradition destroyed through the encounter with Portuguese slavery and colonialism. For this reason, I found it

problematic to trace back the roots and establish the truth of that tradition and history, although interviews were conducted as a way of tracing the historical line and narrative.

Chapter 5 focuses on the importance of the influence of contemporary art practices on my work. This chapter clearly outlines the journey of my practice, from the research project in the Nubian and Chokwe culture, the abstract paintings of Pablo Picasso, my collaboration with Simon Rendall, and the influences of the paintings of Jean-Michael Basquiat and the performances of Fela Anikulapo-Kuti in my artistic transition from painting on canvas to paint on my body.

In this chapter I will demonstrate that Basquiat paintings influenced my practice, specifically the transition I made from painting on canvas to painting on my body (Lemke, 2008:123). I will also describe the fact that Kuti live performances impacted in my work, through his open explorations of his Nigerian Yoruba ancestors, as live performance ritual ceremonies (worship) with his painted body as a dialogue with the spiritual world. I propose that he played a crucial part in the modern definition and understanding of Nigerian and African diasporic ritual practice through his ability to combine ritual and music (Olorunyomi, 2003: 86).

Also, I highlight the importance of contemporary artists using their bodies as a vehicle of communication and expression with an audience with particular emphasis on how notions of 'primitivism' and 'tribalism' impact on their practices and my own. I did this in a comparative study between my work and the works of such artists as: Guillermo Gómez-Peña, Coco Fusco and Rotimi Fani-Kayode. My objective in comparing my work with these artists is not motivated to arrive in any conclusions, but to understand their artistic methodology, gaining an insight in their practice in order to situate my emerged practice and narrative in 21st century Britain.

Particularly, in this chapter as a comparative study I will describe Fusco and Gómez-Peña's important piece *Two Undiscovered Amerindians (TUA)* performed fictionally in a cage. I will also describe the works of Fani-Kayode as a black diaspora artist exploring complex issues of race, identity and sexuality.

Chapter 6 provides a comprehensive background and understanding of my performance practice in Britain, how it originated in 2001 and the concepts behind it. I demonstrate that my work is a postcolonial response and a critical manifesto through the use of my painted body as a visual narrator of oral and textual history and a site of memory (Cordell, 2003: 240). I also, demonstrate that my experience of cultural intersection and hybridity (diaspora and interculturalism) and being a refugee in London contributed to my decision to re-invent a fictional identity and symbolic ritual through body painting based on the Chokwe cultural traditions, ancestors spirit and the notions of 'primitivism' and 'tribalism'.

I analyse in an organised manner a number of exemplary solo and collaborative performance pieces. I describe the interpretative challenges involved in my work while performing to an audience. Most of my performance pieces were undertaken spontaneously, intuitively and naively as part of my creative progress. As a result of this, my work inevitably produces several layers and meanings of interpretations and understandings to an audience and observer. This is an important aspect of my practice that I will deconstruct.

My work has a dynamic that acts as an agent which links my theoretical approaches, practical explorations and its aesthetic. I analyse and describe nine live art performance pieces. I outline

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these works in a chronological manner reflecting my progress over the last ten years. I have written these pieces retrospectively and I attempt to describe them with a degree of objectivity, although it is impossible to erase my subjective position. The reason, I chose to write about these specific performances was to decipher the socio-cultural and socio-political concerns and issues involved in my work. Equally, perhaps, through this process I wanted to investigate elements of my practice that I was initially not consciously aware of when I performed them.

In analysing my own historical practice and asking questions about its forms and priorities I aim to reveal something of the rich ritual practices and traditions that are poorly documented and little known by the Angolan people living in Britain. In effect, this research enacted through my painted body, seeks to reclaim traditional practices and re-construct them together as performance in the contemporary British performance space.

This thesis finishes with the conclusion as the final part in this process, it is where I give the summary of this research investigation, I outline its strengths, limitations and indicates possible directions for future research projects in my studied subjects, performance art, drama and theatre.

Chapter 1
Research Methodology

After I did a great deal of work as an undergraduate student exploring the body through performance art in London there remained a need for me to take a step further in the development and understanding of my work. I felt it was important to examine and reflect upon my work and its trajectories, influences and the driving force behind it. At the time I felt something was missing; I wanted to forge a link between my histories, experience in Angola and the British environment where hybridity and interculturalism are contemporary phenomenon that I have come to understand are embedded in my work (Doy, 2000: 214). My aim at this time was to gain a comprehensive understanding of my work using academic theory about Angolan history and my experience in Britain as a methodology to interrogate my practice. This research project provided the first steps of this realisation.

At the end of my first year I came to realise that my research was not going to be practice-based research because of the fact that the way my work emerged and how I produced it I did not, at time I was making the work have any research questions to investigate. Rather, I became interested in analysing and referring to my past performances in retrospective as a method of investigation. "Practice-informed" research was then suggested as a strategy for undertaking the research.

A "practice-informed" research methodology looks at my work in retrospective examination and investigation in order to situate my own work and better understanding how I came to be making

this type of work. In a way, some of it is been less about an examination of the aesthetic of the work and more about the examination of my own search for identity.

My initial actions as a process to carry out and facilitate this piece of research work were primarily concentrated on investigating Angolan history. This was a struggle because most of the history is written in Portuguese, and while I am fluent in Portuguese, the books are difficult to access in England, very little history is written in English because of Angola's specific colonial history and language affiliation. Moreover, the history available is based on specific Portuguese colonial perspectives of Angola. Angolan history has been primarily recorded by the Portuguese, because of the fact that there are not many Angolan historians, particularly in the diaspora. This is also because during colonialism and civil war the regimes and governments of the country did not build academic institutions and national scholarship programmes to help the Angolan people develop intellectually. In postcolonial Angola the regimes and governments betrayed the people by focusing on achieving power and status, accumulation of national wealth and resources (Angolan patrimonialism) "political and economic hegemony" (Vidal, 2007: 126) rather than creating a progressive system that gave the possibility for the people to engage intellectually and to create a thinking mind and a body of literature in relation to past history. Adebayo Oyebade writes in the context of Angolan postcolonial literature:

> The disappointment of postindependence Angola featured prominently in
> modern Angolan literature. Many writers, Pepetela, for instance, turned
> to the questions of corruption, nepotism, and other social ills that plagued
> postindependence Angola (2007: 56-7).

Through the research process it became clear to me that the people I was referring to were outside the culture, and yet were writing about the history of the country, which can be seen as problematic because the history should be written by the native people of the country.

During this process I read a number of books on Angolan history written by Western historians that clearly expressed Eurocentric viewpoints and criteria. Very good examples of this are Fernando Andresen Guimaraes, *The Origins of the Angolan Civil War 'Foreign Intervention and Domestic Political Conflict'* (2001) and Tony Hodges *Angola: Anatomy of an Oil State,* (2004) a Portuguese and English historian respectively. Although, both books bring light to Angolan history, in my reading I could see that the Angolan history was victimised and hegemonised by Western historians. Both books made me appreciate that the power of the Angolan history was still controlled within the Portuguese colonial regime, in addition, the power structure or paternalistic approach perhaps was still with the Portuguese. David Birmingham states that:

> Many of the attempts to understand Angola's history in the second half of the twentieth century have been undertaken by foreign scholars, who, while deeply sympathetic to Angola's protracted traumas, come from another world and often write in another language (2006: 105).

Also, the civil war after independence had a tremendous impact on the progressive development of the country. For this reason, Angolan postcolonial leaders were unable to take the country in good faith, they failed to "consolidate the gains of independence" as described by Oyebade (2007: 57). The country lacked infrastructure, because the colonial system condemned and erased indigenous cultural tradition. It introduced political, economic and education institutions in favour of Western traditions. Oyebade writes about education in the postcolonial period:

> Lack of necessary educational equipment and infrastructure throughout Angola has greatly devalued the quality of education in the country.

> Primary education, with inadequate classrooms and other facilities as well as trained teachers, is of very poor quality... (2007: 9).

Angola postcolonial experience was a reversive system that elevated Western values rather than indigenous ones. Particularly, the education system created by the Western powers destabilised indigenous societies, promoted "Christian missions" and imposed foreign values (Oyebade, 2007: 142). The education system devalued the indigenous and natives culture in the name of modernisation and it gradually spread "...the cultural impact of colonialism" as noted by Patrick Chabal (1996: 7). From this period the indigenous people in the main cities lost their cultural structure and began to follow Western civilisation, cultural values and life style (Brittain, 1998: 3). In other words, Western ideals and ideas were placed above indigenous tradition and cultural practice.

Furthermore, because the education system was deficient and colleges and universities were very few and Westernised, as a result of this there were not sufficient indigenous intellectuals in the government ready to lead the country. There were only very few writers, such as Agostinho Neto, Henrique Abranches, Arturo Carlos Pestana dos Santos (Pepetela), Boaventura Cardoso, Fernando de Castro Soromenho, Jose Mena Abrantes, Jose Luandino Vieira and Manuel Rui Monteiro, who belonged to the elite and mainly wrote either novels, poetry or prose that reflected the colonial experience and the struggle for independence (Oyebade, 2007: 57).

In this respect, knowing this history made me to realise that there were no Angolan historians writing about history and culture from the Angolan perspective, particularly in the diaspora. I decided therefore that I wanted my research to focus on bringing the knowledge of history and

culture combined with ritual, music, theatre and dance into perspective, but with a focus on highlighting Angolan values within the history. I wanted to highlight the contribution of creative practice in postcolonial Angola that is unknown by the general Angolan population, and how the use of ritual, music, theatre and dance as a cultural instrument of communication and tradition played an important part in redefining the national identity in the postcolonial era. In a way, art was a vehicle that spread and promoted "...the development of national consciousness" within cultural activities according to Judy El Bushra (2004: 12).

Based on the paucity of materials specifically dealing with Angolan history, I decided that I would turn to look at a comparable culture that also had a colonial past, but had rather more in the way of material evidence that could help me create a model for my research. I therefore looked to Nigerian tradition, culture and performance arts scholarship in the diaspora. Nigerian scholars are leading researchers amongst the Africans in the diaspora and they have a strong link with Nigeria. They created very strong culture values that are in dialogue between the diaspora and Nigeria. Indeed, Nigeria long history of independence is visible through the celebration of their culture and history, and they use textile cloth as material evidence to narrate and educate its people about their great past.

There is a tremendous amount of research evidence produced by the Nigerian scholars specifically exploring their own culture heritage, tradition and religion in relation to their history. Nigerian scholars such as Olu Oguibe, Okwui Enwezor and Osita Okagbue played an important role in my construction of this thesis.

Their works informed my analysis on Angolan art and artists in the diaspora. Hence, their academic contributions are a valuable reference point in this project.[3] In performance terms, Nigerian artists have a tradition of exploring the body as an art form and as rhetoric of cultural identity. Rotimi Fani-Kayode (discussed in Chapter 5), a Nigerian diaspora artist and photographer, is a good example. Through his works he attempts to reconcile his diaspora experience in Britain with his Yoruba ancestral traditions of rituals and religious power and iconography.

Additionally, Nigeria and Angola have a similar political history of internal civil war during the transition to independence because of their natural oil (petroleum) rich resources which the international superpowers (North America and Soviet Union) wanted to control and exploit. As a consequence of this corruption and bad governance occurred on those countries leaving its population poor and destabilised (Hodges, 2004: 3). The postcolonial Biafra war in Nigeria and the war to control Luanda and its oil resources in Angola demonstrate and give credence to my argument. In other words; these two nations have a history of political and social struggle and poverty in the countries which are rich in oil. Birmingham points out that:

> In Angola, as in other oil-producing African countries such as Nigeria, which had also been wracked, by a postcolonial civil war, those who held the oil wells were unwilling to share their bounty with those who did not. The history of the oil industry had begun to tell on Angola in the last ten years of colonial rule, but after the fall of Portugal petroleum became the most important, indeed almost the only source of export revenue (2002: 162).

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[3] One of the reason why I chose to look at Nigerian scholars as a reference point is because they play an important role amongst the Africans in the diaspora. In other words, they not just facilitate a deeper understanding of Nigerian art and cultural tradition, and bringing it to the British context, but they also cultivate other African cultures in the diaspora, by including their art and culture in the major exhibitions they organise. Also, they edit important academic publications: books, anthologies and encyclopaedias on African art and culture with the contribution of other African scholars and artists in the diaspora.

After looking at the Angolan history and its complexities in relation to art, ritual, music, theatre and dance[4], I found that postcolonialism had a strong impact on Angolan art and artists, especially in the 1980s and early 1990s. Postcolonialism left a legacy of connection whereby Angolan artists saw that possibility to migrate, settle and explore the coloniser place as a form of creating a new reality and possibility. This was possible because of the inheritance of the Portuguese language as the avenue of expression that gave the artists very little access to creatively engage in a new cultural space (Kasfir, 1999: 190). However, at the time of the artists' migration to Portugal, Portuguese society was not prepared to accommodate Angolan art and artists and for this reason opportunities and conditions were denied for the majority of the artists (Gumbe, 2003: n.p).

Although, it was not easy for artists to live in Portugal, some decided to stay and others to travel to Britain to continue developing their artistic abilities based on the roots and influences of Angolan culture. By analysing the works of Angolan artists in Portugal and Britain I could then begin to understand how artists express their art in the postcolonial era. In addition, I wanted to see the development, influences and the new trend of Angolan arts and artists in the diaspora environment and situation.

Angolan art and artists are very new in Britain, most of the artists are first generation, and for this reason it took me a while to find and connect with the artists. When I did find particular artists, I decided to first go and see them performing live, and where possible video record and photograph the process, in order to gain an understanding of their artistic production. Indeed,

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[4] I am referring to those creative practices to accentuate the importance and contribute it made in the Angolan society, culture and politics in the postcolonial era.

because of this, I spent a lot of time going to Angolan events to see artists performing live and then to interview them after performances.

However, because all the artists discussed in this thesis are established artists in Angola I felt it was important to conduct interviews with them, relating their art and critical view of Angolan history. Thus, because of the importance of their work I also wanted to use these interviews as an oral, historical narrative, and as a research method. In other words, I wanted to have firsthand evidence of personal experiences of Angolan history to go some way towards remedying the lack of material evidence produced by Angolans in this area of study. I carried out interviews with a range of Angolans, including eight artists, two journalists and one spiritualist. I did interview a spiritualist because of the nature of my work which draws reference to ritual and body practice in Angola. During the research I felt the need to interview a spirit so I could gain an insight on how spirituality is practicised and manifested in ritual activities and festivals in Angola.

During the process of the interviews most artists, journalists and a spiritualist contributed positively, they valued the opportunity of been interviewed because they expressed their views about Angolan culture, tradition, history and art, but others showed resistance to openly express their views regarding Angolan culture, tradition, history and art. I suggest that this resistance is likely to be due to their experience of civil war (1975-2002) and the collective post-war traumatic condition that Angolan people are suffering in the modern world as "memory from consciousness" (Fisher, 2008: 191). Jean Fisher in the context of black diaspora experiences of trauma and remembrance writes that:

Modernity is understood through the historical 'accident' of involuntary migration and slavery – in the psychic, economic and socio-political consequences of cultural dispossession, geographical dislocation and political disempowerment... (2008: 191).

It is evident that in Angola the entire media outlet for dissemination of information and entertainment is controlled by the government. For this reason, in the media there is still oppression, lack of freedom of expression that makes people afraid and intimidated to speak openly in public or with strangers, and this affects artists' sense of expression even while living in British society (Vidal, 2007: 173). In the media in Angola artists and journalists who attempted to challenge this system were often silenced or censored by the government, either by a removal from the artistic or journalistic practice or being indiscriminately killed (Birmingham, 2002: 153). Oyebade writes about the media in the context of Angola:

Under the MPLA dictatorship, the Angolan press continued under strict government and party control. Despite the guarantee of freedom of expression by the Angolan constitution, the MPLA government nationalized both the print and broadcast media, making press freedom virtually nonexistent. Government control of mass media and press censorship greatly discouraged critical editorials and publication of news items considered by the state as unfriendly (2007: 67).

Also, an additional element of this research has been an investigation of my earlier formative experiences living in Angola and the sort of activities I took for granted either as a participant or as an observer, but which I have come to understand have played an important role in the person I became now and subsequently it has clearly had an impact on the work that I make as individual.

Identity and Research Methodology

After I arrived in London 1997, I felt a lack of identity or sense of belonging, this was to do with my experience of growing up in a country under a civil war and also having been a refugee and dislocated individual in London. Because of these experiences I felt the need to psychologically, spiritually and bodily to connect with Angolan cultural tradition as a form of a base and origin and to re-create a new identity and self through live performances. This process happened through my personal analysis of my own situation and dialogue between the two cultures of Angola and Britain that are very different in traditions and histories. With this in mind, the roots of Angolan traditions, body practice, rituals and dance together with interculturalism and hybridity in London were the influences that made me start using my body symbolically as a mechanism or device that translates, transforms, informs and narrates the past and history in a fictional and imaginary manner within a performative activity. This process of self realisation reflects the impact and influence of two cultures and histories. The notions of history and memory play an important part in the interpretation and understanding of my work as a diaspora artist using the body to state identity (Doy, 2000: 3).

What is more, for me at the time it was important to connect with Angolan culture so I could then make sense of where I came from in order to situate myself in a new cultural environment. In this way, my body was the most appropriate device to express my feelings and emotions. The feelings of anxiety, fear, insecurity, tension, nervousness, agitation and apprehension were somehow manifested in my earlier performances as a symptom of trauma. This indirectly connects with my sense of the instability of Angolan culture and society because of the civil war situation (Bushra, 2004: 12-3).

In my earlier years in London my body became the central tool of expression whereby I linked my experiences of the two cultures, Angola and Britain as a result of diaspora and displacement. As a result of this, I started to explore body painting because I felt it was a deeper way to connect with the roots of Angolan tradition and identity. Because I was exploring my body as a vehicle of expression I felt that painting my body was a way to naturalise my body and connect with the ancient practice of body ornament and adornment as a symbolic ritual activity.

At first, when I started doing live performances of body painting in London I looked first at the Chokwe 'tribe' in Angola because my dad and his family belong to the Chokwe 'tribe'. Also, amongst all the tribes in Angola the Chokwe preserve Angolan tradition the most, and moreover, as a diasporic artist it came to my realisation that there is an extensive publication of books and articles about the Chokwe 'tribe' compared to other tribes in Angola. I did this because I wanted to see how body practice in the Angolan context is utilised and practised in an alignment with cultural traditions and history, and how the function of religion and cosmology relates to body practice as a cultural form of communication of the everyday life and customs based on oral culture and history. Through my performances my intentions were to give value to the Chokwe religious and cosmological practice and at the same time to bring those traditions into the public spaces as a symbolic form of celebration and to give importance in those practice in 21st century intercultural and postcolonial Britain, where cultural intersection and hybrid culture are a common occurrence "...in the interstices, the in-between spaces of the centre and the margins..." (Doy, 2000: 209).

In the Chokwe religious and cosmological practice, the ancestral spirit plays an important part in the life of the living ones through body practice the ancestral spirit is worshiped as a unifying connection. The ancestral spirit manifests itself through rituals, dance, music, chanting and decorative costumes. In this process, the ancestor returns and blesses the living people in the community. Emma Ejiofor Ebo further posits that:

> In the African world view, the living are able to interact with the ancestors through ritual, and it is this mythical belief that makes the living carry out ritual processes either for propitiation, supplication or thanksgiving (2010: 66).

For this reason, the idea of my ancestors plays an important part in my performances. More than that, my performances are based in my symbolic veneration of my ancestors through body painting, white powder and beads, water and libation as a re-enactment of communion, fictional and imaginary expression of unification between past and present, tradition and modernity. In other words, this action is an act of transformation of consciousness as a diaspora individual wanting to "preserve the integrity of black culture" through performances (Harrison, 2002: 2).

In this research project it was so important for me to look at the Chokwe cultural tradition as a methodological approach which provided the understanding of the roots of my work, hence, this was utilised as a diaspora strategy and predicament of "double consciousness" as codified by W. E. B. Du Bois (1999: xxvii). Du Bois points out that for a black person living in Europe or America it requires some precise forms of "double consciousness" as part of an ontological experience of diaspora.

Not many Angolan artists either in Angola or in the diaspora are aware of the exploration of ancestors in their works and for this reason it was crucial in this research to analyse the works two particular Angolan artists, Licau Daniel and Tingana Victor (Mandingo), who explore ancestral traditions and spirituality in their works. I did this to demonstrate that the powers of Angolan ancestors are manifested creatively through performance and theatre (Mbiti, 1991: 18).

Furthermore, when I first started performing in London my work was very much intuitive and spontaneous. Unknowingly, I was creating performances without any critical and analytical thinking of the experiences and engagement with an audience in a performative space. Somehow, I was not paying attention to some of the details of what was going on during the performances. For this reason, when I started this research project it was imperative for me to understand and contextualise the work I was doing in order to find out where my performances were located in Britain, and in relation to the "other" African and diaspora artists exploring the notions of identity, ritual practice, dislocation and the racialised body (Brewster, 2009: 65).

As an additional methodological approach, designed to consider how I might locate my work in relation to the context of other contemporary artists concerned with issues of identity and dislocation, I chose to carry out a comparative study and analysis between my performance practice and the photographic and video documentation of works of contemporary performance artists and photographer such as Coco Fusco (Cuba), Guillermo Gómez-Peña (Mexico), and Rotimi Fani-Kayode (Nigeria). The comparative study with the works of those artists was important because their works introduced to me new methods of creating performances and exploring a performative space while engaging with an audience. Their works illuminated my

understanding as performance artists who utilise the body as a cultural deployment through which to create performances. This allowed me to recapture, reclaim and reconfigure my personal and historical experiences and to put together my broken identity. This comparison allowed me to see where my work is placed in relation to Angolan, African, diaspora and other ritualistic practice in the context of performance studies. In other words, it allowed me to see that my work has references to my postcolonial condition, civil war and the diaspora experience of being a refugee and dislocated (Mercer, 2008: 9-12). By looking at their works it also became evident that the uniqueness of my work has resonance to the intersections of cultures with the body symbolically devising and discerning identity and traditions in a public space (Enwezor, 1999: 245). However, this also suggests that my work which emerged in postcolonial Britain has inherited a progressive and "elusive" approach that is a representative model of knowledge in contemporary African art and "cultural production", to use Enwezor's phrasing (1999: 245).

Chapter 2

Angolan History 1960s-1980s: Politics, Art and Musical in the Angolan Nationalism

This chapter provides a background and context for my performances practice in Britain. To do this, it considers Angolan history and its relationship to the body art, symbolic ritual and dance used in my performances. In this chapter I intend to examine Angolan and British cultural traditions, values, barriers and differences in relation to my performance practice. My research as an artist based in the United Kingdom draws significantly on Angolan traditions of performance, music, ritual and dance, which I use as a process used to re-invent a self and identity through the body as the vehicle of expression of my cultural concerns and ideas.

In this chapter it is crucial to clarify that, my performances in the British landscape are outside the Lusophone context and framework in terms of the struggle of colonialism, its governance, colonial exploitation and colonial wars. For this reason, the British performance context gives me the opportunity to re-make my identity, as an embodied individual who retains the Lusophone context within me in Britain. In other words, I cannot divorce the Lusophone historical aspect that is embodied in my mind and body as a result of my cultural and personal experiences. However, despite the fact that Britain provides me with the opportunity for an 'open space', of expression, Britain has its own history of colonialism and slavery and for this reason the spectators reading of my work is associated with their own understanding of Britain as a postcolonial state with its own particular histories and context. One of the consequences of this is that my work inevitably is understood by spectators in relation to other black artists in Britain.

Moreover, it is important to note that, my work has been influenced by the historical context of Angola in the 20th century; this historical context includes the various dynamics created by movements of nationalism and the resistance against colonialism from 1960s-1980s. In other words, these dynamics are distilled in elements in my work. For this reason, some reference to this history is pertinent to an understanding of my practice. In this chapter I will detail this history in order to contextualise aspects of my practice which will be discussed in a later chapter.

It is important to acknowledge that upon my arrival in Britain I felt I had a new start to my life in a new environment. This is because Britain gave me space to connect to my Angolan cultural history and identity as well as giving me an opportunity to go beyond Angolan and British cultural boundaries and the limitations of a single sense of my identity.

For this reason, in this research it became imperative to retrospectively examine and investigate Angolan history in order to situate my own work and better understand how I came to be making the work I am currently making, and the processes I utilise in the making of it in the British intercultural environment in the 21st century.

Moreover, in order to better understand my performance practice it has been necessary to trace my own historical trajectory, as an individual embedded in a particular location in history, this is why I will be examining certain events in Angolan history in order to understand better the history and my work (Mixinge, 2009: 179). This examination is part of the journey in my search for identity, as a diaspora individual re-creating an identity from the position of being dislocated and a refugee (Doy, 2000: 215). In this light, my body is the pivotal agent and the embodiment

of my creative expression which itself originated in my experiences and past trajectories (Mercer, 2008: 153).

Notwithstanding, in this thesis the understanding of my work through examining the history has been necessary, because through that process I became aware of particular individuals who were role models, provided reference points and made an impact on the way I thought about myself and my own history. As a result, these individuals influenced the way I understand myself which indirectly relates to my work. However, because my performances emerged as part of my own understanding of myself and that has been influenced by the range of music, dance, rituals, wall-paintings, paintings and textile art I was exposed to while growing up, this obviously has affected me in having a sense of being Angolan. These artists have been important in influencing me in my diaspora construction of the self, but not directly in the making of the work itself. In other words, the Angolan musicians have been important in exerting an indirect influence in me; subsequently the work that I made is a result of me as a person. On top of that, listening to these artists' music influenced me and how I see the world from an Angolan standpoint.

In addition, it is important to write about Angolan history because it has been the touchstone in a lot of ways in the beginning of my understanding of my own work through the examination of my cultural history, so through this progress I became aware of particular individuals who were role models or had an impact on the way I thought about myself and my own history. These individuals played an important part in the way I saw myself and constructed my performances at the very earliest stage of my performance making. Hence, I am examining the history in an

attempt to understand more about myself in order to retrospectively investigate what was embedded in my work subconsciously or in my naive making processes.

The reason I am discussing the Angolan period of independence (1975) is because it coincides with the period during which I was growing up in Luanda, this period is marked by the disruption caused by bad decisions and the poor leadership of Angolan politicians and nationalists, who from the eve of the independence and liberation day fought a violent war for power between themselves to control Luanda and replace the Portuguese colonial forces (Messiant, 2007: 94). The war to control Luanda resulted in a fight between Angolan politicians and nationalists. Fernando Guimarães a Portuguese expert in Angolan history writes that, the nationalists' anti-colonial movement against the Portuguese became adversaries after independence, in a civil war to control Luanda (Guimarães, 2001: 98).

Following independence the Angolan conflict was strongly influenced by the external environment – United States, Soviet Union and China – and the geo-political rivalry of the superpowers of the period of Cold War (Birmingham, 2006: 110). The territory of Angola was viewed as an opportunity, a strategic place for army bases and an important geographic place to control because of its mineral wealth (Hodges, 2004: 10). John Stockwell points out that, even the CIA was secretly involved in the Angolan conflict with paramilitary and financial funding programmes offered to the opposition groups fighting for power in the Angolan transition to independence (1978: 47-8). Oyebade writes that:

> The war was far from being an African affair, however; superpower Cold
> War politics exploited the conflict (2007: 27).

For this reason, after Angolan independence it was a beginning of "...a devastating cycle of conflict..." internal war and disruption (Bushra, 2004: 12) which resulted in hundreds of Angolans leaving the country and migrating as asylum seekers and refugees to African neighbour countries, Europe and North America (Oyebade, 2007: 28). My exile in Britain reflects very much on the bad governance of Angola after the period of Independence. That being the case, it was crucial for me to understand this period of Angolan history which reflects something of who I am and by extension, the work I produce now living in Britain.

As a matter of fact, the civil war constitutes an important part in postcolonial Angolan history and on that account it is significant to write about the affect and impact this tragic experience had on me and on the progress of the Angolan people, their culture and tradition. The civil war created a distraction in the lives of many Angolans and also large amount of the population were "displaced and scattered" for safety reasons, which as a result left many family relationships disintegrated and "...in some cases never to be reunited" as explained by Oyebade (2007: 120). Further, the civil war also caused many people to lose their legs, arms and eyes due to bombs and land mines. The latter makes the Angolan nation, the country with the highest number of disabled people as victims of war in the world. Oyebade describes the impact that land mines had on postcolonial Angola:

> According to estimates, about 20 million land mines remained spread throughout Angola's 18 provinces by the close of the conflict. Angola is said to have the worst problem with land mines in the world. The mines were buried haphazardly and indiscriminately without any form of mapping. Consequently, their removal has been costly, dangerous, slow, and tedious (2007: 29).

Indeed, it is important for me to acknowledge here the fact that Angolan people are suffering psychologically and spiritually from the impact of the war whether one is living in Angola or

part of the diaspora (Oyebade, 2007: 29). In my case, growing up in Luanda and seeing disabled people in the streets, public places and on television has an indirect ramification on my life and work in Britain, rooted in my experience of Angolan history.

It is critical to discuss the important political movements and its leaders in Angolan history during the Angolan revolution (1961) after independence and during the civil war (1975-2002) because through the contribution of these particular movements and leaders Angola was liberated and became independent (Waals, 1993: 47). However, it is pre-eminent to understand the role of these particular movements and leaders in the Angolan history because they played an important part in shaping postcolonial Angola of which I am a result. Through their fight against colonialism and struggle for independence and national consciousness they shaped Angolan national identity which subsequently became the basis of my identity and the foundation of my thoughts, concepts and ideas in my performances (Tvedten, 1997: 29).

It is crucial and important to understand that, although the political movements and their leaders played an important role in Angolan history, they also left a legacy of discrepancy in the distribution of wealth and status (Angolan patrimonialism) which has affected the lives of many Angolans whether living in Angola or in the diaspora (Vidal, 2007: 203). This discrepancy left many Angolans disappointed with the political movements and its leaders that created a division in the interaction between Angolans from different ethnic groups and social backgrounds. On that basis, people are excluded from power and decision making in postcolonial Angola, this started during the period of fighting against colonialism and the struggle for Independence (Birmingham, 2006: 104). What is more, in Angolan society most areas are affected by the legacy of social division, specifically in education, power is used and abused by the leaders, lack

of opportunities for ordinary people, children and women are prevalent. The denial of access to schooling and adequate equipment and materials for education, insufficient teachers and schooling uniforms remains, while the children of people of wealth and status "...obtain international diplomas in prestigious foreign boarding schools" according to Birmingham (2006: 104). In relation to the education system in postcolonial Angola and during the civil war Birmingham highlights:

> In the Angolan wars education suffered. Radical new ideas could not be converted into adequate supplies of textbooks and so children either had no books or continued to cling to old colonial ideas and school methods...Even the educational elite in the university faculties was deprived of teachers, books, periodicals and scientific materials by the overwhelming economic demands of the ministry of defence (2004: 141).

The opportunity for education is one area where I was deeply affected while living in Angola. There was very little chance of success in a country where power was in the hands of a very few people (Birmingham, 1999: 134). Undoubtedly, the social division and fragmented society with status and ethnic rivalry in the postcolonial era has affected Angolans negatively. In other words, in my own situation it disrupted my sense of pride in being an Angolan; I became vulnerable to experiences of divisions and rivalry. This is because when I was growing up there was not appropriate guidance and knowledge which focused on and valued the roots, values and cultural traditions of our Angolan forefathers and ancestors (Brittain, 1998: 4).

These divisions and the fragmentation of society led to radical choices by the political opponents of the first Angolan president Antonio Agostinho Neto. Nonetheless, politicians such as Nito Alves and Jose Jacinto da Silva Vieira Dias Van-Dunem (Ze Van Dunem) Sita Vale and

revolutionary musicians Urbano de Castro, David Ze and Artur Nunes[5] attempted military coup against Neto on 27th of May, 1977. As a consequence of the military coup they were all killed. Thus, the death of those politicians Alves, Van-Dunem and Vale and musicians Castro, Ze and Nunes is an important event to highlight about Angolan history (Somerville, 1986: 51-2). This event had a massive impact on the lives of Angolan people and it changed the course of Angolan social and cultural history because of the way the government military arm quickly responded to the coup by arrests, incarcerations and the brutal killings of a group of intellectual politicians including Nito Alves, Jose Van-Dunem, Sita Vale, Rui Coelho, Jacob Joao Caetano (Monstro Imortal), Bakalof, Pedro Fortunato, Alves Machado (Minerva) musicians including Urbano de Castro, David Ze and Artur Nunes, Luis Kitumba (Birmingham, 2002: 153).

In this chapter, it is important to write about the contribution of art and artists in the development of the country's in the struggle for independence and its significance during the postcolonial period because such creative expression forms a significant part of the making of the modern Angolan culture. Art is so important within Angolan history because it was used as a political weapon to affirm Angolan cultural values and to reinforce national identity during the struggle for independence and in the postcolonial era. Marissa Moorman who writes about the history of Angola has noted the deep importance of art and music in the fight for Angolan independence. In an interview with Sue Supriano she stated that art is not devoid of politics and history and it is important to acknowledge the fact that work in Angola emerged as a result of artists struggling within particular political and historical circumstances. My performance work resonated with and is directly linked to the political struggle of Angola and because of this it is crucial for me to

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[5] In relation to the military coup event of 27th of May 1977 there are more artists, politicians and intellectuals involved and made a contribution, but for the scope of this research at present the time does not permit to include all their names.

provide this context about Angolan history. This history gives some background and assists in the contextualisation of my performances as it is a history that is indirectly correlated with my performance making processes.

This research investigation gave me a broad understanding of my work and the works of other Angolan artists. In addition, understanding elements of Angolan history becomes important in terms of understanding a number of Angolan artists who now work within the British diaspora. Indeed, taking into account that my work is very much embedded in me as a person, I think it is useful for the project of this thesis to discuss the social and cultural history of Angola (1960s-1980s) not from a larger historical perspective but by referencing the trajectories of my own family because if you like they mirror some of the elements of the bigger political frame of the time. What I want to suggest and argue is that, what happened to my family was in fact typical of many Angolan families after the independence (1975) and as a result I am going to use their experience as a way of shedding light upon the particular politics of the time and how that led to my diaspora situation; becoming a refugee now living in Britain.

It has been necessary to investigate and trace back some elements of my history for me to understand the key influences in my work, because in the process of my upbringing much of Angolan postcolonial history was erased or was not taught in schools, colleges or universities. So, in this section of the thesis I am pointing towards the most pertinent elements of the things that I have discovered as a result of my investigation, the things I think are the most significant to state because this impacted on the person I became. In addition, in order to disseminate greater understanding of this under documented period of Angolan history I have included an

examination of the colonial experience, in the 1960s and 1970s. I do this with the intention of increasing understanding of this period and of my own works relationship to this history.

Colonial Experience

For my parents' generation some of the key things that were evolving in the 1960s were the various anti-colonial political movements. These movements increased their membership and intended to fight against the Portuguese colonial regime and the colonial condition of not being able to express their cultural traditions, habits and customs freely in their home land (Smith, 1998: 55-6). The colonial regime acted as a single voice with total hegemony over Angolan people and culture because Angola was Portugal's most important overseas possession (Smith, 1991: 73). According to Oyebade:

> The colonial power virulently exploited Angola's human and material resources, it denied Angolans much of the benefit of the wealth of their country. For instance, the system severely limited educational opportunities so that at independence in 1975, literacy level was very low. Also, the colonial system did not provide adequate social services to benefit the colonised people…Unlike other European colonial empires, the British and the French colonies, for instance, where nationalist activities began after World War II, nationalism was late in commencing in the Portuguese colonies. What was partly responsible for this was the Portuguese repressive colonial system that outlawed any opposition to colonial authority and brutally repressed anti-colonial agitation (2007: 23).

For my parents the liberation movement became a very important mechanism to fight colonialism, the three major political nationalist ethnic groups at the time were MPLA (*Movimento Popular de Libertacao de Angola*), FNLA (*Frent National de Libertacao de Angola*), and UNITA (*Uniao Nacional para a Independencia Total de Angola*) (Oyebade, 2007: 2). The MPLA ethnic languages are Kimbundu and Umbundu, FNLA language Kikongo and

UNITA languages are Ovimbundu and Chokwe (Oyebade, 2007: 25). The *MPLA* was communist and *UNITA* joined with *FNLA* as the anti-communists (Hodges, 2004: 8).

Their political aims and objectives were to express Angolan nationalism and the supreme independence and leadership of Angola (Chatterjee, 1993: 10). Fernando Andresen Guimarães an expert on Portuguese and Angolan history states:

> Angolan nationalism did emerge out of…heterogeneous ethnic societies, upholding a common political goal of self-determination for Angola and its people as a whole…the colonial experience, the national integrity of Angolan state…was…accepted and promoted by all three anti-colonial movements (2001: 32).

Conversely, at the time there was a revolutionary dynamic for a change in Angola, and the people surrounding my parents were very nationalistic and keen on promoting national independence and a new Angola run by Angolans (Fanon, 1963: 219). Fanon explains:

> A national culture is the whole body of efforts made by a people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify, and praise the action through which that people has created itself and keeps itself in existence (1963: 233).

The politics of the 1960s becomes pertinent to my history because the changes of this period had a direct impact on the movement of my family at this time of colonial oppression and social and cultural control (Ferguson, 1999: 39). My dad was born in Moxico province in the South/East and he belonged to the Chokwe ethnic group, he grew up in the Namibe province in the South. My mother was born and raised in Namibe province. During the political struggle for liberation and independence my father was compelled to move from rural Moxico to Namibe and then to Luanda for economic reasons to find a job. My mother moved from rural Namibe to the more urbanised Luanda. Luanda was a big attraction to her indeed, the main influence on her decision

was her exposure to television and radio broadcasts that suggested and sold modernisation and urbanisation and the attraction of being in a central location. As a consequence my mother's drive was to be in the centre of that world with its imagined offerings of Westernisation and a city lifestyle. It is important to state here that, although this is a personal history, it can be interpreted as a frame of reference and as microcosm of the bigger picture of the political and social experience of many rural Angolans who sought a better future in industrialised centres. The history and experience of my family is representative of a common occurrence for indigenous Angolan families at that specific moment and time.

In the 1960s and 1970s Luanda was a melting pot; Angolans looking for a better life, economic security and job prosperity during a difficult period in Angolan history for indigenous people. Meanwhile, the Portuguese coloniser was taking advantage and abusing power by exploiting the country's mineral resources and appropriating the land. The Portuguese however accommodated the exploitation along with their lines of development (Oyebade, 2007: 23-4). Oyebade's book gives an extended overview of the colonial exploitation of Angola's natural wealth (2007: 13-5). Moorman in an interview with Jonathan Overby (2008) stated that the Portuguese exploited Angolan raw materials and transported to Portugal. She continues the Portuguese were interested in taking raw materials such as cotton and coffee from Angola to use in their own industries in order to help and advance their own economy and to keep them from producing their own materials, they benefit from the raw materials from their colonies and sold them in the international market to gain economic profit.

Accordingly, in this period Luanda was the attraction and centre of different cultural influences. At the time Luanda could be considered a hybridised society. Hybridised in a sense that, Luanda was the centre of attraction where the Angolan population from different ethnic groups came together to live and express their own ethnic background, habits and customs. Also, the experience of the city influenced me and came to be relevant to the understanding of where my own practice emerged from, but also it is a prism through which to view the unfolding political situation occurring during this particular period of Angolan history.

Moreover, during the struggle for independence in the 1970s, my family were in Luanda and the city was shaped by forms of political violence between the Portuguese and the nationalist movements that manifested throughout the country because people were discontent with their lives and the sorts of social degradation perpetuated by the colonial army which repressed, suppressed and brutally exploited the people as slaves, while at the same time sapping the country's natural resources to advance the Portuguese economy (Lauŕe, 1995: 45-6). The colonial system was deliberately advancing Portugal's capitalism instead of Angola (Pelissier, 1971: 193). Thus, the colonial objective was to gain a total control of Angolan land and minerals and create a prosperous colonial policy of financial development from these resources (Newitt, 2007: 57).

My family was living under precarious health conditions. There was no adequate supply of electricity and insufficient running water in the urbanised shanty suburb area of the city where they lived. My family life and their living conditions reflected on their situation before the independence. After independence (1975) their life improved because they moved to a better and

more urbanised area and house in Luanda. However, my family occupied a house after the colonisers left the country. This movement of families occupying the houses of colonialists' happened to many Angolan families at the time, during and after the transition to independence.

There was the constant threat of violence with the sounds of gunshots regularly during day and night as the Portuguese army confronted the nationalist movement, who quickly acted in self-defence in response to the violence (Pearce, 2012: 450). The nationalist fights, motivated by their ideological beliefs, were very violent (Henderson, 1979: 259) and many indigenous people lost their lives during the struggle because although people possessed weapons distributed by the nationalists, they could not compete with the well-equipped and sophisticated colonial military vehicles, arms and ammunitions (Bender, 2004: 235).

The recurring violence created a climate of fear for my parents and their community, Portuguese violence and the army's control of Luanda's streets forced people to hide in order to avoid the "brutal lust of expeditionary regiments..." from abroad (Birmingham, 1999: 133). The people could not move freely in the streets, there was chaos created by the confrontations, further frustration, insecurity and instability amongst the many generations of Angolans living in Luanda and beyond. Consequently, the people who went through these experiences whether living in Angola or in diaspora remain affected by these experiences as a traumatic condition of postcolonialism. Birmingham suggests the types of war and violence Angolan people experienced:

> ...The shadow of war, colonial war, factional war, liberation war, civil war, foreign war, city war, war in the wilderness at the ends of the world. No child grew up in Angola without risking a daily encounter with violence, police violence, gang violence, domestic violence, conscripted

violence, exile violence, the violence of permanent fear permeating a whole society and a whole generation (1999: 133-4).

In 1975, my parents and the people surrounding them were fighting and keen to see Angolan independent from Portugal. During this period my father joined the military force and went to fight and liberate the Uige province in the north of Angola for twelve months in an operative battle against colonialists. They were victorious in the battle which was the beginning of a resurgence of Angolan military force to regain control of the regions and country.

To my family and many other families surrounding them the fight brought a bad atmosphere, uncertainty but also a sort of euphoria especially in the major cities. After the confrontations with the colonialists, the three nationalists group embarked in a gun fight and war between themselves trying to replace the colonial role by force, which as a result created an uncontrolled rampage of gun fight and war which took hold of Luanda in the time of independence, on November 11, 1975 as stated by Birmingham (2006: 116).

The nationalists' political fight and war destabilised my family life and the general population. Their greediness for power became a negative and regressive action for the development of the country during independence. The nationalists were unfair to each other in the political arena, did not create a national multi-party political system and did not formally share the power in a democratic manner (Messiant, 2007: 94). As a result, the transition of power from Portugal during independence (1975) was incomplete and damaged (Ciment, 1997: 47) this situation destroyed the culture and the lives of many innocent people in the cities and rural areas (Mendes, 2003: 22).

When the civil war broke out in 1975 people in the suburban areas suffered the most, including my family, who were frustrated with the political leadership, lack of employment and the hardship of living conditions for the suburban poor (Vidal, 2007: 201). The struggle not only affected the population in Luanda and suburban areas but also in national regions in rural areas in the interior where the quality of life had deteriorated and these difficult conditions made it increasingly difficult for people to co-exist peacefully. The fighting in Luanda made it impossible for the country to develop ethnic and tribal divisions were at the core, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, with the nationalist leaders of the political movements (MPLA, UNITA and FNLA) in dispute over the control of government and Luanda (Oyebade, 2007: 26).

For my parents' generation, the extension of the war and the foreign intervention of the superpowers increased the division and rivalry in Luanda and all over the country (Guimarães, 2001: 97). The worsening situation forced many people to flee from Luanda into the bush or refugee camps for displaced individuals in neighbouring African countries. Birmingham describes how some escaped the cities and found refugee camps:

> Lucky children were the ones escaped to a slightly less uncertain future in the not always well tolerated refugee camps across the impoverished borders of Zambia or Zaire (1999: 139).

The postcolonial situation of devastating war and internal conflict drove much of the Angolan population into forced exile. My family was deeply affected by this condition and as a consequence we were forced to migrate into exile for a better life and opportunity, denied in a home atmosphere of political greed and anger created by the nationalists, which "...rejected a post-colonial peaceful co-existence and power-sharing and each attempted to usurp the political power left up for grabs..." as pointed out by Assis Malaquias (2006: 39).

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To my family and the people surrounding them, Angolan postcolonial art after the proclamation of independence was characterised by an atmosphere of new energy and dynamism based on the political revolution and activism in Luanda. For people of Luanda it was the first time after independence that art was utilised as a medium of expression of liberation from colonial domination. As a result, postcolonial artists began to publically exhibit art from this period, for this reason our house displayed paintings and sculptures which expressed the new Angolan political, social and cultural liberation and transformation, rooted in Angolan identity. Furthermore, as a national expression of identity, artists began to change the landscape of suburban areas, by creating a new form of wall murals through painting and drawings, this was done in the streets of local areas, schools and colleges, military headquarters and military hospitals (Mixinge, 2009: 109). Mural artists painted the faces of important Angolan postcolonial political leaders and revolutionary heroes and leaders from Marxist-Socialist countries, such as Russia and Cuba (Mixinge, 2009: 109). For the first time the people could view the wall murals as a new symbol of cultural and street celebration of freedom and ideology in Luanda. This heralded the beginning of postcolonial revolutionary art where it was at last possible to express oneself publically (Birmingham, 2006: 137).

In 1977, two years after independence, after the political change and transformation in the country, my parents' and people in the suburban areas began to show their discontent with the governance of president Neto and his leadership. This was done through mobilisation in local youth centres where people together with factional politicians organised various meetings and rallies. From this period, people together with Neto's party divergents began to speak out and act politically against his authority and an ideology driven by the inherited colonial system

(Moorman, 2008: 173). In other words, people were hostile to Neto's power in the context of class, racial division and prejudice. The meetings intensified in an atmosphere where life and reality of the poor was deteriorating and badly affected by the shortage of food resulting from industrial and manufacturing decline and collapse (Vidal, 2007: 202). Vidal describes the impact of Neto's state leadership in 1977 in postcolonial Angola:

> Service delivery by the state progressively collapsed, especially within the social sector, and this primarily affected the bottom layers of society and the poor. The social tissue became deeply fragmented and the party's 'social compact' entered a process of terminal dereliction... (2007: 202)

The streets of Luanda and the suburban areas were in chaos, my parents and the people around them together with the political factionists such as Alves and Van-Dunem started an unstoppable mobilisation of the activists, and as a result "tensions flourished" within Neto's governmental party and members (Moorman, 2008: 173). The result was the establishing of extensive political debate which made some politicians question Neto's political lines and ideologies. As a consequence, some high ranking politicians left Neto's party (Wolfers and Bergerol, 1983: 85). The ideological differences of class, race and ethnic division generated by the colonial system were at the core of Alves and Van-Dunem mobilisation and revolution according to Moorman (2008: 173). The public debates made Alves and Van-Dunem visible, which resulted in their suspension and removal from the party (MPLA) and a subsequent enquiry was launched, headed by Jose Eduardo dos Santos to find out about Alves and Van-Dunem ideologies and motives against the party politics. This destabilised and created agitation within the party that had many of its members unhappy with its leadership (Wolfers and Bergerol, 1983: 88).

Alves and Van-Dunem became popular amongst the people in the suburban areas and throughout the country because of their political activism concerning the poor and underprivileged left in a deteriorated society and culture apparently without future prosperity or any aspirations (Birmingham, 2006: 116). As a result, Alves and Van-Dunem, together with top military officers, revolutionary musicians Castro, Ze and Nunes and supporters attempted an unsuccessful military coup against Neto on 27th of May, [6] 1977, as mentioned earlier in this chapter. Due to the way Alves, Van-Dunem and their supporters were brutally killed by governmental forces and the Cuban army. This event changed the course of Angolan history forever (Wolfers and Bergerol, 1983: 97-9). According to a journalist and writer Lara Pawson, the government forces went to the factionists' "...houses and without any explanation, took them and killed them" (2007: 14). For the same reason, Angolan artists in Angola and the diaspora in Britain are suffering a syndrome of traumatic memory, which inhibits them from challenging political ideologies and ideals. As a result, this makes them afraid of the Angolan state even while living in Britain or abroad (Vidal, 2007: 129). That being said, fear is so much prevalent in the lives of artists that as a result they are afraid of detention and intimidation because of the denial of "freedom of speech" and "freedom of conversation" in a country where the government created a widespread culture of fear and terror (Birmingham, 2006: 161). Pawson explains about her experience with Angolan people in relation to the 27th of May event:

> I have met many Angolans who have been too scared to speak. Even when offered anonymity some have been convinced that I am an MPLA spy, while others were sure we were being spied on during interview. This has been the case both inside Angola and beyond, in Europe (2007: 15).

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[6] Supporters of Alves and Van-Dunem attempted military coup in which they lost their lives, including politicians such as Jacob Joao Caetano (Monstro Immortal), Bakalof, Aires Machado (Minerva), Pedro Fortunato, Betinho, Nzamba, Rui Coelho, Sita Vales, Joao Manuel da Silva, Jose Congo Sebastiao, Estevao Gungo Arao, Antonio Gaspar da Conceicao, Veloso, Manuel Cassule (Baje), Sianuk (Botelho, 2007: 535) and including musicians such as Urbano de Castro, David Ze, Artur Nunes and Luis Kitumba (Birmingham, 2002: 153).

This means, amongst many Angolan artists there is a sense of disempowerment and neutralisation of public opposition of the Angolan governmental regime; they feel it is too risky for them to speak out (Moorman, 2008: 172). Pawson points out that "...many Angolans remain fearful of protesting or even simply expressing their political views to this day" (2007: 6). I argue that, the government abuse power and politically insult the less privileged people. In other words, the May 1977 event silenced almost all politicised artists, musicians and intellectuals who disagreed with the governmental regime. Because of this, considerable censorship is prevalent in the media, radio and television broadcasts and in newspapers and magazines (Oyebade, 2007: 68). Moorman writes about the effect of the killing of 27th of May and the fear that created in the Angolan society and people:

> Not only do survivors and relatives of those killed remain reluctant to speak out or act politically, but an ongoing and generalized fear of openly criticizing the government and the party permeates Angolan society. When the party leadership sanctioned the killing and tortured of a good number of its own militants it created a disincentive to political engagement among youth that continues today ((2008: 172).

Today some artists in Britain are still affected by this event (Birmingham, 1999: 153). For instance, Ney Corte Real (2008) has an extensive knowledge of this period of Angolan music. In an interview he described the deaths of these important musicians. He openly narrates the importance of the musicians who were killed in May 1977 and the impact they made on the Angolan culture and people, in Angola and abroad. He also states that their music has creatively influenced his music and performance, as he feels inspired by the legacy of music those artists left behind.

Further, as a repercussion of this event, in Britain in some cases in public places or house gatherings when talking about Angolan politics, artists often fall silence because even in the relative freedom of the United Kingdom they fear repercussions should they speak their mind. In this light, my work is a sign of freedom of expression; I am using my body as a voice for Angolan people who are voiceless and constrained in a postcolonial era of political, autocratic and dictatorial regime (Messiant, 2007: 94).

Growing up in Luanda in the 1980s

In 1975 after independence, the Portuguese colonial administration left Angola (Newitt, 2007: 87) Luanda, as an urban area developed and it became the central point for the Angolan population to migrate. Although the country was experiencing a civil war, people travelled from rural areas to settle and find a better life in Luanda. That is, Luanda was an attractive place for the rural population to find opportunity and because of this it was Luanda where most Angolan social and cultural change took place.

In terms of my own personal circumstance, growing up in Luanda I saw the urban environment developing with a multitude of different people from all parts of the country living together and expressing all sorts of cultural traditions as part of everyday life. I grew-up in an environment where everyday life was full of expressions of cultural traditions and ethnic influences from people coming from different areas of the country to a more urbanised Luanda. At the time, Luanda had a mixed population of many ethnic groups and as such can be considered a city of hybridised influences. Because of this, my early formative experiences include the impact of the city and the cultural and ritual practice, with which I was surrounded. Luanda had a very vibrant

tradition of ritual practices which reflects the mixed population from different ethnic groups. Ritual practices are part of hundreds of years of tradition of honouring and celebrating the value and protection of departed ancestors and the impact they made in the lives of their own living kin. For this reason, ritual practice in Luanda is part of everyday life, beliefs, customs and way of being in the world. In most cases, rituals are accompanied with music, singing or dance as an expressive corporeal connection with ancestors as a spiritual act. The African historian and writer John Mbiti argues that ritual is a bodily manifestation of a "...living religion, which is written in the lives of the people..." in the context of African philosophy and religion (1991: 128-31). He writes:

> Africans celebrate life. Therefore they celebrate their religion, they dance it, they sing it, they act it. A lot of the visible demonstration of African Religion occurs in rituals and festivals. These embody what people believe, what they value, and what they wish to apply in daily life. Through rituals, people not only act their religion but communicate it to the younger generation (1991: 131).

When I was in Luanda I saw some of the people arriving from the rural areas who were deeply affected by the war, they were traumatised by the war and change. For some people there was a need to hold onto the values of the past which in everyday life they expressed through dressing with garments or attire with traditional textile designs, listening to music and gathering in the streets with friends. Some of my neighbours were very expressive with how they dressed, especially on Sundays. Religion played an important part in the lives of the people. There was a mixture of different religions, but predominately they were Christian (Protestant, Evangelicals), Jehovah's Witnesses and Simao Ntoko, an independent black church influenced by the Kimbanguist church of Congo in the north of Angola (Oyebade, 2007: 41). The Ntoko church was very influential in the suburban areas. Moreover, because they believed in traditional

religion and spirit, they were "treated as subversives" to the social order by the political leaders of the government (Birmingham, 2006: 125).

Another area where expressions of cultural traditions were visible was in ceremonial rituals for the dead and funeral rites, where a procession takes place as a performative act from the Christian or Ntokoist church to the house of the dead with singing and dancing. In the funeral rites a ritual mourning is organised with washing and kissing of the dead body by family members seven days after of the departure of the dead a party is organised with music, song, dance and traditional food because they believe "that life continues after death but in spiritual form" (Oyebade, 2007: 136). Also, in Luanda Island, every year people are invited to celebrate a ritual at the seaside called Kianda which means a witch and the queen of the waters. In the celebration people bring food to throw in the sea, and drinks (beer, wine, coca cola, and traditional alcoholic drinks) are offered in a form of libation, a religious act of protection against atrocities and disasters. It is important to know that rituals are conducted to placate the sea or Kianda and to gain her favour for a good fishing season. In my interview with Branca Miguel da Silva (2009) an Angolan spiritualist, described in detail the ritual of Kianda, as well as the power of Kianda in Angolan religious cosmology, the phenomenon of death, and Kianda's influence in bringing one fortune. Silva describes a very dark picture of death, witches and lives after death within Angolan spirituality which is not the focus of this present research project.

In addition, growing up in Luanda I was fairly unaware of the politics of my particular situation, but I was aware of certain sorts of performative practice and the surrounding ritual practice. I was part of a local traditional dance group that explored traditional dance and choreography

together with a decorated textile uniform as a sign of national identity. As Partha Chatterjee has argued in the context of postcolonialism, national identity is expressed through a group common objective in practice or action (1982: 2). The traditional group I was part of rehearsed everyday during the week and were invited to perform and compete in the local recreation centres in the weekends against other groups to see who had the best moves and traditional styles. Our group represented the local area in the city competition and festivals. In addition, I saw people expressing different dance styles, ranging from traditional ritual dances to more modern ones.

Another important aspect of expressions of cultural tradition in Luanda was the ritual ceremony of carnival in the streets that was "rooted in the customs" and traditions of the fishing population together with the then emerging "modern society" (Birmingham, 2006: 131). In the carnival ritual, people were "uninhibited [in] sexual expression" and dressed in costumes to "compete for prizes based on the quality of their dance and music" appearance, body adornment and mask (Oyebade, 2007: 157). The carnival was an excessive form of free revelation of national and city identity where people displayed a variety of cultural artefacts centred on Angolan traditions, habits and way of being in the world. Luanda carnival is very important cultural practice in the modern Angola, because it is a way of keeping Angolan tradition and it is a traditional tool to educate the new generation about their past trajectories and history. Birmingham describes in detail the history of the Luanda carnival and its influences in relation to religion, politics and culture (2006: 123-38).

It is important to point out that, in my initial practice, what gave me the desire to look further back to Angolan tradition is because travelling to England as a refuge, made me lose my sense of self and my sense of belonging. The writing of the historian Edward Said emphasises my

argument, when he states that, the trauma of displacement inflicts on the identity of people in exile as a result of political upheaval and cultural disruption, this is a manifestation of a condition of estrangement, indeed never "...satisfied, placid or secure" (1992: 366). Said writes that exile:

> ...Is fundamentally a discontinuous state of being. Exiles are cut off from their roots, their land, their past. They generally do not have armies or states, although they are often in search of them. Exiles feel, therefore, an urgent need to reconstitute their broken lives, usually by choosing to see themselves as part of a triumphant ideology or a restored people (1992: 360).

By the same token, growing up in Luanda my environment influenced how I see the world which informs how I make my work. The rituals, traditions, habits, customs and belief system in Luanda have a profound impact on how I produce my performances. My experience of seeing the hybridised or mutated forms of practices that had come perhaps from rural settings and is now practised in an urban setting in some sort of prestigious form, influenced the way I do my work, what I discovered in that process was that I did not know very much about my own roots, hence I first initiated this research project. In the early 1990s while the country was under intensive internal civil war, like my family hundreds of people left the country as migrants. My family particularly left to settle in Portugal and Britain. I will discuss further about the experience of Angolan artists and people in Portugal and Britain in chapter 4.

Chapter 3

Historical Context: Angolan Art and Music in Portugal and British Diaspora

In the beginning of the 1990s a substantial number of Angolan artists started to leave Angola because of the civil war and the social and political instability. For many artists travel abroad was an unavoidable option, as it was a way to find opportunities and to continue art practice. Portugal was the first option for Angolan artists to migrate, because for them it was easier to get a visa as a by-product of colonisation, and because they spoke and understood the Portuguese language. I am using the term 'artists' in this chapter to describe musicians and artists that make paintings, sculptures, ceramics, installations and videos. Most of the artists discussed in this thesis were young when they first travelled to Portugal, as either artists or refugees and asylum-seekers.

Portugal provided a safe place for these artists to produce art; it also opened a new vision in their artistic expression and creativity. Travelling to Portugal meant a possibility of creating new connections, space to explore their cultural identities and values and accommodate their art. In other words, Portugal for them was an 'imaginary' place to escape war.

In the 1990s upon the arrival of Angolan artists in Portugal there was very negative response from the Portuguese community, and this could be because of the Portuguese resentment about their history in Angola such as the material possessions they left in Angola after Independence (1975) which some Portuguese people even today have not recovered. I believe that this made it difficult for the integration of Angolan artists in Portugal.

In my own case I travelled to Portugal very young and I was living with friends, while living there I recount the fact that my experience was very much linked with the Portuguese colonial in history Angola. In other words, me and my friends were very affected by the history, mentally we were stuck thinking about the Portuguese presence in Angola and the state they left the country. During the time I lived in Portugal (1995-1997) it was very rare to see Angolan art and artists because Angolans were refugees and dislocated. Some artists were working in the building and construction industry to earn a living.

Despite the difficulties and problematic scenarios Angolan artists faced while living in Portugal, positive things also happened because Angolan artists in Britain created a network with other Angolan artists in Portugal and through this network art exhibitions and festivals of art were organised as part of the diaspora coming together.

However, the number of issues Angolan artists had in Portugal forced some artists to migrate to Britain, because they were annoyed with the daily task of confronting racism and with a growing sense of cultural dislocation (Gilroy, 1993: 6). In Portugal, these artists had remained at a social disadvantage and their status as refugees or asylum-seekers did not encourage them to settle in their adopted country. Life, particularly in Lisbon, was very difficult for artists who had no social or professional networks.

In some ways the Portuguese did not welcome these dislocated migrants and even when efforts had been made to forge links, there remained the unresolved problem of the legacy of colonialism and slavery that inevitably affected any relationship between Angolan artists and their Portuguese patrons, teachers, researchers and art dealers. The spectre of the coloniser and

the colonised continued to overshadow relations between Angolan and Portuguese artists, creating cultural tension, much of which circulated around pre-conceived ideas of the 'other' and cultural stereotypes. There was a sense of resistance from the Portuguese coloniser in keeping the colonised 'other' out as described by Sallie Westwood and Annie Phizacklea (2000: 1-3). In other words, the migrant and dispossessed 'other' was demonised by the coloniser (Westwood and Phizacklea, 2000: 1).

Angolan art and music has a long tradition that has influenced my work because while I was living in Angola the dynamic of being surround art and music shaped my perception and creative ability and process. Hence, Angola art and music are part of the culture and for this reason I benefited from the active dynamic of the culture. In Angola art and music are strongly based on the indigenous rural narrative and for this reason my work has influences from the cultural tradition of rural setting and way of life (Weza, 2007: 24). In this chapter I will detail the trajectory of this music and art in Portugal and the British diaspora in order to contextualise aspects of my work to be discussed in Chapter 6.

One of the reasons these artists migrated to Britain was because they felt Britain would provide a more productive and supportive environment for the development of their art practice after the disappointments of the Portuguese social and cultural environment which still wished to maintain a cultural hegemony over Angolan art and artists. A similar situation is described by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. in the context of the West Indian community in London (Gates, 2000: 169-70). Angolan artists chose to migrate to Britain because of opportunities that Britain provides for artists and the acceptance that are given to the artists to development their arts and

cultures. In other words, they prefer London instead of Lisbon in terms of marketing their music.

In addition, these artists migrated to Britain hoping both to further their artistic career and to develop a world view of an Anglophone perspective. By migrating to Britain they abandoned the oppressive historical links to the Portuguese that continued to colour their existence as migrants. For many, living in England where learning, communicating and speaking English was necessary, along with their migration to Britain helped them to become better artists as they were forced to navigate multiple languages and identities. Indeed, within the Angolan artistic community in Britain it is known that speaking English language is the most useful tool, anywhere in the world people speak English and communication becomes much easy when an Angolan artist speaks English, and that's why Angolans do not choose to live in Germany and Holland, but, England.

Although Angolan artists are furthering their artistic careers and developing Angolan art and cultural traditions in Britain, they still need to create links with organisations and institutions to market Angolan art to an international audience. Caló Pascoal (2007) criticised the policy of the Angolan embassy for not promoting music and dance in the international market. He argues that, the embassy should create methods of expanding Angolan cultural tradition and introducing music and dance into music shops and stores in central and surrounding areas of London.

Thus, the nearest works that on some levels have some passing similarity to my own works in Britain are these particular artists, who clearly are working in a very different ways, but there are a few things that I can draw attention to, if I am going to produce an artistic and cultural line, these are the artists that are significant to my own practice.

Tello-Morgado

Tello-Morgado, an Angolan artist, always fascinated me because of his intuitive technique and sound manipulation while playing Angolan percussion music and the variety of instruments he plays including Congas, Bongos, Djembe, Timbales, Darbuka, Pandeiro, Marimba and Birimbao which is used in Capoeira. Capoeira is a type of martial arts developed in Brazil by the Angolan (African) slaves during the transatlantic trade. Capoeira is originally from Angola, and can be seen as an ancient cultural practice of the body utilised in pre-colonial Angola and Congo kingdom.

Going back to my earlier point, Tello-Morgado's music is based on traditional Angolan music, particularly semba and kilapanga, and he explores the sounds and rhythm of Angolan music of the 70s and 80s. Semba is the most popular music in Angola, which is where Brazilian Samba music and dance style comes from. In a workshop at London Richmix (2007) Tello-Morgado together with Ney Corte Real and Natasha explored Angolan music, rhythms and dances such as semba and kilapanga as a form of expanding Angolan traditions to the international audience as well as giving value to Angolan expressions of culture.[7]

However, the reason I am concerned with Tello-Morgado's works is because, through his percussion music he celebrates and validates the richness of Angolan music and culture while introducing a diasporic element of hybridisation as a sign of modernisation. The sound of his music is very rich and it deeply expresses Angolan culture through sound, melody and rhythm.

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[7] Attached is a DVD of their workshop of Angolan traditional culture, where they express the rhythms of semba dance and kilapanga music, London Richmix (2007).

Tello-Morgado is one of the artists in London who are taking Angolan music internationally through collaboration with British artists. This has made him notoriously one of the leading and innovative Angolan artists in the diaspora. When he performs live he wears Angolan traditional garments and beads in his attempt to combine music and spirituality. In the appendix there is an interview I conducted with the artist Tello-Morgado (2007), where he described in more detail his music, collaboration and current projects in London. For the purpose of this research project at present this information does not need to described in more details, because it goes beyond the scope of this research. However, I will explore more on his music in my project in the near future, where I will write about the development and contribution of Angolan music in Britain.

Helga Gamboa

Helga Gamboa is another Angolan artist in Britain that attracts me; her works explore ceramic pots and photography as multi-media art in relation to Angolan history of slavery, colonialism and civil war. Through these art techniques Gamboa investigates cultural and personal issues of politics and post-colonial identity.

Furthermore, what particularly impacts on my own performances is that she uses ceramic to manipulate imprinted images of the civil war such as: street children, women and men victims of landmines and child famine victims as a process of exploration of Angolan history, cultural and personal identity in the British diaspora. Gamboa's works narrates the brutal history of Angola and the pain of its people (women and children from rural areas) at the same time she struggles to create a contemporary self and identity.

For all that, Gamboa's work is particularly important to my performance practice because it

describes the recent history of Angola through multi-media art. In addition, she visually illustrates the richness of Angolan cultural tradition as a reflection of her concern with the interaction of the past with the contemporary. For me Gamboa's work also symbolises transformation and it represents a voice for the victims of the war.

Ney Corte Real

Ney Corte Real, a musician, percussionist and dancer, is one of the most important Angolan artists currently living in Britain. In Britain he continues his artistic career which he started while living in Angola in the late 1980s. Real is a well known artist in the Angolan community, and his music and dance has always interested me because he explores in-depth the Angola cultural roots through his style of wearing adornments (garments, necklace and beads) similar to the tribal people from the south of Angola (Mumuila and Mucubal), his technique of acrobatic dance and comedy, his singings skills of mixing popular traditional roots and contemporary Angolan music with instruments such as congas, hungo (a one stringed Afro-Brazilian bow), and dikanza (a type of rattle).

Real's music and dance has a particular impact on my performance practice because of his concern in keeping the traditional culture alive through his performances, his ability to sing in traditional language and his dance that represents the hybridity of Luanda of the 1980s and 1990s as transculturalism. His music and dance informed my work through his workshops, as he was one of the first, along with Tello-Morgado to conduct a comprehensive workshop of Angolan musical instruments in London.

His works vividly show continuity of Angolan cultural tradition through his voice, body movements, gestures, adornments, dance, and percussion rhythms. To put it more simply, his work artistically translates Angolan culture to the British audience. In some ways, his works represents a hybrid re-invention of Angolan diaspora identity in a non-conventional manner. Better, his work plays an important part in looking at the Angolan past and music history and to re-frame what constitutes Angolan culture and identity in 21st century Britain.

Chapter 4

Tradition and Origin of Body Practice in Angola

Body practice within Angolan culture and tradition is complex, looking from the British and diaspora perspective. These complexities of body practice, religion and ritual are partly to do with Angola's violent history of slavery, colonialism and civil war which destabilised the cultural traditions and value of arts and religious practices (Hodges, 2004: 6). The civil war that followed independence in 1975 devastated the country's religions and customs and made it difficult for the cultural traditions – body practice - to be maintained. It is important to mention that in this thesis I am using the word body practice as an expression to refer to the practice of body paint, adornment, ritual and dance in Angola.

As a result of the devastation of Angolan cultural tradition, body practices and ritual have been inactive sociologically and culturally. What I mean by that, is that the localised tribal body practice and ritual have not yet reached modern and urban areas of the country on a large scale. In this research I intend to unpack Angolan tribal body practice, ritual and dance. In fact, I am interested in bringing to light the largely unknown Angolan traditions of body practice, ritual and dance, with special focus on the tradition and customs of the Chokwe tribe in the north/east of Angola. The Chokwe have a close relation to my performance practice. In fact, I use the Chokwe traditions and customs as a source of information and inspiration for my performances.

Body practice in Angolan culture is part of everyday life and customs, it is the key that validates and makes possible the continuity of cultural tradition and life through the process of body painting (adornment and scarification) dance, music and ritual performance the culture sustains

its tradition. Mbiti pointed out that, body practice in African religion "Has been largely responsible for shaping the character and culture of African peoples throughout the centuries…" (1991: 30).

The Chokwe 'tribal' practice has been my main source of influence. Their rich cultural dynamic and ritual activities are characterised by a long tradition of kingship and ceremonial celebrations, which themselves are part of their beliefs in ancestor worship as part of their cosmological and religious values and principles. What is at the stake in this context is that my practice is influenced in the way that the tradition of body practice in Angola utilise costumes and artefacts as a celebratory mode to express identity and cultural belong. In this chapter I will detail the tradition of body practice in Angola in order to contextualise aspects of my work to be discussed in a later chapter.

In Angolan culture, body practices have been passed down as cultural proverbs, riddles, "myths, stories, legends" (Asante and Nwadiora, 2007: 2), narratives, and sacred practice which originated from Angolan localised tribal traditions as religious practice based on oral culture. Oyebade argues that:

> Traditional religion in Angola is more than religious belief system and practices. Like other religions, forms of indigenous religions constitute a way of life and the gateway through which their adherents view the world (2007: 44).

In addition, body practice may represent historical events. The body metaphorically translates the cultural traditions, myths, stories and legends. The body explains certain culturally hidden things, such as death and life after death and the formation of the universe and nature. Further, in

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mystical terms, body practice is what finds and gives meanings to death and life after death (Mbiti, 1969: 155-65).

The body translates the stories and makes it real to the people in the community. The body impersonates real cultural heroes and facts. Among the Chokwe, the body is used to dramatise the life and death of the mystic ancestor and cultural hero Chibinda Ilunga (Wastiau, 2006: 7). However, in the Chokwe culture and tradition there is Chinganji dance, where the dancers wear mask and traditional costumes in a dramatic form to create an image that represents the ancestral spirit. It is important to mention that Chinganji dance and ancestral spirit only manifests during important celebrations such as: death, birth, funeral, burial and circumcision. Mbiti writes that in the African context:

> Death is sorrowful. It is also important. There are, therefore, many complex and even long rituals and ceremonies associated with death. In every African society people are very sensitive to what is done when there is a death in the family. Death marks a physical separation of the individual from other human beings. This is a radical change, and the funeral rites and ceremonies are intended to draw attention to that permanent separation. Meticulous care is taken to fulfil the funeral rites, and to avoid causing any offence to the departed (1991: 119).

Body practice serves many purposes such as entertainment, to teach moral values and to critique social life. The body educates the people in the community by transmitting to people Angolan beliefs and traditions. It transmits and narrates their existence from the beginning of time up to the present. In fact, such practices have the obligation to realise the cultural tradition with accuracy in order to educate the people in the community. Thus, body practices are a way to pass on religious ideas to the next generations. Aloysius M. Lugira reinforces this point by saying that:

> Most African peoples have no written language, but members of the
> community are trained from childhood to perform prodigious acts of
> memorization, reciting the whole history of the community for untold
> generations (2004: 12).

In this context, body practice is sacred because it contains certain mystical traditions known by the elders of each tribal community. However, the sacred knowledge known by elders is inherited from ancestral traditions. Mbiti explains about this African religious heritage:

> …Heritage forms a long line which links Africa forefathers and mothers
> with their descendants who now feel proud of it. A study of such a rich
> heritage makes it possible to see and understand something of the people
> who lived not only a short while ago, but several hundred or thousands
> years ago (1991: 2).

Ancestral Traditions in Angola

It is important to mention that, ancestral traditions in Angola must be preserved, this is obligatory. In fact, the living ones must continue the relationship with the ancestors after their death. Hence, in Angolan religious cosmology, it is fundamental that the living ones preserve the ideas of departed ancestors in order to have their protection. So, as a form of preservation of ancestral ideas, propitiation rituals are organised. In relation to ancestral ritual in Africa Geoffrey Parrinder wrote that "Many rites, of widely varying importance, are made for the propitiation, help and repose of the departed spirits" (1974: 62). But, in the context of my work in the present, these practices are used as a model and information base for how I create my live performances, which in a way for me through looking at these rites of propitiation one of my main objective – which I translate through my body – is to give value to my ancestors through a process of offering in a form of a symbolic libation; to create a spiritual connection. However, in chapter 6, where I write in more detail about my practice I discuss the way my ancestors affect and influence my practice and their significance in my re-creation of diaspora identity, which focuses

on the body as a mediator of interconnectivity with my roots and cultural tradition. In his case, the body is used to create a double relation as a basis for spiritual continuity in a new environment, phenomenologically (Merleau-Ponty, 2002: 72-3).

Thus, the departed ancestors left their sacred practice before their death. So, body practice as mysticism fortifies the bond between the living and the ancestral spirit. It gives meaning to the ancestral spirit, it represents the return of our forefathers in the world of the living, in other words, as described by Oyebade, worship of ancestors through body practice and ritual "appease and court the good favour of ancestors" (Oyebade, 2007: 137). In this case, I am arguing that, in Angolan cultural tradition, the ancestral spirit only manifests in the people who have characteristics that represent the ancestral spirits. To put in simple terms, the spirits only come and enter into the people that relate to him/her by family lineage. In order for the spirit to manifest the person must possess a natural gift, artistic skill or talent for music or dance.

In Angolan cultural tradition it is important to worship the ancestors through body practice, which may include offerings and sacrifices of animals such as "goats, oxen or chicken" (Oyebade, 2007: 137). Research by Mbiti suggests that:

> …Sacrifices and offerings is [sic] found all over Africa. By this practice material or physical things are given to God and other spiritual beings. This fact marks the point where the visible and invisible world meets, and shows man's intention to project himself into the invisible world. People make sacrifice and offerings of almost any animal or object. The distinction between sacrifices and offerings is this: sacrifices involve the shedding of the blood of human beings, animals or birds, offerings do not involve blood but concern the giving of all other things, such as foodstuffs, water, milk, honey or money (1991: 63).

Actually, body practice as myth and sacred practice in the Angolan cultural context represents the inner expression of the people living in tribal communities; it is the people's religion, philosophy and way of being in the world. Moreover, body practices are the religious medium which connects the local tradition and the material world surrounding such as rocks, caves, hills, stones, mountains, (Mbiti, 1991: 20) sun, moon, trees, rivers, rain, "animals and plants" (Mbiti, 1969: 50). Body practices make visible the connection between the material world and the spiritual world in other words, body practices enable the two worlds to meet. Mbiti continues:

> The invisible world is symbolised or manifested by these visible and concrete phenomena and objects of nature. The invisible world presses harder upon the visible: one speaks of the other, and African peoples 'see' that invisible universe when they look at, hear or feel the visible and tangible world (1969: 57).

Furthermore, the surrounding material world gives meaning to Angolan traditional religion. I am suggesting that the body and the spirit are two dimensions which become one in Angolan traditional religion. The body and the spirit become one and visible through the body. The body is the mirror of the spirit; the body is the visible external expression of the spirit in the physical dimension. The physical dimension is the only way for the departed ancestors to return to the earth. It is important to point out that in the Angolan religious context, body and spirit form a sacred visual communion, which is expressed in the ritualistic song and dance ceremonies. In fact, song and dance ceremonies are a result of the deep sacred communion between body and spirit. Songs and dances "…gives outlet to the emotional expression of the religious life, and it is a powerful means of communication in African traditional life" (Mbiti, 1975: 24).

In this respect, body practice and rituals explain Angolan cultural existence and at the same time it is a link with past traditions. I am suggesting that body practice facilitates the transmission of the cultural tradition to the new generation as assumed knowledge; in this case the body is the

primary source of information and the transmitter of knowledge. The body is a powerful instrument, it elucidates "past events with persistent effects…" and meanings (Wastiau, 2006: 11).

Moreover, the body as the cultural informant and transmitter in Angolan cultural and religious expression is summed up by Manuel Jordan, when he considers "Angolan rituals" as a sacred experience of "symbolic powers" (2000: 94). Those bodily symbolic experiences of ritual are a representation of the supernatural powers of the ancestors. For instance, within the traditions of the Chokwe tribe, people who exercise body practice, walk the path of their deceased ancestors as reinforcement of their spiritual connection. By walking the path of the ancestors it is believed that they have a better protection from the ancestral spirit. Research by Jordan demonstrates that "people who maintain a good relationship with their ancestors enjoy their protection and positive influence" (2000: 105). James Macdonald suggests that:

> There every man worships the spirits of his departed ancestors, especially those recently deceased…The father's spirit must be worshipped and his wants supplied by sacrifice; the grandfather's must be honoured and his known wishes regarded… (1983: 36-7).

What is more, the process of body practices and ritual in Angola carry information about certain realities, such as the historical, political and religious traditions of the culture. Body practices are part of cultural identity within each tribal group depending on location. Thus, body practices link with the supernatural powers of the ancestors. I am arguing that, in religious terms the supernatural powers of the ancestors return to the world of the living through practice of the body as a sign of cultural identity and spiritualism.[8] In the Angolan context, body practice is one of the bridges that create the contact between humans and the supernatural powers of the

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[8] Interview with Angolan spiritualist in Britain, Branca Miguel da Silva, 21 April 2009

ancestors. In this context the ancestors are honoured through body practice. Onyile Bassey

Onyile writes about humans who honour the ancestors, and the supernatural world:

> The two worlds are interdependent through a beneficial reciprocity. This
> principle demands that the ancestors be honoured and fed each time a
> living person eats or drinks, lest he or she be doomed to eternal
> wandering. In return, the living depends on the ancestors for favour,
> protection, a bountiful harvest and fertility (2007: 31).

In this respect, Angolan traditional religion has no value without the supernatural powers of the

ancestral spirit. The ancestral spirits "influence the lives of their living kin" (Jordan, 2000: 105).

The ancestral presence in Angolan cultural identity is crucial. They look after their descendents

as the protective spirit (Jordan, 2000: 87-121).

Furthermore, in Angolan culture, body practice is a mystical medium which maintains cultural

and social traditions. Body practices are the medium used to worship the ancestral spirits,

through the process of ritual, which is stressed by Oyebade:

> The chanting of ritual song, apart from sacrifices, is a form of ancestral
> worship necessary to cleanse the land of evil and invite the goodwill of
> the ever-watching ancestors (2007: 146).

Oyebade's observations are important to my articulation of unfolding Angolan body practice.

His work is helping me to create a clear understanding of the history of Angolan body practice

and ritual. I am using his work as a primary reference point to reveal the history of body

practices and ritual practice in Angola.

In this light, in Angolan body practice is the external manifestation of internal faith in symbolic

terms; it conveys feeling from the deepest inner-self. Further, body practice and ritual are

associated with communication by means of actions and gestures, they are perceived as a series

of movements and steps in time with drums playing and song and dance. This means, in Angolan rituals, drums playing, songs and dances are the mediators in the invocation and contact with the ancestral spirit. Moreover, the drums playing and songs deal with religious beliefs and practices. Samuel A. Floyd argues that "Religious beliefs of Africans were externally manifested in ritual, through which they worshipped God and venerated their ancestors and ordinary spirits, calling on the divinities to assist them in making such contact…" (1995: 19). Drum playing and songs in Angolan ritual are symbolic acts which unifies humans and the spiritual realms of ancestors, "…making understood the unexplainable" (Floyd, 1995: 20). Mbiti comments that, drum playing and songs "…Gives outlet to the emotional expression of the religious life, and it is a powerful means of communication in African traditional life" (1991: 27).

Hence, body practices in Angola – particularly the Chokwe culture – are the mirror of people's life and beyond, they reflect the links to the spirits, the dialogue with the past and present, and feelings and thoughts of their cultural traditions. In this light, the power of the spirits becomes visible through the process of body practice which is a connection with their life and beyond. In this way, the spirits become visible through the physical body. That means the body is the symbolic access of the physical circle of generation and the metaphysical circle of restoration. In other words, the body is physical entity and symbolically it restores connection with the spirit in a metaphysical circle. That is to imply, the body is the centre where the spirit can be manifested in a meaningful manner as part of Angolan religious heritage. The body is the mechanism that brings awareness of the spiritual world, which subsequently creates an impact in the lives and experiences of the Angolans for good and for bad (Mbiti, 1991: 81). In addition, the body is the gateway that allows the ancestral spirit to manifest as a symbol of deep connection with the

living kin. Jordan writes that:

> …Ancestors return after enduring a long symbolic journey from the realm of the dead (underground), coming from the graveyards in the west, where the sun sets, to enter the realm of the living… (2000: 94).

Furthermore, in Angolan religious cosmology, (I am referring to Chokwe traditions) the body as the gateway makes possible the transfusion and understanding of life and death and the physical and spiritual world. The physical body is the essence of life and death that restores the spiritual energy with the ancestors through ritual. What I am arguing is that the ritual body is the divine medium that restores and maintains the spiritual energy between humans and ancestors, metaphorically and ritualistically, the body is the divine medium for ancestral return and rebirth. In the Angolan traditional religious cosmology, the body is the place for ancestral reincarnation (Mbiti, 1975: 119). In the Chokwe context, ancestor spirits are called to fulfil individual and community requests at all major community functions, and they have the responsibility to do both good and bad. As Jordan explains:

> ...Ancestors manifest as active spiritual agents or agencies they are called mahamba... Mahamba watch over their living descendants but they are capricious and expect humans to honor them through offerings and invocations. People who maintain a good relationship with their ancestors enjoy their protection and positive influences (2000: 105).

The origins of body practice are linked both to religious beliefs and to the exercise of power, exercise of power in a sense that through body practice ones gains power because of the spiritual contact with the ancestor. In the Angolan religious performance context, the ancestral spirit manifests itself through ritual with movement of the body, hands, legs, eyes and head. The ancestral spirit uses the body as the divine medium to communicate past traditions. In the Angolan religious cosmology the return of the ancestral spirit is a way to keep the religious

circle of their ancient tradition. Moreover, the worship and veneration of the ancestors is inevitable (Kwenda, Mndende and Stonier, 1997: 106-8). When a person dies, the spirit of the dead becomes part of the spiritual world. Some spirits become ancestors and others become ordinary dead spirits. Lugira explains that:

> In African religious belief, when a person dies, his or her soul separates from the body and changes from being a soul to being a spirit. Becoming a spirit is a social elevation. What was human becomes superhuman. At this point the spirit enters the state of immortality. The living are expected to take note of this development and render due respect to the departed through ritual (2004: 49).

In the Chokwe religious tradition, ancestors are those who once lived in a human society and culture, and have fulfilled certain religious conditions before they went to the realms of the spirits. According to Molefi Kete Asante to become an ancestor one has to live and die in a particular way. In the Chokwe religion in particular, one must have lived an exemplary life, one must have shown devotion to one's ancestors, respected the elders and women and have had children, to become an ancestor. One important aspect for one to become an ancestor amongst the Chokwe is that one must have died in a particular way, a good death such as a heroic death from hunting, fishing or in a battle fighting the enemy. Death by suicide, accident or other forms of violence is not allowed for ancestorhood according to Asante. Furthermore, people who die of diseases such as stroke, epilepsy, diarrhoea and leprosy cannot be considered candidates for ancestorhood according to Asante.[9]

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[9] See Molefi Kete Asante and Mambo Ama Mazama, eds., (2009) *Encyclopedia of African Religion*, London: Sage Publications

Body Practice in Angola

Body practices in tribal communities enable people to understand their environment, culture, tradition and history. In fact, the practice of painting the body or adornment tells cultural stories that draw on facts and ideas already familiar to the people in the communities, it tells about the environment, way of living, and localised religious ideas of god, and the supernatural forces of the ancestral spirit that influence humans. Oyebade discusses this, stating:

> Through mystical stories, Angolans sought to provide rational explanation to the riddle of creation, particularly of the universe and its constitution. Myths also recount stories of foundation and development of societies, communities, lineages, clans, and ethnic groups (2007: 51).

Body practices in tribal communities are associated with localised ideas of God and spirits departed ancestors and heroes, and the universe. The body is very much rooted with the local ideas of the universe, the sky, sea, earth and all creations (heaven-star, sun and moon, earth-humans, animals, rocks, trees, rivers and the underworld-spirit). In the Angolan religious traditions, people do not see these categories as separated; they are all one in connection with space and time.

The tradition and origin of body painting in Angola come from stories from the rural areas passed on by the elders in the tribal communities, that is, these stories use body practice as a vehicle to narrate and pass down cultural traditions and ideas from one generation to another, from one artist to another as a means of preserving ancestral traditions. This transmission of historical tradition is only made through physical acts. In this sense, I am arguing that the body is the holder of history and the narrator of past traditions. In this context, the body action carries multiple ideas, meanings and communications. Catherine Bell "…identified the body as a social construction in the image of society and a microcosm of the universe" transporting multiple ideas and meanings (1992: 94).

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In Angolan tradition, body practice is a cultural vehicle created to bring balance in the communities. So, through body practice and ritual all members of the community are healed. The process of body practice and ritual brings happiness and joy to the communities and with music, dance, song and poetry, the spirits of the ancestors are called to help and to bring luck to the community during difficult times, such as famine and natural catastrophe. Thus, in particular during rituals, music is the vocal expression and dance is the release of religious expression of emotions and elegance. Music and dance are the intermediaries in ritualistic contact with the ancestors during difficult times (Lugira, 2004: 70-3).

Furthermore, the myths that body practice communicates, always mirror the conditions of people's lives in the community, when the people in the community experience catastrophe or famine, body practice as ritual mirrors those conditions. Hence, body practices remind people about their history and who they are, it emphasises cultural identity. The body as cultural identity discerns natural experiences of catastrophe or famine. Through divine ritual, the body becomes possessed by getting in touch with the invisible spirits. During this process of possession communication becomes possible. This possession ritual is interpreted by a specific diviner, who knows the language of the possessed body (Mbiti, 1975: 150-7).

Thus, only through body practice are the ancestral spirits called. Indeed, I am arguing that body practice in the Angolan context, represents the ancient religion of their forefathers. The body in ritualistic propitiation honours the dead kin and gives continuation of life after death (Asante and Nwadiora, 2007: 24) further, ritualistic propitiation in the sense that the body, in ritual, honours and appeases the dead kin.

In addition, body practice in Angolan cultural tradition comes into play when rites, ceremonies, social or moral rules need justification. The body becomes the physical reality that searches for cultural justification through rites and ceremonies. In this context, I am suggesting that the body, in rites and ceremonies, finds mystical answers to cultural problems, so then, the body acts as a diviner that decodes mystical problems. As described by Jordan, the body as diviner in ritual has "…the capacity to search beyond ordinary human experience and expose that which is hidden", mysticism (2000: 135).

In Angolan cultural tradition, body practice has no meaning without its links to the universe, religion and social order. Their people lives are centred in harmony with the universe and religion. The moral laws of nature are respected as given by God. Mbiti explains about the universe, religion and social order:

> There are, therefore, taboos which strengthen the keeping of the moral and religious order. There may be taboos over any aspect of life: words, foods, dress, relations among people, marriage, burial, work and so on. Breaking a taboo entails punishment in the form of social ostracism, misfortune and even death. If people do not punish the offender, then the invisible world will punish him. This view arises from the belief in the religious order of the universe, in which God and other invisible beings are thought to be actively engaged in the world of men (1991: 41).

On the whole, body practice is used by many different ethnic groups in Angola, but for the purpose of this research I am mainly focusing on the body practice of the Chokwe tribe as a model, because they are located in the north/east of Angola near Zambia inland, which means their culture was not affected as much (compared with the other tribal cultures of Angola) by the colonial experience, and also because there is a good amount of literature available about the Chokwe in the English language, which facilitates this research.

Body Painting in Ritual Traditions in Angola

Body painting shows the relationship between nature and traditional religion, it creates a link with cultural existence, thus the painted body expresses religious beliefs and ideas. Conversely, in ritual practice, the paint is used to decorate the body and adds beauty to the body. In fact, the paint on the body illustrates cultural myths; it is a visible representation of proverbs, fables and stories. Moreover, the body, when it is painted, emphasises the cultural myths and stories, it is a form of cultural transcendence of identity. Furthermore, the everyday identity is transformed through painting into an identity that links with the cosmos and nature. For instance, amongst the Chokwe people the painted body is used as a vehicle to represent their imagination and their symbolic link with nature (sun, moon, tree, forests, mountains, rocks and animals). Once it is painted, the body achieves a transcendent and spiritual communication with the surrounding natural objects.

In Angola, body painting is used in ceremonies and ritual practice. The painted body is a transitory act that links nature and spirit, time and space. The spirit manifests in the body once is painted. The transformation of the painted body as a spiritual practice creates a transition in the body from being normal and natural to being painted and spiritual. Time and space suffer a transitory transformation that links with the painted body because once the body changes it also makes a change in time and space. Time and space are no longer the same once the body is painted. To put it more simply, body painting is a transcendental realm of **t**he body and spirit. Hence, body painting is the externalisation of cultural traditions. In other words, the tradition is expressed through the body as a manifestation of what they see in their everyday surroundings such as the brightness of the sun, the colours of the animals, fish and birds, the natural colour and

beauty of plants and trees is used as a visual and cultural influence of self and collective actualisation (Quayson, 2004: 46). Nonetheless, body painting helps to define origins, in the physical world it articulates and simplifies myths, proverbs and storytelling. Hence, body painting as a cultural medium of communication expresses myths, proverbs and storytelling from decades or centuries ago (Mbiti, 1975: 24).

The practice of body painting in Angolan culture has its context and it is designed only for special circumstances, such as the initiation of girls and boys into adulthood, the ceremony of the sacred cow, marriage, hunting ceremonies and in festivals. For example amongst the Mumuila tribe, in the ceremony or sacrifice of the sacred cow, some members of the tribe are painted like cows, so they can internalise the spirit of the sacred cow as a divine animal. The painting is done in front of the cow before the ritual as a sign of respect for the animal (Mbiti, 1975: 57). In the context of Angolan religion cows and other animals are offered in ritual as sacrifice. Mbiti in the context of sacrifice writes:

> The practice of making sacrifice and offering is found all over Africa. By this practice material or physical things are given to God and other spiritual beings. This act marks the point where the visible and invisible worlds meet, and shows man's intention to project himself into the invisible world. People make sacrifices and offerings of almost any animal or object (1975: 57).

In festivals for instance, the paint and adornment on the body lights up the festival. The different colours on the body give a different dynamic in the traditional festivals. The process of body painting is part of the ritual activities in festivals, where the painted body represents the higher power of the culture and society; it is a call to the ancestors, at the start of the festivals (Wastiau, 2006: 45-7).

Thus, paint on the body transforms the physicality of the body; it breaks the pattern of everyday life and customs. The painted body gives access to the world of the spirits and it represents the mind of the tribal people of Angola. Therefore, the surface of the skin painted is used as a medium to link and create ritual and to open a dialogue with the ancient traditions of the body as a higher powerful connection and social mobility (Thévoz, 1984: 50).

One important point to mention about body painting in Angola is that only the people in rural areas practise it, they are far from the major cities and industrial development, so they keep the traditions. And in the rural areas only a well skilled person can paint the body of the dancers during rituals, and only a trained dancer can have their body painted because each type of paint on the body connects with certain rituals and dances. So, in the case of my practice, in Britain, it does not follow these prescriptive hierarchical codes of conduct, because I am in a different context and also because my practice is in a early stage of development and I am using the Angolan cultural traditions as part of my re-invention of a new identity which is my combination of Angolan and British culture. This point raises the question as to whether ritual is site-specific, in the case of my performances as a symbolic ritual I would argue that some of pieces are site-specific only and other are not, this is because certain sites provides the environment and conditions for me to express my ideas, concepts and principles.

Other Angolan Artists Exploring Ancestral Spirit
Hence, in Britain my work emphasises the exploration of my ancestral spirit through the body. This means my body in performance opens up a ritualistic dialogue with the invisible world, the

ancestral spirit. I utilise my painted body to create a connection with the ancestral spirit where the body is the mediator which makes this practice possible.

Licau Daniel

In contemporary Angolan dance in Luanda, Licau Daniel[10] a member of the National Folkloric Dance Group; also explores the power of the ancestral spirit in the Angolan context; Daniel is from Uige, a northern province of Angola. Through dance and drama, he symbolically calls the spirits of his ancestors. His dance and dramatisation refers to the Uige local tradition; its customs, religion and beliefs in supernatural power. In Luanda, Daniel is part of a Folkloric group that use the body to connect with ancestral spirits. Daniel extends his body by creating an anthropomorphic, symbolic representation of his ancestral spirit. As a dancer and dramatist on the stage, he transforms his body into a walking sculpture.

Daniel positions two long pieces of wood onto his leg to extend his height – doubling it – to give a dramatic emphasis to the return of the ancestral spirit to the earth. His body fortifies the idea of the 'agency' of the supernatural world. The dance and drama act as intermediary between the two worlds. When he walks with his long legs he dramatises Uige religious cosmology and at the same time represents his ancestral spirit coming from the sky into the earth with elements of power, force, authority and vital energy and his extended body symbolically represents the embodiment of his ancestors. Daniel with his extended body looks at the audience from a higher position, reflecting his elevated position and the power as a symbol of his ancestor, overseeing the audience from above. Daniel's body symbolically is the spiritual "agent" that bridges the past

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[10] My state about Licau Daniel works is very limited; this is because the lack of literature on Angolan arts and artists has made difficult for me to find out more information about Daniel's work in Angola. However, his works are very important and for this reason I will explore and analyse further in my future projects.

and present traditions in an open dialogue. His body as dramatisation on the stage simplifies the physical and spiritual interconnections.

Tingana Victor (Mandingo)

Tingana Victor (Mandingo) is another Angolan artist exploring the power of the ancestral spirit through traditional dance percussion. Mandingo is also from the north of Angola, Uige province. He was a dancer and choreographer in Angola during the 1980s. But at the beginning of the 1990s he was forced to migrate to the Netherlands during the Angolan civil war. As an artist in the Netherlands, Mandingo still choreographs traditional dance and plays percussion. He invokes the power of his ancestors during his dance on the stage. Mandingos' ancestral spirit manifests while he performs and when he plays drums and his ancestral spirit becomes visible through the intensity of his body movements, his body decoration and also he developed a tongue language with his ancestors while performing. Mandingo speaks with his ancestors in gestures and non-verbal speech and language he developed; when he is performing he speaks his own language to communicate with his ancestors. Thus, Mandingos' language somehow links with the religious tradition of Uige province where he learnt the traditional dance, acrobatics and to play drum.

Moreover, when Mandingo is performing one can see his gestures and non-verbal speech and language, which is a communication with his ancestors. Also, when Mandingo plays percussion he talks with the drums, as a sign of communication with his ancestors, who speak through music in the physical world. The sounds of the drums allow the ancestral spirit to return to the physical world. When Mandingo plays drums there is an invisible dialogue with the world of the

spirits. In fact, when he plays the drums it instigates a spiritual gathering as he pointed out in an interview I did with him during his visit to London.[11]

Links With Ancient Body Practices

It is important to mention that Angolan body practice traditions have suffered a lot of disruption because of the complexities of Angolan history. These relate to the Portuguese colonial control of the land and culture, the slave trade and the ethnic civil war 1975-2002. Nevertheless, because of the complexities of Angolan culture my work is an attempt to reconnect to the cultural traditions of the body. In fact, because the earlier traditions of body practice in Angola have been lost my body practice is attempting to investigate the lost traditions; it places a particular emphasis on ancient connections and traditions of Angola.

What is difficult for me in this research is to establish the truth about the earlier history of Angolan body practice, because of the extraordinary experiences of colonialism, revolution and civil war. These historical experiences wiped out the earlier history of body practice. In this research I intend to find the truth of that history.

My examination of the earlier history of Angolan body practice and culture is a result of my feelings and connections with Angolan traditions. In fact, the Angolan tradition is the basis of my performance practice. That is, my work started from the Angolan cultural traditions of the body. I am arguing that, my body practice is decoding the Angolan historical experiences of colonialism, revolution and civil war. My body when it performs live releases fragments of these past experiences as a signifier of hallmarks and cultural expressions (Fox, 1999: 372).

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[11] Interview with Angolan artist Tingana Victor 'Mandingo (2009)

In the same way, it is important to mention that in Angola, the knowledge of the earlier traditions of the body is passed down from father to son, mother to daughter, uncles to nephews and from mouth to ear. The Angolan cultural tradition of the body has its own social, political and religious context. To put it more simply, my research is attempting to link with the social, political and religious context of body practice of Angola. What I am suggesting is that, I want to link Angolan traditions of the body with my experience of body practice in Britain.

Nonetheless, it is also important to point out that, in this section of my research I am using interviews as first hand testimony, as a method of gaining information about earlier body practice, ritual and dance in Angola. I have interviewed Angolan artists and spiritualists in order to have information about the history of body practice, ritual and dance in Angola. In this light, the interviews are a way for me to find a "truth" in the historical line and narrative. The interviews are giving me subjective accounts of remembered historical traditions. The interviewee remembers a particular past within the country's history. As such, this "evidence" must be treated cautiously, because it only gives the interviewee's account of the past events. In other words, their accounts of the history have only their particular and personal perspective of events within the nation's existence. In this instance, the interviewee account is used to disseminate information and knowledge, which traditionally was used as a form of oral or verbal discourse in pre-colonial Angola (Irobi, 2009: 15)

What Angolan Body Painting Means in Britain

As a performance artist in Britain, I utilise my body as a medium in search of identity. I use my body to re-connect and link back to Angolan identity and traditions of the body. The paint on my

body represents the roots of my identity, also it identifies with Angolan cultural traditions. In a sense, it is a symbol of 'primitivism', it emphasises the idea of the 'uncivilised' other. It is my internalised feeling of Angolan identity, my inside and outside 'primitiveness'. Thus, the paint authenticates and legitimises my identity; it gives me a 'primitive' status. The 'primitive' traditions become my modern form of expression through my body, my body inverts 'primitivism' to create live performances in private and public spaces and environment (Byam, 1998, 232) The points I am making in this section about Angolan body painting in Britain, it represents my ideas based in my experience of the two cultures, so, what I am proposing here reflects my personal perspective on the performance articulation of Angolan painted body based on their history (Brody, 1999: 89).

In Britain, I perform with my painted body because the paint on my body connects with the notion of 'tribalism' and 'primitivism in Africa, Angola in particular. The tribal cultural identity and the way of being in the world is what I explore in my performances. The rawness and naivety of tribalism is the essence of my performances. In fact, I want to illustrate the simplicity of tribal customs and identity through ritual and dance. With my painted body I perform symbolically and ritualistically with dance to connect with Angolan traditions of spirituality. The paint on my body is what makes possible my connection with the Angolan traditions of the body. For me as an Angolan living in Britain I needed to re-invent myself and to create a new identity and body painting is the appropriate medium that facilitated and made this possible, because it gives me link with the roots of Angolan identity. In a way, body painting naturalises my new identity emerged from displacement; it is a powerful device that gives me the opportunity to express my culture creatively in a new context as a strategy and sign of blackness (Hall, 2004:

255). In this case, the paint helped me to create a new self and identity. Paul Gilroy, on the notion of black identity in Britain wrote that "The concept of identity points initially towards the question of the self" (1996: 227). In Britain I use my experience of Angola to re-invent a new identity. What I mean is this, the traditions of the body in Angola were my point of departure. In other words, through body painting I want to bring the Angolan traditions into a new environment and space, where there is potential for further development and creation of new ideas and concepts.

However, my painted body is rooted in Angolan identity and in Britain it represents a cultural symbol and a transmitter of information about Angolan traditions. To look at this another way, Angolan cultural symbols are complex and my body is trying to decipher these complexities. In this research I intend to link the complexities of Angolan cultural tradition and my performance practices. Furthermore, understanding the complexities of Angolan culture enables one to have a deeper understanding of my practice; it enables one to view the meaning carried by my corporal gestures, movement and posture. By the same token, my body, while performing, carries hidden meanings that relate to Angolan cultural tradition. So, my painted body, while performing, engages in the Angolan politics of representation and identification, at the same time it returns to the past as "embodied subject" deconstructing hidden meanings, as noted by Amelia Jones (1998: 198). To put it in another way, my body brings the past into the present by creating new meanings of Angolan traditions.

What is more, in my performances I use body painting to naturalise my body, to get my body closer to nature in a performance context, by doing this I want to authenticate my performances,

ideas and notions of body art on display. The paint on my body creates a social dynamic between past and present it acts as an agent that recuperates and reconfigures the past identity. On top of that, I think this is possible by me taking my body away from the everyday norm, and adorning it as the 'other', who is emphasising the other culture. My painted body in the new environment returns in time, connecting with the past, and taps into western nostalgia for the ancient times as described by Michel Thévoz (1984: 126-8).

Consequently, it looks at the past and the roots of the Angolan traditions. For instance, the past allows my performance to exist: no past, no performance. Past, present and future together become part of my re-invention of the self through ritual and dance. In *Between Theatre and Anthropology*, Richard Schechner, writes that:

> Transformation performances are clearly evidenced in initiation rites, whose very purpose it is to transform people from one status or social identity to another. An initiation not only marks a change but is itself the means by which persons achieve their new selves: no performance, no change (1985: 127).

In this context, past and present constitute an important element in my performances. The new self is derived from the past. So, my body is the cognitive medium that blends past and present as performance. My body allows the past and present to meet physically and metaphorically, visibly and invisibly. Barbara Myerhoff, points out that the body is the medium of transformation in ritual:

> …Transformation is a multidimensional alteration of the ordinary state of mind, overcoming barriers between thought, action, knowledge, and emotion. The invisible world referred to in ritual is made manifest and the subject placed within it. But such experiences cannot be compelled, only invited and sought. Hence transformation is seldom made the explicit goal of a ritual, on whose appearance success is thought to depend. Rituals may dependably succeed on a sociological level,

effectively transforming jural relationships or social status, without involving transformation of individual consciousness. Rituals are communicative performances that always provide a sense of continuity and predictability (1990: 246).

I believe that my painted body links with ancient times at unconscious level. While performing live my painted body becomes aware of the ancient traditions as symbolic ritual. What I am suggesting is that, my painted body becomes the vehicle that links with the ancient traditions through ritual and dance. My return to Angolan ancient traditions is encoded in my painted body as ancient "subjectivity" (Phelan, 1993: 68). That is, my body explores Angolan traditions from an outside perspective, from diaspora experience. For me the British context opened up the link between body, ancient traditions, ethnicity and environment.

Chapter 5

Contemporary Art Practices: Artists and Their Influences on My Work

As a performance artist and researcher, my artistic influences started while I was studying at Lambeth College (1999-2001) in the Art and Design course[12]. As a part of the course I was involved in a project to explore multimedia art which led me to produce a sketch-book with photographic collage and drawing. In this project I developed an interest in the Nubian culture of Sudan through drawing their tribal dance and incorporating copied images into a sketch-book. I became interest in the Nubian culture and art through the development of the project, this gave me an initial understanding to create live performances.

In this section of this thesis I will describe the development of my practice, and the main artists that influenced my work. These artists played a major role in how I found my way to create performance pieces as a diasporic form of expression and communication. My intention in this chapter is to make comprehensive and understandable the steps I took as a live artist to make performances that reflect this dynamic phenomenon of postcolonialism and interculturalism in Britain. These artists helped me to shape the way I experienced interculturalism and constructed my individual conceptualisation of body art and diasporic identity.

Primarily, I will start by writing about the artists that made an impact in my creative trajectory. Although, I am aware that how my work developed is not a linear process and activity, this section is an attempt to contextualise and formulate these approaches as a meta-narrative. It is difficult to construct the methodology I used as a performance maker. But, this description

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[12] See chapter 6 where I described how my first performance emerged.

serves the purpose of giving a framework in which my practice can be understood in reference to a more established group of artists and practices.

Secondly, a comparative study on live artists will be followed; this is where I will consider my performance practices alongside the photographic documentation of works of contemporary performance artists such as Coco Fusco, Guillermo Gómez-Peña, and Rotimi Fani-Kayode. These artists' performances are a bodily ritual in search of identity. I am interested in these artists because they are exploring the notions of identity, dislocation and the racialised body in the diaspora. In this respect, the reason I chose these artists in this comparative study is because of the parallel of their performance investigation of identity through the body as a cultural vehicle and also because their works involve a direct contact with audience in the performative space.

What I am seeking to find in carrying out this comparative study of these live artists is how body art is used in Britain and the United States as a medium of exploration of issues pertinent to traditions of ritual in diaspora and Africa. I am particularly interested to find out how these artists validate the traditions of African ritual and use it as a primary source of inspiration. What is important for me in looking at these artists' works is how their exploration of new identity through the body is executed in a public space with a participatory engagement with the audience who have permission to interact with the performer and even change the role between audience and performer. Thus, by looking at these artists' works I want to find out how they create the new relationship with the audience as cultural, political and racial "otherness". By this I mean that, how they display their bodies as performance within a cultural space which opens up

ambiguous and contradictory questions about the position of the other (black and brown bodies) within a Western performative cultural landscape and aesthetic which created a conventional, social language that racialised the 'other' as a signifier of darkness illustrated in anthropological and sociological form (Harrison, 2002: 3-4).

Because of the turbulent history of migration and dislocation across continents; there are numerous shared stories and histories that cross over amongst African and South American people. This research is not attempting to make some generic African connection that negates the specificity of particular groups, individuals and societies in the area, but, identify that there are parallels of ritual practices that occur in different regions of Africa and South America.

One parallel between their work and mine is in terms of the ritualistic activities with the audience in a performative space, where the audience are given full power to re-create a concept and space where artists and audience cooperate in meaningful manner, and transcendent activities and thoughts.

Pablo Picasso

While I was studying in the Lambeth College I also began to learn about Abstract Expressionists and Cubism. I was introduced to the works of the Spanish painter Pablo Picasso who lived in exile in France. For me at the time of the project, Picasso's paintings served as the primary resource to produce drawing and collage as multimedia art.

In 2001, while I was an undergraduate at Middlesex University on the Fine Art course, I continued to learn about Picasso's work and the impact his paintings made in the development of

western 'modern' art in the 20th century. What I found inspiring in Picasso's works was his Cubist style of paintings, his techniques in the constructions of images that were partly deformed. In my own explorations of painting and drawing I was influenced by Picasso's Abstract drawing and Cubist paintings. Picasso's paintings helped me artistically and made me believe that I could draw and paint by exploring Abstract technique and style. Through researching Picasso's work I began to confidently sketch ideas for painting on large scale canvas.

At the time, what attracted me the most to Picasso's work was his large painting *Les Demoiselles d' Avignon*, because of the powerful expression which for me linked with African ritual rites and fetishes (Picasso, 2003: 33). I was drawn to *Demoiselles d' Avignon* because of the way he constructed the large scale painting of five female figures with face and body deformed in reference to African masks and nudity. What I found attractive it was the composition and chronological order of the bodies performing everyday ritual.

What I found intriguing was that *Les Demoiselles d' Avignon* was produced as a result of Picasso's encounter with African masks, sculptures, statues, fetishes and artefacts during an exhibition of African art in Paris in 1907 (Madeline, 2006: 20-3). After I found out that Picasso's painting *Les Demoiselles d' Avignon* was influenced by African art, I realised that my interest in his work was because of the African influence.

Simon Rendall

While I was studying at Middlesex University (2001-2004) and developing my art I met English photographer and artist Simon Rendall, and we started to collaborate from this period. Our

collaboration consisted of him painting my body and then taking photos of my performances. At the start of our collaboration we only researched African sculpture, mask, body adornment and ritual practices as a way to gain ideas and knowledge of techniques, styles, patterns and colours to use in my performances. In most of my performances Rendall acted as a supporter but he contributed in the performances by directing them, finding the right space and background, and finding available props for me to perform with. Rendall played an important part in my earlier stage of exploring performances arts, from this period it was important for us to combine and merge cultural traditions using the body as the medium and narrator.

Initially, the Chokwe culture and tradition of Angola became our main point of reference at the earlier stage of our collaboration even though we did research into other ethnic groups in Africa. In my collaboration with Rendall our main intention was to create live performances with my body painted as a symbolic ritual that reflected on my experiences of cultural interchange. Our first performance collaboration was *Red, Mask and Wig* (2002) at Quicksilver studios in Wood Green, London in the performance we wanted to portray an imaginary idea of Angolan tradition. In *Red, Mask and Wig* Rendall painted my whole body in red and I wore a wig and mask and was naked throughout the event. The performance was based on spontaneous ideas because we were walking around the studios and creating performances as we were walking about but we focused on the exploration of the body in relation to space in an interaction with an audience. We created fictional symbolic ritual to engage the audience in the performance. In chapter 6, I write more about this performance, and I describe the interaction I had with the audience.

When we started our collaboration we only did performances at Middlesex University, Fine Art studios, because we wanted to experiment and develop ideas for performances to be taken into the streets of London, galleries and museums. We shared ideas together to create performances; we did sketch ideas as a way to visually create pattern, colour and style. We also researched the internet for information on African tribal art. In this exploration, our intention was to re-invent Angolan tradition in Britain, where very little is known about the Angolan tradition and culture. We wanted to do this as a reflection of my experience as a refugee in the British diaspora.

I cannot deny the fact that Rendall had an important input. Somehow he understood my concept as a performance artist, however, as an English artist he brought his own perspective into my work, and I was very much open to his ideas. Personally, I did not find that problematic although some members of the Angolan community during our performance in the Angolan independence party (2005) have made negative suggestions of how Rendall, a white English artist, practices an African tradition of body painting. This suggests that my collaboration with Rendall was a concern to some Angolan audience members who wanted to know how Rendall learnt the practice of body painting. This was not a problem for me as an artist wanting to explore new ideas by using the body as a vehicle to depict ancient practices in a modern environment.

Jean-Michael Basquiat

As my course progressed, my painting skills developed and I discovered the works of Jean-Michael Basquiat, an African American artist, a descendent of a Puerto Rican mother and Haitian father. I was drawn to Basquiat's works in an instinctive way, although I was aware of his very difficult social, racial and cultural background as well as his diverse knowledge of

history, multilanguage and multidimensional identity. To put it simply, I was drawn to his work and the way it reflected a diverse understanding of American popular culture, European art history and African American traditions (Dimitriadis and McCartthy, 2001: 92).

I was also intrigued to find out that his African America influences were often erased or re-defined as European or American art by art dealers, because his works were embraced by American popular culture in museums and private galleries as part of American modernism. Dick Hebdige states:

> The racist implications of the conditions attached to Basquiat's adoption by the art world were painfully apparent. If Jean-Michel was to be taken seriously as an artist he had first to be skinned alive, bleached of his blackness and delivered into the hands of the right foster parents. This is the price he would have to pay for the privilege of being integrated into the royal house of Western painting (1993: 60).

Art dealers interpreted Basquiat's 'primitive' style of painting as a representation of an inferior cultural tradition and origin, for them this gave a sense that European and Anglo-American traditions of painting were superior, sophisticated and advanced through a structure of colonial gaze (Mercer, 1999: 290). In this process, Basquiat was exploited and taken for granted, while the dealers in the art market made millions of dollars from of him. Through his appearance with dreadlocks hair in relation to his naive paintings, dealers saw him as ignorant and inexperienced (Lemke, 2008: 139).

What fascinated me about Basquiat's paintings, drawings, collages, silkscreens and sculptures was his ability to express creatively his African American and Latino view on the history of the African American struggle for justice in 1980s America where black art was under-recognised.

What I found significant in Basquiat's works was his proficiency in portraying images of African American popular musicians and athletes (Marshall, 1993: 16) such as Langston Hughes, Miles Davis, Hank Aaron, Henry Armstrong, Jersey Joe Walcott, Joe Louis, Sugar Ray Robinson, Cassius Clay and Jack Johnson as a way to re-construct his own identity in a post-slave experience in America (Kertess, 1993: 50).

In addition, I found Basquiat's works captivating because they dealt with the historical experience of colonialism, slavery and religion, as well as resistance, empowerment, oppression, street heroism, royalty and black histories (Thompson, 1993: 28). Basquiat used the canvas as an instrument to de-code social, cultural structures and hierarchies created in art by the power of the western art world (Tate, 1993: 56). He also used canvas as a weapon to fight oppression, discrimination and the marginalisation of black art in America (Frohne, 1999: 441).

Above all, for me Basquiat's works are an exploration of unsophisticated "primitive" style of painting based on rock art, African cave drawings and Native American archaeology. I was curious to find out about how his artistic sensibility gained inspiration from the art of children and the insane and resulted in his naive creative representation of people, city life and space. Basquiat's 'primitive' style of painting with simple lines, repeated patterns, form and shape, and his combination of colour gave me inspiration to develop my painting skills. I adopted his painting style during my undergraduate studies.

Because of my diaspora experience, I found the need to look at Angolan and African traditions in search of identity, and in this process I was attracted by Basquiat's works because he was doing something similar. He used the canvas as a medium to pay respect to the great Nigerian

traditions and spiritual warriors of Yoruba, Orisha, Oshoosi and Ogun as a symbol of identity (Vega, 2002: 161).

Basquiat, in his painting, was constantly drawing and making offerings to the Nigerian spiritual tradition "...as a celebration and embodiment of power" (Frohne, 1999: 439). Frohne argued that "…he designates his paintings as an offering to the orisha (1999: 445). Basquiat in his paintings, "represented himself as Oshoosi, the Yoruba deity of hunting, as well as the trickster deity, Eshu, of the African Diaspora" according to Frohne (1999: 439). For example, in his paintings Basquiat drew images of hunters with metal bows and arrows, as well as words such as x, exu, esu, ase as a sign of connection to the "...lifeforce and spiritual energy of the Yoruba..." tradition (Frohne, 1999: 440). Robert Farris Thompson's book *Flash of the Spirit: Afro-American Art and Philosophy* gives an illustration of the metal bows and arrows of the Yoruba hunters. Those words mentioned above that Basquiat used in his paintings made me realise that he was exploring the Yoruba tradition and spirituality as a mechanism to re-invent his diasporic identity in North America (Lemke, 2008: 138). This was expressed in his subtext as part of his concept of diasporic 'consciousness' and appropriation of space in a new culture situation. In short, Basquiat's works gave me a better understanding of the development of my own art practices. After a series of paintings on canvas my work shifted to body painting as live performance, rather than painting on canvas. From this period, body painting became my medium to communicate my fictional ideas of Angolan cultural tradition.

Fela Ransome Anikulapo-Kuti

As my performances developed, I was captivated by the live performances of Fela Ransome

Anikulapo-Kuti (known as Fela), a legendary Nigerian musician who invented the Afrobeat, an African contemporary style of music that revolutionised African music in postcolonial times. I found Anikulapo-Kuti's music and performances important because he expressed his concern about social life people suffering in poverty and the political malpractice in the government in Nigeria (Phillips, 2002: 7) and because his performances were exciting and addressed political issues as a "...pan-African postcolonial philosophy and political radicalism" (Schoonmaker, 2003: 15) which empowered other African artists in the diaspora struggling to express a black perspective of identity and spirituality. I was attracted to Anikulapo-Kuti's performances and his band because of his devotion to the celebration of the Yoruba religions and cultural tradition through music, dance and ritual and his belief in venerating his ancestors spirit for protection and religious practice. Clearly, Anikulapo-Kuti had an impact in my work, because for me he was the central point of reference as an African artist recalling ancient roots. I was drawn to his music because of the composition and the set-up of his *Africa shine* (a place that combines spirituality, music, theatre, dance and poetry) masquerade tradition, dance and libation, African textile garments he wore and the colourful painted body of his dancers. Anikulapo-Kuti was the only superstar African artist who was publically engaging ritual practices while exploring African traditional music.

What had a particular impact on my own performances were Anikulapo-Kuti's ritualistic ceremonies and his dialogue with the spiritual world. I was absorbed by Anikulapo-Kuti's ritualistic ceremonies in his search for deeper African spirituality and modernity. I was fascinated to find out that Anikulapo-Kuti performed live in his *shine* everyday at 2:00am in silence, paying respect to the Yoruba spirits of Shango, Ifa, Eshu and Ogun; the same great

spirits that are found in Afro-Cuban, Brazilian, Haitian and Caribbean cults and in North America in voodoo. During these performances he sacrificed a chicken as a form of blessing his music (Olorunyomy, 2003: 138). He sacrificed a chicken to represent the power and cross connections between the visible mortal world and the invisible immortal world, the chicken was the means and avenue between the two worlds (Veal, 2003: 39). The traffic of energy and forces between them is set-up during the sacrifice of the chicken. What I found appealing was that, during Anikulapo-Kuti's rituals "...the intent and emphasis of sacrifice is not upon the death of the animal, it is upon the transfusion of its life..." from the physical to spiritual world (Deren, 2004: 216). In other words, flesh and blood became the essence of life and death a divine energy with the gods in Yoruba mythological divinity (Olorunyomy, 2003: 135).

In Anikulapo-Kuti's ritual performances the chicken sacrifice is the beginning of a deeper connection with spirits, the spirits arrive when the chicken dies, because upon the chicken's death he loses control of his consciousness and speaks in a sign language and struggles to break off from an incomprehensible experience (Olorunyomy, 2003: 136). What interested me in Anikulapo-Kuti's chicken sacrifice is that, the chicken represented death and the force that generates new life. Life and death become one and the same (Kuti, 1982).[13]

Analysis of the *Two Undiscovered Amerindians (TUA)* in Relation to My Work

In this section of the thesis I will analyse the *Two Undiscovered Amerindians (TUA)* in relation to my work. The *TUA* was performed by Guillermo Gómez-Peña and Coco Fusco in a cage dressed as the exotic, performed the role of cultural 'other', challenged Western perception of indigenous culture. I want to look at this work because for the purpose of this research this is one

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[13] Kuti, Fela (1982) *Music is the Weapon*, Paris: FKO Music Video

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of the most important performances of the 20th century, in which the body is used as a vehicle to express the relationship between the coloniser and colonised in a contemporary space. This performance is very important because Fusco and Gómez-Peña highlight issues of colonial stereotypes about indigenous culture and identity. I will analyse and highlight the issues and controversies surrounding my work and the *TUA,* particularly issues such as race, identity, colonial experience and history, and its stereotypes.

The *TUA* is significant to my work because it is a parallel to my performances, which are ritual activities that question how indigenous history, culture and identity were constructed by the west. The *TUA* questions western racial "ethnographic paradigms of discovery" in a subtle and satiric manner according to Fusco (1994: 145). Fusco and Gómez-Peña use a golden cage as a metaphor to bodily challenge to white supremacy ideas of discovery, race and civilisation; as well as attitude in wanting to control world history and people.

What interests me about the *TUA* is that Fusco and Gómez-Peña used a postmodern aesthetic, through their dressing and performance to reflect back a Western projection of what indigenous people might be like. This made some audience members uncomfortable with themselves and the *TUA* performance. As Fusco points out "...we assumed the stereotypical role of the domesticated savage, many audience members felt entitle to assume the role of the coloniser, only to find themselves uncomfortable with the implications of the game" (1994: 152).

The *TUA* reflects back to the audience the Western projected ideas and prejudices about the 'other'. Thus, Fusco and Gómez-Peña in a satirical and subverted spectacle highlight how the

West constructs indigenous culture. In the cage as fictional performance they impersonate Western postmodern narratives of the indigenous 'other'.

The *TUA* emerged in the early 1990s. The artists involved in it are from Cuba (Fusco) and Mexico (Gómez-Peña), but the work had resonance across the performance world because it generated debates about the different interpretations and readings of the work from different perspectives. Although the *TUA* was performed in the 1990s, I feel that it is important for me to highlight some thematic concerns that I share with it, such as ideas of race and superiority from western peoples when encounting indigenous peoples. By looking at this work in relation to mine I want to stress that I believe that notions of the "primitive other" as uncivilised are still in the forefront of the mind of western people, and this is because the Darwinist theories of racial hierarchal and ideas of race dominate the interaction with non-western artists in a performative context. This constitutes a crucial aspect of my performance practice.

Coco Fusco, born in Cuba, and Guillermo Gómez-Peña, born in Mexico, are both contemporary Latin artists living in the United States of America (Fusco, 2000: 79). They are multi-disciplinary artists exploring diaspora issues of identity and representation and the vernacular of power relations. Their works are concerned with issues of representation and relations between coloniser and colonised, periphery and centre, master and servant, native and modern people in the multicultural world. Since the 1980s their works emerged as part of a generation of cultural theorists and artists that expanded and explored postcolonial critique, globalisation and race relations through performance art and writing (Fusco, 1999: 237). In relation to Fusco, Caroline Vercoe points out:

> While her writing deals with a range of cultural concerns, her solo and collaborative performance works characteristically explore the function

and agency of cultural representation, social inscription, and the Other's body (2001: 231).

Fusco and Gómez-Peña have been in the forefront in the performance world exploring issues of identity and dislocation, cultural stereotypes and Western myths of the construction of the Native culture and identity. Gómez-Peña explains:

> My works are simultaneously essays and manifestos, performances and social chronicles, bilingual poems and radio or video pieces. In them I try to exercise all the freedom that my two countries have denied me (1993: 16).

In 1979 Gómez-Peña made his first performance in North America, in Los Angeles. The performance ritual was called "*The loneliness of the immigrant*" in which he wrapped his whole body in an Indian fabric bound with rope and locked himself up in a lift for twenty hours in protest against North America immigration policy. Gómez-Peña pointed out that "I can only speculate in retrospect, but perhaps I did this as a way of expressing my profound feelings of cultural loneliness" (2005: 6). During the twenty hours performance Gómez-Peña was unable to look, move or express verbally, which put him in an anonymous and vulnerable position, where the audience were free to abuse and mistreat his body. He wrote about the performance experience:

> A text on the wall read: Moving to another country hurt more than moving to another house, another face, another lover...In one way or another we all are or will be immigrants. Surely one day we will be able to crack this shell open, this unbearable loneliness, and develop a transcontinental identity (1993: 125).

In 1997 Fusco organised the first Latin American showcase of performances in London at the (ICA) Institute of Contemporary Art, as a way to introduce contemporary Latin American performance to the British audience (Fusco, 2000: 2). By presenting their work in a conference

in an art institution she made visible and accessible the works of contemporary Latin American artists such as Nao Bustamante and Black Prince in the London art scene for the first time.

In 1992 Fusco and Gómez-Peña performed the *TUA* in a number of cities around the world, including: New York, Whitney Museum, London, Covent Garden, Madrid, Columbus plaza, Irvine, Art Gallery of University of California, Chicago, Field Museum, Washington D.C. National Museum of Natural History at Smithsonian, Sydney, the Museum of Natural History and Fundacion Banco Patricios in Buenos Aires. The performance was developed as a response to the commemoration of the quincentennial of Christopher Columbus' "discovery" of America, the new world. It was part of a celebration of five hundred years of colonial domination of indigenous Americans, 1492-1992. The performance was a reaction against the celebratory culture that suggested that America did not exist before Columbus arrived. Fusco and Gómez-Peña wanted to challenge the quincentennial celebration by "performing the identity of an Other for a white audience" as stated by Fusco (1994: 143).

According to Fusco "Our original intent was to create a satirical commentary on Western concepts of the exotic, primitive Other…" (1994: 143). Fusco and Gómez-Peña made up the performance in cage, in which they deliberately presented themselves as exotic 'other' to reverse the colonial history and image created about the indigenous people.[14] In addition, although their theatrical performance undermines the indigenous traditions it also demonstrates the richness of the indigenous tradition and culture, through their displays of artefacts in the cage.

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[14] Guillermo Gómez-Peña, Ethno-Techno: Los Video Graffiti's, (Volume I. 2004).

Fusco and Gómez-Peña made the performance by presenting themselves as *Two Undiscovered Amerindians* (*TUA)* from an invented island in the Gulf of Mexico called Guatinau. They based their performance on the European and North American popular 19th century practice of exhibiting indigenous people from Africa, Asia, and the Americas in zoos, museums and freak shows (Doy, 2000: 111-2). A good example is a San woman called Saartjie Baartman (Hottentot Venus) from Southern Africa, who was exhibited with her genitals and buttocks exposed to the public in France in 1810 (Gilman, 1986: 232). Her physical body was used and exploited in public as a sign of African feminine beauty according to Jan Nederveen Pieterse "initially the Hottentot female was regarded as the prototype of the African or black woman" (1992: 181). Also, Bernth Lindfors explains that:

> Like many San women, she had steatopygia, a greatly enlarged rump, which appears to have been the single feature of her anatomy sensational enough to bring out crowds to see her (1996: 208).

Fusco and Gómez-Peña created the cage performance as a metaphor to attack the display of the bodies of the indigenous Americans as the exotic 'other' within Western culture. Gómez-Peña explains that they:

> …utilize melancholic humor and tactics of "reverse anthropology" as strategies for subverting dominant cultural projections and representations of Mexicans and Native peoples (2000: 81).

Their presence in the cage context reversed the gaze and shifted power relations, because they came to the modern western world. So they fictionally invaded western territory, their presence in a new territory "…assumed a fictitious centre and pushed the dominant culture to the margins..." as mentioned by Gómez-Peña (2005: 10). By pushing the dominant culture to the margin they created a radical epistemology as "reverse anthropology". The caged native in a

marginalised culture temporarily adopted a "fictitious centre" treating the Western audience as primitive other and unfamiliar. Fictionally, in the cage they forced the change in the constructed hierarchy of cultures. The cage became the idealised dominant culture the place to be in the eyes of the audience. It became the dominant culture because of the way it was set up as exotic place and culture narrative, where the audience fixed their gaze.

In the cage as the 'other' Fusco and Gómez-Peña wanted to criticise western culture and its sense of superiority and authority over indigenous peoples. They challenged the western public display of the 'other' because the public display of the 'other' was used by the west as an educational tool for imposing western educational values on to indigenous American people. According to Diana Taylor:

> The point of the performance was to highlight, rather than normalize, the theatricality of colonialism. Fusco and Gómez-Peña parodied Western stereotypes of what "primitive" people do (1998: 167).

In addition, Fusco and Gómez-Peña used the cage as the perfect instrument to educate the Western audience about indigenous tradition and culture in a subverted manner. At the same time they challenged the representation of indigenous tradition in the New World Order that devalues the 'other' as having an unsophisticated and backward existence.

The intention of the artists was to make a performance that was not "real" even though they made the performance in legitimate museums, institutions and other public spaces and because of the context of the performance and the spaces where they performed, more than half of the audience members believed that the fictional circumstances of the performance was "real" (1996:

98). On one level the performance was "real" because of the fact that they were "real" people performing. In relation to the audience's interpretation of the performance Fusco stated:

> ...We did not anticipate that literalism would dominate the interpretation of our work. Consistently from city to city, more than half of our visitors believed our fiction and thought we were 'real' (1994: 154-5).

In this light, I am suggesting that the audience believed in the fictional performance because of the way they performed and constructed the set up of the cage with indigenous artefacts, and most importantly because they were inside a cage. This suggests the vulnerability of the indigenous people and culture on encounter with the Western empire. People rarely perform inside a cage and so the performance had a strong impact on the audience who wanted to make sense of the encounter with the cage. The cage fictionally and visually dramatised the tragedy and suffering of the indigenous people and culture during the colonial encounter "it narrates the layers of the colonialist modes of objectifying non-western cultures" (Fusco, 1995: 171).

The *TUA* is very important in terms of understanding of my own work because the body is used as the object and subject to express the issues of indigenous culture being inferior to Western culture. Not having discovered the *TUA* performance prior to doing my own performances, it was a revelation to me when I did see the *TUA*. I realised that it contextualised my work in terms of being a live art activity centred on the body and an encounter between the performers and audiences within Western contemporary spaces.

Hence, looking at my own work, I paint my body to explore Angolan cultural tradition whilst living in Britain as a re-invention of the self, at the same time I want to explore the issues of indigenous culture, tradition and civilisation being inferiorised by the west. I want to explore this

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because of the fact that indigenous traditions have been undermined through colonisation and because of this I intend to highlight indigenous traditions through my performances and the relation between indigenous tradition and the west. In fact, indigenous tradition and civilisation are considered 'primitive' by the west because of their alleged lack of sophistication. Because of this I want to use my body as a vehicle to explore and analyse the relation of power in the encounter between my painted self and the western audience. Frank Willet points out that indigenous and African art:

> ...is a highly developed and extremely sophisticated art form with thousands of years of history behind it, yet it is still sometimes discussed as a subdivision of 'primitive art', a concept which derives from Darwinian evolution (2002: 26).

In coming into contact with this particular performance, there were certain things that seemed highly relevant to me, for instance the way they were dressed (a Mexican wrestling mask of a leopard skin and grass skirt) and interacted with the audience by touching their hair and posing for Polaroid photography, the fact that they explored the performance in different spaces around the world as shown in the video. Although one of the initial performances was framed in a museum context, the performances were not about portraying indigenous culture from a museum perspective.

The original setting of the *TUA* was in a museum, and because of this it sets up different cultural readings of the performance, because one assumes in the museum context what one see is something to be associated with museum education, but it was not in the case of *TUA*. The idea

of the performance in the museum it was not initially to celebrate Western civilisation and dominance of the indigenous culture, but it was an attack on its hegemonic authority.[15]

My research is based on the photographs and the edited video with additional footage of historical images and commentary, and also from articles that have been written about this performance. From these I can piece together quite a complex picture of the work and the impact this performance had. For example Fusco's article *The Other History of Intercultural Performance* appears in undergraduate and postgraduate readers for the subject both of *Performance Studies* (Schechner, 2002) and within *Visual Culture* (Mirzoeff, 1998) as a core reading. These articles are widely discussed and are part of the canon of performance studies.

In the context of the performance in London, Covent Garden, Fusco and Gómez-Peña at the beginning of the performance, walked to the cage on leashes. They were led into the cage by two collaborators who were identified by their prominent badges with the words "Ask Me".

While Fusco and Gómez-Peña were inside the cage, outside the cage the "Ask Me" were dressed as museum "experts" these performers acted as mediators in the theatrical fiction between the performers and the audience. The "Ask Me" museum "experts" served the purpose of speaking for the caged people that supposedly did not 'speak' or 'understand' the English language. Therefore, the museum "experts" spoke to the audience in English, while the cage people were performing and telling-stories in a non-sensical language which demonstrated that the 'subaltern cannot speak' as described by Gayatri Spivak (1994: 80). The museum "experts" spoke to the audience in English, the imperial language this gave them a sense of power and authority while the audience encountered the cage.

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[15]See https://www.msu.edu/user/carterca/fusco.htm [accessed, 10 May 2013].

The way they were led to the cage diminishes indigenous traditions. They appeared to be treated like the domestic dogs that are put into a cage for order, control and submission, and in need of looking after. This action inferiorised them in the performance context, and it emphasised how humans mistreat animals. The leash on their necks metaphorically represented the colonial condition imposed on indigenous people and it justified conquest. It reduced their status as human beings because of the fact that they could not walk to the cage alone. The show represented the return to the past where indigenous people were "captivated" and controlled by the colonial "master". It emphasised victory over the indigenous tradition. On leashes they became the subject to be visually used and exploited, and commodified by the audience. The leashes gave a visual representation of the coloniser's "nostalgic yearning" for the past (Lemke, 2008: 123). In this context, the leashes visually acted as a trigger mechanism – for the western audience – to create a "nostalgic yearning" for the past where indigenous people were colonised and dominated by the western power. The leashes in this case gave an opportunity – for the western audience – to think about the past and want the past to return and become present again, where their fantasies about the "primitive other" could be released and manifested.

The layout of the cage was a mixed hybrid of "primitive" and modern Western items, such as "primitive" clothes, a television, a plastic snake, bright textile materials, a briefcase, books on primitive people, lenses, table and chairs, a basket.[16] These objects were placed in the cage to emphasise Western modernism and civilisation. Gómez-Peña played with the television in an exaggerated manner, to show the western stereotype about indigenous people's fascination with television and the moving image.

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[16] Basket is where Fusco and Gómez-Peña kept all the hybrid ritual objects and fruits.

The *TUA* deals with ideas of the "primitive other" invading the Western landscape and disturbing its life style, and its cultural exaggeration while performing in the cage created a discomfort and sense of invasion of space to some audience members particularly in London, Covent Garden and Madrid where a businessmen "...approached the cage to make stereotypical jungle animal sounds..." (Fusco, 1994: 160).

Further, I am suggesting that the television in the cage became the instrument of informing the audience about the new indigenous history and identity with indigenous voices. That is, the images played in the television were deliberately selected by Fusco and Gómez-Peña to visually illustrate indigenous history and culture. The television acted as the modern technological medium that reinforced the live performance in the cage, it created a double performance, the "real" bodies performing live (Fusco and Gómez-Peña) and the images on the television captured the audience's attention and made the performance believable, creating a connection between past and present. In other words, the images on television made the performance look "real" even though it was a fiction, because the audience could see on the television a "real" old film about the indigenous people, while gazing at the couple in the cage. The television, as everyday mass media, opened a visual and mental dialogue between the couple and the audience the television was the physical mass media that created a connection between the two.

Gómez-Peña wore plastic sunglasses, an Aztec style breastplate from Las Vegas, a Mexican wrestling mask of a leopard skin face and black boots. Fusco had her body painted green and yellow, her hair was braided and she was wearing a grass skirt, leopard skin bra, baseball cap and tennis shoes. In the Covent Garden performance, Fusco's face painted green and yellow

acted as a medium to authenticate her tribal character in the cage and in terms of my own performances I use the paint in the opposite way to Fusco, because the paint on my face and body is a medium that links me with the roots of Angolan traditions. The paint is a medium that bodily and spiritually facilitates my return to Angola as a reflection of my diaspora experience.

The paint I use on my face and body relates to Angola, but for instance, when I perform in the British Museum I had an enthusiastic response from the audience members - -both black and white – because of the diversion I made with my performance. On the other hand, when I performed in Brixton I experience a sceptical response from an African audience that was not quite sure about the performance activities I was doing in the streets, which I feel that there are complicated issues with the black audience surrounding that dynamic, because when I performed in the British museum context I was the exotic 'other' and my status was uncertain in that context. But it was safe, because the museum is a public institution and a gallery setting designated to exhibit art, which in a way I was part of a performative moving installation, I conformed to the audience expectations and stereotypes. is part of my re-creation of the self and the third space. It is my way of combining Angolan and British culture. It is an alternative space that combines two different cultures and traditions in order to create a third one. The third space is formed as part of hybridity and diversity in Britain it provides a space of unification and creativity for non-western communities and artists according to Mercer (2008: 124). Contrary to Fusco I am using my own corporeality to establish a new self where nature and culture are connected as performance. I am engaged in creating a ritual and symbolic return to my Angolan roots. Thus, looking at the paintings of the African American diaspora artist Aaron Douglas, Mercer comments that:

…Douglas provides a visual equivalent to those diaspora populations that attempted to emancipate themselves by advocating a physical or spiritual return to a proclaimed African homeland. His fantasy seeks to empower African American by promoting pan-African 'race' pride. Douglas' image venerates an ancient culture legacy and idealises African spiritual as well as bodily strength. Hence, his symbolic homecoming highlights what is common to the diaspora imaginary… (2008: 127).

In this context, I would argue that the paint on my body is a fictional and imaginary connection with Angola it plays an important part in the self definition of my diaspora experience and identity. To put it simply, it re-claims the Angolan ancient tradition as "representational and experimental" as put by Mercer in his writing on the works of the African American artist Douglas (2008: 128). The paint on my body is "representational and experimental" because it emerged as part of "diasporic culture" and condition which links to ancient roots with a prospective to create "…a brighter future while unifying differences…" (Mercer, 2008: 128). In relation to Douglas, Mercer wrote that his work:

It inaugurates and partakes in shaping a modernism expressive of the unceasingly fragmented diasporic condition…we should interpret Douglas' symbolic homecoming as a counterpart to the various 'back-to-Africa' movements (2008: 128).

The paint I use on my face and body relates to Angola, but for instance, when I performed in the British Museum I had an enthusiastic response from the audience members – both black and white – because of the diversion I made with my performance. On the other hand, when I performed in Brixton I experienced a sceptical response from an African audience that was not quite sure about the performance activities I was doing in the streets, which I feel that there are complicated issues with the black audience surrounding that dynamic, because when I performed in the British museum context I was the exotic 'other' and my status was uncertain in that context. But it was safe, because the museum is a public institution and a gallery setting

designated to exhibit art, which in a way I was part of a performative moving installation, I conformed to the audience's expectations and stereotypes. Contrary to that, in the streets of Brixton in real life, I felt that the African audience felt frightened and uncomfortable by seeing me painted performing outside the station as I was not framed and contextualised and because of this the audiences' response actually revealed the uncertain situation that the performance created. The reactions in the British Museum and Brixton had different sort of motivations from the audience that gazed at the performance where the individual motivations were western stereotypes (British Museum).

The performance was very much open to interpretation and this played a significant part in the African audiences reading of the performance. The fact that my performance draws on "primitive" and tribal traditions of Africa I felt that many African audience members did not want to engage in the performance because I was touching a sensitive nerve that many African audiences do not wish to see or take part. However, I am not denying the fact that in Brixton there are many African people with different backgrounds and they are proud of their African cultural heritage and happily celebrate it in a specific and prescribed manner, for example their national day, a particular festival, the wearing of a particular traditional dress and the practice of a traditional dance in a celebration of independence day in a town hall. This would not necessarily be something that I would adopt for my performances.

I am aware of the fact that by placing my work in British setting, there are complications regarding the images I construct, where the dominant reader of my performances would take it as

a reinforcement of behaviours and practices that are fictional, even though the images I construct

I intend to connect with the roots of Angolan tradition and culture.

The difference in what I do in my performances, compared with the *TUA*, is that I based my performances on Angolan traditions where ritual practice is part of everyday life and tradition and where ritual is in context, has history and is authentic. My performances in the United Kingdom are fictional and are attempting to connect with the Angolan traditions as part of my diasporic re-connection with home. They differ from the *TUA* because Fusco and Gómez-Peña used a western projected image of the "primitive other" as stereotype. They created a fiction based on the western perspective of ideas and behaviours of the non-western people. The *TUA* openly reflected back to the western audience their own prejudice and expectations of the "primitive other" however, that does not constitute what I do in my performances.

I create this connection as way of keeping the relation with my ancestors for protection and guidance. I venerate them because they are still part of my family. This veneration is a self creation. The live art context is the platform for me to explore this imaginary dialogue in a creative and expressive manner.[17] As explained by Oyebade:

> As in most parts of sub-Saharan Africa, Angolans believe in life after death, and their indigenous religions recognize the universe as a unified entity with the living very much in close connection with the spirits of dead ancestors…(2007: 44).

Although, I have not been directly trained on how to venerate ancestors, I am from Angola and I naturally have inherited those beliefs through growing up within the culture hence, I am aware of the importance and power of the ancestors. Oyebade continues:

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[17] For a more detailed explanation on the ancestors and Angolan tradition see chapter three.

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> Ancestors are believed to be capable of playing a part in the lives of the living, and thus the spirit of a dead family member or of a prominent member of the community or ethnic group can be worshipped. Indeed, ancestral worship is a common denominator for many of the traditional religions (2007: 44).

As a diaspora artist performing live art I use my painted body together with objects (Angola) to create performance that draws from ancient traditions. I make up ideas as I perform to link with past traditions but although I invent the performances and concept I do believe in what I do and create. I am consciously aware of the complications and contradictions my images create and I am very much open to the critical discourse surrounding the work. My work found its platform in live art where I am allowed to explore without being afraid of my experiences of diaspora, multiculturalism and globalisation.

Based on the *green-man* performance in the streets of Brixton it is important to state that the traditions of the painted body can be problematic and constitute an issue for some African audiences, because of negative past experiences. According to this, I suggest that some African people in contemporary British diaspora deny their cultural origin and tradition because of the simple fact that they want to fit in, follow the master and become sophisticated as part of the colonial, mental legacy. In relation to the Nigerian diaspora in Britain, Osita Okagbue writes:

> It is important to point out that in an individual caught in the grip of mental colonization, there is never the desire to be better than the former colonial master; such a person finds it difficult to image a world beyond the master (2008: 44).

To return to *TUA* Gómez-Peña in the beginning of the performance was walking inside the cage. He was pretending to make some spiritual invocation while Fusco was sewing a doll. Gómez-

Peña's spiritual invocation was an ironic comment on the stereotype of 'primitive' people's reliance on customs, spirits and rituals.

In contrast, the fact that the paint on my face and body is a spiritual connection with the Angolan traditions of the body and ritual poses questions in the British context, where Angolan ritual practice and spirituality as live art have not really been explored substantially. Thus, one has to consider that in Britain, Angolan ritual practices are out of their cultural context and origin but this research is pioneering this practice in Britain. So, then new meaning and ideas on Angolan ritual practice can be revealed and explored in the future by artists and scholars.

Fusco wrote that Gómez-Peña told authentic Amerindians stories in a non-sensical language (1994: 145), and I am arguing that this performance choice disconnected him from the audience and left the audience to create a performance narration as they wished. The non-sensical language distanced Fusco and Gómez-Peña because the audience could not understand and relate to the story-telling of Gómez-Peña, and this created a division between the two cultures – primitive and modern – and also because they were inside the cage, the frame of the cage stopped the full interfusion and linkage of the two traditions especially in the Covent Garden performance where the cage was displayed in the pedestrian section of the shopping area.

In Madrid, the performance encounter put the audience on the spot because of the use of the Polaroid camera recording the experience with the 'primitive' people displayed in the cage. The fact that the Polaroid camera could produce an instant portrait meant that it created a double performance with the audience posing in front of the cage. For one dollar per photo, the Polaroid

camera released the images of the moments of the experience for the audience that wanted to take away the photo as proof of ownership and appropriation of the 'primitive' couple.

For the audience, posing with the caged people and owning their photo image from the Polaroid camera was like owning the bodies of the 'primitive' people as it happened during colonial times. Metaphorically owning the image from the Polaroid camera became a physical representation of the past and colonialism. In this case, the audience posing for a photo in front of the cage became a significant and pleasurable moment for audiences to emphasise western modernisation and industrial advancement over the indigenous traditions presented and reduced in a cage.

In New York City at the Whitney Museum, the audience encountered the couple in the cage while they were drinking red wine and socialising and gazing at the couple. The audience were dressed formally and this emphasised the limited clothing of Fusco and Gómez-Peña.
Interestingly, Gómez-Peña added a sexual dimension to this performance. For five dollars he exposed his body half naked, showing his genitals. He kept his penis behind his legs, instead of hanging out, giving an impression of a feminine sexual triangle. It has been said by Fusco that this action deliberately refutes the myths of western colonial fantasy of 'primitive' people being over sexual, exotic and erotic, because he became disempowered by hiding his penis from the audience. However, seen differently this action could link with the western invented ideas of colonial fantasy of 'primitive' people being over sexual and erotic. What I am arguing is that Gómez-Peña's action of hiding his penis between his legs introduced to the performance a desire for sexual fantasy in a discrete manner, allowing the audience to engage in the act visually and

mentally from a "safe" distance. The bars of the cage acted as a mechanism to protect Gómez-Peña's public erotic exposure. It prevented the audience from touching his body.

At the Whitney Museum the audience posed for photos in front of the cage and Fusco and Gómez-Peña touched the hair of the audience in an exotic and sexual manner, and this allowed intimacy between them and the audience. Hence, because they were posing for a photograph closely with the couple, the couple behaved in an extrovert manner as expected by the audience that engaged with pleasure in the theatricality. In this instance, the audience were drinking red wine, and the encounter had a party atmosphere, posing for a Polaroid photo became an important moment for them for "inscription of ownership" (Vercoe, 2001: 233). The pose for photo was thus, a moment to own and to take home as something to remember about the experience. Vercoe points out:

> A side-show dynamic was enhanced by the sale of Polaroid images of audience members and the "savages," allowing moments of this experience to be captured and taken away by each purchaser. Implicating viewers into the theatre of encounter by fixing their images along those of the Other, becomes a way of interrogating the pleasures and ambivalences of cultural consumption. The camera has been firmly sited within colonial discourse as a mechanism enabling the capturing of native bodies and landscapes and the inscription of ownership and difference into them (2001: 233).

In the context of my own performances when I was walking in Oxford Circus during the *green-man* (2001) performance, I was part of the cultural consumption for the tourists, I was an alternative to House of Parliament, Trafalgar Square. Because I was painted walking in the streets of central London I was extraordinary in the cultural consumption in the tourists' experience.

In the *TUA*, the camera was there recording the experience and the encounter in a symbolic manner western cultural ideas of stereotypes of the 'other' being exotic were present as the audience danced and smiled while posing in front of the cage. The fact that the audience were interacting with the couple while posing in front of the Polaroid camera dancing and smiling created stereotypical poses through their bodies in an overt and exotic manner, they posed very close to the couple and allowed tactile encounter in an intimate manner.

Indeed, the way Fusco and Gómez-Peña presented themselves in the cage, some of the audience interpreted their presence in the cage as a performative sign of exotic 'other', by making sexual connotations. A good example is in Irvine, California, one woman wanted to go beyond posing for a photo as described by Fusco:

> …A white woman asked for plastic gloves to be able to touch the male
> specimen, began to stroke his legs, and soon moved toward his crotch.
> He stepped back, and the woman stopped-but she returned that evening,
> eager to discuss our feelings about the gesture (1994: 162).

This gesture of the female audience member wanting to use gloves to touch Gómez-Peña proves the point of the western cultural stereotype of 'exoticising' the 'other' bodies. As Vercoe continues, in the cage "…the body of the Other remains fixed in an objectifying discourse in which it is framed concurrently as sexualised, exotic…" (2001: 234). The cage was the perfect place for the audience to fantasise and exoticise the 'other' as part of the legacy of colonial nostalgia and yearning for the past.

Fusco demonstrated a 'Guatinaui' dance with a tape playing rap music. This was the only moment in the performance (as shown on the video) that Gómez-Peña was hidden in the

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background, clapping his hands while Fusco was dancing. This indicates that Gómez-Peña in the performance took a masculine role and Fusco a feminine one. The dance made more excitement in the fictional theatricality as it was just a few movements she made up without any reference to a specific ritual or 'traditional' cultural practice. My argument is in the cage Fusco's movements were a way to exaggerate stereotype on what indigenous people do "in the jungle".

In the case of my own performances the dance is a way to embody the Angolan traditions as a ritual that connects the body and the spirit, the dance is a transcendence that unites the visible and invisible world. The dance is an instrument that demonstrates what everyday life is in relation to the natural environment in Angola. Dance is the corporeal representation of nature. In Angola traditional dances are based on everyday life and animal movements. My performance (movement, gestures and dance) activities in the British context question and challenge stereotypes, and I cannot avoid to mentioning the fact that my performance practice in Britain is a challenge because it can be seen as reinforcing an "old-fashioned" stereotype of primitive behaviour even though my personal intention is to validate the roots of the Angolan cultural traditions.

In Sydney, in the Museum of Natural History Gómez-Peña told authentic 'Guatinaui' stories in a nonsensical language, while playing with a plastic snake that was hidden in his briefcase. The plastic snake in his hands dramatised the encounter with the audience and reinforced his presence in the cage as 'primitive'. I would argue that, to me watching the video the plastic snake looked like a 'real' snake. Gómez-Peña gave the impression of being a shamanic healer that had some special powers and communication with animals and the underworld, even though

Gómez-Peña playing with the snake was a criticism towards western attitude and approach to the 'other'. In the context of my own performances I use objects – white powder, white and green candles, a wooden sculpture, skull, basket and beads – to achieve a completely different purpose, I do not use them to criticise the west but for opening up a ritualistic dialogue between my painted body and the traditions of Angolan iconography. The props shape the performance, create a new meaning and negotiate space in a new context. The objects have a correlation with the performances and highlight the richness of both Angolan traditions of sculpture and ritual (Oyebade, 2007: 75).

At the Whitney Biennial, Fusco and Gómez-Peña had a set up basket with different fruits in it, including apples, grapes and bananas to mock western stereotype about the 'others' eating fruit and specifically bananas associated with monkeys, apes, etc. They wanted to criticise the west and this set-up caused a male audience to want to pay ten dollars to feed a banana to Fusco and Gómez-Peña he wanted to be photographed in the process, which suggests a colonial fantasy of indigenous people as inferior and associated with animals such as monkeys and apes. In *The Negro and Language*, Frantz Fanon argues that "It has been said that the Negro is the link between monkey and man-meaning, of course, white man" (1967: 30).

Therefore, I am arguing that giving a banana to Fusco and posing in the process for a photo was like feeding an animal (such as a monkey) and a postcolonial pleasure and act of humiliating the 'other'. For the audience (the man in particular) feeding a banana to Fusco became a symbol of postcolonial representation of animal/human, especially when audiences confronted caged beings in a museum context as described by Fusco "…after the initial surprise of encountering

caged beings, audiences invariably revealed their familiarity with the scenario to which we alluded" (1994: 154). According to Fusco this is related to the social Darwinist ideas of the existence of a racial hierarchy (1994: 152). Moreover, neurotic orientations are the complex problem of colonial stereotypes in *Black Skin White Mask* in which Fanon points out that "The feeling of inferiority of the colonised is the correlative to the European's feeling of superiority" (1967: 93). Colonial stereotypes have a direct link with the European conquest and dominance of indigenous people and culture. The colonial stereotype represented here by the male audience giving a banana to Fusco captured the structure of colonial power. It became a repetition, western colonial power colonised the other cultures, and the western male audience member fed a banana to the indigenous Fusco inside the cage. In feeding bananas to the caged occupants, this action dehumanised the caged couple. In *The Other Questions: Stereotype, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism*, Bhabha in relation to colonial discourse comments:

> The objective of colonial discourse is to construe the colonised as a population of degenerated types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish system of administration and instruction (1994: 70).

In the setting at the Whitney Museum, while the couple were performing in the cage there was one American female member of the audience who was crying after seeing the audience taking photos with Fusco and Gómez-Peña with a normality as if they were animals. She was unhappy because the audience was not thinking or questioning how they were treating the couple in the cage.[18] In this context, I want to suggest that the fixed normalisation is partly to do with the ideological construction of the 'other's' identity, "…as the sign of cultural, historical, racial difference" and the paradoxical modes of representation as noted by Bhabha (1994: 66). Because they were different in the cage performance, they were seen as animals as pointed out in the

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[18] Interview female audience members in Fusco and Heredia video, *The Couple in the Cage* (1993).

video by a female audience member. In the context of my own performances, specifically the collaboration I did with photographer Simon Rendall, *Red, Mask and Wig* (2002), in which I was painted red, wore a mask and a wig and was naked, I did not experience audience members taking photos and treating me as if I were an animal, because of how I deliberately constructed the performance which primarily focused on my body creating a fictional ritual and exploration of the dynamic of space in an interaction between me, painted red as the 'primitive' 'other' and the audience members.

During the performance of *Red, Mask and Wig* audience members were taking pictures and invited me to perform in different spaces of the festival and on some occasions to perform with other performers to create a double performance as an attempt to create a contrast of a visual performance aesthetic and to explore the boundaries of performance making and interpretations. I have to consider that although there was no verbal comment from the audience during the performance which related me with animals, the methods I used during the performance were deliberately set up to create an open interpretation from the audience. During the performance I was dancing and interacting with other performance artists. What made my performance different was the fact that I was painted and created a performance piece as the "primitive other" roaming in the space of the festival where the audience were close to me during my performance. Indeed, I was not restrained to a specific space or place and did not create a boundary between me and the audience, the performance was an open and an invited interaction with the audience in an objective manner.

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Going back to the *TUA*, the performance in different places around the world had a variety of responses. Fusco and Gómez-Peña's actions in the cage suggested that they wanted to create an immediate and unreflective response from the audience. This intention created some anger from critics and reviewers that considered Fusco and Gómez-Peña as manipulators. As stated by Fusco, "The reviewer sent by the *Washington Post*, for example, was so furious about our "dishonesty" that she could barely contain her anger and had to be taken away by attendants" (1994: 159). This anger manifested by the audience member was partly to do with the construction of the piece and the artefacts in the cage that triggered some of the audience's feelings about the "primitive other" within the western environment.

Rotimi Fani-Kayode's Work

Oluwarotimi (Rotimi) Adebiyi Wahab Fani-Kayode was a black gay male artist born in 1955 in Lagos, Nigeria from a Yoruba family. Chief Fani-Kayode was a well respected high priest in a city of ancestral importance in Yoruba culture. Fani-Kayode's family were the keepers of the Yoruba deities and they had the custodial responsibility of the Ifa Shrine of the Yoruba oracle and the traditional title of Akire. Fani-Kayode's family was well regarded for its spiritual responsibilities in its hometown of Ife, a sacred city in Nigeria known as the spiritual centre of Yoruba culture. Chief Remi Fani-Kayode was a high priest because he possessed the crown wealth of the family of the Akire. Chief Remi was the "Balogun of Ife" which means a traditional Yoruba title of "warrior." (This status has relevance solely to the Yoruba ethnic group and has little effect on Nigeria's political administration) (Reid, 1998: 218). It is important to know about the history of Fani-Kayode's family, which is one of the reference points featured in his work the Yoruba religious tradition.

Rotimi Fani-Kayode was born into a family of privilege in both political and religious circles, but, was dispossessed at a young age. When Fani-Kayode was eleven years old in 1966 a military coup and civil war took place in Nigeria forcing him and his family to move to England where they sought political asylum and settled in the seaside resort town of Brighton. Fani-Kayode continued his education in Brighton until the age of twenty-one when he and his family travelled to the United States to Washington D.C. to further his education and academic career in 1976.

While his desire was to study fine arts, he compromised with his parent's wishes for him and also studied economics. His parent's ideas were to make him an educated economist to help the economy in Nigeria. After finishing a B.A from Georgetown University in Washington D.C. in 1980, Fani-Kayode moved to New York and completed an M.F.A. in fine art and photography at Pratt Institute in 1983. Fani-Kayode, during his graduate studies, began making photographs of himself and other black men in Yoruba garb using Yoruba symbols, art objects, iconography and dramatic colours. His photographic portraits were specifically nude and dressed in traditional Yoruba clothing. The earlier photographs of Fani-Kayode, while a graduate student, laid the important formal and critical frame-work of his later performance and photographic works, which mainly explored issues of race, masculinity, belonging, homoeroticism and nationality hence, he often used a very sophisticated and ambiguous mix of pattern, texture, colour and symbols of Africa and Western iconography.

I chose to study Rotimi Fani-Kayode because he is one of the most important black

photographers of the 20th century,[19] and because he created images to promote the black presence in the British diaspora in the 1980s (Bailey, 1990: 60). The images he created were ambiguous images which Kobena Mercer has described as "Eros and Diaspora" (1996: 108). He made a significant impact on the representation of black identity through photography. He was founding member and first chair of Autograph (Association of Black Photographers, London) in the 1980s Fani-Kayode's photography of Afrocentric imagination influenced the discourse of race and sexuality via Autograph (Mercer, 1994: 210).

Fani-Kayode's images made reference to symbols and iconography of the Nigerian Yoruba culture and had a significant and direct impact on my practice in Britain. The connection I have with Fani-Kayode's work is being displaced in Britain and using the body as a method to construct identity related to the African cultural traditions. In addition, the sort of things he faced when attempting to get representation in the British highlight the type of discrimination that artists like him experienced and continue to experience when presenting the black male body in galleries. That is why I am interested to write about this particular artist and most importantly because of the issues identified in his work such as displacement, dislocation, masculinity, sex, identity, race and desire and the reception and the reading of black bodies in galleries in Britain (Sealy, 1995: n.p.). The body in his work captured and translated those issues, in a sense it shows his perspective of the function of the body as a visual matrix, beyond the conventional knowledge and function of the body in a modern world (Riccio, 2007: 20-1).

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[19] See Sara-Jayne Parsons, Fani-Kayode, Rotimi **http://www.routledge-ny.com/ref/20Cphoto/fani.html** [accessed, 03 December 2009].

Further, the images of the black body in his works are constructed as translated objects representing erotic fantasies in communion with ancestral and spiritual values of Yoruba culture. Fani-Kayode's photographs the black body is the narrator of the Yoruba traditions of posture and gestures, in a ritual activity of religious power. Moreover, his images highlight the relationship between the black male body and the Yoruba past.

Fani-Kayode's work positions the black subject at the centre of his photography, and because he invents a new meaning in the representation of black identity in the British diaspora, his new meaning emphasises a spiritual, liminal and transcendental relationship between the black body and Africa, as stated by Steven Nelson in a different context (2005: 14). He constructs this by framing the body with African art objects as a means to connect the diaspora with Africa, tracing the history and connection between Africa and the West (Okagbue, 2009: 6). This approach is his return to conservatism inherent in the face of diaspora. It is his desire to re-connect to an ancestral past in a fictional way as a means to understand contemporary self a yearning for a fictional, imaginary past (Hall and Sealy, 2001: 43).

I draw attention to this artist because of his exploration of photographs of nude and semi-nude black male models wearing African textile garments with face painting, posing or gazing at African symbols or masks. What are important in his works are the composition of elements that indicate the complexities and the multiples layers of his identity. I am arguing that, this is a result of his simultaneous experience of several cultural terrains, such as Nigeria, England, and the United States. The use of African symbols, iconography or mask creates codes of spiritual references to Africa (Deren, 2004: 86). In relation to mask and spirituality Fani-Kayode wrote:

> In African traditional art, the mask does not represent a material reality;
> rather, the artist strives to approach a spiritual reality in it through images

suggested by human and animal forms. I think photography can aspire to the same imaginative interpretations of life. My reality is not the same as that which is often presented to us in western photographs. As an African working in a western medium, I try to bring out the spiritual dimension in my pictures so that concepts of reality become ambiguous and are opened to reinterpretation. This requires what Yoruba priests and artists call a technique of ecstasy (1996: 6).

Fani-Kayode's photographic vision has a spiritual dimension, he re-invented a new spiritual meaning in the relation between the body, African traditional art, mask and fictional ancestral memory (death) he did this by using the "technique of ecstasy" a method of the Yoruba priest. Because his reality was different, his artistic medium – photography – motivated him to explore a ritual devoted to fictional ancestral memory, mask and the transformation of the body as the Yoruba priest's technique and practice (Mercer, 1999: 198). By doing this he demonstrated the power of his art and how artists take the role of priests. Alex Hirst explains:

> *The Techniques Of Ecstasy* is the idea that the babalawo (father of the secrets or priest) goes into an ecstatic trance in order to communicate with the god. Rotimi and I understood the artist to be doing something parallel to that and also, on a more jokey level… (1992: 8).

Fani-Kayode framed the body in his photos as fragmented, incomplete and erotic which suggests the trauma of dislocation and diasporic experiences he had. Sigmund Freud would describe these bodies as fetishist bodies and erotic objects (1991:66). They express the psychological impact of being removed from his place of origin and most importantly the fact that he lived in uncertainty within the notions of hybridity and multiculturalism in the 1980s.

The way Fani-Kayode constructed and framed the photos of his models mostly in the studio set, created nostalgia and a longing for his return to Africa, his mother-land. His photos and images were his expression of a direct relation and desire for Africa in an imaginary sense. Fani-

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Kayode's work and mine are not authentic because they emerged in the diaspora as a way of reiterating the roots of African traditions, but both works are original and have their validity and importance in the context of diaspora (Matzke and Okagbue, 2009: xvii).

Fani-Kayode's work fused and transformed eroticism "with Yoruba iconography and religion" (Nelson, 2005: 6) and his photos highlight the power of the black body in an expressive, sensitive, obscure and dark manner. Fani-Kayode's photographs articulate and translate through the body, ideas of eroticism and religion; his photographs express religious matter and a fusion of western and African philosophy (Bataille, 2001: 31). He made the body erotic as an act of devotion to Yoruba mystical religion and power (Mahon, 2005: 13). According to Okagbue in the Igbo religion:

> The world of the living (humans and animals) exists on the material plane, while the worlds of the gods, the dead or ancestors, and the unborn exist on the spiritual…Through rituals they are able to establish an environment within which they can negotiate with the spirits believed to play major roles in their lives. Through rituals also, they are able to honour the gods, placate the spirits, and commune with their departed ancestors (2007: 18).

Some of Fani-Kayode's photos attempt to narrate the history of Africa from the Yoruba and diaspora perspective. In addition, he used the notions of diaspora to reconcile the past and history of Africa and Greece.[20] This is because of the controversies in the history of the African and Greek system of thought (James, 2001: 9). Through his diaspora experience he emphasises the Yoruba system of thought as the source of knowledge, instead of the Greek system of thought, as

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[20] The reason Greek system of thought constitutes an important practice in Fani-Kayode's work is because the Western civilization looks at Greek culture as the foundation of the West origin. However this attitude negates the African civilization as the roots and source of the Western modern culture. For this reason, Fani-Kayode's photographs challenges this notion by placing African system of thought as the origin of Western civilization. He demonstrates this by placing African culture and identity as historical narrative (Diop, 1991: 377).

a challenge to the West (Browder, 1992: 189). Cheikh Anta Diop's work *Civilization or Barbarism: An Authentic Anthropology* (1991) gives substantial, textual, visual and historical evidence that Greek system of thought and civilization originated from African civilization. This is seen in the Greek language formation; where Greek priests and philosophers travelled to Egypt (Pharaohs) to be initiated and learn African language and culture (Diop, 1991: 377-9).

An example is his photographic work *Nothing to Lose XI (Bodies of Experience, 1989)*, where he presented a black male body wearing Yoruba attire and hat, black and red beads on his neck with a small white skull hanging from them. The black male is standing with his hands open as a sign of devotion to the Yoruba religion and spirituality, behind him is a pair of white hands holding up two iconographic Yoruba sculptures. Fani-Kayode in *Nothing to Lose* uses the black male body as his diaspora visual representation of his imaginary roots of the Yoruba religion and spiritual realms. Mark A. Reid comments:

> Because Rotimi's work escapes recognition in Nigeria, his photographs
> are living spirits in search of their Yoruba roots – imagined and real. His
> black male nudes dramatize the uncertainty of where his Nigerian self
> ends and where his exile western self begins (1998: 219).

Fani-Kayode's work gives a context to my practice in Britain. As far as I know he is the only black photographer in the British diaspora in the 1980s that explored the black body alongside art objects in reference to African spirituality and ancestral values. His photos gave me a visual understanding of the value and power of African photography in Britain because they explored African spirituality and ancestral values. His photographs demonstrated to me the possibility of examining African traditions and at the same time creating a live art. His photographs opened up my artistic eye to see and understand the African religion and system of thought (Mercer, 1994:

227). Living in Britain made me look at Angolan culture differently; it made me validate the cultural tradition, religion and spirituality.

His photos taught me to include African objects in my performances. They showed me the possibility of creating live performances where I use my body as the main instrument, together with objects to link to Angolan traditions as interfusion with British modernism. His photographic explorations of Nigeria, Yoruba body paintings, objects, masks, beads, attires and textiles were my primary visual guide and also illustrated to me how to position my diaspora body to create performance dialogues which focus on my experiences of exile and the homeland. Sieglinde Lemke explains about diaspora art:

> It is safe to argue that diaspora art depicts the act or the consequences of either forced or voluntary dispersal. Sometimes diaspora art expresses a longing for a home, and frequently it tries to construct a collective identity out of its mostly heterogeneous reality (2008: 123).

Fani-Kayode's works clearly deal with how the works of black artists are received and interpreted by the white audience in Britain. In the 1980s in Britain, while Margaret Thatcher was Prime Minister, black artists were affected negatively by the political, cultural and social transformation at the time. The transition to postcolonialism and postmodernism forced black artists to reposition and re-invent themselves against the hegemonised political, cultural and social system (Enwezor, 1999: 245). Thatcher's free-market and neo-liberal system made black artists (African, Afro-Caribbean and Asian)[21] the less privileged and marginalised ethnic groups, and this forced them to create and present art only in the margins of British society. I am using the term 'black artists' in its broadest, most inclusive sense. The term 'black artists' are considered to be a political, social and cultural, rather than a genetic or biological, category. The

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[21] In this context I am using the term 'black artists' to describe non-western artists or group.

term 'black artist' has yet to be finally determined and its meaning is continually evolving according to Hall and Sealy the term 'black artists' is "a contested idea, whose ultimate destination remains unsettled" (2001: 35).

At a time of fervent transformation in Britain, some black artists wanted to challenge art galleries and public institutions through the medium of photography. As a consequence, photography became an important art form amongst black artists who challenged and questioned the "gate keepers" of the British art establishments. Sealy states that:

> Kayode's main frustration was confrontation with egocentric institutional gate keepers. When Kayode was trying to generate interest in his photographs he experienced, more often than not, that the gate keepers were out to lunch and there was no reservation for him at the table. On the rare occasion when he/they could get an audience, curators found it difficult to grasp Kayode's terms of reference. Quite simply, his practise was not understood (1995: n.p).

Fani-Kayode was working closely with other black gay artists in England and United States (including Joy Gregory, Robert Taylor, Sunil Gupta, Lyle Ashton Harris, Dave Lewis and Roshini Kempadoo, Essex Hemphill) addressing issues of gay sexuality from a black perspective. Thus, through the medium of photography Fani-Kayode expressed the relation between sexuality, identity and iconography as an expressive African art form.

However, "Fani-Kayode was an important figure in the shifts that resulted in the flourishing queer culture of the late 1980s" (Mercer, 1996: 112). His images of the black male body contributed to the fight for gay liberation movement in the 1980s. His subverted images of the black male body were well received "in the context of metropolitan gay culture" in Britain and the United States according to Mercer (1996: 112). His photos appeared in gay magazines and books for example in the art journal founded by Alex Hirst (*Square Peg*) and books by Jonathan

Doilimore (*Sexual Dissidence*, 1991), and Tessa Boffin and Sunil Gupta (*Ecstatic Antibodies: Resisting the AIDS Mythology*, 1990).

Fani-Kayode's photography in 1980s was ahead of its time because of his sophisticated understanding of the aesthetic and power of Yoruba religious eroticism with the politics of race, identity and sexuality. This is because he understood his experience of diaspora, which he linked to Yoruba religion and myth, however, his sophisticated portrayal of Yoruba religion in the context of diaspora "…celebrates and affirms black male sexuality in all its forms" (Reid, 1998: 219).

In the 1980s Fani-Kayode's photography was not understood because of his hybridity and the Yoruba 'technique of ecstasy' religious method to honour the image and spirit of the Yoruba deity Esu (Exu) a messenger and interpreter to the gods, the carrier of sacrifices, and the deposit of "crucial points of intersection, to the goddesses and to the gods..." (Thompson, 1984: 19) his photos transcended cultural codes of reference, he utilised the black male body in a religious relation with the Yoruba gods and spirits. He made possible the return of the Esu (Exu) spirit in the physical world through the black male body in an art form that was difficult to grasp by the art establishment. Through the medium of photography he "…captured the physical and conceptual essence of the trickster god" (Oguibe, 1996: 247).

Fani-Kayode made this possible by venerating the acts of propitiation[22] of the Esu (Exu) image and spirit – a given by which the protection of the gods is requested – which is "the childless

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[22] According to *The New International Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary 'Of The English Language'*, propitiation means: reconciliation, satisfaction, the bringing into agreement, of those who have been estranged,

wanderer, alone, moving only as spirit" (Thompson, 1984: 19). As the messenger of all the gods

as well as "the imperative messenger-companion of the devotee, the Esu (Exu) "thus transcends

the limits of ordinary affiliation and turns up wherever traditionally minded Yoruba may be"

(Thompson, 1984: 19).

In an exhibition in which Fani-Kayode took part, *Abiku* (1988), he presented himself with a

"...caul around his neck" to illuminate "the logic of his visual thinking by showing how human

laws of sexual difference are overturned by the sexual indifference of the gods" (Mercer, 1999:

199). Fani-Kayode describes the presence of Esu (Exu) in the exhibition of *Abiku*:

> Esu presides here, because we should not forget him. He is the trickster, the Lord of the Crossroads, sometimes changing the signposts to lead us astray. At every masquerade (which is now sometimes called Carnevale– a farewell to flesh for the period of fasting) he is present, showing off his phallus one minute and crouching as though to give birth the next. He mocks us as we mock ourselves in masquerade. But while our mockery is joyful, his is potentially sinister…We fear that under the influence of Esu's mischief our masquerade children will have a difficult birth or will be born sickly. Perhaps they are Abiku–born to die. They may soon return to their friends in the spirit world, those whom they cannot forget. We see them here beneath the caul of the amniotic sac or with the umbilical cord around their neck or wrist. We see their struggle for survival in the face of great forces…These images are offered now to Esu because he presides here. It is perhaps through him that rebirth will occur (1988: n.p.).

According to Robert Farris Thompson, the spiritual power and image of Esu (Exu) is utilised by

black Africans in crossroads rituals and religious celebrations across the Atlantic, in Cuba,

Havana, "men or women of African descent pour cool water at crossroads" (Thompson, 1984:

19). In Brazil, Rio de Janeiro and Salvador many honor Esu (Exu or Eshu) with "candles

begging Eshu's favour may be lit in the gutters at intersections, in the very shadows of the

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offering, action, suffering sufficient to win forgiveness or make up for an offence, sacrifice that makes the governing power propitious toward the offender (1996: 1011).

skyscrapers that line the beaches of Ipanema or Copacabana" (Thompson, 1984: 19). In Haiti, Port-au-Prince, Eshu is honoured in voodoo ritual and sacrifice on the sea offerings of foods and drinks, and in North America, Miami and Spanish Harlem in New York, Eshu is honoured in rituals as a mediator to link African-American diaspora with Yoruba spirituality (1984: 20). Henry Louis Gates, Jr. in *The Signifying Monkey 'A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism'* wrote a list of Esu (Exu) qualities, the most important ones includes "individuality, irony, indeterminacy, open-endedness, ambiguity, sexuality, disruption, and reconciliation, betrayal, and loyalty, encasement, and rupture" (1988: 6).

In the 1980s Fani-Kayode experienced frustration because of the constant rejection in his attempt to present his photographs in galleries and public institutions; this forced him to study history and to understand the European and American modernist canons, with a strong reference to painters such as Edouard Manet, Rene Magritte, Francis Bacon and Paul Gauguin. In terms of photography's of the male nude he was influenced by, George Platt Lynes and Robert Mapplethorpe, both North Americans. Fani-Kayode's understanding of Western art history, led him to want to critique western institutions and subvert their art. This can be seen in *White Bouquet* (1987) and his version of Manet's *Olympia* (1863), a well known Western painting. *White Bouquet* is a black and white photograph that reverses gender, race and identity as a diasporic homosexual interpretation. It depicts a ritual ceremony between two men. In this nude anonymous photograph *White Bouquet* is constructed with a white man as active in the scene, standing with a bouquet of flowers as an offering to give to a black lover laid on a sofa. Both of their faces are unseen. The white man's body is cut in half and he is with his back to the viewer, his head is turned left, away from his lover as a sign of romantic play. The black man on a white

sofa with his back to the viewer "…serves as the focal point for the viewer, encodes him as the passive one in the scene" (Nelson, 2005: 8), the object of the viewers gaze. Thus, in the frame he turns his face away from the white man in a gesture of rejection of the flowers. This image has multiple interpretations but it could be possible that in a playful manner Fani-Kayode on the white sofa wanted to challenge the representation of the black maid in Manet's *Olympia* (1863). Moreover, *White Bouquet* leaves an ambiguous challenge to the viewer to understand the scenario within the terrains of race and sexuality (Oguibe, 1999: 36). *White Bouquet* is seen by the viewer as an intimate encounter which can be interpreted in many ways, as intentionally constructed by Fani-Kayode. Hence, *White Bouquet* acted as a "homoerotic encounter or a subversive comment on the racial power relationship associated with colonialism"[23]. *White Bouquet* is a visible, direct attack on galleries and institutional canons that challenges Western constructions of canons that disregard non-western art, photography and history. *White Bouquet* demonstrates the existence of black canons of art and history which derived from western art. As Fani-Kayode explained:

> I have done my home work, I have read your art history. This is what I
> want to do with that knowledge – invert, subvert and appropriate it – to
> suit my own concerns and experiences (1995: n.p.).[24]

In the 1980s the work of Fani-Kayode emerged in a climate that was coloured by all sorts of discourses and issues including slavery, colonialism, the myth of the black male sexuality and AIDS (Doy, 2000: 158). During this period the reception of the black body (Fani-Kayode's work in particular) in the British context inevitably was loaded by those discourses as cultural stereotypes. It is as a result of these cultural and historical factors that the works of Fani-Kayode were misinterpreted.

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[23]See Sara-Jayne Parsons http://cw.routledge.com/ref/20Cphoto/fani.html
[24] This is a quotation taking from an exhibition catalogue, Mark Sealy, ed., (1995).

While presenting the black male body in the British context, in galleries and public institutions, Fani-Kayode found out that his works were misinterpreted and loaded by the legacy of slavery and racism in Britain (Du Bois, 1999: 17). His works were more accepted in North America. Hirst comments that:

> Throughout the time we were together here, he was constantly thinking about trying to go back to live in Washington or New York. He saw this country as narrow-minded, irretrievably racist and backward-looking (1990: n.p.).

A vivid example is in his work *Bronze Head* (1987), a photograph of an unidentified black male nude sitting on an Ife bronze head, the Yoruba god. In this photo Fani-Kayode attempts to reconcile homosexuality, Yoruba culture and diaspora according to Nelson (2005: 6). The bronze head represents the link between diaspora identity and Nigeria and because diaspora was born out of the transatlantic human trade, galleries and public institutions associated its art with the legacy of slavery.

In *Bronze Head* Fani-Kayode uses a mask to validate the traditions of African art from a diaspora perspective as a powerful spiritual re-connection and a visible material for allowing transgression. In this he symbolises the head as a classical African art to connect with the Yoruba culture and spirituality which galleries and public institutions did not grasp. Instead they understood it as a generic comment on slavery. Hirst commented:

> In Bronze Head Rotimi is 'giving birth' to an Ife bronze. Ife, the cradle of an ancient Yoruba culture, is also his city of origin. The head, ori, which for the Yoruba is the seat of the spirit, orisha, represents a god. Symbolically, the artist is transforming his old culture into contemporary terms, having understood that the old values no longer "work" but still have power as archetypes. Also, he is presenting his rear-end, a traditional affront to the powers that be. The image contains the idea of the head as a "higher phallus," penetrating and fecundating the artist. although a man, destined to penetrate the depths of the unconscious, here

the artist is also a feminine "receiver" who is fertilised by it and thus able
to bring forth a "son" of God (1990: n.p.).

Although Fani-Kayode was exploring Yoruba cultural tradition and sexuality in this image, homoeroticism was inherited in the *Bronze Head* because the photograph gives the impression of a sexual activity between the black body and the Ife head. The fact that Fani-Kayode was an African gay artist rejected by his family, sitting on the *Bronze Head* was an attempt of reconciliation with his notions of Yoruba traditions and homosexuality. The *Bronze Head* image created a "discomfort" within the Yoruba culture and the black community in Britain (Oguibe, 1999: 35).

Fani-Kayode's photographs can be seen as a yearning for his Yoruba cultural traditions and a sense of belonging as a diaspora artist (Reid, 1998: 218). I would argue he felt disappointed by his Yoruba culture because of the way he left his country and also because his photographs were not accepted by the Yoruba culture that marginalised and refused his gay identity. *Bronze Head* is also his most expressive insult to the Yoruba cultural traditions because of the naked buttocks sitting on the Ife Bronze as a form of devaluation or defamation. In other words, his act was a deep-rooted denigration of a cultural icon and Yoruba national identity (Mercer, 1994: 212).

A good example which shows this misunderstanding of Fani-Kayode's work by galleries and public institutions is his work *White Hands* (1989), a black and white photograph of a black and white male. The photo shows a very dark background with a black male standing with hands closed and "a pair of anonymous white hands coming from behind" the black body to cover his eyes (Zaya, 1996: 27-8). In this photograph Fani-Kayode wanted to explore interracial relationships in visual terms by creating a contrast between the black body and the anonymous

white hands. He used the contrast between the white hands and black body as the product of diaspora and hybridity to challenge notions of identity and the cultural/racial construction of the self in opposition to the other (Fisher, 2005: 171).

In this photograph Fani-Kayode transgressed racial codes of difference of the 1980s by placing white hands and black body in a harmonious seductive composition. The viewer only sees the white hands without the full body, which leaves an ambiguous interpretation and reading. The face of the black body is unidentified and his hands are closed. The white hands create a triangle shape that locks the face of the black body and the identity of the white hands and body. In this photograph Fani-Kayode attempts to narrate a dialogue that questions homosexual relationships and interaction in the 1980s.

In *Golden Phallus* (1987-8), Fani-Kayode highlighted the Western stereotype about the myth of black male sexuality. *Golden Phallus* is a black and white photograph of a nude black male sitting in a dark space and looking at the viewer. The black male identity is anonymous because he is wearing a bird-like painted white mask, his penis is painted gold and it is suspended on two pieces of white string to hold it erect and to create diagonal lines that diverts the gaze of the viewer. His hands are comfortable resting on a chair; his body is muscular which emphasises black male masculinity. The white bird-like painted mask is used to link Yoruba symbolism and animal form to create a diaspora aesthetic. Hirst described the photo's aims:

> The Golden Phallus is there to show that we were dealing with issues of stereotypes black male sexuality, linked to issues of AIDS, but not directly… The Phallus – many people (black and white) have this idea that black men are studs. We wanted to challenge that. The gold makes the dick the center of attention but the string shows the burden is too much to live up to. It's a very subversive picture (1992: 10).

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Golden Phallus subverts the Western myth of black male sexuality because Fani-Kayode places the golden black penis onto a string as a paradoxical erotic object that points to the viewer as a sign of desire and repulsion and cross-over between the divine and the inglorious. The erected penis suspended on two pieces of white string is deliberately used to show the stereotype about the black penis (Mercer, 2003: 242). The golden penis acts as a seductive mechanism as well as racial weapon to subvert cultural and sexual concepts about the black body and penis.

The white bird-like painted mask re-enforces the relation between diaspora and Africa, it closes the historical gap. The mask hides the identity of the black male body and makes the golden penis the focal point for the viewer. The mask was used by Fani-Kayode as a Western fetish to degrade the value of the black body to create an anthropological study (Nelson, 2005: 18).

Golden Phallus Fani-Kayode's response to the demonised publicity by the Western media that black people were the originators of AIDS (Hirst, 1992: 10). He challenged the homophobic and imperialist ideology constructed around the origin of the disease, by openly going against the Western cultural preconceived idea that black people are, by their nature, diseased and sexually dangerous. *Golden Phallus* also expressed his experience of living with AIDS as it investigated the Yoruba spiritual realm as an attempt in his search for cure. As Fani-Kayode and Hirst put it:

> There is nothing easy or straightforward about it…. We have drawn on transcultural and trans-historical techniques to offer our response to a phenomenon which is specific only in terms of the individual it affects here and now. We (happen to) have been inspired in this by ancestral Africa, ecclesiastical, and contemporary 'Western'/erotic images. HIV has forced us to deal with dark ambiguities. Where better to look for clues than in the secret chambers of African shrines, the sumptuous ruins of Coptic and Eurasian temples, and the boarded-up fuck-rooms of the American dream? In the European "Dark Ages," faith in ancestral values

ensured a survival of sorts until a time of rebirth or enlightenment (resurrection was a good idea even then) (1990: 78-80).

Fani-Kayode suffered discrimination while exploring the homoerotic black male body (Oguibe, 1999: 35), his photographs openly exposed the black male sexuality in a nude exercise. The uncompromised and explicit sexual and ritualistic imagery Fani-Kayode created in his distant and diasporic relation with Africa – Yoruba tradition of identity – transformed the way the black men were seen through photography and homosexuality. His images were ambiguous and suggestive it provoked reaction in the view in the conscious and unconscious level, because of the many complex ways his work was interpreted (Doy, 2000: 157-9).

Robert Mapplethorpe

In the North American context, photographer Robert Mapplethorpe experienced discrimination while attempting to present his work to galleries and public institutions. His controversial photos depicted the beauty and seduction of the forbidden world of sexuality and violence such as homoerotic sado-masochism. Hence, the aesthetic sophistication in his photos confronted the taboos and stigmas against homosexuality (Sischy, 1999: n.p.). In other words, he used photography as a weapon to break cultural taboos about sexual violence and homoerotic sado-masochism (Shange, 1986: 8).

Mapplethorpe was an Irish-American descendent of English and Irish heritage. His photos were controversial in American in the 1980s, because they exposed mainstream gay liberation and the homosexual subculture of 1980s North America and portrayed highly stylised graphic sexual acts, linked with politics, history and race. Thus, Mapplethorpe's photographic depictions of

sado-masochism, homoeroticism and exploitation of sexual acts were regarded as pornography and obscenity by galleries and public institutions that refused to represent him in their galleries (Mercer, 1994: 189). It is important to point out that, Fani-Kayode's work was considered second-rate, as galleries and public institutions considered his photos as pure imitation of Mapplethorpe. Doy in relation to Fani-Kayode's work writes:

> Some white critics said his work derived from that of Mapplethorpe, thus setting up a comparison where the rather formalist art photographs of the white image-maker are preferred to those of Fani-Kayode. This devalued the suggestive and culturally rich aspects of Fani-Kayode's work, which were thus posited merely as devices allowing him to imitate Mapplethorpe (2000: 159).

According to David A. Bailey the Photographers' Gallery in London refused three times to show Fani-Kayode's work on the grounds that it was a poor imitation of Mapplethorpe's photography (1990: 62). It is clearly visible that desire and black masculinity, eroticised as gazed-at objects are key interests for both artists but Fani-Kayode had a unique vision to create aesthetic and ritual tradition that focused on African spirituality (Hall and Bailey, 1992: 23). Stuart Hall pointed out that "Rotimi has both learned from Mapplethorpe, fought him off, and brought another tradition of representation to his work" (Bishton, 1996: 69). Hall's points recognised the influence of Mapplethorpe in Fani-Kayode's early works, produced when he was living in North America. But the influence may be derived from the fact that both, Fani-Kayode and Mapplethorpe studied at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn.

My Interest in Fani-Kayode's Work

My interest in Fani-Kayode's work started when I was an undergraduate (2001) at that time I came across his work by chance. I was looking for books on live performance and I found his

book in the library, then I connected with his work straightway because of the way he explores the body as a mechanism to express issues of identity and cultural history.

As an undergraduate student facing challenges of cultural identity and displacement, Fani-Kayode's work gave me the confidence to explore my diaspora experience in connection with Angolan dance and ritual practice. It triggered my imagination to utilise my body as the main source for re-invention of the self in Britain. It helped me envision body painting in the British context. Moreover, Fani-Kayode's photos made me acknowledge the power of the spirit in African art and how the spirit is used to transcend boundaries and cultural codes.

I was attracted by the way his photographs fused African and European cultures and how they visually traced ancestral, spiritual memories to create a dialogue between past, present and future. I was inspired by the way he used iconic Yoruba objects as a method to create a spiritual dialogue with Africa. That is, I felt connected with his photographs because of his "techniques of ecstasy". The black male body in the studio set together with objects was a visual process to trace ancestral spirits, the objects were the intermediators because they depicted the past, they were the central point in this process.

Chapter 6

My Work in the British Context: Reflections on Interculturalism and Performance

This chapter intends to provide a comprehensive overview and interpretation of my performance practice from its emergence in 2001 as a result of my experience of cultural intersection and hybridity in London to the development of my ideas, concepts and principles. Mercer a black British cultural writer expresses something of my experience and practice in Britain when he describes the existence of "cultures of hybridity" (1994: 3). In other words, my practice "...participates in a particular mode of performative artistic production typical..." of postcolonial experience of body oriented practice (Jones, 1997: 33). In this instance, my practice as "self-identification" relates to the modern experience of people of different cultures, backgrounds and ethnic groups travelling to the British multicultural environment (Caws, 1994: 374). In this chapter, I will present what I consider to be the most significant of my performances so far. All of which have been, produced in the past ten years. I will describe the sorts of interpretative challenges involved in my work while performing to an audience. I will also, state my intentions and the objectives of the performances. My work comes as a result of my exploration of ancient 'primitive' and 'tribal' traditions of the body and this performative practice and method seems to constitute a challenge to some people of both, the African diaspora community and Western culture in London. In this chapter, most of the performances of which I am writing were initially made through the process of thinking about home as inspiration; this is why I am writing in such way that it reflects the sentiment of my predicament as one who is here and there, diaspora and Africa in a dialogue (Hassan, 1999: 224). Indeed, the performances in this chapter also indicate the feelings and emotions I had and the directions I took through the intersections of diaspora, globalisation and multiculturalism in Britain (Goldberg, 1999: 7).

The purpose of this chapter is to describe some of my primary concerns as a performance artist exploring the body as a vehicle of expression and communication and to highlight my particular experience in relation to my socio-cultural and socio-political circumstances in the British environment. Where I found myself dislocated, displaced and with a feeling of fear, which was a result of my experience of the Angolan civil war. Indeed, these experiences had a considerable impact on me in Britain and are distilled in my performances (Hall, 2003: 234). This is to say that, my concerns expressed through the body are one of the most important aspects of my performances and will be a key focus of this chapter. However, for this reason, I am arguing that my work is an original contribution to live art practice in Britain (Mercer), the methods that I use in making performance work and the presentation of this work in the context of Britain (Oguibe).

As a contemporary diaspora artist my work offers different possibilities and alternative interpretations and readings within an intercultural "conception and perception of space" where the audience come from a range of backgrounds (Heathfield, 2004: 10). In my performances, it is necessary for an audience to understand that, my physical body while temporarily acting creates transgressive gestures and movements that intentionally reveal and re-introduce a critical approach about cultural values and art, object and subject and the black body presented as a playful subversion. In this approach, it is important to know that the body strives to highlight its cultural practices while negotiating and experimenting with a language in a new environment (Harrison, 2002: 8).

It is critical to discuss the impact of colonialism and civil war in my performances, because those experiences left a mark in my identity and it affected the way I saw myself and constructed my

work when I first started. Consequently, my work is a postcolonial response, it critiques the colonial experience and the history associated with it. For this reason, this chapter will illustrate how my performance works are a visual tool to express my dissatisfaction with the Western empirical and impractical colonial exploration and legacy in Angola. This statement reflects my perspective as an Angolan artist. My work is my most appropriate mechanism to express the tragedy of my past and history and these intentions are expressed in some of my performances, which I will examine in the following pages.

It is crucial to point out in this chapter that, the experience of civil war made me a refugee and a displaced individual without a sense of belonging when I first arrived in Britain. For this reason, I started looking at Angolan traditions of the body as a cultural and diasporic reconciliation. Through this process I began exploring body painting, symbolic ritual and dance as a way to find new identity, and also to re-connect to traditions lost to me. Those creative explorations through the body are the product of my diasporic imaginary ideas together with concepts of Angolan realities, customs and traditions. This chapter on my performance practice opens up a new dimension in postcolonial and intercultural discourse on the use of the body as a narrator of history in the contemporary environment, where the body links the past and present. I am arguing that, the body visually takes on the function of a combined practice of oral and textual narrative of history (Okpewho, 1996, 120).This is because the body transports and examines the history of colonialism and civil war as cultural and political translator of personal experiences. By the same token, this chapter emphasises that my body metaphorically represent the colonised body as trans-national and trans-cultural communicator in the 21st century.

Moreover, a number of solo performances will be analysed in this chapter. The purpose of organising the solo works together is to create a structure that allows me to put my ideas in perspective. The analysis is derived from my own thoughts, concepts and rationalisation of the performances in retrospective. These works are a series of performance explorations of spaces that are very personal, which involves me re-inventing myself painted and creating a symbolic ritual in a fictional approach. The ways the performances are structured are not necessarily chronological by year, but deliberately organised based on principles and issues I had set to explore at the time. Nonetheless, I am using the past, my postcolonial experience and condition as critical lenses to analyse the performances (Said). I am doing this because it reflects the interconnectedness and impact colonialism made upon me and my generation in terms of diaspora imagination and memory (Joyce, 1999: 541). In this case, I am using my imagination and memory as a form of re-creating a personal history through the power of the fragmented body (Fisher, 2008, 193). Babatunde Lawal a Nigerian scholar states that "...memory not only facilitates the transfer of cultural property from one geographical space to another, it is also a catalyst in the construction and negotiation of new identities" (2002: 43). In the performances of which I am writing I want to draw attention to both, my analysis and interrogation of the aesthetics of the performances in a critical and challenging manner.

In this chapter I write about my performances retrospectively. The analyses here represent my ideas through looking back at the performances and as such they are largely based on the photos and video records of the performances and my own recollections of the experiences of making and performing the pieces. The videos and photos of the performances are a crucial part of my analyses; the framing of the videos and the photos undoubtedly influenced my analyses of all the

performances. The way the videos camera were positioned and filmed and how the photos were taken did have an impact on the way I came to understand the performances. Below in the main text of this chapter I will only write the most important things about the performances that I want to discuss and point out.

It is important to clarify that, some of the performances in this chapter was done intuitively and perhaps naively; I made particular works without fully appreciating the ways in which those works might be received by the audience in Britain (London) and Germany (Berlin). But, now from my position of greater understanding I can read those performances in a variety of ways, because I chose very specific sites to perform, and those sites have specific connotations and implications and the sorts of works I created in some ways it reflects those environments and it is likely to trigger certain sort of associations to those who encountered those performances; even if at the time those associations did not reflect my intentions in creating the performances.

Most of the performances which I will write about were undertake during a period in which I was not sure about what I was attempting to do in my performance works, but reading it in retrospect I realised the sort of layers and meaning that such work can invoke for those who observed what I was doing. In this way, because of the nature of my performances which evokes the nature of 'primitiveness' and 'tribalism', it would be difficult for an audience member watching or experiencing my performances no to make some sort of association with the colonial past history of Britain, whether this was to do with slavery, colonialism or the exploitation of 'other' land and resources. Whether I intended to project it or not, Britain's colonial past is likely to be somehow reflected in the reading of my performances by the audience members.

For a better understanding of my work it is crucial to mention that, one important aspect about my performances explorations using the body as a mechanism of communication is that, I always adorn and painted my body as a way to link with my cultural origins and as a trigger device to allow my creative imagination about traditional body practice to manifest.

Green, Red and White, **Lambeth College, London (2001)**

In 2001, while I was a refugee living in London and studying art and design at Lambeth College in South London, I found myself lost without identity and a sense of self as a result of my diaspora displacement (Fisher, 2008: 197-8). At the time I felt that I was living without personal roots of identity. For this reason, I started exploring body painting to entail a fracture between "myself and my origins" (Mercer, 1999: 284). I found this a catalyst for my creative process when I first started performing. Through this practice my emphasis was to explore my new diaspora visions and to re-connect to my lost culture from this displaced position (Enwezor, 1999: 248).

Furthermore, *Green, Red and White* states what Stuart Hall calls the "narratives of displacement" and identification where the body re-creates a new history and a new identity in Britain (2003: 234). Hall noted that identity is:

> …A construction, a process never completed – always 'in process'. It is not determined in the sense that it can always be 'won' or 'lost' sustained or abandoned. Though not without its determinate conditions of existence, including the material and symbolic resources required to sustain it, identification is in the end conditional, lodged in contingency. Once secured, it does not obliterate difference. The total merging it suggests is, in fact, a fantasy of incorporation…Identification is, then, a process of articulation, a suturing, an over-determination not a subsumption. There is always 'too much' or 'too little' – an over-determination or a lack, but never a proper fit,

a totality. Like all signifying practices, it is subject to the 'play', of *difference* (1996: 2-3).

This was my first performance and it was the beginning of a direct and provocative exploration of my own body in front of an audience. The performance took place at the photographic studio of the college, with the assistance of the creative teacher Harriet Lee, who was also a photographer. As an art student my initial idea for the performance came because of my interesting in the traditions of ritual, dance, mask and body painting of the Chokwe tribe of Angola. Their cultural practice became my central point of reference for the development of my work and ideas. Through this process the Chokwe gave me access to my metaphorical return to Angolan cultural identity and it was a point of entry into the world of the spirit of my ancestors. This meant that, my explorations of my painted body in a symbolic manner have a spiritual significance to it, because the origin and resource of it come from African religious belief and the context that remembers and venerates the spirit of the dead ancestors as a ritual activity. The African historian and writer Mbiti writes that:

> African peoples believe that death is not the end of human life. A person continues to exist in the hereafter. This continuation of life beyond death is recognized through a very widespread practice of remembering the departed, which is found throughout Africa. In some areas more attention is paid to it, especially in the farming communities, than is customary in nomadic and pastoral communities. This remembrance of the dead concerns mainly the living dead, that is, the spirit of those who died up to four or five generations back. Heads of families, adults and married people are remembered in this way longer than babies, children and the unmarried (1991: 128-9).

As a descendent of the Chokwe tribe I started to explore their cultural tradition only through symbolic ritual as a reference point in a performative act of remembrance and veneration (Jordan). My act of remembrance in *Green, Red and White* was a symbolic ritual and performance, as well as an open acknowledgment of the existence of my ancestors. One of the

intentions of the performance was to have my body painted and through this process create a connection with my ancestral tradition and heritage (Mandingo) as an act of pride. Mbiti explains that as an African I have a very rich heritage of what my ancestors "...thought, did, [and] experienced..." which is of a great importance to remember and validate (1991: 2).

Thus, my initial idea of the performance reflected what I was feeling at the time, the destruction of the Angolan culture through the colonial process and the impact it made in the development of the country. Hence, my feeling about the destruction of the culture inspired me to validate the tribal art and traditions through painted body in front of a camera. In this piece my body was painted with three different colours *Green, Red and White*; one at the time. I was painted very roughly because I deliberately wanted to look like Angolan tribes man and as a way to personify indigenous identity in a performance act (Byam, 1998: 230). I wore a black wig to emphasise the act and to create an aesthetic and believable image which was influenced from a diasporic dialect style and dynamic (Tulloch, 2004: 89). With the wig on I wanted to create an authentic appearance and to capture the audience's imagination about tribal art (Gómez-Peña).

In this instance, the paint on my body was a visual creation that served to connect Africa and the diaspora with a particular emphasis on traditional and ancient ritual practice as described by Jean Young in a different context (2002: 298). Textile material was also attached to the wall of the studio to create a background in the performance as a visual possibility that purposively represented history, culture and tradition from a diasporic perspective. In fact, the textile had an important meaning it symbolised a trans-cultural medium of communication about my representation and subjectivity (Fisher, 2008: 192). It became the closest visual representation of

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Angola in my imagination, which I wanted to portray through my body. The textile served the purpose of both elaborating on and simplifying my culture; it transcended the narrative of self and location. Visually it represented the adjacent meanings which fuse body, culture, identity, space and time. In other words, the textile in this context represented history as a material and archaeological fact of identity, culture, existence and origin.[25]

In this piece the tribal and 'primitive' cultural practice was my main concerns and only used my body as a tool to express it in a confined space where there were only few audience members, such as teachers of the department and fellow students. The intention of the performance was to use the body as a voice, cultural statement and for my own empowerment having lost my sense of identity. However, the performance was created intuitively and I focused on using movement, facial and body expressions as a way of realising personal feelings and emotions. Indeed, one of the principal objectives of the piece was a self-liberatory action because it was the first time I expressed my feelings to an audience. Further, I felt liberated and with a sense of freedom to speak through a corporeal approach. I utilized my body as intervention to express my traumatic (Fisher, 2009: 108-9) trajectories of the two cultures I was a part of; the culture of civil war and political dictatorship in Angola and the culture of being a refugee in Britain. In making this piece I intended to capture my life experience as a symbolic ritual in a confined photographic setting and space. The activity in this performance situation consisted of a repeated action which represented my desire to start life again; a new phase in a new cultural environment (Robinson, 2002: 332). In this piece memory of home was celebrated, remembered and 'pontificated' (Mercer) as a new beginning. *Green, Red and White* expressed my cultural transition and it was

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[25] It is important to point out that historically wax textile manufacture made in Holland was sold to Africans as a result of the colonial history and encounter.

my first symbolic ritual that could be described as beginning what Beverly Robinson, a prolific writer on African American performance has called the pluralisation of my African diaspora identity (2002: 332).

Green man, Streets of Central London and Brixton (2001)

The *Green-man* performance took place in the streets of Bethnal Green, Oxford Circus and Brixton. My whole body was painted green to symbolise nature and I wore a textile cloth and a wig (Gómez-Peña). My intention in using green was to put me in harmony with nature and the environment in a connection between body and spirit (Asante). The streets were the appropriate place which I wanted to make it happened. The colour took on a metaphoric function which reconnected me to Angolan culture. That is, the colour inscribed on my body acted as an agent of diaspora existence and situation (Hall). It creates an imaginary possibility of reconnection with home and as such became a symbol of empowerment (hooks, 1992: 115). It represented a personal affirmation for me and a cultural engagement with African traditions (Tulloch, 2004: 88).

In the piece, the cloth covered half of my body to make me feel proud about my past. Thus, the cloth on my body created a connection with my forefathers and traditions (Picton, 2004: 45). It became an expression of Angolaness, and it fortified my relation with Angola on a spiritual and material level. Nonetheless, the cloth on my body signified Angolan traditional fixed identification, where the cloth functions as a visual representation of the culture (Picton). Hence, the cloth visually transported the culture and history in an encoded religious and spiritual tradition. However, the action of wearing the cloth creates a symbolic link of ritual experience

which produces an inscription of Angolan performance tradition and culture in Britain. This is possible because the cloth creates a visual connotation with reference to Africa (Angolan) culture and tradition. The design and style on the cloth draws reference to Angola and depict culture representation (Tulloch). The cloth on my body captured the system of symbolic organisation of Angolan religion and society (Mbiti). A visual example of this can be seen in the textile tradition of Cabinda province in the north of Angola[26]. In this context, the cloth was a vivid reminder of the presence of Angolan culture in Britain (Gilroy). The cloth was an aesthetic representation of Angola which linked the modern streets of London with Angola's past. In other words, the cloth unified the past and present in a transgressive relation which goes beyond cultural boundaries and borders to create an ideological 'third space' style, expression and identity centred in Africa (Joyce, 1999: 539). According to Stuart Hall the 'third space' is created as a consequence of the 'third people' struggle and marginalisation by the "world system" which excludes them into a gaze of invisibility "...in the cultural representation" (2005: 2). In this respect, the cloth signified the tradition of the 'third people' (Bhabha).

As the performance progressed when I was in Bethnal Green travelling on a bus I encountered an old black man who became, in effect, a spectator. He started a conversation with me by asking why I was acting as a female, because in his view my appearance represented the world as upside down. He saw my body as a female body. For him the cloth on my body represented a "cross-dressing type of masquerade" to use Efrat Tseelon's term (2001: 2). This made him think that I was a woman and unintentionally my body questioned cultural and social constructions of 'binaries' as categories of female and male gender social construction. By me wearing the cloth

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[26] Vestuario, Adornos, Penteados and Tatuagem, in Angola http://www.cabinda.net/CabindasCap22.html

it challenged the cultural and hegemonic containment of the 'other' and the concept of authentic identity within the modern society that delineate rather than contemplate transgressive cross representation of cultural forms of creative expression and behaviour (Tseelon, 2001: xv). In other words, the cloth on my body puts into questions easy notions of understanding of male and female representation in public as a binary category (Butler). Also it interrogated the modern definition of the representation of the male body in public "...considered essential or constructed, biological or cultural" (Tseelon, 2001: 2).

As pointed out above my intention of the performance was to re-connect with the roots of my Angolan identity (Oguibe). However, this man's reading of my piece was out of my control. As audience, he understood the piece based on his knowledge of social, political and cultural construction of "genealogies of gender ontologies" and appearances. Judith Butler writes that:

> Gender is the repeated stylisation of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being. A political genealogy of gender ontologies, if it is successful, will deconstruct the substantive appearance of gender into its constitutive acts and locate and account for those acts within the compulsory frames set by the various forces that police the social appearance of gender (1990: 45).

Basically, he understood the piece based on his knowledge of gender appearance; his pre-conceived idea of gender was the basis of his judgement of my gender. To his knowledge only a woman would wear a cloth covering half of the body; I would argue this view is a cultural regime, a "regulatory practice" of identification to construct a female gender category as described by Butler (1990: 44). In a way, my wearing this cloth went beyond cultural and political definitions of female or male. I became the transformed body in between "gender

construction" a mutual point of gender classification, a signifier of inside and outside representation and authentification of body/gender (Butler, 1990: 24). How I was covered formed two sides of the same coin, male and female, creating gender confusion; at the same time I was questioning our socially constructed definition of gender, in public. A good example of this can be seen in the performance by Adrian Piper of *The mythic being: Cruising white women*, (1975) where she performed in the streets, on the subway, in museums, bookshops and other public places, demonstrating a desire to question and disrupt general social attitudes towards difference, and how this is read through a person's appearance and gestures.

Thus, my practice in general does not directly refer to masquerade and carnival, rather it draws parallels to these forms, but I do not directly investigate those traditions through my body. My concern is about investigating Angolan traditions of the body, ritual and dance practices as roots for my own identity and cultural belonging (Oyebade).

During my interaction with him, he reversed the role; he became the performer when he was interrogating me. During our interaction I thought his questions were real and he really meant all the questions he asked. So, at the end of the conversation he understood that I was a male and after the performance I would go back to my normal behaviour as a male; the adornment was a pure performance act with a pre-determined time frame.

The fact that I was painted and walking in Oxford Circus created a contrast between Angolan indigenous culture identity and Western civilisation. In the streets the painted body represented indigenous culture in the modern environment. As a result, my body was exoticised by some of tourists walking in the streets (Fusco). My presence diverted the attention of the shoppers in the

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busy fashion street. I felt the perception of some of the tourists made them relating me with ideas of 'tribalism' and 'primitivism' as a cultural reference to non-Western bodies, even though my intention was to validate Angolan culture in Britain. While I walking possible some tourists linked me as a 'primitive' person walking in Oxford Street with the "jungles of Africa" (Gómez-Peña). In my interaction with tourists I embraced their excited interest while I was performing. In Oxford Circus I was more noticed and appreciated compared with Bethnal Green. I felt there was a sense of enjoyment in the audience, which was expressive in their faces. My presence was very unexpected and because of this many tourists wanted to capture the experience by taking photos with me, this became part of the performance and dramatic encounter (Hall and Sealy).

While performing, my primary approach was to deliver a message to an audience through my body standing in front of Brixton station in South London. I deliberately did not speak to the audience as part of the creative process, concept and exploration. I wanted to show the richness of Angolan cultural traditions and re-connect to African traditions regardless of the historical experiences of slavery and colonialism embedded in the psyche of the audience members` of African descent.[27] The message was designed through using the body displayed in a passive manner, communicating a culture as object and subject of the self and history (Hall and Sealy, 2001: 16).

During the performance while I was standing, I noticed a discomfort and uneasiness amongst the black audience members expressing itself towards me; painted green, directly confronting them in a style of power play. The audience reaction was because of the dramatic encounter with me

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[27] In this particular section in this chapter when I am writing about audience, I am directly referring to the African descent response on the *green-man* performance in Brixton.

as a fictional indigenous in the streets creating and provoking uncanny confusion and critical responses. This encounter produced a dramatic response in the audience which is perhaps psychologically a consequence of historical experiences (Vidal) stated above.

For the audience, the affect may have been traumatic. The experience of indigenous and tribal culture and practices causes an embarrassment to some African people in Britain. Colonialism destroyed the African culture and as a consequence its negative legacy damaged the African identity and self image. It disrupted the core essence of African cultural identity and the way of being in the world in connection with the past and roots. In a way, the painted body reminds people of a practice that is labelled 'backward and savage', which does not constitute a trend in the modern and global world of progressive technology. Modern civilisation seems to be an aspiration embraced by Africans as migrants and settlers, lost and detached from the values of indigenous traditions marginalised and pushed into the peripheries in the process of globalisation (Papastergiadis, 2000: 86). In this case, perhaps Africans in Britain are reluctant to embrace the sort of performance practice I engage in openly in the context of street performance because of the legacy of postcolonial assimilation, hegemony and the compositional structures of social realities (Enwezor, 1999: 246).

This is affected by the dismissal of African performance and tradition within the British existing sphere of knowledge, class and agenda (Hall, 2005: 2)   It seems to me that these responses suggests a denial and a reluctance to reflects the events of brutal history and violence, land appropriation and forced migration that African people experienced, in the very recent past (Mercer, 2008: 7). These events left a legacy which was transparently expressed by some

audience in the streets of Brixton. Gilroy's concept of the 'Black Atlantic' in particular deals with the recent African history of colonialism and slavery and the consequences derived from that experience which affected negatively on the image, identity and representation of black bodies in the diaspora (1993: 3). Those expressions by audience in the streets of Brixton are a reflection of the cross-over of the two worlds which places Africans as creoles, 'natural victims' and with 'double consciousness' in the post-Atlantic transition (Echeruo, 1999: 6). Natural victims in a sense that history has shown that Africans people have been victimised a number of times consistently. 'Double consciousness' in a sense that the trans-Atlantic experience gives to the Africans a wider perspective of both sides of the Atlantic. To put it simply, it gives an ability to construct an individual or collective consciousness and identification outside of home, origin and national space (Lemke, 2008: 123-4).

The piece challenges certain negative views from the audiences of African descent in Brixton, because of the Western constructed ideas of African culture being savage and 'primitive'. These negative views about African descents are a result of the Western perspective and understanding of African cultural traditions through the historical encounter. Nonetheless, this historical legacy affected negatively on how African people in Britain see themselves in the 21st century (Darwinism). For this reason, there is a negative view and stigma about the practice of painting and adorning the body in the way I do in my performance work. Because of this, during the performance I felt some kind of resistance in my interaction with the audience which possibly and understandably misunderstood the work. Throughout the performance there was no close engagement; as I was expecting in Brixton, which has a predominance of residents who are descendents of Africa and the Caribbean (Gilroy).

The recorded photography of the performance captured the expression of the faces of the passing by audience, which to certain extend reinforce what I felt during the live performance. A good example from the performance was when I stood in front of the station when a black lady stood in front of me for few minutes and then approached me by asking if I needed some help; she assumed that I was lost and needed some help and she also thought that I just arrived from Africa and was displaced and did not have a place to go. Obviously, she did not understand the purpose of the piece. I consider that my presence could be interpreted in many ways while in Brixton, which seems understandable to me, it could be that my articulation may not have been well elaborated and efficient; considering it was one of the first times I was performing in public. Also, I did not have any posters with me with written texts to inform the audience about the work and its context. These could have played a part in the audience's reading of the piece. Indeed, my interpretation of this piece reflects on how I thought at the time when I did the performance and this thought contrasts with my present conception of the piece at the time of writing this thesis.

Identity and Parliament Square (**2009**)

In this site-specific performance my idea was to explore notions of location through my body in front of the iconic symbol of the Houses of Parliament in Westminster Square, London; where my body created a visual and imaginary past as a reflection of my postcolonial experience of social struggle and being a refugee (Fani-Kayode). In this particular piece, the Houses of Parliament and the buildings surrounding it shaped and played an important part in the composition of the performance. The buildings helped my narration of the self and the 'primitive' and 'other'. It affected how I positioned my body as a vehicle of diasporic cultural production and identity. By positioned myself in Westminster Square in front of the Houses of

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Parliament painted as I was, I created an imaginary connection with home (Anderson) because of the contrast I created between 'primitivism' and British ideas of civilisation, past and present history and modernity (Basquiat). In this case, my body was a tool which connected the two cultures through the process of diaspora, displacement, dysfunction, trauma (Fani-Kayode) and migration as pointed out and broadly described by Braziel and Mannur in their classic text *Theorising Diaspora* (2003: 1-3).

In addition, this performance is a bodily representation of my strategy as a diaspora individual re-inventing and redefining myself and identity (Hall and Sealy, 2001: 35). It is my act of negotiating the space with the dominant culture portrayed by the Houses of Parliament. In this piece, ideas of space and visibility were a concern expressed through my body in a symbolic ritual (Bhabha). Furthermore, I posed a challenge by been visible and claiming my space in Westminster Square, where I shift notions of home by positioning myself as the painted 'other' constructing a representation of diaspora imagination and vision (Fusco). In this case, diaspora experience becomes the focus of expression intersecting with ideas of home and origin, while the body claims the space (Fani-Kayode). Actually, notions of home are expressed by idealising the process of diaspora experience. In this context, I claim my space and occupy my position through my painted body making my diaspora experience exposed as a product of interculturalism (Schechner) phenomenon in Britain. In this case, through the process my cultural tradition and performance became visible in the space of the colonial and imperial cultures. According to Daryl Chin:

> Interculturalism is one of the ways of bringing previously suppressed material into the artistic arena, by admitting into a general discourse other cultures, cultures which had previously been ignored or suppressed or unknown (1991: 95).

To this purpose, interculturalism allowed my cultural tradition to manifest publically as an open option of cultural representation; it made expressive with meaningful perspectives the perception and reading of the black body in public as material culture, transient art, and an autonomous tool of empowerment of identity and cultural tradition exploring the space (Doy).

Notwithstanding, during the performance the statue of Nelson Mandela positioned in one of the corners of the square was the place where I narrated my diaspora experience and claimed my space. Mandela statue for the purpose of the performance connected me with home and Africa. It represented a site to express and elaborate my origins, the struggle of my diaspora experience and what it means to be an African in the postcolonial and post-apartheid era, in Britain (Cohen-Cruz, 1998: 286-7). The performance in front of the statue was an attempt to relate with Mandela's social struggle for justice, validation and the independent existence of African people in a way that shared a sense of the interconnectedness of diaspora and transnational experience. Empathy with the political struggle of African people in South Africa was symbolically eluded to through the performance in front of the statue. My body a diaspora instrument to create a new reality and a "...new ways of thinking and feeling" about the past and present in a new environment (Nicholson, 2009: 268). In this case, the statue served to trigger the link or relationship between diaspora and Africa the mother land of civilisation (Hall, 1994: 394) as an important memorial moment for the construction of an alternative perspective on identity and history (Gilroy, 1996: 225-7).

Nevertheless, my body in this visual arena of performance frameworks expressed multilayered references (Basquiat) and meanings of Africa through the aesthetics of painting, facial and body

movements and gestures and the exploration of the space, characterised by my diaspora condition (Lemke, 2008: 124).

My body functioned as an agent that spoke out in the Westminster Square about my existence and experiences of national identity, hybridity and the impact of globalisation (Campt) in London metropolis (Enwezor, 1999: 245). In this piece, my presence was my way of contesting the position of the dominant culture that dismisses, subsumes and de-legitimates African 'tribal' and 'primitive' traditions and cultural practice in favour of industrial and technological advancement. By presenting myself in this way, it was my intention to put forward my African origins, cultural heritage, legacies and ideologies in a symbolic ritual in front of the Houses of Parliament; a British imperial and iconic building. Theorists such as Stuart Hall, Paul Gilroy and Kobena Mercer have commented extensively about the complexities of the experience of Africans in the diaspora, their position and sense of belonging and the settlement in the new world.

This action in the performance reflects my sense of blackness and the connection with African traditional culture described by Mbiti in the context of African religion (1991: 2-3). It is in this respect that my presence in front of the Houses of Parliament turned the space as an overt and legitimated place for the expression of nostalgic yearning for my cultural origin and identity. According to Carol Tulloch this encounter could be seen as reinforcing my"...sense of self and dignity mapped on to [my] body" and this happened as a result of cultural disruption and confrontation in a new place as a "new way of being" (2004: 17).

The Houses of Parliament reminded me of where I have come from and my history. It created in me a deep feeling of an outsider returning home through the process of encounter. For this reason, this performance represents my relationship with Angolan traditions as a diaspora individual analysing my origin and personal trajectories (Fani-Kayode). What the building represents to the British people I did not feel I was part of; in a way I felt as an outsider invading the imperial space and culture. The encounter illustrated to me the beginning of coming to terms with the self in relation to notions of home and belonging (Matzke and Okagbue, 2009: xviii). I felt that home was an important place to connect to, as a grounded force for identity and cultural belonging. In this situation, home became an idealised place to commit and to connect to; an engagement with ancestral cultural practice (Okagbue).

The structure and rigidity of the Houses of Parliament intimidated and created a division between the 'us and them' of the social order, which de-authorise the 'other's' existence and social realities in the British political and parliamentary discourse and hegemony. It created in me a feeling of separation between two worlds and cultures. The police and the gate keepers of the building restricted my approach and made me feel intimidated; it was safe to perform far away from the building, in case of any trouble or confrontations. The performance situation was appropriated to some distance from the building (especially when one is presented painted and half naked). My presence in front of the Houses of Parliament was unpredictable and it created a contrast against the hard, solidity of concrete and the rigid architectural infrastructure, which displayed power and control in the city, assisted by the presence of the police and other gate keepers. It emphasised the representation of the body as a product of culture. On the other hand,

it could be considered that the Houses of Parliament provided a privileged space to perform, narrate identity, and challenge the social order and gate keepers of the English establishment.

Performing in front of the Houses of Parliament encouraged me accentuate my cultural history and subjectivity in opposition to postcolonial modernism and institutional production, which constantly imperils the creativity of the 'other' as a control mechanism (Appiah). Enwezor explains that:

> ...Critical judgements of art and artists in the West constantly play themselves out in the well-regulated and predictable interstices where eurocentric hegemonic power-mongering meets and colonises the contributions of non-Western cultures... Under the demanding imperialistic gaze of twentieth-century Western art history, modernism's self-arrogated centrality and exclusionism become the great totems that bear the imprimaturs of this legacy of erasure, which marginalises as it appropriates (1999: 246).

In this context, by performing in front of the Houses of Parliament, my work suffered the consequence of alienation within the constraints of the Western well-regulated establishment, which operated from a distance because of my appearance of being different and perhaps 'inappropriate' in the centre of the city. In this case, the Houses of Parliament represents a symbolic site of the "...axis of power" in at city where people gather and transit as a product of an environment very much embedded on modernism and capitalism to use Judith Rugg terminology (2010: 54). Despite the fact that, the piece was a self articulating of experience of different localities and a narration of my culture in a re-fashioned manner; it also transgressed the boundaries of the Western power encoded by the legacy of the colonial condition perpetuated by the authority symbolised by the Houses of Parliament. In this case, Big Ben symbolically represents imperial power and exposures the culture hegemony of the West (Enwezor).

One of the main reasons I want to perform in front of the Houses of Parliament was because of the history of the British Empire associated with the building and the political power the building holds in correlation to colonial history and practice. The building represents the modern era, evolution, the contact with 'other' cultures through slavery, colonialism (Coombs) and the historical and social memory derived from it (Christian, 2002: 71). I believe that this performance challenged and subverted the Western perspective of notions of black identity, art and conventions; because black identity is always evolving and transforming as part of diaspora experience and circumstance (McMillan and SuAndi, 2002: 115).

In this context, I practicised my culture in the street as a conviction and sign of liberation and freedom; as a matter of fact, in this piece theories of African cultural tradition are expressed through the body, which makes it a practical performative expression and guide for diasporic re-created realities and experiences, centred on the African system of thoughts and Afrocentricity to use Molefi Kete Asante expression (2002: 116). Actually, Asante plays an important and leading role as a scholar supporting Afrocentricity, in a way he encourages African artists to explore Afrocentricity in the context of intercultural space and encounter. For the purpose of this research, it is important to state that, when I did this performance my intention was not to directly attack the British Empire, but to express my culture and identity destroyed through the colonial encounter. In fact, it is a personal and performative manifesto to restore and bring awareness about my culture, tradition and art (Hassan, 1999: 217). Quoting Asante on Browder's work about Afrocentricity:

> A frame of reference wherein phenomena are viewed from the perspective of the African person...it centers on placing people of African origin in control of their lives and attitudes about the world. This means that we examine every aspect of the dislocation of African people;

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culture, economics, psychology, health and religion....As an intellectual theory, Afrocentricity is the study of the ideas and events from the standpoint of Africans as the key players rather than victims. This theory becomes, by virtue of an authentic relationship to the centrality of our own reality, a fundamentally empirical project...it is Africa asserting itself intellectually and psychologically, breaking the bonds of Western domination in the mind as an analogue for breaking those bonds in every other field (1992: 245).

However, at the very end of the performance I came across the permanent protest against the war in Iraq, standing and representing a humanitarian cause outside the Houses Parliament, in the streets and square; their presence reminded me of the experience of civil war I had while in Angola. The encounter with the protesters was for me, like an emotional return home. In the encounter the civil war experience became real again in my imagination. I felt sympathetic to their cause and also it resonated with my anti-war stance. According to Rugg, the streets and squares have a history as sites of resistance; in this case the protesters used it as a platform for visibility and demonstration of political struggle. It becomes a temporary space for communication with the passers-by audience (Schlossman, 2002: 87).

This engagement created a connection and if you like, fused my own life experience with this protest as a performative act. For a moment, it became the perfect, safe place for me to release emotions and my anti-war feelings in the British environment. Through my performance I also felt that somehow symbolically the distant war in Iraq merged with the sentiment of the Houses of Parliament performance. For this reason, I felt at the time, that the performance reflected something the environmental atmosphere of political and social disruption and the uncertainty of terrorist attack in Britain during the war in Iraq.

Further, the encounter with the protesters really affected the dynamic of the performance because of their vivid depiction and display of images of war. What moved me was seeing homeless people living on the pavements, the colourful flags protesting the war, with their words of peace, the disturbing images of children and women suffering in the war, the white clothes with printed hands hanged above the tents and the white board indicating the number of dead, starved and tortured victims. All these factors generated an emotion response in me which was visible in the expression of my body, it's movement, gestures and walk in the space. My performance was altered by what I witness while performing in the space.

Above all, my body painted with a mask in this site-specific performance posed a question and challenged what it means to be a black person and artist living in Britain in the 21st century; where the impact of hybridity, multiculturalism and globalisation very much alters black identity and confuses its realities in the development of notions of the self (Tulloch, 2004: 11).

Chikukuango and Albert, *British Museum* **(2005)**

This piece came about as a result my involvement in an African festival at the British Museum which was part of a national celebration of activities and curatorial projects centred on African art in Britain. The festival served to promote the arts, artefacts, traditions and cultures of Africa. It has been organised every ten years since 1995, and this one was called *Africa 95*. That is, this particular one was the second of its kind. When I was invited to take part in the festival I understood that the festival came to existence as an act of remembrance and commemoration of African heritage and the collective presence of its people in Britain. However, I later came to realise that, according to the writings of Annie E. Coombes a festival such as this can be

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interpreted as a tool to enhance the legacy of "monolithic" imperialism and colonialism (1994: 2). Following that, based on my observation of the way the festival was constructed, shows that it was shaped as a postcolonial activity, which for me meant the exploitation of African cultures and peoples for economic gain and profit. This was demonstrated because of the money and the financial funding involved in the making of the festival, with large British organisations sponsoring and advertising at the event. Gilane Tawadros a cultural critic writes about the festival:

> It was a multisite project that encompassed most of the major art institutions in the United Kingdom, who took up the challenge of exploring Africa from a million years B.C. to the present day. Easily packaged to capture the attention of audiences and neatly categorized to exploit private and commercial sponsorship opportunities (not to mention Foreign Office priorities), these projects appear now as the last cultural gasps of imperial and nationalist tendencies facing the inevitable surge of the forces of modern globalization (2005: 127).

This made the event an intersection of power and ideological instruments; a product of "social and political interests" (Duncan, 1995: 5). The African cultures' exposure in the festival was used to project imperialistic and colonial power; an agenda that reflected globalisation and hegemony (Hebdige, 1993: 366). Stuart Hall in Hebdige writes:

> ...hegemony refers to a situation in which a provisional alliance of certain social groups can exert 'total social authority' over other subordinate groups, not simply by coercion or by the direct imposition of ruling ideas, but by 'winning and shaping consent so that the power of the dominant classes appears both legitimate and natural (Hebdige, 1993: 366).

This statement indicates the subtle domination and power structure manifest in the museum context. Having said that, as an artist it was important to participate and present my performance in the festival, because the museum as institution can give the facility of order and it creates public experiences, it shapes the understanding of an individual, collective people and culture

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and the world. This is because of its position of displaying ancient material culture and artefacts (Duncan).

Further, the museum is a place which plays an important part in re-creating and re-constructing my diaspora identity and in adding value to my culture; it is a place whereby audience members and visitors gathered in the locality in search of knowledge and meaning in the British postcolonial era. When I was invited to perform in the museum my initial idea was just to perform my culture and the museum framework and politics was not my concern. This is, because the museum is part of the ideological instrument of the ruling state which represents power, the elite and class ideology; it is centralised by political means, identity and class structure (Hutchison, 2004: 52). In that case, the museum acts as a power structure that reflects the views of the dominant postcolonial culture, it is a material and visual evidence of what was achieved through colonisation (Simpson, 2001: 1). In this case, for the purpose of this piece, the museum was used as an important tool and platform to dismantle the visual fixed narrative and image created by the dominant colonial and anthropological authorities (Gómez-Peña). It was also used to challenge the negative views and perceptions of African body practice and traditions and the interpretation and marginalisation of its people outside the canons of the dominant narratives and discourses of the West (Welsing).

The fact that I am Angolan and the piece was my symbolic representation of my culture through my body narrating my history based on my own perspective, contrary to the stolen colonial and imperial artefacts displayed and protected in framed glass. The intention of the piece was to express my hybridised remaking based on my memory and imagination and the adornment on

my body. Moreover, the cloth I wore was my physical connection with Angolan cultural tradition. The wooden sculpture I performed with served the purpose to demonstrate a visual reflection of the ancient and traditional influences and principles of the piece in an environment where wooden sculptures are protected in framed glass while on display. The constraints of the museum would not allow the audience to hold or play with wooden sculpture in the same way that I allowed in my piece while performing and interacting with an audience. I did this with the intention to show the hybridised nature of the piece.

In that way, what I set up for the performance was a way to express my cultural heritage and display the origin of my identity as a form of continuous historical process and the dynamic of the living culture (Fusco) which linked diaspora and Angola. I did this because of the significant relation with the time and circumstance I found myself in Britain. In this sense, my diaspora experience is very much reflected in this process. In this case, the performance gave opportunities and possibilities to an audience to visually and mentally establish a richer understand of my heritage through performance in the conceptual space of the museum (Johnson, 2012: 54-5).

By performing in the museum my intention were both to retain a sense of pride in my unique cultural identity while also representing and creating images of Angolan cultural traditions that contrasted with that which was portrayed through collections, displays and exhibitions which perpetuates the image of the past as an uninvolved traditions, as if there was not a contact with Western cultures (Simpson, 2001: 35). This imagery associated with the traditions of indigenous people means that they often appear subjugated and/or is interpreted as superstitious. Beliefs and

practices are considered strange and unfamiliar only because they are unknown to Western audiences (Munjeri, 1991: 448). James A. Boon points out that:

> Museums perhaps make me sad because of what they reveal about representation–a sadness savouring resignation to the museumlikeness (perhaps even museuminess) of what the museum would on first thought appear to be a museum of. If there is no *of* to museums–only more museum: representations without immediate reference, makings for-the-removal–then that must be what makes me sad. Sad, or melancholy (1991: 256).

For this reason, in recent years museums – such as the British Museum – have become a centre of controversy debate and criticism because of what is considered to be biased approach to the representations and displays that present dislocated fragments of art, artefacts and objects belonging to 'other' (Asante) cultures and people referred to as crude, 'backward', 'primitive', 'barbarian' and 'Third World' (Munjeri, 1991: 448). According to Carol Duncan, museums in the Western world "...often misrepresent or even invent foreign cultures for what are ultimately ideological purposes" (1995: 3). She continues:

> The issue of what western museums do to other cultures, including the minority cultures within their own societies, has become especially urgent as post-colonial nations attempt to define and redefine their cultures identity and as minority cultures in the West seek cultural recognition (1995: 3).

In this particular piece I chose to paint all my body red with black and white circular dots as a means to expressively communicate and to create a ritual and dance. Again, this process is a form of personal resistance and to highlight the roots of my culture in opposition to colonialism. The idea I had for the piece was to normalise the ideals of Angolan body practice – that seems strange in the context of public museum setting – and to control how my culture and history is represented in the context of postcolonialism and interculturalism in the museum space. Hence, I adorned and painted my body in a spontaneous and improvisatory style, but deliberately

following the aesthetics of Chokwe body practice as a guide line and performance strategy. The result was a combination of ritual, dance, body movement and gestures to the rhythm of drumbeats. Moreover, the aesthetic of the body played an important part in channelling my symbolic contact with the Angolan tradition as a means of creating an embodied knowledge. In this context, the way I presented my body depicted the shift in my present place of existence and it expressed the flexibility of my idea of the self as a transient being in the museum space a site "...rich with stimuli for aesthetic experience..." of history and modernity (Farthing, 2012: 101).

The performance piece was structured as a form of collaboration with Albert a Ghanaian performance artist who utilised the acrobatic nature of dance as a practice to explore the space, in a way that was visual and provided an interaction with the audience. I did few very interesting collaborations and improvisation live performances with Albert, but because he is very professional and established artist and dancer in Britain he travels internationally throughout the years. We lost contact and at the time of writing this thesis I still do not know his full Ghanaian name.

The space was constructed in a circle; a shape imbued with symbolism from the perspective of ritual. Again, as pointed out earlier, the nature of the piece reflects my hybrid experience. This was demonstrated through the metaphysical construction of symbolic gestures of venerations that idealised Angolan spiritual and ritual practice. The space was arranged in a circular manner to create an accessible ritual which created an exciting atmosphere encouraging the audience to move through the space to experience and enjoy the scenario "visually and kinaesthetically" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998: 59). People were given permission to sit and stand in the stairs in the entrance to the museum to allow good visibility. The entrance of the museum provided a

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means whereby the audience and visitors could take in elements of the performance as they were arriving and passing through to other parts of the museum. It allowed for brief engagement in an experience which proposed potentially allowed each individual to explore contemporary reflections of body practice in relation to identity, memory, trauma and displacement (Fani-Kayode) within the constraints of the museum setting. From my perspective the piece's primary objective was to express personal and collective narratives in relation to diaspora experience and Angolan cultural history, however, whether the audience read the work in this manner is impossible to say. Anthony Jackson and Jenny Kidd describe about the experience of visitors to museums spaces:

> Visitors to museums and heritage sites have in recent years become (not least in promotional rhetoric) less about the *object* and more the experience: an 'encounter' with a past that is 'brought to life', peppered with 'events' and advertised through a list of 'What's On'. The increase use of performance has been seen perfectly to exemplify this trend, rendering it subject to criticism of 'Disneyfication' and 'edutainment' (2012: 1).

In this context, while I was painted and exploring traditional theatricality as ritual using my body half naked in the opened environment I engaged the audience with my painted body in a manner of self-displayed; in this circumstance, I understood the importance of the occasion and celebration, for this purpose the piece took the opportunity of the situation while engaging with an audience and visitors to negotiate the modern and contemporary space of multiple activities and social values (Smith, 2012: 69) and to transgress personal and cultural boundaries associated and created by the museum structure, function and the construction of the event, with political dimensions imposed as higher or low art in a hierarchy order of the "specialized establishment" (Hudson, 1991: 463). Duncan points out that ritual practice in the context of museum structure has been considered as a lower art form in the museum construction of hierarchical order (1995:

5). By performing in the museum the intention I had for the piece was to question such views and reject those constructed definitions and dichotomies, which position rituals as some kind of a practice of cultural 'other' and unfamiliar, a subject of anthropological and ethnological studies and distinctions (Duncan, 1995: 5).

In addition, this piece utilised performance to articulate an alternative experience (Fusco) of Angolan history and tradition, which reflects my new existence. In this process, my body acted with agency to create plural images that I considered memorable, desirable, raw, extrovert and controversial while reconstructing my identity and participating and contributing to a discussion of diasporic community within the museum framework and festivity; this perspective makes the performance a symbolic re-invention of identity (Thompson). The piece, as far as I am concerned, acted as a complex liberal translator of cultures. It bridges the gap of cultural and continental differences and practices between African cultural tradition of body practice, diasporic construction of symbolic narration of identity and the British museum festival of cultural diversity and multiculturalism. In relation to cultural differences and in between Homi Bhabha writes:

> ...Having done so, we introduce into the polarizations of liberals and liberationists the sense that the translation of cultures, whether assimilative or agonistic, is a complex act that generates borderline affects and identifications, 'peculiar types of culture-sympathy and culture-clash'. The peculiarity of cultures' partial, even metonymic presence lies in articulating those social divisions and unequal developments that disturb the self-recognition of the nation culture, its anointed horizons of territory and tradition. The discourse of minorities, spoken for and against in the multicultural wars, proposes a social subject constituted through cultural hybridization, the overdetermination of communal or group differences, the articulation of baffling alikeness and banal divergence (1996: 54).

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My reasoning for carrying out the performance in this was in order to tell the history of a minority and silenced people, disregarded in history and contemporary performance discourse in Britain. Furthermore, I consider the performance, even in the museum context, to be 'authentic' because it drew upon my roots with the best intention (Graft, 2002: 32). In this respect, my piece represented the 'other' cultural traditions and customs through my corporeality and physicality. In this situation, while I was performing I felt that the museum acknowledged and recognised my performance.

By the same token, this gave the piece and the encounter perhaps a perspective of a not fictional manifesto and activity; this is to do with the way my body was painted and the profound aesthetic it created, an imaginative performance act of creation and identification which connected between me the artist and the audience in a theatrical engagement of spiritual revelation through strong ritual expression according to Duncan (1995: 16). From my point of the museum building and space with its collection of art, artefacts and objects possesses an access point to the artistic geniuses of the past. For this reason symbolically to me the spirits within the space and environment manifested themselves as an immortal spirit of the past that I engaged with through my performance. Symbolic past time returns through my actions as a sort of spiritual recycling. This was possible because of how I was painted, the traditional practices I explored and the museum space and environment. In other words, the piece gave access to the audiences and visitors that were seeking the opportunity "...to re-live spiritually significant moments of the past..." as a museum ritual paradigm where the past becomes real through my body and physical appearance in metaphoric terms (Duncan, 1995: 17).

However, in the same way, the piece deliberately points towards the symbolism of postcolonialism and interculturalism, whereby audience members and visitors were gathered and induced to fix their attention onto my body and the ritual activities I was engaged with. The audience themselves were representatives of different races, creeds, ages, nationalities, ethnicities, religions and faiths. The piece functioned outside the normal 'safety zone' of the traditional theatre or studio frame which conventionally acts as a mediator for a personal, individual and social transformation of history and the present.

In this piece, the audience were involved both passively and actively through watching and participating in the performance as a form of dialogue; they were co-creators in the exploration of the space. However, that is not to say that I did not see some audience members display interest but less commitment than others; treating the encounter as if my body was another museum artefact on display to be viewed in passing or from a distance.

At the end of the performance my interaction with the audience increased because I had to move around the space and some of the audience and visitors were intrigued and interested to see me close up. To my surprise some people believed that I was some kind of an animated museum artefact. However, for this reason, some of the audience treated me as if I belonged to the museum collection by assuming that I did not speak English, and they were very curious to touch my painted body displayed in public and in this process I sensed that, for them to touch my body, as if they were touching the displayed wooden sculptures inside the museum protected with vitrines. In this respect, my painted body displayed in public was like a wooden sculpture out of

the glass frame; some of the audience could not believe I was real, and the only way for them to make me a real experience was by touching my body, as if by doing this proved my reality.

One important aspect to highlight about the piece in the museum context is that, the black audience responded very positively during the interaction with my painted body. I felt there was a sense of engagement with what I presented to the spectator. Contrary to the *Green-man* piece in streets of Brixton, this piece was more celebrated and welcomed and this could be (as I pointed out above in this chapter) because of the fact that the museum space legitimated and authorised publically the creative thinking – of an artist or performer – about cultural narration and history. In this case, because of the museum's status as a place that acknowledges old, and in this instance, new forms of expressions of culture and identity formation; it facilitated my bodily communication with the black British audience who wanted to pose for pictures with me without any negative interference created by the past history that portrayed 'primitive' practice as an obscure tradition; this shows that in this case the museum played an important part not just as a practical space but as a tool for cultural engagement, interpretation and "edutainment" (Jackson and Kidd, 2012: 4); for those in need of information of live art and culture from an African perspective (Asante).

Within the encounter, the wooden sculpture as object perhaps can be seen as the physical link that connected these spectators with their own ancestors in Africa (Browder). Holding the object became vivid moment for them to connect with the past and their own history (Diop). In this case, the object became the centre of their experience and engagement because of the value it was given in the museum, within an act of "...authenticity, origins, aesthetics and representation

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(Shaughnessy, 2012: 135). Conversely, I was aware the fact that the meaning of the object was altered and had multiples readings within the context of the museum setting. Citing D. C. Stam, Paul Johnson explains that:

> The meaning of objects in performance is altered through their being on stage, whether those objects are operating as props in a dramatic fiction or in some other way in some other type of performance (2012: 54).

At the same time, it was interesting for me to observe the way tourists visiting the museum as an international audience interacted with the object; I saw through their faces the impact the object made on them, I am suggesting that it created double meanings of difference and unfamiliarity, new, original and unusual. Hence, while I was walking the space my body and the tradition associated with it was exoticised and this was apparent through the theatrically of interaction and the posing for pictures. [28] The encounter showed how my body and cultural tradition was visually and physically consumed by the tourists (Gómez-Peña) and at the same time questioned the originality of the performance and ritual; because possibly it gave the sense of a "ceremonial practice" made for a tourist audience detached from its appropriate context (Alivizatou, 2012: 86). Visually, in the context tourists taking pictures of me as the 'primitive' 'other' became a significant factor that theatricalised the experience as one to remember, to consume and to take home. As a sign of ownership of the pleasurable moment with me, as the friendly but unfamiliar 'other', made 'safe' and accessible' through the context of the public museum. According to Papastergiadis, this action by tourists represented a "homogenization" of my culture exposed within the frameworks of a global context (2000: 111).

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[28] DVD and CD of my live performance *Chikukuango and Albert*, British museum (July, 2005)

Audience Painting Chikukuango, **Anominous gallery, Leamington Spa, Birmingham (2006)**

The primary idea of this piece was for me to stand in the middle of the gallery space and interact with audience members by asking them to paint my body as they liked, as a form of participatory art making. But, also as part of the concept of the piece I wanted to perform an African dance, for this reason I had with me on the night Naomi a dancer from Congo. Naomi is a specialist in a vibrant Soukous dance and because of this I thought it was a good opportunity to perform with her. My idea for the night was to finish by performing a dance with her. Moreover, the idea was that we would also incorporate the audience into her dance style, by bringing them to the centre of space, while creating intimate body movements. In a sense, her dance style is very spectacular and invitational to an audience. Normally, when I perform solo my dance style expresses my own improvisatory vocabulary which is rooted in African dance, but while performing with Naomi my intentions were to emphasise body movements and particular techniques that combined the creative energy of Angolan and Congolese dance. Because of the nature of the collaboration and how it emerged, I do not know Naomi's full name; this is to do with the circumstance at the time when we met our main objective was to create a piece together as a creative artists. After the collaboration we lost touch. This performance collaboration happened as one off experience.

This piece is important because for the first time I invited the audience to construct the performance with me through their interactions with my body and the paints I offered them.
I allowed the audience to be the active and creative 'performers' by utilising my body as an agent for the exploration of ideas of cultural traditions and identity. In this occasion, my body became the empty canvas ready to be inscribed with ideas and signs of cultural values and

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appropriations. In the same way, I wanted the audience to express their imaginary notions of 'tribalism' and 'primitivism'. Also, most importantly, I chose this piece, because for the first time as performance artist I had the opportunity to observe the audience's ideas, feelings, emotions and movements while they were painting my body. This approach as an artist and observer is what Gómez-Peña calls "reverse anthropology" (2005: 25). This aspect of the piece will be expanded below where I will write about the performance itself.

This performance emerged as a result of collaboration with an English artist; photographer and curator, Sarah Holt, whom I studied as an undergraduate at Middlesex University, in the Fine Arts programme (2001). After our graduation Holt lived in New Zealand and in Western Samoa with aboriginal people; whom inspired her to think about the effects of globalisation on culture as well as the affect of colonialism in creating a homogenised mass state. As a result of the experience Holt felt inspired to work with me and curate an exhibition upon her return to England, as she explained in the catalogue biography (2006).

At the start of the performance when I arrived in the middle of the gallery space, the first person who started painting my body was Holt. However, there were two types of containers that I carried to pour the paints on, which I did not notice initially. One was a glass container and the other was a wooden container, Holt chose the glass container for the white paint and the wooden brown container for the black paint, and this was not my choice, I did not control this part of the performance, I am assuming that this was a deliberate choice by Holt.

Nonetheless, in this piece I did not have my own containers to hand to pour the paints in, so I was just thinking about having something for the paints. But, after the performance when I was looking at the video, I realised that Holt seemed unconsciously to relate to 'primitive' cultures and tribes in a real sense. I am suggesting that for her the containers with white and black paints represented Western culture superiority and colonialism (Welsing) the white paint was in glass container as a signifier of modernism and the black paint was in the brown wooden container as signifiers of uncivilised and savaged race, society and culture (Mirza, 2000: 298). Such unconscious actions like Holt's have been deconstructed by Homi Bhabha who profoundly explores the myths of Western power and knowledge which restricts and dispossesses colonised people in a system of authority and "misrepresentation" (Bhabha, 1996: 88). In this case, racial difference triggered her colonial signs and designs of authority. According to Bhabha:

> It is there, in the colonial margin, that the culture of the West reveals its *différance*, its limit-text, as its practice of authority displays an ambivalence that is one of the most significant discursive and psychical strategies of discriminatory power–whether racist or sexist, peripheral or metropolitan (1996: 87).

Metaphorically speaking the containers and the colours of the paints were associated with the identity and traditions of the Western hegemonic cultural superiority inherent from colonialism; the hierarchy of the "colour bar" was manifested through the social event (Pieterse, 1992: 88-9). In this context, the containers and the colours of the paints became the physical visible reality which shows Western colonial dominance as performance art (Fanon).

Holt chose the white colour and the biggest brush that I had with me, again her action here emphasised Western dominance of the other, by selecting the biggest brush for the white colour, and this could be Holt's subconscious thought, perhaps. Her idea was to paint my body all in

white and then black on top, to create my body as the real canvas for the audience to project their imaginary ideas in a public place and environment. Franko B., an Italian live performance artist, uses white pigment paint to neutralise and protect his body before his bleeding performances (Wilson, 2001: 153). He does not use body painting the same way I use to reconnect to Angolan cultural tradition and identity.

The audience's projection of their imaginary ideas into my body relates very much with the Western representation, difference and power over the non-Western cultures and identity as described by the British sociologist Stuart Hall (1997: 259). It is important to mention that, for the audience the history of non-Western people affected their imagination in the very moment before they painted me. So, again the history of colonial dominance, economic struggle, postcolonial struggle, political and social migration had an impact on the audience's imagination of how they painted my body as the 'other' (Fanon, 1996: 677). When Holt was painting me I was surrounded by audience members. The audience were walking, drinking white and red wine. I am suggesting that, the scene somehow related to colonial experience, where I, the painted tribal subject became the servant of the colonial master by being happy serving the people of the dominant culture that were drinking, as a sign of Western cultural hegemony (Bhabha, 1994: 20). The drinks represented modernity, technological advancement and cultural evolution. The gallery space with the audience gazing at my body being painted white, and this turned into a moment of action of erasing the 'primitive' and tribal cultures in favour of Western modernism (Basquiat). The white paint over my body was a signifier of Western cultural dominance and global expansion and appropriation of non-Western cultures. In other words, this became a repetition of the colonial encounter in the gallery context.

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In addition, the aesthetic I created by wearing a loin cloth attracted the attention of some of the female audience who gazed upon my body half naked (Gómez-Peña). In fact, one female audience member painted my legs and toes. She was very delicate painting my toes and finger nails and this for me was a signal of gender cross-over; she wanted to transform my body into a female body, by utilising female body adornment. She also made some dots on my neck and then she finished by painting my face and lips as a sign of male/female gender cross-over as modification and identification of my body (Tseelon, 2001: 153). I noticed that my body became an object infused with sex, gender and creativity. By allowing the audience to express their ideas in a close relationship with me as the art object; my body became a site of vulnerability. Like Yoko Ono in her piece *Cut Piece* (1964) she was passive and vulnerable when she invited the audience to approach and cut off her clothes, piece by piece.

The audience deconstructed the supposedly neutral subject/object relationship between the viewer and the art object (Goldberg, 1998: 101). In the interaction with the audience, Ono implicated herself in the potentially aggressive act of unveiling her passive body. The audience while cutting her body emphasised the reciprocity in the way that they the audience and Ono the subject became the object for each other (i.e. the body, dress, scissors and hands). In other words, *Cut Piece* demonstrates the possibilities of creating an interactive live performance with an active participation of audience, with the potential to open up a debate about the relationship between performer and audience and at the same time to find out new positions of expressions of the contemporary body and identity in a cultural and transcultural space; the complex place of multiple identities and trajectories (Mirzoeff). *Cut Piece* is an important live art performance that has some parallels with my gallery performance, whereby my body became vulnerable and

passive when the audience were inserting different layers of painting into my body (Warr and Jones, 2000: 74). The performance opened up new ways of thinking and interaction between performer and audience in an intercultural space and encounter (Schechner).

As I have pointed out above, the idea of this piece was to interact with the audience, by inviting them to paint my body with the colours black and white upon their arrival in the space. For this reason, it is important to know that, in the piece I did not make any overt reference to colour, race or racism as a social category in Britain. But, somehow amongst the audience an English artist and poet misinterpreted the concept of the piece by writing a poem on my chest insinuating racial lines. His poem was:

Cut me…Red you will see the same for all, whatever race.

Colour or creed!

Certainly, in that we can see then that he thought because I am a black artist the piece was about colour, race or racism. It is obvious and visible that, he did not comprehend the concept of the piece; he stereotyped and discriminated my body by taking my 'skin' as a natural identity of cultural and political discourse associated with 'race' relation (Basquiat). Bhabha considers that the understanding of 'skin' and 'race' in public relates to cultural, political and historical discourses, stating:

> Skin, as the key signifier of cultural and racial difference in the stereotype, is the most visible of fetishes, recognized as 'common knowledge' in a range of cultural, political and historical discourses, and plays a public part in the racial drama that is enacted every day in colonial societies (1994: 78).

All the same, he made a wrong connection between my 'skin', 'race' and live piece. I think what he thought was a good example of "stereotyped" judgement towards non-Western art and artists

(Basquiat and Fani-Kayode). His interpretation of the piece by the way he wrote the poem expressed an ambivalent perspective. According to Bhabha, speaking of stereotype:

> To recognize the stereotype as an ambivalent mode of knowledge and power demands a theoretical and political response that challenges deterministic or functionalist modes of conceiving of the relationship between discourse and politics, and questions dogmatic and moralistic positions on the meaning of oppression and discrimination (1996: 88).

In this case, he went to the extreme in his interpretation of the piece; although I wanted the audience to paint my body by granting them licence but not to the point of taking advantage of my vulnerable position and relating the encounter with peoples colour, race or creed differences while intersecting in the space. In this situation, as a black artist it was not my intention to be an agent of "racial representation" speaking for the black community while performing in the gallery space (Mercer, 1994: 239). With that in mind, it was not part of my object in any form or shape to carry the burden that black artists in Britain are representatives of public figures while performing. Indeed, the way he understood the piece could be related to what Mercer suggested in the context of black artists in Britain:

> Whereas politicians and other public figures are elected into positions from which they speak as "representatives," this role has fallen on the shoulders of black artists not so much out of individual choice but as a consequence of structures of racism that have historically marginalized their access to the means of cultural production. When black artists become publicly visible only *one at a time*, their work is burdened with a whole range of extra-artistic concerns precisely because, in their relatively isolated position as one of the few black practitioners in any given field–film, photography, fine art– they are seen as "representatives" who speak on behalf of, and are thus accountable to, their communities...The visibility of a few token black public figures serves to legitimate, and reproduce, the invisibility, and lack of access to public discourse, of the community as a whole (1994: 239).

In this context, what is important for me to state is that in my performances, ideas of colour or race are not my primary concern; my work specifically deals with the issue of identity, hybridity,

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diaspora, interculturalism and reconnection to Angolan traditions and ancient practices of body painting, ritual and dance. This was my objective in this piece, in which I wanted the audience to participate by contributing with imaginary ideas that link with ancient practices of the body, movements and gestures.

Marina Abramovic's important piece *Rhythm 0* (1974) illustrates her exploration of the dynamic of passive aggressive interaction with the audience. She stood and offered her body passively to the audience to treat as they liked with a range of objects placed on a table and her body (i.e. fork, comb, lipstick, bottle of perfume, gun, bullet, paint, knives, matches, rose, candle, water, nails, chains, olive oil, plasters, grapes, honey, scissors and needles). In this piece the audience mistreated her body by painting, decorating, cutting, and pressed a loaded gun against her head. Abramovic in the *Rhythm 0* went to extremes by positioning her body in danger with objects that could possible harmed her (Schimmel, 1998: 101). She went so far through the physicality of the piece and ritual by surrounding herself with potentially dangerous objects (Warr and Jones, 2000: 125). This is such an iconic piece which constitutes an important visual reference point to my practice within the performance studies discipline.

Encounter with Rosalie, Islington (2007)

This collaborative piece took place in the streets of Islington (Angel) in North London, where I and Rosalie Wahlfrid a model from Sweden wanted to explore the streets by utilising our bodies as a devise of a creative process captured by Sebastian Andrews; an Australian photographer. The idea for the piece emerged from a conversation we had, where we realised we had a common interests in understanding our perception of our bodies while navigating through spaces

and streets. In addition, in this interceptive piece one of our intentions were to openly express dances, gestures and movements to represent our experiences of hybridity and interculturalism. At the time of the performance, Islington was for us an interesting place to create a piece because of the area's vibrancy and where the signs of globalisation are visibly manifest through the diversity of shops in the high street and the cultural events that take place here (Fusco).

On the day when we came about to do the piece, we did not rehearse, we planned to do the piece in the manner of a creative improvisation. We considered that it was a very nice day to perform; there was lots of sunshine, which helped how we felt, and creatively the sunshine made our interaction pleasurable. Not having to worry about the cold weather conditions was a satisfying feeling. It is important to highlight here that, this was our first collaboration and our backgrounds and differences was an instrument to underline. We wanted to emphasise the beauty of our bodies (black and white) in a performative and art form to create the possibility of a new language of bodies from displaced individuals in 21st century Britain (Chin). What I mean is we both were engaged to create an alternative symbolic space by merging our experiences as people of two different cultures, traditions and histories, as outsiders describing a visually cross-cultural and trans-national aesthetic (Hassan, 1999: 232). In this piece, it was important for both of us to emphasise the expressions of the body based on our own existing cultural influences and the traditions of African and Europe. One of the ideas of this piece was to express my position and connect to my roots as an artist descending from Africa; by living in the West in the postcolonial era and experiencing cross-culture and trans-nationalism (Gilroy). In the context of African artists exposed to Western modernism Salah Hassan points out that it is important:

> ...to see how African artists have interpreted and translated the aesthetic and
> social experiences of postcolonial, contemporary Africa into new idioms of

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artistic expression that are both related to their cultural heritage, and connected to Western modernism. This would offer a new critical perspective on 'modernism' as a concept in twentieth-century Western art history, and on cross-cultural aesthetic in general (1999: 233).

In fact, in this piece we wanted to relate the trajectories of our past to create an aesthetic form within the discourse of Western modernism and interculturalism (Patrice). However, what became manifest through our physical contact and while creating a temporary and intimate relationship, was a sense of invading each other's space created, difference and discomfort. For instance, when we laid on the floor or when we sat against the bar in the street with her hair placed on top of mine temporarily it created an easiness and unusual feeling of strangeness, because this action transported "...meanings across codes of racial.." and cultural differences (Mercer, 1999: 284). On the other hand, this represented difference which we were attempting to bring to surface as an artistic expression of cultural heritage in modern art. Indeed, I am suggesting that, my reaction in this instance related to my culture and to the process of adapting to a new experience expressed publically in the city and streets (Tawadros, 2005: 130).

To further elaborate, the piece started in the stairs opposite the Business Design Centre (Islington) where we also kept our costumes and props. I presented myself topless – without painting my body in this particular piece – and Rosalie with a black dress and high-heeled shoes. Although we made ourselves completely available for the passing-by audience in the streets, we did not focus our interaction on their gazes and curiosities (Gómez-Peña, 2004: 163). Rather, we were interested in creating a visual aesthetic of our bodies with their own specific cultural and historical references in a creative relationship.

Indeed, we set up the piece deliberately in such way that looked interactive but discrete in a busy high street. We began by exploring our bodies in the space, by creating contact with each other and using our bodies to create shapes on the floor; highlighting our differences of hair and body postures through the close shot of the camera (Mercer). As I have point out earlier in this section of this chapter, the plan for the collaboration was very much based on improvisation and the trial of different possibilities for the exploration of our bodies as an evolutionary new form of communication and performance method grounded on a "...purely ritualistic origins..." and traditions of Angola, which in this case suffered alteration as a result of the global "encounter with the Western world" (Byam, 1998: 231).

The originality of my contemporary concept expressed in this piece in the streets had wider implications to us, the artists involved in it. With this in mind, Rosalie and I were very much engaged in the process of exploration and interested in the outcome of the piece. But, soon after we started the collaboration, it was Andrews the photographer who brought his personal issues into the experience by manipulating our interaction through the power of the camera (Malik). At the time I did not really pay enough attention to this dimension of what we were doing. This was because I was so engaged in the process that such details passed unnoticed. The fact that he had the camera in his hand that he set up some situations where he played a directorial role eventually highlighted the fact that he held a lot of power in our interactions (Ani). To my surprise, his behaviour expressed ideas and signs of racism and "white superiority and supremacy" to use a terminology of a psychiatrist Frances Cress Welsing (1991: 1-2). In this context, his behaviour subsequently drove his actions, demonstrated through the pictures from the camera. Welsing in relation to "white superiority and supremacy" elucidate:

> ...the goal of the white supremacy system is none other than the
> establishment, maintenance, expansion and refinement of world domination
> by members of a group that classifies itself as the white "race" (1991: 3).

The way he captured on camera my body in certain situations showed an overbearing attitude of an authority towards me revealing, as far as I was concerned, the mind of a neo-colonialist. For instance, the way he directed me to place myself on the floor with Rosalie on top of me in a position of authority, which suggested power and dominance over the black body, this scenario was deliberately constructed for the camera (Browder). His directions, from my perspective, represented visually a neo-colonisation of the body and space. Moreover, Bhabha argues that colonial authority and discrimination is no longer immediately visible publically, because it has constructed a new form of expression and disposal of power:

> The presence of colonialist authority is no longer immediately visible; its discriminatory identifications no longer have their authoritative reference to this culture's cannibalism or that people's perfidy. As an articulation of displacement and dislocation, it is now possible to identify 'the cultural' as a disposal of power, a negative transparency that comes to be agonistically constructed *on the boundary* between frame of reference/frame of mind (1994: 114).

Furthermore, at the end after the collaboration he was very difficult to get hold of and I had to chase him for the pictures. Eventually, I found myself left in a situation of powerless, even though I was the performer using my body as the subject of practice. This experience raised for me the question of intellectual property and who owns the rights of the performance piece. When I received the pictures from Andrews I also realised that he had published on his website some of the neo-colonial images we made. In a way his publishing the images is outside my control; but it shows his mind set in relation to the image of the black body (Hall).

In this piece I learnt to be more conscious about what I create and set up to do in any given performance piece and situation. In the future I need to be clearer about my aims and objectives I have in working collaboratively. It was also an important lesson in being prepared to say no to collaborations that compromise my image and principles. I do not always have to go with the flow of other people's creative process. I have to choose the creative material, people and ideas to work with. In fact, I have to be more specific to choose what I need to be part of and not just engage in collaborations without knowing the artist or photographer. As a turning point it made me to think what collaboration is; this allowed me to realise that in further performances using practice-informed research I need to be more conscious about the creative ideas and the artists. I need to know and sketch in advance a list and at least some ideas and structures for any collaboration, even when the outcomes itself is not determined. Also, I need to create some kind of parameters that I can identify what I need and want to work with. In this way, I can ensure that I protect what I value as an artist and researcher.

Transformation, **Area 10, Peckham, London (2007)**

Light in the Dark, **Galerie-Lecoq, Berlin (2007)**

The next two performances were symbolic ritualistic activities and processes that were based on similar ideas and principles as those which explored community and gallery space. One of my intentions was to create a ritual practice and aesthetic of the body expressed by the Haitian people as part of their culture, customs and ceremonies of voodoo (Kuti). Essentially, their cultural tradition influenced me to do these works (Gilroy, 2000: 490).

Haiti has a very rich ritualistic expression and ancestral worship based on West African (Benin, Nigeria, Senegal and Congo) traditional religion and cosmology (Deren, 2004: 58). In this case, my particular interest in looking at the Haitian cultural tradition as an intercultural and transcultural method to create performance in England does not mean I lost my own sense of origin and integrity, but because the Haitian cultural and religious practice constitute one of the important aspects of the continuing of the African religion in the diaspora (Basquiat) well worth exploring alongside the African diasporic religious practices of Brazil, Cuba, Jamaica, Dominican Republic and North America. Actually, according to Thompson an expert in African art and historian, the Kongo[29] (which is where Angola is located now) have a direct link with the religion practiced in Haiti, Brazil, Cuba and North America (1984: 127-29), this demonstrate the communality with my practice and processes which I am currently looking into, as a quest for ancient connections derived from Africa (Gates).

The reason I have chosen to include some reference to these pieces is because they are very significant and important visual representations of my practice; where for the first time I expressed a ritual practice and character beyond the Angolan cultural tradition (Chokwe) and my personal trajectories in the diaspora world (Portugal and Britain). In other words, in these pieces I demonstrated the direct link I made in a form of a symbolic ritual based on the Haitian cultural expression of contemporary religion and iconography (Thompson). In that case, it is important to state at this point that, through the development of my practice the Haitian cultural tradition and religion became an important diasporic source of information and inspiration because I wanted to

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[29] I deliberately spelled Kongo in this format in a similar way as writing by Robert Farris Thompson (1984) *Flash of the Spirit*.

integrate my experiences of my new self in relation to their cultural practice (Murphy, 1994: 14), which manifested physically in these works as a result of my creative vision.

However, in these pieces, one of my objectives was to translate into a performative work my interpretation of the Haitian ritual presented through the extensive works of Maya Deren's *Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti* (2004) a book and DVD with the same title. It is important to emphasise that I did these pieces based on my research of her works because of the accuracy and analysis she gives to Haiti rituals and ceremonies. In the performance, it was important to have the space dark, so then I could transform the space and symbolically manifest the power of the Haitian ancestral spirits and deities in a connection expressed and mediated through the actions, movements and ephemeral gestures of my body inventing a ritual (Owusu).

The space of the performance was deliberately configured and devised in a way that the audience formed a circle to create a ritual approach and atmosphere, with the visibility of the space and my body placed in the centre (Gómez-Peña). I consciously decided to set up the space to be this way. I was the focus of attention and through this setting I wanted possibilities to occur through my body as the medium constructing a personal ritual of healing and connection in the dark space (Soyinka). In these works my body was painted white, black blue and red; and I used the following props: a 'divine' basket, white powder and water to symbolically create a ritual that suggested both sacred and surreal worship and a point of access between the physical and the metaphysical world as expressed in the Haiti ceremonial religion (Thompson, 1984: 179-80). Moreover, these pieces were constructed as an act of offering and veneration; I knelt and touched my lips to the ground as a gesture to express my devotion (Kuti) to the Angolan ancestors and

the spiritual power of the Haitian deities. The candle light was used as a metaphysical point of contact and interfusion; at the same time the body served to naturalise and establish a bond and unity between the physical and spiritual world. In addition, my props were placed in the middle and my exploration of the cross-roads ritual was the visible aspect which represented the Haitian culture and religion. What is more, the use of the cross-roads was fundamental because symbolically it indicated the communion and traffic between the two worlds (Deren). These works were performed in a way that Haitians express the cultural tradition of voodoo ceremonies. That is to say, my actions symbolically made reference to interlocking link between life, transfiguration and the Haitian gods and the cosmic world (Murphy).

Cross-Roads Ritual, **Sydenham Hill Park, South London (2007)**

This piece came as a result of my interest in wanting to continuing to explore the Haiti traditions of ritual and voodoo ceremonies in the context of a park or forest in a rural environment. In a way, it was a rejection of creating a performance for a gallery space and allowed me to make a more direct contact with nature in an obscure place. I felt this would give greater authenticity to the work as such ritually as usually performed in relation to the land and environment. The piece was produced in collaboration with the British photographer Savinien-Zuri Thomas and we set up the piece in middle of a forestry park where I was surrounded with trees, grasses and leaves to symbolically capture the roots of Angolan and Haitian 'primitive' cultures and societies. Also, the idea of using this environmental space was to provide a repertoire of symbols and connection that resemble and describe those traditions and practices "primitive".

Notwithstanding, the piece started from our deliberate visit to the Hornimen ethnographic museum, in South London, where natural objects, collections and practices from Africa and the Pacific Ocean are preserved and exhibited on a permanent basis. The photographs of artefacts we took at the museum were used as a reference point for painting my body. During our visit to the museum we wanted to gain inspiration and particularly my idea was to translate what I saw – in terms of the ethnographic objects that are static – in the museum into a live performance piece, which communicates and narrates the tradition and history of Angolan and Haiti (Murphy).

Although, this piece was made in connection to the visit to the museum, our main objective was to focus on creating cross-roads in a rural environment in harmony with nature. The cross-roads were a symbolic construction to represent life and death in connection with the cosmos. It is a symbolic representation of the earth and by extension "...the cardinal points on the horizontal plane" (Deren, 2004: 35). The divine basket was placed in the middle of the cross-roads. I used white powder as a point of access to make the cross-roads. I used the white powder to draw symbols on the floor and in the air as a means of creating "...the juncture of the horizontal with the vertical, where the communication between worlds is established and the traffic of energies and forces between them is set up", according to Maya Deren (2004: 36). Water as a divine liquid was poured as a form of offering and libation and a call to the spirit of Angolan ancestors. In this respect, trees and leaves particularly are great natural highways for spiritual communication and traffic, which possess divine properties and healings. For this reason, symbolically I made a circle of white powder around the tree and a libation of water was offered to indicate communication and traffic between the worlds (Basquiat).

However, the way this piece was conducted in the middle of the forestry park, we actually hidden from any passing-by audience; in reality this work was created without an audience. The piece was more focused on exploring ritual, and attempting to capture something of this experience through the camera, rather than attracting an audience to see what we were doing.

Conclusion

What Original Contribution to Knowledge Does This Thesis Aim to Make?

This thesis makes an original contribution to knowledge via 'practice-informed' research in the field of performance studies through an investigation of both the context and background of Angolan history and the value of its cultural traditions, which have been lost, destroyed or erased as part of the quest for modernity and the drive towards industrial and technological development, created through the transatlantic slave trade and the experiences of colonialism and civil war. Throughout this process of investigation, I utilised my own painted body as the central point of enquiry that symbolically creates ritual, dance and movements as part of my diasporic imaginary connection with my Angolan roots and the re-invented hybrid identity in Britain.

I have used 'practice-informed' research as a methodology and my original contribution to knowledge is my retrospective analysis and instigation of the interplay of critical and theoretical information about my body painting symbolic performance and rituals. As I have indicated, most of the performances were undertake before I engaged in this research and they were made intuitively, naively and spontaneously

My contribution to knowledge is based on my own performance practice. This research originated from my body painting work and through that process my methodology contributed to my findings and discovery. The notions I utilised in this research were supported through a retrospective and objective analysis and examination of my practice, which was undertaken with a greater objectivity. This process allowed me to recognise things that I would not otherwise necessarily have observed if I was just making the works as a practitioner. Being a researcher enables me to cast a critical gaze across the works I made in the past. Through this activity, I

used postcolonial and interculturalism as the theoretical framework of my analysis and examinations.

In this light, the significance of this research in my field of study is that, I have combined theory and practice in relation to the articulations of the events in the Angolan history which impacted on my understanding of the self and the use of my body as a creative practice, whereby cultural tradition were narrated and presented in a new form as substitute for oral communication and textual history. For this reason, the contribution I made in my field of study relied in these four aspects indicated in the chapters:

- The findings and discoveries I made from analysing my practice in Britain in an interaction with an audience.
- My use of my body painting and its aesthetic in diaspora in a relationship with Angolan cultural tradition and history.
- The context of where and how my practice emerged as a re-configuration of identity resulting on experiences of war, trauma, violence, exile, refugee and nostalgia in the diasporic dislocated framework of postcolonialism and interculturalism.
- The comparative studies between my practice and the contemporary art practices and their influences from Europe, Africa and North and South America.

Summary of Findings

One of the aims of this research was to explore the complexities of Angolan cultural history (1960s-1980s) and the contribution of music, poetry, literature and musicians, poets and

intellectuals in the revolutionary struggle, fight for independence and during the country's postcolonial civil war. In doing this I engaged with the social-cultural and socio-political account of Angolan history. I discovered that those creative practices played a major role in the development and liberation of the nation from the Portuguese. In this exploration I found that the post-independence and postcolonial governmental leaders (MPLA) were corrupt and had a bad sense of governance through accumulation of national wealth and resources (Angolan patrimonialism) for personal gains and privileges (Vidal, 2007: 127). Through this process, they covered a great part of the country's information from the general population in order to keep them ignorant and knowing the truth. In this way they could lead the nation without political opposition. For this reason, the leaders controlled the entire media outlets for information and entertainment (Oyebade, 2007: 67).

As I have shown, this inevitably created oppression and lack of freedom of expression, which resulted in an indiscriminate death of artists and journalists who attempted to challenge this system (Birmingham, 2002: 151-3). The problem of education was seen as very important issue, because of the fact that people are socially excluded from power and decision making. As I have argued, in the education system power was used and abused – and it continues to be – a lack of opportunities for ordinary people to access adequate school, college or educational equipments or materials; while the children of the leaders had the privilege to travel internationally to obtain diplomas in prestigious foreign schools and colleges (Oyebade, 2007: 8-9).

The thesis goes further by exploring the event of 1977 whereby musicians, poets and intellectuals attempted a military coup, but were brutally killed by the MPLA government.

However, as a consequence this action silenced most of the Angolan artists in Angola and the diaspora. It left them afraid to speak out and intimidated to raise their own opinions regarding the governmental leadership and political activism. As a consequence, I discovered that Angolan artists and people suffer psychological and spiritual post-traumatic syndrome. This was visible through the interviews I conducted, where there was resistance from some of the artists and journalists to speak out their personal perspective of the history and political events. Considering the fact that all the artists, journalists and one spiritualist I interviewed are first generation of Angolans, some of them were even suspicious of me and the nature of this research; and questioned its purpose and objectives. They were concerned about who was going to see their comment and perspective about their culture and history. To my surprise suggestions were even made to hide the video recordings of the interviews in the special room in the Brunel library; where only authorised people would be allowed to watch the interviews. Hence, in this research important considerations were made concerning the fact that my interviews contributed to better understanding of Angolan culture and history based on the account given by the interviewees in the diaspora.

In this thesis I demonstrated that one of my main purposes was to simplify the complexities of Angolan history with the influence of politics, literature, music and dance. In this respect, I wanted to do this way because the history and past are very negative and brutal because of slavery, colonialism, political revolution and civil war; I wanted to write this thesis as a form of intellectual statement and to re-write history from the Angolan perspective. This thesis provides information about Angolan history in the artistic sense, specifically from 1975 until the end of the 1980s. For example, the function and contribution of ritual and dance are given their

appropriate context and validation in Angolan history, particularly, during the struggle for independence (1961-1975) and during the internal civil war (1975-2002).

In this process I also discovered that an important aspect of my practice is my earlier formative experience of living in Angola; the sort of activities I participated in or observed, which I now come to realise its influenced on how I see the world and that it has played an important role for me as a person and impacted the work that I currently make. An additional element of this research has been an investigation of my earlier formative experiences living in urbanised Luanda hybrid city and the sort of activities I took for granted either as a participant or as an observer.

I also have shown the dynamic of the environment I grew up with a multitude of different people and ethnicities from all parts of the country expressing the different types of cultural tradition through dressing, music and dance (Birmingham, 2006: 131-4). Religion and cosmology played an important part as a cultural expression in the lives of the people; funeral rites, ceremony of the dead and Kianda ritual with libation (water and traditional alcohol) and food thrown in the sea to honour the queen of the waters was described (Oyebade, 2007: 136-7) . The importance of ritual ceremony of carnival in the streets was also commented on to demonstrate the visual and aesthetic influence in my practice (Oyebade, 2007: 157).

In the Angolan situation the question of artists utilising metaphor and the conceptual manifestation of the Angolan ancestral spirit embodied in performance art, ritual, dance music and drama as a union of physical and spiritual connection were explored in the works Licau

Daniel and Tingana Victor (Mandingo). This was investigated to demonstrate the link between Angolan contemporary practice and the thousands of years of ancient Angolan tradition and religious values of the dynamic between body and spirit in a creative process. I found it problematic to trace the roots and establish the truth about Angolan tradition and history, because of the experiences of slavery, colonialism and civil war. At the time of finishing this research project I still do not know the truth of its roots even though empirical interviews were conducted. However, this is an open invitation for my area of study where could be further investigated in future research projects; through further explorations which would require more interviews with artists and historians and possibly a few visits to Angola.

The interviews I conducted with: Tingana Victor (Mandingo), Branca Miguel da Silva, Tello-Morgado, Bonga Kuenda, Walter Republicano, Ney Corte Real, Garcia Francisco Baxe (Kekas) and Caló Pascal, added value to this thesis and contributed to a better knowledge of Angolan culture and history considering the situation of Angolan postcolonial and post-civil war.

To demonstrate the importance of the dissemination of Angolan cultural history, as an appendix I have attached the DVD *Angola 'End of an Empire'* (1990) which describes historically the intervention of the international countries (Cuba, Soviet Union, South Africa, Zaire, China and North America) in the civil war and how this damaged the country and its natural resources. Until the release of this DVD, this history was hidden from the general Angolan population. The DVD shows the complexity of the Angolan transition to independence, which was deliberately constructed in a retrograde manner by the Portuguese colonial authority. This DVD is an important resource to assist people in the understanding of Angolan history (1961-1980s).

Through this research I found out that Angolan art and artists in Britain are very new because they come from a Lusophone perspective and approach constructed as a result of postcolonial social and political frame and circumstances. This was identified in comparison to a more established practice with English speaking countries from Africa and the Caribbean communities, which already have a long history and settlement in Britain because of the legacy of colonialism. I demonstrate the fact that Angolan artists in Britain are using distilled elements of their cultural origin and roots of identity in their art and music production as a derivative of new settlement.

These artists are established creative makers in Angola and their practices have similarities with mine, but because of the nature of my practice I discovered that my work is unique on the basis of how it originated, my thought process and methodology, the concept and aesthetic I deploy in my painted body in an interaction with an audience. In a sense, I realised that none of the artists are using their painted bodies painted and performing live in the same way I do to re-invent a diasporic identity. The importance of having these artists in the British diaspora was also acknowledged because through their works I had an identical practice to compare with as well as learning about their practice in a situation where I could also improve my performance practice and strategy. Another appendix is a DVD of Angolan music and dance workshop made by the artists Tello-Morgado and Ney Corte Real (2007). This took place in London and the main purpose is to show the richness of the Angolan cultural tradition, so that, people can have a better understanding of this practice in the diaspora.

There is not enough documentation of books and articles of Angolan history in the English language and the very little available in Portuguese is difficult to access because of travel expenses. It has colonial outlook of the history. The lack of Angolan scholars with appropriate knowledge of the tradition, culture and history was also discovered. For this reason, I turned to look at Nigerian tradition, culture and performance arts scholarship in the diaspora as a comparable culture that also had a colonial past, but had rather more in the way of material evidence that helped me to create a model for this research. In this methodology, I described the main Nigerian scholars Olu Oguibe, Okwui Enwezor and Osita Okagbue who impacted and played an important role in my construction of this thesis.

In this context, in chapter 5 I considered and evaluated the importance of 20th and 21st century contemporary artists (Pablo Picasso, Jean Michael Basquiat and Fela Anikulapo-Kuti), who influenced the development of my practice and the transition from painting on canvas to paint on my body.

The main reason I compared my work with these artists' works was to create a thematic umbrella in a performative and theatrical frame of reference and to provide an opportunity to analyse, debate and articulate body painting as a symbolic ritual and dance. The idea of a comparative study was not motivated to arrive at any specific conclusions; because I wanted more than anything else to gain an insight into their works, context and better understanding the mechanisms they are utilising in order to situate my emerging practice and narrative. Producing this comparative study allowed me to disseminate the complexities of my practice and condition as a way to instigate better possibilities of understand diasporic articulation and knowledge.

Britain is a changing cultural setting and this comparative study was made to give a grounding to my practice in an engagement with an audience within a socio-cultural and socio-political ideological sphere of activities and encounters. Hence, Fusco, Gómez-Peña and Fani-Kayode are the artists I have used to conduct the comparative study in this research.

The Strengths of the Thesis

A major contribution to the understanding of my work has been gained through researching and carrying out interviews with Angolan artists in Britain as well as contextualising my work in relation to the works of other African, Afro-American and South America artists. This has illuminated my practice and my theoretical understanding of performance arts in a broad sense. In particular, the interviews I conducted gave me access to very important information concerning historical and social events largely unknown to the general Angolan population. This is significant and gives weight to the investigation undertaken in this thesis. It is hoped that some insights will be provided that will expand the body of knowledge in this area for theorists and practitioners who wish to engage in a discussion about the inter-relationship of creativity and history of Angolan culture and art practices and their presence in Britain.

Furthermore, in this thesis I offer a comprehensive investigation of contemporary Angolan body painting in Britain with the interplay of theory and practice. This thesis is the first of its kind in providing a theoretical and practical research examination on Angolan body painting and history. This research is pertinent to the contemporary culture and situation of the Angolan people in Britain; it reflects their recent migration and settlement. With this in mind, this research contests

any existing notions that my investigation has a generic vocabulary or perspective. My own practice can be seen as an embodied narration of Angolan tradition and history.

Further Research Strands to Pursue

Because of my background, my journey to Britain and how my work emerged in relation to Angolan cultural history and diaspora there are many questions about my practice that this present 'practice-informed' research does not reach. Although this thesis has covered many important areas, there are some areas whereby I only touched the surface. For example Tello-Morgado mentioned his collaborations with other international artists in the British diaspora. This could be an interesting area for further investigating, given the fact that Angolan art, music and dance are emerging. Also, the study of Angolan diasporic art in Britain in comparison with other African and the Caribbean artists would be interesting to examine. A survey of Angolan diasporic arts and artists across Europe would also be very productive. In addition, looking at different practices of Angolans in a various positions in exile would be very profitable as well. In this I want to see the many creative directions Angolans took and their perception of the self in relationship with the culture. Investigating Angolans now in transformation, changing and developing after the civil war would be rewarding. Also, scrutinising what is happening now in performing live art in relation to Angolan diasporic production is an interesting strand to pursue.

It would be beneficial to develop an archive of works from Angolan practitioners that can then be used as a resource for future research, so that Angolan artists and researchers would not start from scratch in a manner which I did in the course of this project. With this in mind, I am considering exploring my main contact with a range of Angolan artists and historians to build

national resources for Angolan artists living in Britain to provide new and emerging research in correspondence and exchange with the documents available in Portugal to help re-write Angolan history through an examination that has cultural forms. In other words, this would offer an alternative approach to history.

These future research explorations do not simply suggest where my research may go. I invite researchers to explore one of the areas I have outlined in this section of the thesis. In this context, I think there is an urgent need to look at what is happening with Angolan art in the context of 21st century, which live art may facilitate with the people, resources and material available there. My suggestions are only a few considering that the nature of this research is pioneering, but with this in mind, there are many potentially interesting aspects that I believe are worth exploring in relation to the contemporary Angolan diasporic performance art of body painting, symbolic ritual, music and dance.

To conclude, it is important to mention that the lack of documented information about Angolan history and the struggle I had to carry out this research should not be seen as negative, rather it should be taken as positive sign and challenge for future creation of research that combines an interdisciplinary approach to the examination of history, culture and traditions.

I hope by conducting and writing this research on Angolan culture and art I made some significant steps in terms of giving access of information in the English language where very little is known or has been written about Angolan history, culture and traditions.

The research of this thesis has opened up an area of study which has much to offer and capacity for generative knowledge. Contemporary Angolan body painting, symbolic ritual and dance

marks the end of an era and beginning of an interesting journey and possibilities within performance studies and the British diasporic sphere of social-cultural and socio-political discourse.

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Appendix

1950s Angolan nationalist political movement was formed in Luanda with Mario de Andrade The formation of the nationalism political movement in Luanda started with Mario de Andrade, Dr. Agostinho Neto, Lucio Lara, Viriato da Cruz, Bonga Kuenda, Vitor Teixeira and Higino Aires de Sousa

1950s The nationalist movement from the Mbundu ethnic group was formed by a group of Angolan intellectuals, artists, politicians and musicians: Mario Coelho Pinto De Andrade and Dr. Antonio Agostinho Neto, Viriato Francisco Clement da Cruz, who were the most important politicians and poets in the history of Angola revolution, Ilidio Tome Alves Machado, Joaquim Pinto de Andrade, Nito Alves, Eduardo Dos Santos, Paulo Jorge, Matias Migueis and Lucio Lara, were all politicians, and Bonga Kuenda, Maria de Lourdes Pereira dos Santos Van-Dunem, Mario Bwana Kitoko (Matadidi), Urbano de Castro, David Ze, Sofia Rosa, Carlos Vieira Dias, Liceu Vieira Dias, Artur Nunes, Belita Palma, Elias Dia Kimuezu, Mila Melo, Sam Mangwana, and Antonio Paulino, were all musicians. In addition, there were Anibal de Melo, Artur Carlos Mauricio Pestana dos Santos (Pepetela) and Antonio Jacinto, intellectual and writers who had contributed in the revolution through writing manifestos; and Vitor Manuel Teixeira (Viteix) and Roberto Silva were painters. Deolinda Rodrigues was a female activist and member of OMA-*Organizacao das Mulheres de Angola*

1955 *Angolan Communist Party* (PCA) is formed under the leadership of two brothers, Mario Pinto de Andrade and Joaquim Pinto de Andrade

April *Party of Liberation of Africans the Angola* (*PLUAA*) was formed by Angolan intellectual artists, politicians and musicians such as Viriato da Cruz, Agostinho Neto and Mario de Andrade

1956 PLUAA merged with PCA to form the *Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (*MPLA), under the leadership of Agostinho Neto

July Holden Roberto, Barros Nekaka and Manuel Nekaka from the North of Angola founded the *Union of People of North of Angola* (UPNA)

1960 Oil exploration started, principally under foreign companies such as BP, Shell, Agip, Chevron Texaco and Total

1961 nationalists set up a base in Congo Leopoldville headed by Agostinho Neto

February In Luanda the MPLA and FNLA started the revolutionary fight against the Portuguese

1962 In March, Holden Roberto formed the *Frent Nacional de Libertacao de Angola* (FNLA)

1966 Jonas Savimbi leaves the FNLA and founds the *National Union for Total Independence of Angola* (UNITA) in defence of the rural and peasant people, his ideas related to Maoist in China

1974 Mombasa peace agreement in Kenya, moderated by the Kenyan President Jomo Kenyatta with the three political groups MPLA, FNLA and UNITA

April 25, Carnation Revolution in Portugal, A military coup that overthrows the fascist and dictator Prime Minister Marcelo Caetano

1975 15 of January, Portuguese government signs the Alvor agreement with MPLA, FNLA and UNITA

February South Africans and Zairians clandestine sophisticated armed forced started to help *FNLA* and *UNITA* to enter Luanda

July U.S. President Gerald Ford approved aid to *FNLA* and *UNITA*, who joined forces, that was the beginning of the CIA covert operation in the politics of Angola

August Cuban military forces arrived in Luanda

November 10, the Portuguese transitional government officially left Angola with over 300,000 people

November 11, Agostinho Neto formally declare solemnest the independence of the People's Republic of Angola in Luanda in the 1st of May square at 12.00am, after 14 years of guerrilla war

November 11 Jonas Savimbi and Holden Roberto proclaimed their own independence of the Social Democratic Republic of Angola in Huambo province in the south-central territory

1975-1976 During the civil war, most foreign forces in Angola withdrew with the exception of Cuba

1976 Soviet Union started to receive *MPLA* military members for military training

1977 Nito Alves and Jose Jacinto da Silva Vieira Dias Van-Dunem military commanders, attempted coup known as 27 of May

1979 President Dr. Agostinho Neto dies and Jose Eduardo dos Santos was nominated as the president

1984 FNLA drops out of the civil war

1992 First Democratic elections in Angola, but Savimbi refuse to accept MPLA victory, he alleged that the election was fraudulent

2002 Angolan armed forces killed Savimbi, MPLA and UNITA leaders signed a peace agreement in Luena

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