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Assembling emergence: making art and selling gas in Bulawayo

Joshua D. Rubin

Introduction

I first met Dee[1] in the studio he occupied in a Bulawayo art gallery. Dee's works were subtle, complex, and evidently time-consuming to make. He began each piece by sketching the contours of an image on a section of white poster board. He then used a box-cutter to outline and excise small geometric shapes from within that image, removing the shiny top layer of the board and exposing a second layer beneath – darker and matte. To my eyes, the contrast between shiny brightness and matte darkness gave the resulting images both texture and depth. They appeared to vibrate with energy. While he was actively working on his art, tracing the edges of the geometric shapes, Dee seemed to vibrate with potential energy as well. When tourists stopped by his studio, all his energy burst forth – into smiles, exclamations and enthusiastic nods. In Dee's experience, visitors to the gallery were especially interested in his methods. How long did his work take him? Did he start with a photograph or produce the sketched image from scratch? He was flattered by their interest, but he also suspected that these questions were designed to help tourists judge the fairness of his prices. Tourists, Dee told me, hardly ever asked him what he intended his artworks to *mean*.

Dee had a detailed explanation for the significance of his art. The tiny geometric shapes that seemed to bring his images to life were discrete puzzle pieces that, in his view, represented the fragmentation of human experience. He explained the meaning of his work this way: at one point in the distant past, people lived in isolation from each other. Then, the Creator thrust everyone together into a single shared world in which human beings needed to find ways to live together. For Dee, this search amounted to putting together the pieces of the puzzle of individualized experience and, in doing so, producing a shared unity. He approached his work with this unity, not the tourist market, in mind. 'I work for the future,' he said, 'not for money.'

Dee was not alone in imagining his artistic works as opportunities (for him and for others) to engage creatively with notions of unity, cohabitation and experience; other artists who worked in the gallery had similar views. One artist, who painted with ink, explored these themes in his production process. The ink gave his completed works a polished, almost untouched quality, but this coherence belied the interpretive labour that the ink required of him. Because ink dries more rapidly

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than paint, he told me, he brought his paintings to unity by negotiating with his materials. He layered colours, spread them around, waited and watched, until the ink gave him an image he found satisfactory. For another artist, John, these themes appeared in the content of his art. He painted ghostly faces and added scraps of newsprint to his artwork. John intended these elements to produce gaps and fissures in the narrative of the work, and he included them because he wanted his viewers to hone their interpretive skills by identifying and explaining the erasures for themselves.

In my experience in Bulawayo, these themes also appeared in a somewhat less expected place: in the work of quasi-unregulated natural gas retailers. Like the artists in the gallery, these dealers aspired to unity and coherence. Although these men operated within fragmented and contingent networks of social relationships (including customers and collaborators, wholesalers and border guards, regulatory inspectors and police officers), they sought to knit these relationships together in order to deliver gas reliably and produce sustainable profits. Like artists, too, these dealers used the openness that marked the *pursuit* of coherence as an opportunity to creatively reshape the world around them. They bribed inspectors, borrowed import licences and invested in houses for the purposes of hiding their profits from the Zimbabwean government. It is with these relationships and strategies in mind that I characterize this work (with admitted clumsiness) as 'quasi-unregulated'. The terms 'formal' and 'informal' are simply too static and binary to account for either the mutability of the networks in which dealers participate or the complex roles that the state plays in the formation of those networks (cf. Roitman 1990).

This article teases out and examines the connections between making art and working with natural gas. Stopping short of collapsing these forms of work into a single category, it analyses the experiences of a collection of actors who make art and/or distribute gas, demonstrating that these actors mobilize an overlapping set of strategies to navigate the everyday political conditions of life in Bulawayo. These political conditions are unpredictable, insofar as they change frequently and crystallize only temporarily and in unexpected ways, and artists and natural gas retailers learn to operate within these conditions by building what a number of scholars have termed 'assemblages' – emergent arrangements of human actors, non-human objects, affect and time. In keeping with the theory of 'emergence' that motivates this part issue, I argue that this approach allows these social actors to leave interpretive possibilities unresolved and to feel their way into the future, in continual negotiation with the environments, situations and things that surround them. Although in many respects this approach bears similarities to those adopted by actors who work elsewhere in Zimbabwe's unregulated markets (cf. Chagonda 2016; Jones 2010b; Mawowa and Matongo 2010; Musoni 2010), artists and natural gas dealers also pursue their labours with a special awareness of the material properties of the substances with which they work. This awareness equips these actors to recognize both the skill required to manage these recalcitrant substances (and, by extension, the wider assemblages these actors seek to build) and the limitations of intentionality that this skill implies.

Furthermore, with its emphasis on the similarities between artistic production and gas distribution, this article resists the temptation to posit straightforward distinctions between artistic labour and other forms of work. In Bulawayo, as in

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many places, such distinctions are both unhelpful and inaccurate, even in their barest outlines. Artists in the gallery did more than render aesthetically a world that natural gas dealers navigated economically; they were also economic actors, in that they procured raw materials and shaped their works to meet the needs of a tourist market. Natural gas retailers, for their part, constructed dynamic representations of their worlds with and through the gas they circulated. Those representations might have been codified as the price of gas on a given day, but they were no less aesthetic for their economic value. One dealer in gas even coordinated his own community arts programme from within a studio in the gallery. Framing these practices as cultivated assemblages accounts for the categorical fluidity of these forms of work. It also situates the people who engage in this work within a shared social world that includes not only the material and affective resources they employ, but also the demands imposed on them by a predatory state.

The state, the sun, and emergence in Bulawayo's LPG market

Dee had little interest in catering to the tastes of the tourist art market. Although he found the questions that tourists asked to be superficial, and the themes they desired uninspiring, his strongest objection to the tourist market was aesthetic in nature. Dee considered a 'true work of art' to be one that provided 'a journey for everyone' and, in the context of his work, the richness of that journey was easily measured. The more geometric shapes his works contained, the more complex their puzzles and the more robust the journeys to piece those puzzles together. If tourists were more interested in the time it took to make a work than they were in the meaning behind it, they had little reason to wait patiently while he added the necessary detail. Tourists might visit his studio only once during their trip, and if he had no baobab trees or majestic lions' heads ready when they arrived, they would find those images elsewhere. While he tried to fill his tourist art with the same geometric shapes that appeared in the projects he was passionate about, the pressure to work quickly prompted him to compromise his artistic vision. He made the shapes larger – tracing, for example, the flank of an elephant in just a few pieces – so that they would be easier to execute, and the resulting works therefore lacked the complex puzzles and deep significance that he so valued. As Dee was explaining his frustrations, his friend Edward arrived. Edward listened for a moment and, when he chimed in, he was even more disdainful of tourists and their tastes than Dee had been. 'I could dash off three or four pictures of women with pots on their heads in five minutes and sell them to a European for a thousand bucks a pop,' Edward said. 'We call that stuff *isinkwa sabantwana* – bread for the children.'

Edward also occupied studio space in the gallery. Rather than using it to produce his own artwork, however, he ran a small arts education programme out of it. In addition to this art programme – which I discuss below – Edward was involved in a range of moneymaking ventures. At the time of my fieldwork, his primary interest was liquid petroleum gas (LPG) – a mixture of butane and propane gas that is pressurized and stored in tanks in liquid form. Having conducted his own independent research, Edward had good reason to think that his

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interest in LPG was justified. Zimbabwe had no domestic sources of LPG,[2] and large multinational companies had been slow to establish footholds in the country because of concerns about economic instability and political malfeasance. This lack of foreign and domestic investment had led Edward to believe that people who regularly turned to LPG to heat their water and cook their food (in his estimation, roughly 8 per cent of Zimbabwean households) were chronically underserved.[3]

Edward further suspected that Zimbabwe's LPG market had significant potential for growth and cited the country's crumbling electrical infrastructure as the source of his confidence. The Zimbabwe Electric Supply Authority (ZESA), the national power utility, is at best struggling – and at worst failing – to meet the electricity needs of the country. A 2015 article by Ndakaziva Majaka in the *Daily News* reported that large portions of Zimbabwe were spending upwards of sixteen hours per day without power. The cause of the blackouts was a significant production shortfall. Zimbabwe's two major power stations, Hwange Thermal Power Station and Kariba Hydro Station, account for 95 per cent of Zimbabwe's 1,095 megawatt (MW) daily output in a country that typically requires double that amount (2,200 MW per day). To make matters worse, Majaka noted, Hwange Thermal Power Station was due to undergo repairs shortly after my fieldwork, in late 2015 (Majaka 2015). As one of my informants, another dealer in LPG, put it: 'You know things are bad when ZESA is asking people to consider offsetting their electricity usage with gas!'

Edward saw an opportunity in this situation, but he was far from the only person to notice it. Tendai Makaripe, writing for *The Financial Gazette*, observed that the unreliability of Zimbabwe's electrical grid, coupled with the country's high rate of unemployment following its economic collapse in 2008, had produced a whole class of entrepreneurs who were eager to profit from the unregulated sale of alternative energy sources such as LPG (Makaripe 2015). Another man I knew, Zu, belonged to this category. Zu became acquainted with LPG in 2013, selling and pumping gas on the street and in the sun, and it wasn't long after he got his start that he was able to use his profits to build himself a metal garage-like structure behind a restaurant. By the time I met Zu, he had hired a couple of men to accept cash and pump gas while he busied himself with the unpredictable

[2]Quasi-unregulated dealers in LPG can procure their gas from Botswana and Mozambique, but the most important refineries are located in South Africa. There are presently no reliable statistics that capture the quantity of gas that Zimbabwe imports from any of these countries. Part of this problem stems from the conditions of Zimbabwe's LPG marketplace, but studies of LPG in South Africa suggest a second issue: South Africa has little information on how much LPG it imports, exports, or even produces. Production statistics used to be collected by the South African Petroleum Industries Association, but, as Philip Lloyd (2014) has noted, they stopped keeping records in 2008. The Department of Energy was due to take over data collection, but it did not do so. While it is obviously difficult to speculate on the precise combination of factors that have contributed to the limited involvement of foreign companies in Zimbabwe's LPG market, the confusion at the heart of the production process in South African refineries would seem to be an important contributing factor. Important too is the fact that petroleum refineries in South Africa are forced to use more LPG than their competitors in other countries because they lack the natural gas (methane) that refineries typically use as a heating supplement (*ibid.*).

[3]The vast majority (upwards of 88 per cent) of Zimbabweans, Edward discovered, relied on firewood or intermittent electricity for their cooking and hot water. The rest used LPG or paraffin.

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and occasionally maddening work of making sure that there was enough LPG at his fuelling station for his customers to buy.

Dealers such as Edward and Zu operate within convoluted webs of relationships and interactions, and each nodal point in those webs has the potential to affect the fate of those that surround it. A cross-border trader, carrying gas, could be delayed by confused paperwork or a sceptical official. Or a new player could enter the gas market and make a name for himself by flooding the market with gas and driving down prices. If an unscrupulous partner spends or pockets money that was meant to go towards procuring more gas, the flow of LPG will be interrupted and the retailer will have no legal recourse. Even further down the line, a foreign refinery might temporarily halt production (as one did for the first few days of my fieldwork) and cause a retailer's pipeline of fuel to collapse. Under such circumstances, prices can increase from US$2 to US$3 per kilogram to US$5 or even US$6 as one dealer after another runs out of supply.[4] In the quasi-unregulated LPG market, liquidity can freeze at a moment's notice.

It would be a mistake, therefore, to represent these retailers as the authoritative subjects of their labours. Other humans (such as border officials and traders) have an impact on the circulation of LPG, but so too can non-human objects such as gas itself,[5] the valves and generators that pump it, the vehicles that transport it, and the stoves, bathrooms and kitchens in which it is ultimately deployed (cf. Bennett 2010). The sun is an active participant in the circulation of LPG: as one dealer explained to me, sun exposure can raise the pressure in the tanks, damaging them and increasing the likelihood of an explosion. The gas tanks themselves are notably active, too. They are recycled from Southern Africa's formal gas market[6] and they leak fuel as they are filled and emptied. Although state

[4]During my research, two South African gas refineries shut down simultaneously for maintenance. In addition to raising the price of LPG dramatically in Bulawayo, *The Financial Gazette* in Zimbabwe reported that this shutdown also forced South African 'players' to import their gas from other countries ('LP gas shortage hits Zimbabwe', *Financial Gazette*, 6 August 2015 <http://www.financialgazette.co.zw/lp-gas-shortage-hits-zimbabwe/>, accessed 27 May 2018).

[5]Parts 1–3 of LP Gas Standard ZWS 960 in Zimbabwe's standardized specifications for 'The handling, storage, distribution and maintenance of liquefied petroleum gas in domestic, commercial, and industrial installations' (published in 2012) are a treasure trove of examples of the disruptive agencies of gas and tanks. In Part 1's 'Properties of LPG and precautions to be observed', for example, the standards note: 'LPG liquid, by its rapid vaporization and consequent lowering of the temperature, can cause severe cold burns when it comes into contact with the skin.' As a result, it continues:

> Appropriate protective clothing, such as gloves, goggles, aprons, and gumboots, shall be worn when there is any possibility of such contact. Because of the hazard of the generation of static electricity, the soles of gumboots shall be made of leather or non-conductive rubber, and clothing shall not be made of fabrics that contain artificial fibres.

With respect to explosions, the standards note:

> LPG is denser than air and will flow along the ground or through drains. It can be ignited at a considerable distance from the source of leakage, therefore low-level ventilation of buildings shall be provided.

[6]For customers, one of the fringe benefits of buying gas from a quasi-unregulated dealer is that such dealers are willing to fill any tank the customer brings. Licensed distributors will service only their own tanks.

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regulations stipulate that leaky tanks are too dangerous to use, dealers will fill them anyway and their open-air stations are suffused with the acrid smell of gas. The consequences of a station filling slowly with gas can be predictably dangerous.[7] As these complexities and avenues of potential failure demonstrate, LPG distribution in Zimbabwe can be derailed for reasons that have no direct connection to a retailer's own actions and decisions. This being the case, the quasi-unregulated distribution of LPG is perhaps best understood as an *emergent* process.

As the statements from the Zimbabwe Energy Regulatory Authority (ZERA) might suggest, the Zimbabwean state participates actively in this emergent market. Notably capricious in its engagement with other similar markets (cf. Bratton and Masunungure 2006; Fontein 2009), the state has only recently sought to regulate the sale of LPG. Justifying its actions as a response to a spate of explosions that it blamed on negligent dealers, the state produced the Petroleum (LPG) Regulations of 2014 (Statutory Instrument 57). These regulations require sellers to undergo site and safety inspections and purchase retail licences. Retailers in Bulawayo are now officially answerable to the ZERA and its equipment standards, the city council, the fire brigade, the Environmental Management Agency (EMA), and the police. Should they fail to comply with the state's regulatory standards, they are subject to fines, both large and small.

Although it may appear that these regulations are designed to address the safety concerns that attend the use of a dangerous substance, and to inject a measure of stability into a volatile market in the process, Zu and other sellers of gas are (perhaps unsurprisingly) extremely wary of this reading. For one thing, retailers allege that a man who serves as an adviser to the ZERA owns his own petroleum company (and perhaps multiple 'competing' companies). Given that the ZERA has the power to determine whether a company will receive a licence to sell LPG, and given that at least one of this man's companies was preparing to enter the LPG market, his conflicting interests belied the legitimacy of Zimbabwe's 'formal' LPG market. Dealers were therefore not particularly optimistic that the ZERA and its agents would assess their operations fairly. For another thing, retailers know that they can avoid the fines that come with failed inspections if they are willing to bribe the inspecting officers. Zu estimated that he paid out between US$80 and US$100 in bribes each month, or between 13 per cent and 16 per cent of his expected monthly profits (US$600), depending on which organizations inspected him and how much clout they had. The greater the clout, the higher the fines; the higher the fines, the higher the bribes to avoid them.

[7]In one instance documented by the ZERA, an unlicensed LPG retailer in Chitungwiza was working too close to a welder. As the ZERA noted: 'A spark from the welding electrode ignited vapours from the LPG filling area resulting in the explosion of 2 fully charged 48kg LPG cylinders in the filling area.' This resulted in injuries to the retailer and four customers. In a similar case, this time in Bulawayo, a small LPG tank exploded in a kitchen. In its report, the ZERA blamed the retailer quite explicitly. The person who filled the cylinder, the ZERA claimed, 'was not licensed. He could not be positively located since no receipts were used for gas purchases. If the retailer was licensed he would have stopped continued use of the cylinder as required by LP Gas Standard ZWS 960 Part 3 of 2012' ('Petroleum fire accidents', ZERA, 2014 <https://www.zera.co.zw/index.php/78-home/125-pfa>, accessed 27 May 2018).

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Whatever the original goal of inspections and licences might have been, it would seem in practice that they do not so much stabilize LPG distribution in the interests of promoting safety as provide opportunities for state officials to *strategically* regulate the gas market and, in doing so, to find profit in its emergence.[8] Zu's experience with the ZERA and other regulatory bodies supports this interpretation. He finds his operation under nearly constant scrutiny. In 2015 alone, he told me, his retail site was inspected once by the ZERA, four times by the EMA, and ten times each by the Bulawayo City Council and the fire brigade. Given that each inspection presented another opportunity for a fine and a bribe, the frequency of these visits hardly seemed coincidental. The police, in particular, was suspected of using the public reports composed by the ZERA as a way to time its own inspections; the implication was that if the ZERA had recently inspected a retailer's site, the retailer would not be expecting another. Zu, for his part, was relieved that the police's involvement in LPG seemed limited to surprise inspections and bribes. 'Emergency taxis' – regular cars driven by citizens for extra cash – often become objects of special police interest. The police, Zu explained, have a stake in Bulawayo's kombi taxi industry, and they will 'regulate' emergency taxis to control competition. 'The minute the cops get into gas,' he said with a laugh, 'we will have all kinds of problems.'

As Zu's speculative final remarks indicate, dealers who wish to be successful in the unpredictable conditions of Bulawayo's LPG market need to have a working understanding of emergence. They need to be able to anticipate the forms that this market might take and to respond by linking human actors – including bribed police and emergency taxis – and non-human objects – including foreign refineries, tanks, pumps and fuel itself – in flexible and situational networks. Zu, for example, sometimes used cross-border traders to bring his gas into Zimbabwe, but he also occasionally transported the gas himself. Unwilling to apply for his own import licence, wait for it to be processed and risk becoming legible to the state as a result (cf. Ndlela 2006: 29), Zu rented licences from an already registered importer and bribed border guards whenever the discrepancy was discovered.[9] Because arrangements like these are so contingent on the vagaries of state interventions and interpersonal relationships (not to mention, in a broader sense, the challenges of moving currency across international borders and the possibility of refinery closures), they do not amount to anything so stable as systems upon which dealers can reliably depend. Instead, they are

[8]Mawowa and Matongo make a very similar claim about the involvement of the Zimbabwean state in another of Bulawayo's lucrative unregulated industries: roadside currency exchanges. State officials, they observe, 'became referees in a game of accumulation in which they had vested interests' (Mawowa and Matongo 2010: 322).

[9]The Zimbabwean state levies a 15 per cent duty on imported LPG. If an importer is able to rent a licence from a person who receives a discounted rate, they can save upwards of R8,000 – or roughly US$600 at the time of my fieldwork – per shipment. In a strategy reminiscent of others that the state has deployed in the interests of 'shedding light' on Zimbabwe's various black markets (cf. Jones 2010a), the authorities have periodically accused LPG retailers of artificially inflating their prices. Zu found this accusation ridiculous. If retailers are charging exorbitant rates for LPG, he said, it was the government that was ultimately to blame – retailers needed to charge high prices to compensate for the duties they paid at the border.

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better understood as 'assemblages' in the sense used by Deleuze, Guattari and others – as formations of human and non-human actors, which pull themselves together in particular moments in time (Deleuze and Guattari 2011; Deleuze and Parnet 2007: 69–70; Massumi 1992).[10]

Assemblages and affect in Zimbabwe

Perhaps the clearest example of an assemblage that I encountered in my fieldwork came not from Zu or Edward or from any of the other gas retailers that I met. It came instead from an artist who worked down the hall from Dee. This artist painted small works with sweeping swathes of colour that lay like glass on the surface of the canvas. The effect stemmed from his chosen medium – ink. This man said that he found ink to be challenging to work with, because it dries extremely quickly and settles into unexpected colours as it does so. Faced with a stubborn and fluid entity, which insisted on settling itself when and how it pleased, this artist chose to collaborate with it rather than resist it. He would deposit the wet ink where and in what colours he chose, and he would guide the ink carefully around the canvas to shape its distribution as it dried. This strategy provided him with a measure of control over the finished product, but the works themselves were congealed assemblages, combining medium with artistic intervention and time, that revealed themselves to him in the drying process. Although he was clearly an active participant in his assemblages, this artist was well aware of the limits of his ability and his dependence on the ink and its qualities. He was, he told me, 'blind' to the work until the work had finished.[11]

[10]The present article is far from the first to have noted the relevance of assemblages to unregulated economic situations in African contexts. Perhaps the two most applicable anthropological works that have explored this theme are Danny Hoffman's (2011) monograph on the interconnections between labour and war in Sierra Leone and Liberia, and Janet Roitman's (1998) analysis of the *garrison-entrepôt* – the figurative and literal fluidity of bodies and objects in the Chad Basin. In the context of artistic production, there exist interesting connections between a Deleuzian theory of aesthetics and *négritude*, appearing most obviously in their respective approaches to rhythm, force and the work of Henri Bergson (cf. Diagne 2011; Manning 2009; Okeke-Agulu 2015). These connections seemed to manifest themselves in Dee's poster board artworks in particular. Compare, in this respect, Dee's aspirations for unification in his work with Diagne's summary of Senghor's interpretation of the significance of rhythm. Diagne writes:

> The rhythmical movement is a whole, indivisible. It is the ideal of creation, from which alone the 'joy' Bergson speaks about can be born: the joy that informs us that the destination is reached when the inner rhythm is in perfect symbiosis with the transcribed rhythm. If African sculpture can be said to be 'Cubist', it is not because it analyses the object into separated elements, *partes extra partes* (one part external to another), before recombining them; on the contrary, it is because it insists on the indivisibility of the whole, on the total effect where all the rhythms which melt into it converge. (Diagne 2011: 88)

Indeed, with this definition in mind, it is hardly surprising to learn that Dee's aesthetic approach synthesized (in his view) cubism and pointillism with a uniquely African approach to weaving.

[11]See Deleuze and Guattari (2011: 80–1). Erin Manning, speaking in dialogue with Brian Massumi, has described the place of human agency in assemblages in similar terms. 'What is at stake here,' Manning writes, 'is understanding not the agency of the subject, but the *agencement* of the event in its speculatively pragmatic unfolding. This is a word that is impossible to translate.

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Gas dealer assemblages, though far riskier and broader in scale, are similarly contingent on circumstance. Suspended between cross-border traders and border guards, foreign refineries and domestic regulations, financial liquidity and insolvency, and always only partially regulated by the state, dealers produced gas and profits by linking actors together in creative – and always situational – ways. To help me understand the scope of his set of relationships, Zu mapped them for me in an elaborate diagram. The diagram began at his retail station, and it immediately branched outwards to include his rivals and partners, border guards and smugglers, foreign refineries, and the organizations he could expect to bribe. It also included his preferred wholesaler and the emergency taxis he took to visit them. The wholesaler in question was especially noteworthy because they were willing to offer Zu one-day loans of gas at a reasonable interest rate (US$0.05 per kilogram). Although he was frequently in debt to this wholesaler (who had their own mysterious ways of procuring gas), Zu prized this relationship because it afforded him greater financial liquidity. If he kept careful track of his debt, he could purchase gas in one part of Bulawayo and repair canisters in another. His money could be in two places at once.

As this wholesaler–dealer relationship demonstrates, assemblages are more than conglomerations of human and non-human actors. They also contain an ineluctable *affective* dimension (Massumi 2015). Affect, which differs from 'emotion' in that it can float free of human bodies (Amin and Thrift 2013: 46–7; Grossberg 2009), contributes to the formation of assemblages in a variety of ways. In some cases, it can accelerate their unification or hold them together. Trust, in this sense, can be understood as an affective bond that is developed over time and sustained through material and immaterial linkages, and that joins social actors in a shared assemblage (cf. Hart 1973; 2000). In other instances, though, affect can cause assemblages to take unexpected forms or derail them entirely. Bribery and inspections can culminate in these less desirable outcomes. Inspections, after all, are more than checklists to be completed, and bribes are more than mere payments of cash. With every illicit payment to a police officer or a safety inspector comes a moment of hesitation and a question: will the official play along or not? 'The system works,' Zu remarked, 'but people can delay you just because they want to. It's a system within a system.' Zu was speaking here of the affective dimensions of bribery, but he might have been describing the affective dimensions of his whole web of relations, insofar as negotiations with wholesalers, border crossings, speculations about police interest in LPG, bribery exchanges and inspections all constitute affective systems within systems and each informs how tanks of LPG are ultimately distributed. And this distribution will inevitably take emergent forms, because no dealer can know with absolute confidence how a state official (or even a trusted associate, as shown below) is going to act until the ink finally dries.

If affect can be felt with particular intensity in the moment when an assemblage is 'thrown together' (cf. Stewart 2007: 30), both Kathleen Stewart and Lauren Berlant (2011) have observed that this intensity is never wholly produced within the moment itself. Instead, it too must be assembled – out of a wider 'affective atmosphere' (Stewart 2007: 15), which colours the unpredictability of emergent

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The best that anyone's come up with is "assemblage", but that's misleading. *Agencement* connotes a doing doing itself. You have to understand the event itself as agency-ing' (Massumi 2015: 157).

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encounters and gives them a recognizably situated and even dreadfully familiar appearance. In Zimbabwe, this atmosphere is structured in large part by the state. From its policies before and during the country's extended economic crisis (Chagonda 2016; Jones 2010a) to its campaigns against unregulated labour and settlements (Bratton and Masunungure 2006; Fontein 2009; Musoni 2010), the Zimbabwean state has made itself a felt presence in the lives of the populations it governs – both intentionally and unintentionally.[12] Other scholars, working elsewhere, have come to similar conclusions about states and affect (Jeganathan 2004; Kernaghan 2015; Masco 2014). As these theorists demonstrate, 'affective atmospheres' can be productively differentiated from specific encounters, negotiations or policies. Although specific state-generated initiatives carry affective consequences of their own, those consequences become 'atmospheric' as they become layered on top of each other, over time and across different bodies and spaces.

If the affective dimensions of trust or bribery are especially recognizable because they can be felt so strongly in particular moments, then the amorphous and unactualized qualities of affective atmospheres can make them somewhat harder to detect. Even so, both artists and LPG dealers are attentive to the atmosphere that surrounds them, just as they are to the material contexts out of which their assemblages emerge, and they represent this to themselves in a variety of ways. Dealers, for example, encounter state actors directly during inspections, border crossings and the payment of bribes and fines, but they also deal with the state as an affective force in their problems with hard currency. As is the case with many borderline-illicit industries, successful LPG retailers struggle to deal with the cash that their businesses generate. The dealers with whom I spoke were uniformly adamant that they could not deposit their profits in Zimbabwean banks. They believed that the state would take notice of their success and – appropriately, in the context of this article – conduct more frequent inspections of their operations. To avoid this situation, dealers deployed a range of strategies. Some deposited their money in foreign banks. Others held their wealth in property. One retailer told me that he owned several houses around Bulawayo and was prepared to sell them for cash if the need ever arose.[13] Zu had his own solution. In an approach that was reminiscent of the one adopted by traders who dealt in scarce commodities during Zimbabwe's economic crisis (Chagonda 2016), Zu sometimes sent animal skins to South Africa with experienced cross-border traders. He instructed these traders to sell the skins, buy LPG from South African refineries, and carry the gas canisters back across the border.

[12]The research for this article was completed in 2015 and therefore prior to Robert Mugabe's resignation from the position of president in 2017. Several of my interlocutors have since noted that his resignation/removal has been accompanied by heightened sensations of uncertainty and crisis in Bulawayo. Although these sensations would perhaps be understandable, given that Mugabe's successor (Emmerson Mnangagwa) served as Mugabe's minister of state security during the height of the state's violence towards Ndebele-identifying persons, I have been unable to supplement their assertions with my own ethnographic research.

[13]Another seemed to be avoiding the problem of unwanted cash by means of diversification. His business interests included not only LPG, but also liquor production and distribution and wildlife tours. These ventures tended to overlap productively with LPG (this man hoped to open a club, at which he would sell the liquor he produced and serve food prepared on LPG stoves), and they could help to stabilize the volatile profits that came from gas.

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The effectiveness of this strategy hinges on Zu's awareness of the affective atmosphere in which he constructs his assemblages. While one might think of animal skins, gas and currency as distinct components within an economic system or – in a Marxian sense – as two commodities and the abstraction of value that allows them to be exchanged, Zu conceptualized these components by means of an approach that Degani, following Guyer (2004) and Verran (2001), has called 'modal reasoning' – a learned appreciation for how things can and should be modified in practice (Degani 2017: 301). For Zu, skins, gas and currency constituted a single unified form that could take different shapes according to the context in which, and the perspectives from which, they were viewed. Excess hard currency became animal skins, which became material objects on the border and skins-turned-cash-turned-gas in South Africa; the whole amalgamation cut across straightforward distinctions between material and immaterial forms of value, and between formal and informal market transactions (cf. Bolt 2012: 114), as it moved from situation to situation. Because he invested in animal skins, therefore, Zu could both conceal his wealth and avoid the issues associated with transporting large amounts of cash across international borders. The retailer who bought houses with his profits demonstrates this approach even more explicitly. From one perspective – that of the always inquisitive state – the house was merely a house. From another – his – the house could be either a house or cash, depending on the situation and need. Whether a house appeared as a house or as cash was contingent upon the dealer's needs and the requirements of the assemblage in which he happened to be participating. While the Zimbabwean state serves to structure the affective atmosphere in which these strategies develop, the actual utilization of these strategies contains an affective dimension of its own. Even as Zu was speaking with me, he was on and off the phone with a buyer of skins in South Africa who had changed his purchase price after a consignment of skins had been delivered. Zu's frustration with this man stemmed from the fact that a lower purchase price in South Africa meant less cash to use for the purchase of gas, but it was also traceable to the man's failure to adhere to his end of the bargain. Zu found to his chagrin that he had, in Degani's terms, crossed a threshold of modification (Degani 2017: 302). He had overextended himself by committing too definitively to skins too far from home, and the man had responded by betraying his bond of trust.

Artists in the gallery were similarly attentive to affect and its contexts. In Dee's case, the fact that humans now occupy a single shared world required them to 'seek out ways to live together' – that is, to form durable affective bonds with each other. Another artist, John, also put affect at the centre of his work. He was a painter who worked with oil, and his works were characterized by the depiction of ghostly, faceless figures and the inclusion of scraps of newsprint (some that were legible and others that were not). In John's opinion, the faceless images and the newsprint worked together to produce works that encouraged viewers to activate their own powers of creative interpretation. He wanted viewers of his paintings to puzzle over the faceless figures and imagine the faces that they themselves might include; to scrutinize not only the legible newsprint for its statements about Zimbabwe, but also the *illegible* pieces and speculate about what they *might* say. In one notable work, John used small pieces of newspaper and charcoal to portray the figures in the painting as zombies. These zombie figures captured and sought to address one of John's major concerns about the world he saw around

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him: people in Zimbabwe, he said, could become so invested in a single received perspective that they began to lose the capacity to perceive in other ways. 'You become blinded to stuff going on in Zimbabwe,' he explained. 'You don't see what's in front of you.' John hastened to tell me that his works do not always address politics so explicitly, but this one certainly did. The received perspective he wanted viewers to identify in his paintings, to scrutinize and to escape was the one that was propagated by state-run news organizations.

Affect, labour, and Bulawayo's 'artistic entrepreneurs'

These readings of affect are arguably representative of the affective atmosphere of much of life in contemporary Zimbabwe, insofar as they speak to a distrust of the state, its discourses and its policies. Other interpretations are much more localized. The city of Bulawayo is, after all, located in Matabeleland, a region of the country in which people who identify ethnically as Ndebele – a national minority that has historically encountered both violence and political and economic marginalization at the hands of the Shona-dominated Zimbabwean state (cf. Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2012) – represent a majority of the population. This legacy of exclusion and violence informed and shaped nearly every aspect of LPG distribution and artistic production. At the most general level, it designated the capital city of Harare as 'Shona' and Bulawayo as 'Ndebele', effectively mapping ethnicity onto geographical space. Within this context, it became easy, though certainly reductive (cf. Musoni 2014), to code any feeling of economic precarity as a consequence of the state's preference for Harare over Bulawayo and Shona over Ndebele.

LPG dealers are certainly not the only unregulated operators in Bulawayo, quasi or otherwise, who frame their work in ethnic terms (Nyamunda 2014), but the state's recent interest in LPG brings the ethnic coding of that market into especially stark relief. Given the frequency with which they were inspected by the police, for example, it was hardly surprising that dealers accused the state of importing Shona police officers into Matabeleland for the purposes of discriminating against Ndebele persons and their businesses. Nor was it surprising, given that dealers expressed serious doubts about the state's willingness to grant licences to sellers of gas, that they attributed the preponderance of Ndebele-identifying people in Zimbabwe's unregulated economic sectors to the fact that Shona controlled the regulated ones. When unlicensed dealers (many of whom, as noted above, began to pump LPG during Zimbabwe's economic crisis) filled old and leaky tanks and were subsequently blamed by the ZERA for any explosions that resulted when those tanks were used in people's homes, the full scope of the politicization of LPG came into view. Every aspect of the distribution process – from licensing to sale and use, and including, of course, the very accessibility of gas itself or its necessity as a result of Zimbabwe's crumbling electrical grid – could be read through the lens of ethnic and regional politics.

This affective environment shaped the interpretations produced in the gallery as well. In keeping with a broader sentiment (expressed in the phrase *bamba zonke* – meaning 'take all' or 'grab everything') that everything good goes to Harare, Edward accused the state of systematically underfunding the gallery. It was a regional gallery with its main office in Harare, and Edward complained that

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resources that were meant to go to the Bulawayo branch (and particularly resources that might come to the programme he ran) would arrive at the Harare gallery and get 'lost' there. These material grievances, when mapped onto a remembered history of ethnic violence, emerged within the gallery as deep and ethnically marked suspicion. During my research, this suspicion targeted one man with particular intensity. This man identified as Shona, and was identified as such by his name, and he (like Dee, Edward, and the man who painted with ink) occupied a studio in the gallery. While other studios opened their doors to the public, in order to be social and to attract tourists, his was invariably closed. The reason for this was simple: he had won a contract from a large multinational corporation to produce artwork, and his studio was therefore more of an office than an exhibition space. Although he was undoubtedly an artist, others in the gallery assumed that he had been tasked by the state to monitor them and to make sure they produced no work that was explicitly political in nature.[14] They justified their position on the basis of his reclusiveness, but the clearest evidence of all was his apparent success. No ordinary person (and especially no Ndebele person) in Bulawayo could have won such a lucrative and prestigious contract. He had to be working with the government, and his Shona identity further increased the likelihood of his collaboration.

Edward's community arts programme took shape within the context of these suspicions, too. So sceptical was he of the gallery's Harare office that he refused to formally affiliate his programme with the gallery even though it occupied one of the gallery's studios. The programme was therefore 'quasi-unregulated' in its own way, and it recovered in flexibility what it may have lost in security and stability. In this sense, Edward felt that keeping the programme formally separate from the gallery afforded him more freedom to design his curriculum as he saw fit. Although he remained suspicious of his Shona gallerymate, and was convinced that the man was informing the government about everything he did, his courses proceeded without any input from Harare. And any donations his programme received were kept for its own use.

Staffed primarily by Edward and his spouse, this arts programme resisted strict categorical definitions. For schoolchildren, its goals were mostly (but not entirely) aesthetic. During school holidays, it offered an introduction to the creative possibilities of art through origami projects and exercises in telling stories with drawn images. At the end of the programme I observed, student art was put on display in the gallery and made available for sale to families, friends and casual attendees. For young adults, its goals were less aesthetic than economic and social.

[14]Although it is obviously impossible to determine whether this affect of suspicion was correctly directed at the designer in the gallery, evidence does suggest that the suspicion itself was well founded. In 2010, a gallery in Bulawayo hosted an exhibition by Owen Maseko, an artist whose work is well known for its focus on state violence towards people of Ndebele descent. The exhibition was closed almost immediately after it opened and Maseko was arrested. In a conversation with Shepherd Mpofu, Maseko commented directly on the affective atmosphere that surrounded his work. The 'atrocities were so intense, they are engraved on people's minds to a point where that fear is still there. Everyone is afraid … to a Ndebele anyone putting on an army or police uniform is a threat because we … experienced that with the militia … [and] the government forces.' 'So in a way,' Maseko continued, 'everyone was worried, of course people would have little secret meetings and have people supporting [me] secretly some come to [me] physically and they wouldn't want to be seen with [me]' (Mpofu 2019: 73).

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Edward regularly taught classes on the basics of figure drawing so that young people could learn to draw or paint the realistic nature scenes that Edward believed tourists would want to buy. These classes, he further believed, would inspire these young adults to develop a passion for art and would keep them out of trouble. For Bulawayo as a whole, Edward felt that his programme offered an injection of creative energy. Art and artistic communities, he argued, mobilized the city's population: they educated it, socialized it, and transformed it into a community of what he termed 'artistic entrepreneurs'.

Edward's phrase, considered in the context of this article, helps put a name to the shared set of strategies that artists and natural gas distributors use to navigate their city. It can describe the work of a young adult who learns to assemble *isinkwa sabantwana* that will cater to Bulawayo's tourist market, or even a child who makes an artwork and sells it to a family member. It is also an apt characterization of the work of LPG dealers such as Zu, in that they approach the distribution of LPG in a manner that requires them to think inventively about how to circulate fuel under unpredictable social conditions. Ultimately, though, it was clear to me that Edward saw himself as the model for the hybrid identity of the 'artistic entrepreneur'. Not only did he encourage the students on his programme to consider their art from an entrepreneurial perspective, but he approached his own entrepreneurial work with an artistic eye as well. He constructed mental representations of the assemblages in which he participated, much as Zu did, but the scope of his plans set him apart from his peers. Edward planned to standardize the distribution of LPG by importing gas in large shipments and delivering it directly to people's homes. Once his business was profitable, he intended to build his own refinery in Zimbabwe.

Assemblages, emergence, and the limits of transcendental theory in Bulawayo

As Edward outlined his vision to me, I couldn't help but notice the parallels between his project and that of Dee, a few studios away. Like Edward and the LPG dealers with whom I spoke, Dee recognized in his poster board shapes the fragmentation of social relationships. But Edward and Dee also evidently believed that these fragmented relationships could be – even should be – repaired. For Dee, this amounted to adopting a transcendental perspective that called all the puzzle pieces equally into view. This transcendental perspective, for Edward, was that of the perfect 'artistic entrepreneur' – a person who saw through the short-term benefits of international collaborators and dangerous border crossings, trusted wholesalers and foreign refineries in favour of a distant dream of a system that would remove all ambiguity. This transcendental entrepreneur would not pay any bribes either. Edward himself, unsurprisingly, hated bribes and he condemned them for precisely the reason we might suppose: bribes, he said, made the payer dependent on the recipient and vulnerable to their whims. They undermined the stability of the system he hoped to institute. By rejecting this path, Edward would transcend political conditions in Bulawayo once and for all and fit all the pieces of the LPG puzzle together in a single unified system.

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In theory, this transcendental position distinguishes the aesthetic perspective we find in Dee's work (and Edward's) from the one we find in Zu's. Like the other LPG dealers with whom I spoke, Zu was constantly assembling his gas distribution networks. Gas entered and left his control by means of a complex network of social relationships that was always contingent on circumstance, and he navigated these relations by utilizing a mode of theorizing that Kathleen Stewart (2008) has called 'weak theory' – theory that abandons the pursuit of a completed 'puzzle of being' in favour of an approach that familiarizes itself with always emergent processes of becoming.[15] While Dee remained optimistic that the larger puzzle of human experience might one day be fully assembled, Zu diagrammed – and, in his mind, continually re-diagrammed – his small corner of that puzzle in the hope of better understanding the processes that acted upon it.

In practice, though, Dee and Edward were less transcendental in their work than they would have liked. Because Edward refused to pay any bribes, he exposed himself to all manner of problems. Zu could proactively and productively manage his distribution system by deploying illicit cross-border traders and bribing border guards, and he could avoid inspections by bribing the city council or the police, but Edward's dream had been slow to take shape. Zimbabwe had made him suffer so much in pursuit of his vision for Bulawayo's LPG market, he told me, that Dee had given him a nickname. He called him Moses.

Dee's poster board artworks were restructured by social conditions in Bulawayo as well. After all, many of Dee's works were produced with the tourist market in mind, and those works reflected a touristic perspective more than his own. If we take Dee's artistic vision seriously, we must recognize that his *isinkwa sabantwana* was not just a simplistic (and therefore adulterated) representation of the world and its fragmentation. In its flawed transcendence, each work became a kind of testament (or, in other words, an aesthetic of 'imminence' (cf. Canclini 2014: 185)) to the obligations placed on Dee and his work – obligations that brought together tourism (with all of its colonial and postcolonial connotations), economic dependence, artistic production and the time devoted to it, and Dee's own affective annoyance with the compromises he made to accommodate this situated assemblage. In this sense, these tourist works were more precise depictions of life in Bulawayo than were his passion projects. If Dee's favoured works depicted the world as Dee hoped it might become, his *isinkwa sabantwana* (like Edward's fragile vision) was a more than fair representation of the world as it was.

Conclusion

Markets may always be emergent, in that the valuation and circulation of commodities are never prefigured, but the full scope of that emergence is not always recognized. Regulated markets, in this sense, acquire a measure of their stability

[15]Michael Taussig has recently encouraged theorists to seek out ways to unite aesthetics and economics in pursuit of a total social fact (2012: 5–6). Should this social fact exist in practice, I agree with Taussig (and with Stewart, on the basis of her conception of 'weak theory') that it will be vague and blurry at the edges, produced from overlapping and situational assemblages, and experienced through tactility (if not always through magic).

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from the fact that they conceal emergence in contracts and law (cf. Hart 2005). However, for a range of reasons outlined in this article (including the climate of suspicion in which they operate, their everyday negotiations with state officials about newly created policies, their reliance on foreign sources of fuel, and all the aspects of their work – from relations of trust to dealing in cash – that make their work only quasi-regulated), LPG dealers are well aware that the gas market is always taking forms they cannot anticipate, for reasons that are often beyond their control. They might reject that unpredictability, as Edward does, or try to diagram it and produce assemblages within it, but in practice they remain just one category of participant among many.

Theorizing networks of LPG distribution as assemblages accounts for the conditions in which they are cultivated. Dealers are shown to be enmeshed in interactions, which they share with emergency taxis and wholesalers, customers and the police. Those interactions, in turn, stretch outwards in time and space, connecting dealers with unreliable infrastructure and foreign refineries, cross-border traders and bribes, economic crises, leaky LPG tanks, welding torches and flames, explosions, state policies, inspections and bribes, and animal skins and houses. Although none of these relationships are particularly stable, dealers work within emergence to pull them together into assemblages that can be used to create a specific kind of coherence – profit.

If assemblages call attention to the forms of creativity that LPG dealers exhibit, they also demonstrate that the artistic works produced in the gallery are more than disinterested exercises or products of the artist's own mind. Instead, these artworks are emergent relationships of humans and objects that are imbued with affect. Dee joins together with his box-cutter to carefully feel his way into pieces of poster board. He also creates simpler works that he hopes will lure tourists into his studio. The artist who painted with ink is obliged to build his work in dialogue with his medium. Although the end result of that process appeared to be a static painting, each moment of the process of production was interpretive and fundamentally open. This negotiation with ink, in turn, was connected to the broader assemblages in which he participated. Despite his appreciation for the unique material properties of his medium, this artist told me that he had originally adopted ink for pragmatic reasons. Oil paints were scarce and expensive in Bulawayo; ink, however, was cheap and readily available. John, for his part, seeks to incorporate the viewers of his artwork into the assembly of that work by encouraging them to deploy their own creative powers of interpretation.

John's newest project shows clearly that these assemblages extend beyond the subjectivity of the artist; they even extend beyond the encounters with materials and media, the negotiations with potential purchasers of art, and the walls of the gallery. For this project, John has decided to walk through the streets of Bulawayo and record the ambient sounds of the city. In doing so, he hopes to capture some of the sensory richness that makes Bulawayo and Zimbabwe different from other cities and countries. He then intends to pair these audio recordings with illustrative paintings, which will add a measure of visual complexity to the soundscape that he provides for his audience. Should this project come to fruition, the resulting works will link colour, paint and texture to noise and atmosphere (composed of the sounds, voices and acoustic environment of the city), and they will unfold for viewers within the unique acoustic and visual contours of John's gallery space. John will be enmeshed in these works as well. He will

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appear both as a person who is practised in the art of assembling emergence and as an artist whose experience of the city is fundamentally constructed by the sensory environment that it throws up around him – both as a producer of assemblages, we might say, and as a component of them.

In his creative (and contextual) repurposing of social relations, material objects and even affective and sensory atmospheres, John bears a surprising resemblance to an LPG dealer. The works he intends to make, however, resemble something else: the market price of gas.[16] Gas itself may be a commodity and may therefore acquire a kind of magical allure that detaches it from its origins and processes of production, but the price paid for that gas on the streets of Bulawayo on a given day still carries the traces of the assemblages that produced it. In one encounter I witnessed, a customer was surprised to find that the price of LPG had dropped by US$0.50 from one day to the next. Puzzled, he asked his dealer what had changed. The dealer was happy to explain: refineries in South Africa had recently closed for maintenance and so LPG was in short supply. In the midst of this shortage, a supplier had found a new source of fuel. One tanker had arrived the day before, and Bulawayo had already drained it dry. A second had arrived that morning and, the man said, dealers were 'decanting right off the back of the truck'. On this occasion, the price of LPG became a representation of everyday life in Bulawayo. That representation linked LPG to Zimbabwe's dependence on foreign refineries, to the local competitions between quasi-unregulated dealers, to the state and its interests, to wholesalers, and to the scarce fuel's domestic use. And, like John's paintings and soundscapes, that price located the dealer squarely within that broader context – as an engaged participant in the networks of bodies, objects, affect, politics and history that come together to circulate LPG in the city where he lives.

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Abstract

This article is an ethnographic investigation of the labours of making art and selling liquid petroleum gas (LPG) in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. It locates these activities within a shared social world, centred on one of Bulawayo's major art galleries,

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and it demonstrates that artists and LPG dealers use similar strategies to respond to the political conditions of life in the city. This article frames these conditions as unpredictable, insofar as they change frequently and crystallize in unexpected forms, and it argues that both groups are attempting to act within these conditions and shape them into emergent assemblages. In adopting this term 'assemblage', which has been elaborated theoretically by Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari and their many interlocutors, this article emphasizes both the mutability and the unpredictability of these formations. The artists who work in the gallery, for their part, make their art by assembling their chosen media. The processes by which they choose their media constitute assemblages as well, in that artists have to adapt their artistic visions to the materials that Zimbabwe's market can provide. Street dealers in gas also produce emergent assemblages against the backdrop of unpredictability. If they want to make natural gas available to consumers, dealers must shepherd their medium through an always emergent process of distribution. They participate in transnational networks of trade, but they also theorize innovative strategies of procurement, develop circuits of trust and loyalty, and conjure up visions of a predatory state. Like artists, they use their work to construct dynamic representations of the world around them. Artists may produce images, and dealers circulate gas, but this article shows that conceptualizing these practices in terms of 'assemblages' calls their commonalities into view. In doing so, it also demonstrates that these practices complicate easy distinctions between aesthetics, economics and politics.

Résumé

Cet article est une enquête ethnographique sur le travail de création artistique et le travail de vente de gaz de pétrole liquéfié (GPL) à Bulawayo (Zimbabwe). Il situe ces activités dans un univers social partagé centré sur l'une des principales galeries d'art de Bulawayo, et démontre que les artistes et les vendeurs de GPL utilisent des stratégies semblables pour répondre aux conditions de vie politiques dans la ville. Cet article présente ces conditions comme imprévisibles, dans la mesure où elles changent fréquemment et se cristallisent en formes inattendues, et soutient que ces deux groupes tentent d'agir dans le cadre de ces conditions et d'en faire des assemblages émergents. En adoptant ce terme d'« assemblage », théoriquement élaboré par Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari et leurs nombreux interlocuteurs, cet article souligne à la fois la mutabilité et l'imprévisibilité de ces formations. Pour leur part, les artistes qui travaillent dans la galerie créent leur art en assemblant les supports qu'ils choisissent d'utiliser. Les processus de sélection des supports utilisés constituent également des assemblages, en ce que les artistes doivent adapter leurs visions artistiques aux matériaux que le marché zimbabwéen peut fournir. Les marchands de gaz produisent aussi des assemblages émergents dans ce contexte d'imprévisibilité. S'ils veulent mettre du gaz naturel à la disposition des consommateurs, les marchands doivent le faire à travers un processus de distribution toujours émergent. Ils intègrent des réseaux commerciaux transnationaux, mais ils théorisent également des stratégies innovantes d'approvisionnement, développent des circuits de confiance et de loyauté, et inventent des visions d'État prédateur. Comme les artistes, ils utilisent leur travail pour construire des représentations dynamiques du monde qui les entoure. Les artistes produisent des images tandis que les marchands distribuent du gaz, mais cet article montre que la conceptualisation de ces pratiques en termes d'« assemblages » révèle leurs éléments communs. Ce faisant, il démontre également que ces pratiques compliquent les distinctions faciles entre esthétique, économie et politique.

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