

12

Blurred lines

12

Blurred lines

Nicolai Klotz

University of Cologne

a104266@smail.uni-koeln.de

Art is a broadly defined concept. Ultimately anything could be considered as art, and the inducement for creating artistry may differ just as much as the various artists that create pieces of art. For some people art is a way to express themselves, to deal with their past or to denounce political or social injustice. For others it is just a way to make money or, on the other hand, a rather cost intensive way to get rid of the same. And art is, as we know, a matter of taste of course. What is also important to be mentioned: art is always embedded into a context. Just like every human that creates art is influenced by the environment around him or her, so everybody's art is as well.

Most – if not all – kinds of art have the potential to influence others, especially if it is public art that is accessible to everybody. The following pictures, which were taken in Swa-

kopmund/Namibia in the year 2014 during a joyous stroll, surely intent to reach out to the spectator. Each of these pictures carries its own message. They are covering the wall of a facility that appears to be a school and the children that are taught here are most likely the creators of those expressional artworks. However, since every school is run by teachers, it is not unlikely that they also had their say concerning the choice of motifs and messages that are adorning the wall. And since every school knows the distress of trying to get along with some notoriously dedicated parents, it could be that they also may have made their voices heard; of course in order to make sure that instead of Vybzs Kartel, a very popular yet controversial Jamaican Dancehall artist who is well known all over Africa (not least for his explicit videos and manner of expression), or Yemi Alade, pro-



Fig. 1.
Mahatma Gandhi – Be the change

bably one of the most successful and admired African female musicians of our days, the face of Mahatma Gandhi would gain the last free space in this fine compilation of colorful art (see Fig. 1).

Nevertheless, the final result is truly an eye-catcher for everybody who passes by this site of the Namibian coastal town and surely inspires thoughts of all kind. Whether the wall should be understood as an “unadulterated” expression of the local youth culture may be as debatable as the definition of the term “youth culture” itself. Undebatable though is the fact that whosoever walks here for the first time will most definitely stop and stare when recognizing the paintings portraying renowned people like South Africa’s first black president Nelson Mandela with his Xhosa name “Madiba” attached (see Fig. 4) or Bob Marley, who’s face found a place next to a

painting of the Namibian national flag (see Fig. 6). The wall may trigger different connotations and the spectators may agree or disagree with messages like “Say no to Alcohol & Drugs” (see Fig. 8). But just as art is a matter of taste, so are the messages that are transported by it.

When we think of youth language and youth culture as a subject to scholarly debate and analysis, sometimes it is just a great gain to leave academic attitudes, concepts and methods aside for a while and merely appreciate the beauty that comes with the creativity of young people – even if it is at times allegedly corrupted by the influence of adult people. But at what point do we stop to be young after all? And when are we truly grown up? The lines between youth and adulthood are blurred. How easily we forget that the elderly people of today were the youth of yesterday ...



Fig. 2.
Peace, unity and justice



Fig. 3
The joy of playing the drum

Fig. 4.
'Madiba' Nelson Mandela



Fig. 5.
Prayer is for everybody

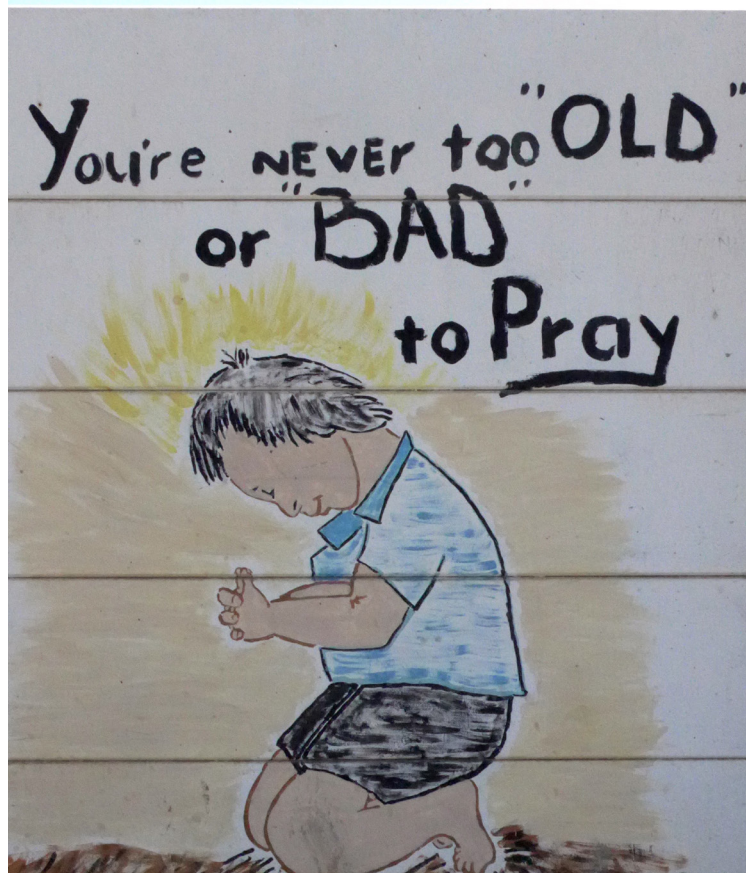


Fig. 6.

One Love – Bob Marley and the Namibian flag



Fig. 7.
2gether we can





Fig.9.
Make love, not war



Fig. 8
No to alcohol & drugs



Fig. 10.
A wall with many faces





Fig. 11.
From Argentina to Bolivia to Namibia –
Che Guevara