

Destruction/Reconstruction of the Artist/Art Object. What is Possible?

This approach to the topic of destruction grew by encountering three interesting artists. These artists are Chen I-Chun, Phoebe Boswell and Inci Eviner. They live in different parts of the world: Taiwan is Chen I-Chun's home, Inci Eviner lives in Turkey and Phoebe Boswell, who is now living in London, has lived in Kenya and Dubai. Inci Eviner's artistic career is longer than the others. The artists are not friends and only two of them speak English. However, their artwork shares a common interest around the self, people, community, art practice and the art object. Sometimes the artworks focus on mythological constructions, which are reconfigured in the case of Chen I-Chun's animated drawings, while Inci Eviner's animated drawing entitled *Beuys Underground*, made in 2017, looks at the destruction of the artist in society, who is driven underground. This idea of having a purpose or position is reinforced in Phoebe Boswell's artwork *Mutumia*, made in 2015, which translate into 'one whose lips are sealed'¹(Wambui Mwangi, '*Silence is a Woman*', *The New Inquiry* <http://thenewinquiry.com/silence-is-a-woman/> assessed December 2017). In this artwork, the voices of the women are heard at different times in the animated drawing. What is presented in all the artworks of these artists is the staging of destruction and reconstruction of the artist including the art object. There are moments of ambivalence that contribute to destruction and reconstruction. The staging is equally about the known and unknown. This is also reflected in the use of technology as a form of art practice. All these artists have embraced technology as a form of cultural brokerage and technology itself has a way of destroying or preserving its own innovation. Considering all these points, how can destruction after the primary burst of creation, be replenished with creativity?

The Self and Other People.

Firstly, by comprehending how the voice is presented and used to create a narrative, it will be possible to see how the notion of the self and other people exist in the artwork by these artists. By reading the artists descriptions of their artwork, it becomes clear that the third-person narrative dominates the artwork. By the third-person narrative, I am referring

to how only the narrator, the artist, knows the thoughts of their characters. In *Shui Yuan Lin Legend: Episode One* produced in 2013 we see an old man in a field surrounding by red mountains, who is struggling with a water buffalo that is refusing to move, not far from him is a water-wheel and inside the water-wheel you see a modern generator. Further along there is a small grey temple and beside the temple you see the image of the same old man who is hoeing the field before he takes the water buffalo to the same field. Descriptions of the *Shui Yuan Lin Legend* series by Chen I-Chun always focuses on the presence of her grandfather. He provides the content and context to the work. In *Shui Yuan Lin Legend: Episode One* Chen I-Chun's third-person narrative is evident when she discusses her grandfather. She writes,

Shui Yuan Lin in his earlier years went to Taiwan. Every time on the way to the field he passed a small temple. The cattle was reluctant to enter the field. Because of this Shui Yuan went to the temple and made a promise to worship there in the future if the cattle were allowed to enter the fields² (Author's interview with artist February 2018).

While in Phoebe Boswell's *Mutumia*, her third-person narrative focuses on the women in the work. In the installation piece last size images of women are projected on three sides of the wall. She states,

Mutumia salute these women who altered history but not been written about. I decided to create an 'army' of naked women who confront the viewer as they enter the space. This was also to confront the lack of visibility of women in the white-male dominated spaces in the art world³ ('A Conversation Between Phoebe Boswell and Ndinda Kiko about Mutumia', <https://www.phoebeboswell.com/mutumia/> assessed March 2018).

Yet, in Inci Eviner's artwork *Beuys Underground* her use of the third-person narrative exist in the textual labels such as *Philosophy on Death*. This artwork consist of many sections where people and imagery reside. Surrounding them are textual labels with various meanings. She writes,

Philosophy on Death-Antigone with the sexy socks and hunchback is trying to get back her brother's coffin from a Turkish man. Meanwhile she is going on chatting about death and life. The role of the Turkish man here reveals the conflict of freedom and femininity in traditional Society⁴ (Author's interview with artist March 2018).

The use of pronouns: he, she and they are firmly rooted in the artists third-person

narrative voice. This is interesting because the bodies of the artists are not visible in their artworks. Instead, their visibilities are made possible by their third-person narrative and authorial subjectivity. By authorial subjectivity, I am referring to the artists showing knowledge of their characters experiences and where these experiences happened. The authorial subjectivity is more apparent when a description or naming of a place is intrinsic to the artwork. In the case of Chen I-Chun's *Shui Yuan Lin Legend: Episode One* she informs us that the small temple is "known now as San Yi temple in Zhushan, Natou"⁵(Author's interview with artist February 2018) and this is where the cattle field is located. For Inci Eviner, the name of the country Turkey gives the location of her story, whereas Phoebe Boswell's artwork *Mutumia* translates into "one whose lips are sealed"⁶ (Wambui Mwangi, *Silence is a Woman*, The New Inquiry <http://thenewinquiry.com/silence-is-a-woman/> assessed December 2017) in Kikuyu. This is her mother's tribal tongue in Kenya. By mentioning these places the artists are also trying to establish their identity in their artworks. Chen I-Chun and Phoebe Boswell locate themselves in particular areas but Inci Eviner places her identity in a boarder context. Even though we are getting a sense of the artists identities, they are external but equally internal to the work by the third-person narrative. On one level, we are slowly receiving a story about these artists and elements of their cultural memory, but the internal focalisation still allows the narrative voice to remain the external voice. This point is made clear by Jonathan Crewe's book *Acts of Memory*. He writes,

Literature is an important carrier and constructor of cultural memory; it is a cultural phenomenon that intersects with history. It is strategic because it helps humans to make sense of their world narratives [whether literary, visual or oral forms]. This is an important resource for restricting and re-comprehending experiences⁷ (Jonathan Crewe, 'Recalling Adamcastor: Literature as Cultural Memory in South Africa' in Mieke Bal, Jonathan Crewe and Leo Spitzer, eds, *Acts of Memory: Cultural recall in the present*, University Press of New England, Hanover, 1999, p75).

However, the construction of the artist identities by the third-person narrative does not make their artwork autobiographical. The function of cultural memory is there to create a connection for the reader/viewer that can be perceived as humanising subjective emotional engagement with the artwork. The subjective engagement will happen in different ways especially for people who recognise the geographical symbols. The artists has to consider this

and the third-person narrative creates the opportunity to move content to context. This is known as a transition of narrative mobility. In *Shui Yuan Lin Legend: Episode Three*, produced in 2014, Chen I-Chun's grandfather is inside a building jumping up in the air wearing a dog mask, the external space is created by the juxtaposition of colonial buildings and Japanese style housing. The dark colouring of the sky has made a foreboding atmosphere while a young boy eats a water-melon next to a skeleton of a dog. In another section of the artwork the same boy is seen standing up by water melons between two skeleton dogs. Her grandfather is wearing a mask because he appeared in her "dream and told her not to show his face in the story"⁸ (Author's interview with artist February 2018). In Inci Eviner's *Beuys Underground* the female figure, Antigone appears many times with male figures. She is based on the daughter/sister of Opedipus and his mother Jocasta in Greek mythology. The name Antigone means "worthy of one's parents or "place of one's parents"⁹ (*Greek Names*, <https://www.greek-names.info/antigone-or-antigoni>, assessed March 2018). While in *Mutumia*, there are many women with their own identities. Phoebe Boswell states she, put a call out on social media asking women to take part in the visual reference gathering. Curators, writers, artists and musicians acknowledged my call to arms. They brought their own stories and traumas to *Mutumia*¹⁰ ('*A Conversation Between Phoebe Boswell and Ndinda Kiko about Mutumia*', <https://www.phoebeboswell.com/mutumia/> assessed March 2018).

All these other figures in the various artworks I have mentioned act as authors who are using the narrator, the artist, to tell their story. To make this point clearer, the narrator gives them the position of author. They become the nominated author who co-exist with the real author. They equally exist in the same ontological world but the nominated author has a different story to tell which gives a different perspective from the real author, the artist, who is the third-person narrator. Shui Yuan Lin wants to conceal his face, the boys are spirits who can turn into dogs and these dogs can become boys. Antigone story is rooted in Greek and Turkish cultural political history, while Phoebe Boswell's women have multiple stories. This is how content and context shift in this narrative mobility. Things are constructed, destroyed and then put back together again. The voice of the nominated author and the third-person narrator play a major role in the narrative communication.

Subtle Activism.

In order to comprehend how all these voices operate in the various artworks it is necessary to analyse the context and content of these works. The artists cannot be described as political activist but they ‘create political art that is not propaganda, but rather acts to evoke and stimulate a critical stance in the world’¹¹ (Ron Eyerman, ‘The Role of the Arts in Political Protest, *Mobilizing Ideas*, <https://mobilizingideas.wordpress.com/2013/06/03/the-role-of-the-arts-in-political-protest>, assessed March 2018). In *Shui Yuan Lin Legend: Episode One* Chen I-Chun creates a landscape of shifting unrestricted viewpoints that providing meaning for the third-person narrative and from a participant’s point of view. In this case, the participant is Shui Yuan Lin. Chen I-Chun has already mentioned the temple, the water buffalo and the farmland in her third-person narrative. She continues explaining the artwork by stating some time later after Shui Yuan Lin made his promise at the temple he received a Buddha statue from a local woodcarver who was responsible for renovating the temple. The Woodcarver asked Shui Yuan Lin to pay for the statue. This doubly surprised Shui Yuan Lin because he did not order the statue and did not expect to pay for it. He remembered his promise made at the temple and accepted the statue. The temple and farmland are equally important, because during the Qing dynasty General Su’s army were buried on the farmland where the temple is located, turning it into a graveyard. Many centuries later local police officers make offerings at the temple hoping it could help solve criminal cases. However, further investigation of the work resulted in a much more complex reading of the imagery allowing Shui Yuan Lin to tell his story. At certain points in the animated drawing a policeman wearing a Japanese uniform of the colonial period is seen. In one section he is seen standing not far away from Shui Yuan Lin as he struggles with the water buffalo. This police officer is Chen I-Chun’s granduncle and his presence relates to the 228 Incident in Taiwan. It is also known as the February 28 incident or February 28 Massacre where many Taiwanese people died.

This incident took place in 1947. It was caused by Chinese mistreatment of a Taiwanese Woman on 27 February 1947. The Guomintang Regime created the government monopolies after the Republic of China had taken administration of Taiwan from the Japanese in 1945. On the 27 February 1947 the Taipei City’s Monopoly Bureau was notified of a boat carrying

boxes of illegal matches and cigarettes docking near the port of Danshui, north of Taipei. Only people with special licences could sell matches and cigarette. Investigators went to Taiping Street looking for illegal dealers but failed to find any. During their search they noticed a female street vendor, a forty year old widow with a young daughter, who they believed was selling contraband goods and confiscated her cigarettes. She demanded the return of the cigarettes showing her special licence as the goods were her livelihood. Ignoring her request one of the investigators struck the woman on the head with the butt of his gun making the daughter cry. A large angry crowd started to gather around the investigators demanding the return of the cigarettes. One of the investigators panicked killing a man as he shot into the crowd. The result was a violent protest that the understaffed Taipei police force could not cope with. On 28 February 1947, the Taipei police tried to suppress the revolt by firing into the crowd killing more people. The Taiwanese people had enough of ‘the corruption, inefficiency and arrogance of the Guomintang administration’¹² (Aris Teon, ‘The 228 Incident: The Uprising that Changed Taiwan’s History’, *The Greater China Journal*, <https://china-journal.org/2017/02/27/the-228-incident-the-uprising-that-changed-taiwans-history/> assessed March 2018). Either on 7 or on 9 March 1947 Chiang Kai-Shek sent in the Chinese nationalist Troops who suppressed the uprising killing even more people. On 10 March 1947 Chiang Kai-Shek defended the government’s decision by describing it ‘as a ‘disturbance’ caused by ‘evil persons’ and by a ‘Japanese-style deceit’¹³(Aris Teon, ‘The 228 Incident: The Uprising that Changed Taiwan’s History’, *The Greater China Journal*, <https://china-journal.org/2017/02/27/the-228-incident-the-uprising-that-changed-taiwans-history/> assessed March 2018). After the suppression, martial law was declared creating a long period of the White Terror that ended in 1987. During that period people went missing, were imprisoned, local leaders along with other people died. Shui Yuan Lin was a local leader but survived the White Terror. Local leaders formed a Settlement Committee and presented the Republic of Chinese government with a list of demands requesting greater autonomy, free elections and the end of government corruption.

The tension between Chinese and Japanese colonialism of Taiwan is shown in the running two face figure/monster and the water wheel seen earlier in the *Shui Yuan Lin Legend: Episode One*. This figure’s body is left as an empty space and runs between

buildings in the landscape. They relate to the Japanese administration policies, introduction to power generation systems and domestic irrigation in Taiwanese villages from the 1930s. The Japanese also started to recognise the importance of rural leaders whom they co-opted to maintain social order. The Japanese police uniform worn by Chen I-Chun's granduncle signifies the Takasago Colonial Policy. When the Japanese occupied Taiwan from 1895-1945, the treatment of Taiwanese people was equally harsh. However, from the 1940s the Takasago Colonial Policy showed a change in attitude towards the Taiwanese people. The policy gave them strong incentives to assimilate with Japanese ideals, learn Japanese, and if a member of the family enlisted in the police force or military this improved their family status. With this increased status, the Japanese authorised the increase of ration bonds to the family. The Chinese Nationalist Party after 1947 downplayed the Japanese colonialism era. They saw it as a disgraceful event in Taiwanese history because they wanted to combine Chinese history with the Taiwanese people. Mandarin became the official language for education, government positions and the media. The Japanese policy of promoting economic modernism and justifying it using the rhetoric of nation strengthening, Chinese government's dislike of Japanese colonial discourse of assimilation resulted in China constantly questioning Taiwanese ties with Japan.

The 228 February Incident is an important event in Taiwan's modern history. The Chinese Nationalist Party made the subject officially taboo. Only years later in 1995 could the massacre be discussed. On the 228 February Incident anniversary native-Taiwanese, President Lee Teng-Hui publicly discussed it for the first time. This happened under the pro-Independence Democratic Progressive Party who wanted to promote a Taiwanese sense of nationhood. The Taipei Fine Art Museum, under the new Democratic Taiwanese Party Mayor, in 1996 hosted an exhibition dedicated to the memory of the 228 February Incident. Older artists who had lived through that period were invited to submit work to the exhibition. Even though Chen I-Chun is following in the footsteps of Taiwanese nationhood of the 1990s, her work reveals that being Taiwanese does 'not exist outside the temporality and spatiality of colonial modernity, but are instead enabled by [the colonial condition]'¹⁴ (Leo T.S. Ching, *Becoming Japanese: Colonial Taiwan and the Politics of Identity Formation*, University of California Press, London and USA, 2001, p.11). What Chen I-Chun

is also doing is seeking to deconstruct the idea of nationhood by allowing ShuiYuan Lin to tell his story. The *Shui Yuan Lin Legend: Episode One* produces and negotiates metanarratives within the limited space the Taiwanese people occupy.

What is interesting and valuable is how the Red Flag deity, the fish with its mouth open hovering over a building and the dinosaur, seen twice in the image stills, adds to the metanarrative. All these things refer to Taiwanese religious cultural beliefs that are associated with Chinese influences. Shui Yuan Lin not only went to China to learn witchcraft, he also visited China with the aid from Hong Chi Gong Temple to learn Taoism and Feng Shui then returned to the village in Zhushan, Nantou County. Taoism and Feng Shui are similar. Taoism focuses on naturalness, compassion, humility and Feng Shui concentrates on energy to harmonise humans with their environment. In Taiwanese religious culture the connection between individuals and the natural world is paramount. Shui Yuan Lin's interest in Taoism including Feng Shui reinforces a natural belief in the relationship between humans and nature. The fish is a soul as well as monster, the dinosaur symbolises a mountain God, Chen I Chun states, 'In Asia, people believe that each and every natural object, stone, water, Mountain, tree, animal and others has a God, whose aim is to keep people safe and well'¹⁵ (Author's interview with artist February 2018). In addition, the plants 'act as containers for souls and monsters to conceal themselves'¹⁶ (Author's interview with artist February 2018).

Local Taiwanese communities attribute the ling qualities to their deities. Ling relates to the magical power of the deity and its quality can increase or decrease over a period based on the reputation of the deity. The deity can be gods or ancestors. The Red Flag deity in *Shui Yuan Lin Legend: Episode One* becomes a god after Shui Yuan Lin consecrates the temple. The village inhabitants due to his support and kindness respects Shui Yuan Lin. He is seen as a spiritual leader that is emphasised in the *Shui Yuan Lin Legend; Episode Three*. Due to famine in Nantou in the Second World War, local people were killing dogs to eat, Shui Yuan Lin told them not to kill the dogs because their ling was very high and they are loyal companions. The local people ignored his request. Therefore, Shui Yuan Lin cast a spell ensuring every dog killed would come back to life and be seen by the people the next day. The dogs can also turn into boys and back into dogs. It took some time for the people to realise this was happening. When they did, the dogs were no longer eaten.

In this episode Shui Yuan Lin is seen leaping in the air wearing a dog mask as he warns people not to eat the dogs. The fan in his hand symbolises positive energy in Feng Shui practice. It is there to stress the balance between individuals and nature. The skeleton dogs are the eaten ones who return to dogs the next day. They surround the boy and the image of the boy eating water melon symbolises the eating of the dogs. Taiwanese local religious beliefs rely on the sacred power of history to authenticate the concept of social collectives and their identities. However, the Nantou County's name is derived from the aboriginal word Ramtou from the Hoanya language that is now extinct. Before the Dutch, Japanese and Chinese colonized Taiwan, a number of ethnic aboriginal groups existed with their own languages. In total, forty-four different aboriginal groups are listed as the true natives of Taiwan. Officially, the Taiwanese government recognises not all these groups. Only the Hoanya is represented in Chen I-Chun's work by the name Nantou. Chen I-Chun's work is a powerful critique of the continuing effect of Japanese and Chinese colonialism that deconstructs an abstract form of nationhood, while reconstructing the continuities of power and placement of a particular Taiwanese identity linked to religious cultural beliefs.

The process of destroying and reconstructing is acted out in Inci Eviner's *Beuys Underground*. The title itself marks the first step of alienation from a materialistic hunger for Land above. This is made more apparent where Inci Eviner states,

Upon Beuy's own request, we establish a system that will enable him to stay constantly in the air in order to deliver his performance without his foot touching the ground¹⁷ (Author's interview with artist march 2018).

However, before looking at the deeper significance of Beuys, it is important to return to the female figure of Antigone, also to the third-person narrative and the nominated author. Inci Eviner's third-person narrative in her artwork focuses on Antigone's wearing of sexy socks, her brother's funeral and the never ending discussion about death, making the work become a declaration of allegations inflicted on female inhabitants in Turkey represented by the Turkish man. Inci Eviner witnessed the military intervention in Turkey on 12 September 1980 that ended four years of right-wing ultranationalist death squads against left-wing oppositions. However, the military coup against the state resulted in the banning of all political left-wing activities and a loss of democracy, that later gave rise to a reconstructed

Turkish Republic from 2002 under Prime Minister Erdogan. From the 1980s to the present, the positioning of the Turkish female figure remains constantly in flux. Before Erdogan, Mustafa Kemal's Turkish Republic on 29 October 1923, set out to modernise the state and part of the western modernisation did consider the equality of women. The 1980 military coup abolishment of left-wing political activities failed to restrict the development of democratic pluralistic women's movements.

These women's movements acted as civil society organisations to challenge the patriarchal system of the state. By building feminist institutions such as, The First Women's Congress that was formed in 1989, feminist consciousness could be widened to attack any oppression against women. Many years later under the reconstructed Turkish Republic the revision of the Civil Code in 2002 incorporated gender equality. Yet, it failed to abolish the penal code giving judges the right to combine local customs and traditions when deciding criminal sentences. This has resulted in the murder of women being reduced to honour killings and the provocation law leading to minimum sentences. The struggle between political Islam and modernisation in the present day Turkish Republic, operated by Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, Turkish Political Party, headed by Erdogan, has caused suppression of women. This has given the control of female sexuality into the hands of the state. Virginity tests take place to judge female morality using cultural traditions as mechanisms of control by the Turkish Republic.

The state's way of reducing women to the lower ranks does not stop women from having a voice. Antigone as a nominated author has resuscitated female power. She is there to represent and re-write female history. Antigone in the Theban play has to decide to bury her brother Polyneices that will result in her death or leave his body outside the Thebes city walls to be eaten by animals. Creon, King of Thebes, has declared Polyneices a traitor because he fought against his native city and forbidden his burial. Defiantly Antigone decides to bury Polyneices at night. Creon sentences her to death but later changes his mind. His decision comes too late because Antigone has already committed suicide hence Inci Eviner's label *Philosophy on Death* in the animated drawing. Antigone's actions criticise the patriarchal power of Creon where the principle of law and obedience dominates. Even in death, she engages in an act of rationalised self-realisation. This is apparent in another image of

Antigone wearing tights and acting savagely in the animated drawing. Inci Eviner writes, 'While she is acting savagely with fancy pantyhose and sexy shoes she is trying to perform herself as acting Here I AM'¹⁸ (Author's interview with artist March 2018).

This notion of 'Here I AM'¹⁹ (Author's interview with artist March 2018) is two-fold. Not only does it reposition the female voice back in the construction of Turkish state's political history but also it positions the female voice in the 1963- 1974 civil war between Turkish and Greek Cypriots. During this period, many men, women and children were listed as missing. It is not clear how many people are missing because some individuals listed as missing were proven to be living elsewhere. Some people who had died from natural causes and were openly buried were on the list. However, few bodies had been recovered making it possible to bury people. The missing Greek and Turkish Cypriot female bodies stress the social exclusion from land and political systems. The situation between Turkish and Greek Cypriots is still tentative due to the failure of renegotiation talks that took place in 2017. Earlier in 1997 Greek and Turkish Cypriot women came together in Brussels under the motto Women Speak Out In Cyprus. The non-government organisation Actions in the Mediterranean invited them. They made a joint declaration asking for lasting peace, 'respect for human rights and democracy, respect for the cultural heritage, characteristics and national identity, affirmative action against any kind of discrimination and freedom from any form of oppression'²⁰ (Joint Declaration by Cypriot Women, 'Give peace a chance' www.peace-cyprus.oeg/Declaration/women.html assessed March 2018). For Turkish women Islam funerary rites do not allow them to carry the coffin. They have to stay at the back of a funeral crowd. Antigone's hands on the coffin and her struggle to maintain ownership of the coffin make it clear women's need to bury their dead. This need for women to carry the coffin is emphasised further by a 2015 murder of the rape victim Ozgecan Aglan. Women at her funeral were angry at male sexual harassment and ignoring Islamic funerary rites refused to allow men to carry the coffin stating, 'No other man's hands would touch her'²¹ (Elif Shafak, 'After Years of Silence, Turkey's Women are going into battle against oppression', *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/feb/17/turkey-women-battle-oppression-protest> assessed March 2018). In addition, Antigone's struggle for ownership of the coffin emphasise that women need to be

part of the political and cultural identity of their countries.

If it is not possible to have a position above ground then the other option is to create a position below ground. This is what *Beuys Underground* does. Inci Evirner writes,

Due to unknown factors, a piece of earth finds a place for itself below the horizon line and this is the convenient environment for a new settlement to be established²² (Author's interview with artist March 2018).

To create a position underground the residents have to reconstruct themselves out of nothing. They already lost their position and identity above ground. They,

have to create an image-symbol or symbol order and transform themselves into a representation. At the same time, creating a new pictorial iconography is of vital importance for them, and their lives are based on this subject. Therefore, quotation and imitation are the basic elements of this production phase²³ (Author's interview with artist March 2018).

The reconstruction of the artist uses reference from Western art history and a Turkish cultural institution in the animated drawing. In the *Determine the Losses* section, Antigone with the hunchback is walking around and in *Practising 'Liberty Leading the People'* she is imitating the figure of Liberty from Eugene Delacroix's nineteenth century painting *Liberty Leading the People*. The image is taken out of the Western context because it is important for the residents to 'build a new language and redefine meaning of affection'²⁴ (Author's interview with artist March 2018) that will encourage the residents to work together instead of being individuals in an underground environment. In the section *Making a Proposal for the Ataturk Cultural Center* once the residents have become a collective then they can decide if this institution should be destroyed and rebuilt to construct a different Turkish identity. Above ground, the Ataturk Cultural Center is located in the heart of Takism. The Turkish government and opposition groups have discussed what should happen to this building. It has been the scene of many bloody uprisings and there is a demand to make it a symbol of democratic republic society.

Beuys performative presence in this artwork allows his shamanic vocabulary to be used by The residents enabling them to free themselves from any restraints as symbolised in the *Unleashed* section in the animated drawing. Beuys performative presence is based on his 1972 artwork *Coyote, I Like America, America Likes Me* and Inci Evirner uses this because she wants the shamanic qualities to allow the Turkish identity to move forward when confronted with difficulties as presented by *Just What Is It That Makes Today Homes So*

Different, So Appealing? and *Striving To Be A Whole Person* sections. Here there is a break down of meaning with the word-image dialogue as the struggle for Turkish identity continues. The shamanic qualities are symbolised by the *Persian Vase Coyote* and by Beuys on stilts above the horizon. He changes into a female figure and a dog during the video. The vase replaces the coyote in the original performance by Beuys. The dog replaces the coyote and Antigone replaces Beuys. Inci Eviner use of Beuys including Antigone enables the destruction and reconstruction of the artist also women to be brought into the political realm.

To emphasise this point further, after the failed July 2016 coup the purge of artists including other intellectuals increased. Many were signatories of a petition released in January 2016 asking for peace in the south-eastern region of Turkey. They called themselves Academics for Peace and were sacked from public institutions while new Islamic institutions were increasing. Prime Minister Erdogan's distrust of contemporary art has made him enforce Turkish national cultural values. On 9 February 2017 at the Ministry of Culture and Tourism's Special Awards Ceremony Prime Minister Erdogan stated, 'It is possible for Turkey to have valuable artists in every field, only if the existing ones are protected'²⁵ (Artist Freedom of Expression In Turkey: State of Emergency', *Arts Everywhere*, <https://www.artseverywhere.ca/2017/08/28/artistic-freedom-turkey>, August 2017, assessed March 2018). Turkish artists are trying to use their voice. At the September 2017 Istanbul Biennale Curated by Michael Elmgreen and Inger Draget it was stated Turkish artist have 'quiet voices. The artists wanted to get together, find new strength and represent an opposing attitude. This happens not boldly but rather more directly'²⁶ (Werner Bloch, 'Istanbul Biennial gives artists political voice', *DW*, <https://www.dw.com/en/istabul-biennial-gives-artists-political-voice/a-40560235>). This is echoed in the *Sensual Misunderstanding* label in *Beuys Underground*. Inci Eviner writes, 'They are not only deprived of certain language, also they are not able to express themselves in a proper way'²⁷ (Author's interview with artist March 2018).

In Phoebe Boswell's *Mutumia* voices do not capitulate especially the Kenyan women because for adult sons to see their mother naked in most African cultures is taboo. *Mutumia* is influenced by Ndinda Kioko's essay *The Khanga is Present* written in 2016 and it is here where Phoebe Boswell's third-person narrative begins. The khanga is a cloth wrapped

around the female body symbolising the dignity of African womanhood. It communicates women's feelings and history by using visual aphorisms written on each khanga. Their bodies gives them a voice and it is not an invite for sexual assault as Khweizi made clear in a poem in response to a rape case against President Jacob Zuma in 2006. She writes,

I am Khanga...I exist for the comfort and convince of a woman. But no no no make no mistake...I am not here to please a man. And I certainly am not a seductress. Please don't use me as an excuse to rape²⁸ (Ra'eesa Pather, 'The Khanga, womanhood and how Zuma's 2006 rape trial changed the meaning of the fabric' *Mail & Guardian*, <https://mg.co.za/article/2016-08-10-the-khanga-womanhood-and-how-zumas-2006-rape-trial-change-the-meaning-of-the-fabric>, 10 August 2016. Assessed March 2018).

In addition, Members of People Against Women Abuse wore khangas in protest against President Zuma outside the court.

For Phoebe Boswell, how the dignity of women have been socialised in the khanga is problematic. The 1990s economic collapse in Kenya resulted in a renewal of conservatism in women's dress especially at the time when women were demanding more rights. The government encouraged a discourse of shame on female sexuality, as women were more expressive in their dress in the urban parts of Kenya 'The problem with many young people's perception of fashion is that it has to be Western-inspired and flesh exposing'²⁹

(Gardy Chacha, 'Dressing Etiquette, *The Standard*,

<https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2000063068/dressing-etiquette>, 1st August 2012. Assessed March 2018.).

In the 1990s, the first wave of stripping attacks occurred because the men, supported by some women, wanted the women to dress modestly and wear traditional African clothing. Kenyan women are still living in this climate. They do not get much support from institutions for these stripping attacks. My Dress My Choice campaign in 2017 challenged the government's lack of response to these attacks. In *Mutumia* the khanga is invisible but the title symbolises African womanhood enabling Phoebe Boswell's third-person narrative. As she becomes entwined with her tribal ancestry and womanhood, she is aware women must struggle to find their voice in a patriarchal environment while acknowledging their position within it. Yet, challenging this environment they refuse to be imbricated in a subaltern consciousness. The nakedness of the women in *Mutumia* emphasises the invisible khanga of African womanhood. The invisibility and nakedness are weapons of attack that still maintain The dignity of African womanhood. The artist is destroyed by Kenyan patriarchy but is reconstructed by the invisible khanga.

However, the female figures takes the invisibility and nakedness as weapons further in *Mutumia* allowing them to speak as the nominated author. Phoebe Boswell states, she wanted her work to be ‘pliable enough to squeeze into the Gikuyu corners and also into the English edges’³⁰ (*A Conversation Between Phoebe Boswell and Ndinda Kiko about Mutumia*, <https://www.phoebeboswell.com/mutumia/> assessed March 2018). The women participating in *Mutumia* explored different emotions such as anger, strength, joy and pain while using different parts of their bodies such as, head, womb and heart to express these emotions. During this process, Phoebe Boswell filmed their bodies then turned it into an animated drawing. The process enabled the women to project their voices through their bodies. Phoebe Boswell states these, ‘women came for their own reasons, to challenge themselves, the patriarchy, empower themselves by claiming their bodies back from ideas drilled into them’³¹ (*A Conversation Between Phoebe Boswell and Ndinda Kiko about Mutumia*, <https://www.phoebeboswell.com/mutumia/> assessed March 2018). In *Mutumia*, the third-person narrative of the artist and the voice of the nominated author enable the artwork to criticise Kenyan patriarchy while challenging the patriarchal system in general. There are subtle clues to the Kenyan social political problems while the visual clues to the general forms of patriarchy are more obvious.

The Art Practice and Art Object.

Creative performance is an element dominating the artwork of all these female artists. By creative performance, I am referring to the production of ideas, processes and solutions that have been identified and synthesised to make the art object. For *Beuys Underground* Inci Eviner starts with many ink drawings allowing the imaginative traces of her ideas to slowly, come to the surface. Drawing with ink provides the fluidity substance she needs for the ideas. On one level, the ink makes the ideas secure but on another level as the ideas develop Inci Eviner questions their validity. She writes,

Drawing is like a vehicle carrying me to the other side...I think it will directly reflect my sincerity; however at the moment images appear on paper, the process starts falsify me³² (Author’s interview with artist March 2018).

For Phoebe Boswell, drawing is her main form of communication. As she draws in pencil this

gives her more control enabling her to create details. Yet, she does not conceal her mistakes in the drawing. She allows the eraser marks to remain on the drawing. The pencil and eraser are her drawing tools. As she focuses on drawing the female body ideas about her, own experience begins to emerge that translate into other ideas. She states,

Drawing the female body is really interesting because it's really brought out my own hang-ups and then solved them for me through the process. For these women to allow me to see them, to really see them, and to take that further..was such a monumental pleasure³³ (Yvette Gresle, 'Interview: Phoebe Boswell "I Always Want drawings to be Open and Moving and Shifting"', *Moving Histories*, <https://movinghistories.com/2017/04/13/interview-phoebe-boswell-i-always-want-drawings-to-be-open-and-moving-and-shifting/>, Assessed march 2018).

For Chen I-Chun, using ink to express the flowing calligraphic loose style for her drawings enables her to juxtapose them with collages. Watercolours are used to make the drawings more substantial and enhance the collages. All these elements help to produce the narrative in the artworks.

Drawing is the foundation of the artists works that moves into technology where the form and capacity of the technology on one hand operates at a semantic level. Meanings are reconfigured in ways that the technology can engage with. Inci Eviner uses the video to create many levels that are defined in stages and images. She refers to making many post-productions like her drawings to create these layers. In *Beuys Underground*, different scenes are seen simultaneously. Both Phoebe Boswell and Chen I-Chun use animation computer software. In *Mutumia*, Phoebe Boswell's images move right to left. Some female figures move towards the viewer communicating by mouth, facial and arm gestures. While Chen I-Chun's animation follows a handscroll landscape format as the narrative unfolds from left to right, instead of right to left in traditional Chinese handscrolls. Similar to Inci Eviner she creates stages of moving images that appear simultaneously as the narrative unfolds. At another level Inci Eviner and Chen I-Chun use of video design and animation computer software enables the technology to be pliable and amenable to their process of production including design. Inci Eviner's staging of scenes are vertical while Chen I-Chun's staging is horizontal. Both disrupt the conventional linear narrative time frame.

Technology is an assemblage of dynamic interrelations between materials and immaterial Elements. Phoebe Boswell in *Mutumia* takes this use of technology further. In this artwork, the focus on the materiality of technology privileges the body as the point of interaction

between the female subjects and technology. While Phoebe Boswell was talking to women in her studio she recorded the conversations to make them part of the work. She also worked with a gospel choir who had to respond to provocative questions about protesting and express their responses through emotional songs including sounds such as, crying and laughing. All these sounds were combined to make the sound piece for *Mutumia*. When people enter the room, they activate the sound as the drawing moves. The sound increases as more people enter the room.

All the artists use of technology shows that they arrived at a board range of designs that are sensitive to the viewer and establish a set of parameters for engagement. The technology itself delineates a relationship of development, viewer activity and production leading into further materiality of technology. The different forms of technology used show a development in technology itself. Video programmes also computer software induce destruction of old programmes and induce the creation of new ones. This relates to creative destruction where the purpose is to consider possible disconnections and putting strategy in place for new technological connections to be established. As the artists have chosen particular technology to make their artwork, the other forms of technology not used are alternatives that are potentially destructive components threatening the artwork. The need to protect the artworks means the artists have imbued their use of technology and its meaning with agency reinforcing the artwork as an art object. As art objects, they have the ability to evoke some sort of response in society. They are there to intentionally to manipulate society and create a discourse.

