The Art of Doing Ethnography with a Camera

An Audiovisual Study on Contemporary Art Practices and Aesthetics in Maputo, Mozambique
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An Audiovisual Study on Contemporary Art Practices and Aesthetics in Maputo, Mozambique

Thesis film: Living Art

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Abstract

There is a growing interest among visual anthropologists to experiment with documentary film formats and styles. My research about contemporary art practices and aesthetics in Maputo, Mozambique contributes to this ongoing debate through two modes of scholarship—audiovisual and written. First, the film ‘Living Art’ is a sensorial approach towards visual ethnography, giving attention to the aesthetics and embodiment of contemporary art. Since both art and filmmaking are embodied practices, a sensory approach through filmmaking can communicate the embodied and aesthetic aspects of art on an experiential, rather than explanatory, level. The film challenges conventional anthropological film formats, through the near absence of the spoken word as a discursive element and through various montage techniques, such as juxtaposition, decontextualization, soundscapes and repetition. Second, this text reflects upon the creative possibilities of integrating audiovisual ethnographic practices with intuitive artistic filmmaking in a research project about art. A balance between methodology and theory on the one hand and intuition and creativity on the other hand positively impact the research process and outcomes, but this dual approach also requires critical assessment of the limitations of methodological and creative choices in one’s practice. Both text and film are based on a collaborative audiovisual research project carried out with a group of young contemporary artists in Maputo, whose practices range from performance, and visual, to installation art. The great diversity of practices is key for the project because it allows capturing the aesthetics of contemporary art in Maputo in its various forms. Through audiovisual analysis, it reveals patterns of similarity and difference that otherwise wouldn’t have become visible. For a research about art, the described integrated approach between art and anthropology offers possibilities of rendering new insights and forms of knowledge about art because of its methodological affinities to art itself. The thesis discusses in detail how this is achieved throughout the entire research, from preparations and fieldwork to the editing process. It introduces the research method aesthetic learning which allows combining the ethnographic and artistic approach during all research phases. The conclusion is that through aesthetic learning and in combination with editing-analysis, aesthetic knowledge can be gained about contemporary art practice, which in return contributes both to art and anthropology. These insights open up possibilities for further studies about contemporary art and stimulate dialogue and reflection about the inter-disciplinary aesthetic connections of different art practices.
Acknowledgements

This research would not have been possible without the dedicated contribution of David Aguacheiro, Samuel Djive, Idio Chichava, Edna Jaime, João Paulo Bias, Phephile Hlope and Bruno João Mateus, and I thank them sincerely for all their collaboration. It has been an honor working with them and I hope that our collaborations will extend into future projects together. Hopefully the insights generated here will be a valuable contribution to the discourse about contemporary Mozambican Art, and about contemporary art in general.

I would especially like to thank David Aguacheiro, the best life companion anyone could wish for, and my dad Willi Krueger, who both nurtured me with their constant moral and emotional support and advice from the every beginning.

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1. Introduction

Art practice in Mozambique currently finds itself at a turning point. In the past, politics and other external factors like the independence in 1975 and the civil war between 1977-1992 have almost always conditioned and dominated art practice in Mozambique. Before independence it was a vehicle for resistance against the colonial regime, after independence and during the civil war, the ruling party FRELIMO almost entirely used it as a tool for the dissemination of its social-political agenda. It was only after the peace treaty in 1992 between FRELIMO and the opposing party RENAMO that the new democratic political orientation and improving infrastructure made way for the development of art venues, galleries, and a younger generation of contemporary artists. (Rivas 2014; Costa 2013)

Today, an internationally up and coming (contemporary) art market is emerging in Mozambique, currently having a significant number of its talent exposing their works at renowned art venues worldwide.

Research about the aesthetics in Mozambican contemporary art practice is duly needed because the young generation of contemporary artists is currently re-negotiating and re-defining the dynamics of the art world in Maputo. With their ‘new’ way of making art in Mozambique, these artists are contesting internationally predominant notions of ‘real African’ art as being only the traditional forms. On a larger scale, they are contributing to a diversified and internationalized perception of contemporary art that includes artistic productions from regions other than Europe and North America, which dominate the discourse and international art world. While studies on the shifting dynamics of the art world in Maputo, the various facets of art practice, and questions regarding the artist’s agency would provide valuable insights to situate Mozambican art within the larger art world, this project focuses on the aesthetic tendencies of contemporary Mozambican art and offers a critical reflection on using audiovisual methodologies to study the aesthetics and embodiment of contemporary art. It elaborates in detail the approach used to gain sensory insights, and at the end presents an overview of the main aesthetic knowledge that was gained about art practice in Maputo, discussing similarities and differences between the various disciplines that were part of the research. It also presents observations on tendencies in contemporary artworks that transcend the various disciplines I included in the project. However, these observations are not the main focus and only occupy a minor part of the thesis.
In line with ongoing debates about the visual ethnographer’s practice and the intersection between art and anthropology, I argue that an integrated approach between audiovisual ethnographic practice and intuitive artistic filmmaking constructively impacts the research process and outcomes of an anthropological research about art, by enabling sensory forms of knowledge production through the method of aesthetic learning.

The material for this thesis comes from a sustained period\(^1\) of collaborative fieldwork with a group of seven young contemporary artists in Maputo, Mozambique. By contemporary artists, I mean practitioners whose work is original and innovative,\(^2\) who expose their work in spaces recognized by the art world and its members, such as cultural centers and galleries, and who may have, but don’t necessarily need to have, academic training in the arts.\(^3\) (Schneider 2013: 512)

The artists I worked with are practitioners in performing art, visual art, and installation art.\(^4\) They are visual artists David Aguacheiro, Djive, Bias and Shot B, contemporary dancers Edna Jaime and Idio Chichava, and singer and songwriter Jazz P.\(^5\) Compared to the larger artist community in Maputo, these artists are a rather academic, professionally trained and internationally connected group. The selection of these artists was made grounded on personal contacts I have had with them and their work in the past eight years I lived and worked in Maputo.

Because of the diversity of aesthetic and topical foci of their respective work, they can be considered representational for the young artists that defy traditional aesthetics and search for new ways of expressing their ideas through contemporary art.

The outcome of this project is split into two parts: a text, and a film. The film Living Art is a sensory\(^6\) ethnography of the aesthetics and embodiment of contemporary art (practice). I chose this title because it can mean two things at once: How artists live their art, and how art has a life of its own. These are two central aspects that are

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1. The research was based on an initial ten weeks phase with a follow up stretched over several months.
2. As opposed to artisan works, which in Mozambique, more specifically in Maputo, are perceived to be imitative and reproductive of other artists’ works or traditional art objects.
3. This distinctive aspect of a contemporary artist has to be seen optional within the context of the art world in Mozambique, because there are very limited possibilities to attend academic or other professional training in the arts. Most artists who have an academic background attended art schools and/or universities outside the country, either for their entire education or for parts of it.
4. I am aware of the gender imbalance in my research group. This is mostly due to an under-representativeness of women in the contemporary arts, and can, therefore, be seen as a reflection of the actual gender situation in Maputo’s art world.
5. Find a short biography of each artist in appendix 1.
6. The term sensory in the context of this thesis does not relate to the anthropology of senses. It is to be understood from the perspective of audiovisual practice and synaesthetic theory. (van Lancker 2013: 143)
interwoven throughout the film. Through its sensory approach during the conception and shooting in combination with several montage techniques during editing, this film creates a possibility for sensory understanding, generating affective and experiential kinds of knowledge about art, rather than explanatory or didactic knowledge. The words of anthropologist and artist Laurent Van Lancker emphasize my intentions behind this, even more: “I want to give the viewer a taste of other cultures, rather than explain the menu.” (Van Lancker 2013: 143)

This text offers a critical reflection on using audiovisual methodologies to study the aesthetics and embodiment of contemporary art. It discusses the creative possibilities of integrating both audiovisual ethnographic practice and intuitive artistic filmmaking into a research project about art. These reflections are based on my methodological and theoretical fieldwork preparations, the collaborative research phase in Maputo, and the editing and analysis of the film Living Art.

Section two situates this study between the fields of art and anthropology, introduces aesthetics as the analytical framework and outlines the method aesthetic learning. Sections three and four analyze how audiovisual ethnographic practice and artistic filmmaking practice contributed to each other during different stages of the research. Lastly the conclusion summarizes the main arguments and then gives an outlook on how the results of this study can open possibilities for other research about contemporary art.

2. Between Art and Anthropology

“Visual anthropology is both a descriptive and an aesthetic endeavor. [It] constitutes a terra nullis between science and art. This mixture of aesthetics and knowledge has practical consequences in the anthropology of art.” (Brutti 2008: 279)

2.1 Anthropology of Art

This research contributes an anthropological perspective to the study of global art and thereby challenges traditional foci of the anthropology of art., Two central concepts
need to be introduced shortly to understand this claim: world art and global art.

Historically world art described all art produced anywhere “outside occidental art history” (Fil Ortiz 2015: 299) at any time, and it was considered a subject for anthropology. (Lundy 2013: 5) The focus of most anthropological studies of world art are the functionality of art regarding the social order of the society studied, the encoded meanings and symbolisms that an artwork represents, and cross-cultural comparisons and transactions of artworks. (Coote and Shelton 1992: 3; Gell 1998: 3pp.; Lundy 2013: 6; Fillitz 2015: 300) The concept got revised in the early 1990s to include Occidental art and the notion of treating all art equally independent from its region of production, but it still maintained a rather historical direction.

More recently there was a shift within art history that introduced a new concept called global art, meaning "contemporary art from any art world" (Fillitz 2015: 299; my emphasis). This concept implies that all art creation, regardless of its region of production, should be positioned in relation to its particular locality and not judged based on “the universal standards of art history’s grand narrative.” (Fillitz 2015: 299) Global art thus isn’t concerned with an art historical perspective, but rather with a de-historicized study of contemporary art from all over the globe.

The particular contribution of this research project to the anthropology of art first is its focus on global art in Mozambique. The contemporary art practices and artworks in this study are neither analyzed regarding (Mozambican) art history nor considering their social function or supposedly encoded symbolisms and meanings. Treating non-western global art in its own right like this can open new channels of understanding the artworks and practices, without imposing western standards for analysis and interpretation. (Schneider 2013: 525)

Instead of traditional thematical foci, this study concentrates on the production of sensory knowledge about the aesthetics7 of different art practices, and the artists’ bodily engagement with their artworks. I make use of audiovisual ethnographic practices to be able to communicate this sensory/aesthetic knowledge. The particular contribution that visual anthropology can bring to the anthropology of art lies in the possibility of integrating a richer understanding of art practices into an expanded field of ethnographic research that includes global art, thus creating opportunities for a different kind of knowledge

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7 Here in the epistemological sense defined in section 2.4
production about art. (Schneider & Wright 2013: 19) Visual anthropology’s very own artistic qualities make it an appropriate medium for communicating the sensory, embodied and aesthetic forms of knowledge about art that this study produced.

2.2 Ethnographic turn in contemporary art
Since the 1990s a large number of art practices has shown similarities with anthropology in their treatment of cultural issues. (Rutten et.al. 2013: 459) In the ethnographic turn artists adopt ethnographic research methods, although sometimes not following anthropology’s fundamental principles of observation, participation, and self-reflexivity. (Foster 1996: 302pp.; Marcus 2010: 272) The critiques of the ethnographic turn in art notwithstanding, 8 ethnographically inspired art projects have the potential to contribute valuable lessons to anthropology and ethnographic practice. They can lead away from physical site specificity towards more experimental or conceptual spaces and open possibilities for more complex intellectual collaborations with research participants than in traditional ethnographic practice. Furthermore, they can channel research outcomes towards mediation and intervention, meaning that anthropological knowledge is not produced for the archive, but for and with the research participants and communities. (Marcus 2010: 273pp.)

Today contemporary art practices are often entrenched in social practices. For example some of the artists I worked with channel observations and interpretations of their socio-cultural surroundings in their art. They question important social and political issues in their community and interact with their community through their art. 9 This sort of art practice calls for adapted research methods that can assess the social dimensions of art. It becomes more important to research the art practice and process, instead of the finished art products. (Siegenthaler 2013: 739) An active research involvement during the artistic process “creates a complex set of interactions during the production, reception, and interpretation of an artwork” (Rutten et.al. 2013: 464), and therefore renders possible understanding art in new ways.

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8 Hal Foster’s article „Artist as Ethnographer“ (1996) is an important work in this debate, but a more profound discussion of his critique would surpass the confines of this thesis.

9 These issues are only reflected implicitly in the film Living Art. Because of the sensory ethnographic approach for the film that lacks almost all narrative, a lot of background information is needed for the audience to be able to decodify them. Still, this does not constitute a problem because they lie outside of the key insights the audiovisual output of this research wants to communicate and depending on the audience’s background they can still be understood unproblematically.
2.3 Why an integrated research about art?

“[A]nthropology’s iconophobia and self-imposed restriction of visual expression to text-based models needs to be overcome by a critical engagement with a range of material and sensual practices in the contemporary arts.” (Schneider and Wright 2006: 4)

This call for more openness towards non-textual presentations of research outcomes in the field of anthropology, and for the incorporation of contemporary artistic practices exemplifies what is often called the sensory turn in anthropology. It very much resembles the dynamics of the ethnographic turn in contemporary art discussed above, and it can, therefore, be said that the two are closely related, or even run “parallel”. (Rutten et.al. 2013: 460) The similarity of these two turns shows that there is a profound “[e]pistemological interconnectedness of art and anthropology [...]”. (Bray 2015: 120) Both ethnography and most contemporary art practices base themselves on social and embodied experiences; thus an integrated practice between the two can be very beneficial. It seems that visual anthropology, in particular, is suited for combining the two approaches. (Brutti 2008: 299) The ethnographic method helps to stay focused on socio-cultural concepts and theories throughout the research and to not lose track of important ethical reflections that can positively guide creative choices. The artistic approach creates a space of freedom from epistemological limitations inherent to anthropology, and thus enlarges the ethnographer’s toolbox with an increased number of techniques and methods. (Clarke 2014: 179)

Still, why is this approach specifically helpful for research about art? Both the creation and appreciation of art is an embodied kind of knowledge learned through practice and performance and perceived through the senses. These sensorial, visual, and audible aspects of an individual’s engagement with art cannot be captured or conveyed in the expository modes of writing. (Grimshaw & Ravetz 2009: 548p.; Becker 1982: 131pp.) The sensorial qualities of art and its aesthetics can best be understood and communicated through a practice that is closer to art itself. Filmmaking is such an embodied and performative practice. The encounter with art mediated through the camera helps create an embodied kind of knowledge about art. The combination of ethnographic and artistic audiovisual practice opens up possibilities to access the contents of the audiovisual material in ways that generate new insights, enabling “the potential of sensory ethnography to convey the ineffable.” (Nakamura 2013: 133) The final outcomes of this integrated approach can
“sometimes abandon scientific paths to seek adventure in more subjective dimensions, which are nevertheless additional ways of doing ethnography.” (Brutti 2008: 280) I consider reflexivity in the thesis article as to why this approach was chosen and how I realized it as more important than pretending to achieve an impossible paradigm of an accurate depiction of reality. (Howes 2003: 3) When approached in this manner, visual anthropology has the potential to “expand the anthropological discipline beyond its own realist representation conventions [and] to harness its critical aspirations.” (Mjaaland 2013: 60)

The open structure often presented by experimental film, and for that matter by most contemporary art, allows for more complex interpretations in the audience. (Firth 1992: 6; Mjaaland 2013: 58; Van Lancker 2013) Adapted to ethnographic film this open structure is a way to avoid the inferred idea that images (still or moving) are an objective, holistic depiction of reality. An open structure makes them more accessible and questionable. It also gives more transparency to the interpretative, analytic and subjective character of ethnographic film, since it lets the viewer actively engage with it as a creative product of the filmmaker’s point of view. There is a certain loss of control on the ethnographer’s side because they cannot predict how the audience will interpret their product.10 (Marcus 2010: 271; also Ruby 1995) By acknowledging this loss of control, it can be critically accounted for and maybe even incorporated in the research design as a valuable contribution towards research findings.11 This could happen for example through screenings followed by discussion rounds with different audiences, where they share what kinds of sensory experiences or aesthetic knowledge they have gotten out of the film. These insights would have to be reanalyzed and compared to my findings. I have had a pre-screening of Living Art with the group of artists that appear in the film, and interestingly even with this relatively homogenous group, there were varying and sometimes opposing interpretations. Whatever the viewers’ interpretation might be, no matter if it agrees or disagrees with my intent, the film Living Art is hopefully always able to provoke an active engagement of the audience with the screened images, to appeal to a sensorial, individual understanding of contemporary art aesthetics in Maputo and to generate new insights into art practice and process.

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10 Although it is also questionable to assume that this is possible with more traditional models of visual ethnography.
11 Of course, there can also be negative implications because of such openness of an ethnographic film and the contents can be understood wrongly or not at all. However, the positive impacts of involving the audience more actively and not inferring a false objectivity should clearly make up for that.
2.4 Aesthetics as interpretative framework

The term aesthetics has been used in different ways throughout history. For example, Kant understands it as the subjectively perceived judgment of beauty and the sublime in art. Hegel’s philosophy of aesthetics views art as an expression of spiritual freedom and beauty, determined by content and form. According to Baumgarten, aesthetics are a value system to assess beauty in art. (Ginsborg 2013; Houlgate 2016; Kluge 1999:58) In everyday usage, aesthetics often stands as a synonym for beauty.

Current scholarly usage tries to move beyond an assessment of beauty in value systems and towards the actual etymological meaning of ‘aesthetics’ that derives from the Greek aisthanesthai, which means, “to perceive (by the senses or by the mind).” (Harper 2016) In this etymological meaning of the word, aesthetics is not necessarily related to beauty, but instead “may involve visual and auditory sensory experiences, perception, and imagination which may either be pleasant or disturbing.” (Mookherjee 2011: S1, my emphasis; also Mitchell 2005)

For the analytical framework of this research, the etymological meaning of aesthetics needs, even more, refinement. Instead of it being only focused on sensorial perception, aesthetics here means “knowledge that comes through the senses.” (Clarkson 2016, my emphasis) This framework emphasizes the contribution that aesthetic knowledge can make to cognitive knowledge production.

Within the scientific community, there is a prevailing dichotomy between knowledge and aesthetics. As scientists, anthropologists and especially visual anthropologists, are expected to produce “knowledge before beauty.” (Brutti 2008: 288) However, understanding aesthetics as knowledge annihilates this dichotomy. Aesthetics becomes more than an attribute of form for the final product of the research, but also serves as an epistemological and interpretative framework. The anthropologist is no longer trapped in a position to choose between knowledge or aesthetics (in the conventional sense), but rather in a position to gain knowledge through aesthetics (in the sense defined above). Aesthetics becomes a lens through which all observation in the field and the analysis of video footage is filtered. The main question to be asked at all times then is: How does any given image, action, movement, color, or sound evoke knowledge that can only be understood on a sensorial level, and not cognitively?

This framework asks for adapted concepts and research methodologies that consider sensorial, embodied, and intuitive approaches as equally relevant for scientific knowledge production as a supposedly objective cognitive approach.
Research methodology

I used an integrated methodology of art and ethnography, which works towards a rethinking of fieldwork practice. According to George Marcus, post-1980s ethnography needs reinvention and the incorporation of ethnographic methods as they are adapted by arts, as well as the inclusion of artistic methods, to work past the critiques posed by the writing culture debate. (Marcus 2010: 265pp.)

In an effort to enact Marcus’s challenge, I have adopted two approaches that use aesthetics as an analytical framework, on slightly different registers.

First, visual ethnographic practice embraces all ethnographic practices with visual methods. The ethnographic of this term refers to ethnographic fieldwork, not to be perceived as a specific method, but rather as a set of dynamic and reciprocal relationships between the researcher and the research participants. (Schneider 2008: 173) In the context of this research, visual refers primarily to an embodied practice, meaning there is a strong focus on the bodily involvement of the ethnographer with his research through the camera. The handheld camera records the filmmaker’s movements alongside his subjects and their movements, which is why “[t]he image is affected as much by the body behind the camera as those before it.” (Mac Dougall 2005: 26p)

This sort of visual ethnographic practice envisions sensory ethnography as an outcome. (Van Lancker 2013: 143) In the tradition of the Harvard Sensory Ethnography Lab, the main goal of this project is the conveyance of “the bodily praxis and affective fabric” of contemporary art practice. (SEL 2010) It is to produce a film “that evoke[s] the power and fascinations of the sensory world.” (MacDonald 2013: 173) In other words, it is the projection of vivid aesthetic knowledge about contemporary art and art practices in a sensory-aesthetic ethnographic film!

The second approach is intuitive artistic filmmaking. It stands for the filmmaking practice I have acquired over the past years as an independent documentary filmmaker and video artist. It is an embodied knowledge based on the mastery of technical skills that cannot be unlearned or turned off for my practice as an anthropologist. Its most important features in this context are the pursuit of aesthetically\textsuperscript{12} framed images, and intuitive filming choices that aren’t guided by theory or concept, but rather by a gut feeling.

\textsuperscript{12} Both in a conventional sense and within the meaning used in this thesis.
2.5 Aesthetic learning

Aesthetic learning means "learning through the senses." It constitutes a key method for making sensory audiovisual ethnographies because it is composed of the most important aspects of both the artistic and the ethnographic approach. It relies upon the investment of time and close observation mostly ascribed to ethnography, and upon the bodily engagement with research subjects through the camera that is part of filmmaking. For the aesthetic learning to work, the (camera)work of the ethnographer has to be "a complex choreography of consciousness, body, and senses" between him and his research subjects. (Grimshaw and Ravetz 2009: 542)

It is what visual anthropologist David MacDougall calls a "spiritual synchrony" between filmmaker and subjects. (2005:28) The ethnographer has to be able to analyze a situation in situ through his senses and to corporally engage with it through the camera, thus gaining a sensory, experiential, and embodied understanding of the processes before the lens.

If this can be achieved then, in the post-fieldwork phase of the research, the aesthetic knowledge can be applied to the analysis and editing process. During the reviewing of the recorded images and sounds, the analysis, and formulating of image-phrases there is an opportunity to engage with the recorded situations in a different state of consciousness and embodiment. During the filming situation, the researcher actively engages with the protagonists through his body with the camera, and his mind has to be aware of the protagonist’s actions and their surroundings to be able to select and frame his images as the situations unfold. In contrast, during the editing there is a spatial and temporal detachment from the protagonists and the actions they perform. The researcher interacts with the images, which are already an interpretation and selection, in a static embodiment from his editing station. He has time to re-watch countless times, compare the different practices, and observe more in depth. Therefore it becomes possible to perceive other aesthetic aspects of the depicted art practice that in return add to the aesthetic knowledge gained during the fieldwork phase.

These insights about sounds, colors, movements and smells constitute a different form of knowledge about contemporary art (practice) that is otherwise hardly

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13 Although these lines are getting increasingly blurred as ethnographers incorporate art practices in their research and artists incorporate ethnographic methods in their practice. (Marcus 2010)
14 For the purpose of a facilitated legibility of this thesis, I will be using the masculine pronouns as representative of both the feminine and masculine form.
accessible, and that generates an 'unbiased' understanding and engagement with the studied art practices.

A key factor in aesthetic learning is time. The more time I spent with an artist, observing and filming them at work, it gradually became easier to get in tune with them and anticipate their movements within the space, the speed and timing of what they were doing and so on. Anticipating to some degree has to be possible because the image has to be framed and focused before the action starts happening. When there is an embodied understanding of how someone works, it becomes possible to know how long a shot can be held before the person breaks with this movement. It is a sort of skilled vision, often implicit, unconscious and dependent on experience, that greatly influences the shooting of a scene, technically and conceptually. (Grasseni 2009: 1; Herzfeld 2009: 211) As a consequence, this affects the sensory value of the audiovisual material, and how it will affect the audience.15

The work with Edna exemplifies this aspect of bodily engagement and time. During the research, I only got to film her dance on two occasions. The first time we met at Jardim Tunduro, a park in the city center close to where she was working at a dance residency at the time. We could not have a trial run because Edna had to get back to her residency. Once she started dancing it became very hard to keep up with her movements, often making it near to impossible to frame the images nicely or to maintain the camera movements steady. The second time I went to meet Edna at the CCFM in the evening after her residency was over. This time, we filmed in two rounds. In the first round, Edna asked for a long shot of the entire piece. With the camera on the tripod, it gave me enough time to see her movements and the dynamics of the scene. I asked her to redo a part of the piece so that I could film up close. During this sequence, I managed to accompany her smoothly. When I showed a part of this performance where the camera follows her hand movement to peers, they said it felt like the camera was dancing along with Edna, which was exactly the intention of this shot. This example shows how much of an embodied practice filmmaking itself is, which is why it is such a good way to learn about other art practices.

For the aesthetic learning to work as a method, the artist-ethnographer has to find a balance between his intuitive subjectivity, scientific objectivity, and research goals. (Bray 2015: 119)

15 Here the example was audiovisual research, but aesthetic learning can be adapted to any other research between art and ethnography. (see: Bray 2015)
3. Audiovisual research practice between art and ethnography

When looking at audiovisual research practice as integrating ethnographic and artistic key elements, it is important to evaluate and analyze how this interference works both positively and negatively. First, this section discusses the methodological, conceptual and ethical fieldwork preparations influenced practical choices made in the field. Secondly, it elaborates on how creative and intuitive choices during the fieldwork affected to ethnographic filmmaking practice and knowledge production.

3.1 Visual ethnographic practice

Before the fieldwork phase, I had outlined the conceptual and thematical plan for the audiovisual practice and the thesis film. The emphasis of the film was conceived to be on the sensorial aspects of the contemporary art practice in Maputo, to be able to communicate the ineffable dimensions of aesthetic-sensory knowledge. (Grimshaw & Ravetz 2009: 548p.; Becker 1982: 131pp.) The plan for the camerawork was a mix between an object- and subject-based approach.

By interlacing the object- and subject-based approach it is possible to establish a sensorial dialogue between the two lives that are taking place during art practice: the life of the artists and the life of the artwork. Both approaches engage the audience in an affective way, although appealing to different emotional and/or cognitive registers. The subject-based approach (Figure 2), with a focus on the artists’ movements and facial expressions, appeals to inter-subjective emotions and provides the possibility of getting an insight into this person’s thoughts and feelings during the creative working process. It may evoke sensations of connectedness with the person on screen, or on the opposite of feeling disconnected from that person. The object-based approach (Figure 1) on the other hand, with a focus on materials, forms, colors, textures, shapes and sounds of artworks, provokes the viewer's subjective notion of beauty. It may evoke synaesthetic responses in the audience, for example having the impression of being able to smell or touch the objects on the screen. This mix results in experiential knowledge about the aesthetics of contemporary art in Maputo in the audience.17

16 An example of a film that was an inspiration during the conception of this project is "Verde come il silenzio" by Marcello Carlotti, about an artist's involvement with his physical environment through a physical connection and painting, and how this inspires ideas for cooking dishes with local foods.
17 Depending on the audience's background, some of the elements in both approaches can also trigger emotions connected to memories of spaces, themes, sounds, et cetera.
Balancing the object- and subject-based approaches well is essential for conveying a sensorial dialogue between artist and artwork. I used two distinct perspectives to emphasize this dialogue even more. (Figure 3) First, an inverted perspective from the artwork’s point of view as if looking at the artist at work renders the artwork as an
active participant in this conversation. Second, there is the artist's point of view upon the artwork he is creating. Through the combination of looking at an artist's expression while at work and seeing the artwork being transformed, alongside the impact of the audible and synaesthetic qualities of the material, the audience can get a sense of witnessing a silent dialogue between artist and artwork.

Figure 3: Sensorial dialogue – inverted perspectives
My practice as a documentary filmmaker has taught me how easy it is to get carried away with the moment during filmmaking practice and to film anything that draws you in through the lens of the camera. Other scholars describe this phenomenon as “ciné-transe” or “ecstasy of the filming body”. (MacDougall 2005: 27) Art itself can divert one’s attention during filming. The vivid colors of a painting, movements of a dancer or materials of a sculptor make it easy to forget about the second relevant focus, which is the body of the artist and especially facial expressions while being engaged with their artworks. Equally, the face of a musician and the sound of their music easily distract from more materialized aspects of their work, like the lyrics on paper.

The above outlined filmic approach helped to stay focused during the research phase. I would know what situations or actions to look out for and could film very selectively. It also contributed to staying concentrated on the sensorial qualities of the situations happening before the camera. Since I produce a lot of commissioned work, which is almost always in a talking-head-based documentary style, it would have been easy to fall back into old patterns and filming a lot of talk or interviews. However, reminding myself of the concept for the movie made it possible to channel my attention during the filming and to unpack situations in a sensory way.

Having said that, the commitment to a concept developed before field research also bears some challenges, like unconsciously becoming trapped within the selected theory and concepts. They can create blind spots for crucial elements that fall outside the previously established conceptual framework. For example, if it were not for my prior filmmaking experience, I would probably have stuck to the concept of ‘no talking heads’ and not have recorded the three-word statements about art that turned out to be a relevant chapter in the film.

**Attempting collaborative research**

The core of this research had been planned around the concept of a collaborative practice between the artists and me, the outcome of which was supposed to be a joint exhibition/installation/performance. The method I wanted to use were weekly workshops where we would discuss our ideas about contemporary art and aesthetics and find ways of combining the different art practices to create something new in collaboration. Sadly, this method did not work out the way I had planned, due to two key factors: time and money.

Most of the artists I had invited for the project also work and/or study in addition to their art practice, which made it extremely difficult for us to find a common schedule.
where everyone would be able to meet. During the first ten weeks of fieldwork, we only managed to meet twice, and then the group was never complete.

During the first meeting, we elaborated an initial idea of working with garbage, tracing its journey through the different art practices while being also transformed by each practice. I found that recycling and repurposing of various materials are a characteristic tendency of contemporary art in Maputo, and this topic and material choice for our project confirmed my observations. Sadly, both time and financial constraints kept us from developing this idea further. 18

Because I wanted the artists to be as actively involved as possible, I was very open with them from beginning on about the aim of my research and the sensory approach for the film. (Gubrium & Harper 2013: 48) They all watched a video that I had previously made with a Dutch artist in the sensory style I wanted to use for this project. Watching it had a positive effect on our filming sessions, during which they were very much at ease, possibly because they had an idea of what to expect. Consequently, this reflects in the material because I could get close to the artists and create a more intimate feeling in the images, without any awkwardness about me getting this close and not asking any questions. When the collaborative exhibition became unfeasible, I switched to deciding together with the artists when and during which activity I could film them. 19 Given that they knew about my research focus, this meant that the choice of practices I got to observe and film was already an interpretation that the artists themselves made of contemporary art and aesthetics. I will give the example of David Aguacheiro, who works with a lot of different mediums and practices. He could have chosen to let me film him while painting or while working on his photo or video works. Yet he decided that I should film him welding a sculpture of exhaust pipes. This sculpture is a critique of the ongoing political armed conflict between RENAMO and FRELIMO in central and northern Mozambique. His choice reflects that in his interpretation this kind of material, topic, and type of artwork is the most representative and meaningful way to depict his contemporary art practice.

This section is called attempting collaborative research, because not disregarding my efforts, I am aware that the entire project is still my initiative, and that I have invited all participants. Through my continuous effort to keep the research collaborative, a significant part of the decision-making process was transferred to the artists. I

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18 There is still interest from both sides to pick up where we left and create something together, possibly even for the first public screening of the film „Living Art“ in Maputo.
19 For some situations, I specifically asked them if I could film them during certain activities because they were of great interest to me, but I’d only film if they agreed.
acknowledge the impact they had on the research phase and the audiovisual material I collected, which reflects their perception of contemporary art. However, I also realize that my interpretation and perception ultimately shaped the final form and content of the audiovisual product. (Gubrium & Harper 2013: 49, 57)

With ethnographic films, there is always an ethical dilemma of authorship over the audiovisual material. Does it belong to the filmmaker or to the individuals that were filmed? (MacDougall 1991) In the case of working with artists, the question seems to become even more complicated. The artists that participated in this study actively contributed to and shaped the filmmaking process. Furthermore, the filmed images depict their original artworks. On the other hand, I am the author of this audiovisual material and the editor of the film. Both them and I have “intellectual property rights” towards the footage. (Gubrium & Harper 2013: 55) Contrary to norms of social research, I decided not to keep the research participants anonymous, thereby acknowledging their claim on the contents of this study. (Gubrium & Harper 2013: 51p.) Their names appear in the film credits, and there is an appendix with short biographies at the end of this thesis article.

**Research reciprocity**

Given that the research participants are professional artists, it would have been inconsiderate and also unethical to expect them to invest time and effort in the project without being reimbursed in any way. Before the research phase, I had out ruled monetary retribution both because of the controversy money might have brought to the research on an ethical level, it might seem more like service than collaboration, and also because I had a lack of research funds. To comply with the demand for ‘fair return’ that exists for anthropological fieldwork (ASA 2011: 6), I decided to offer practical contributions that could be beneficial for their professional careers, such as photos and videos for their promotional purposes.

These ethical considerations had a positive influence on the research outcome, which is exemplified in my work with Shot B. When I first approached him for the project, I let him know right away that I could not offer any money in exchange for his participation in the project. He said that was fine with him because he had accompanied and admired the work that David Aguacheiro and I had been doing over the past years and instead of receiving money he would like us to enter into a more long-lasting collaboration together. For the context of this research, he mentioned a hip hop and beatbox workshop he would be giving later in February at the American School, which he would like to have documented for promoting of his teaching. Shooting this event
seemed like a fair idea for both of us, and I accepted. Later I edited a short promotional video for him.

Without the importance of ethical considerations in anthropological research, I would probably not have considered filming the workshop since it was outside of my research interest. In the end, the music presentation on the first day at the school where he showcased what his workshop would be about turned out to be an essential part of the title scene of the film Living Art. His music forms the soundscape for this scene and gives an audible introduction into the art context. For one, the music genre hip-hop and the dynamics of the beat make it clear that the film will deal with contemporary art and not for example traditional art.

“How brilliant. Arte alta, satisfeito, ao meu jeito. […] Aqui a prova, we’re having fun. É paz não guerra, não estavas a espera. […] We’re thrilled like you hit it on, I got my feeling on. Tudo que eu sou, e tudo que eu sei. Tudo que eu dei, e tudo que eu mostro. Kill it on. Living, rapping, ditching, painting, spill it on.” (Excerpt of the song Godzilians by Shot B)

Secondly, the quote above shows how the lyrics talk about his life as an artist and the way in which his two passions for graffiti and music influence him. Lastly, the lyrics are a mix of English and Portuguese, and I have found that mixing of various kinds is probably the main tendency of contemporary art in Mozambique. My observations have shown that mixing is the only consistent tendency that is characteristic of all art practices that were part of this project. Like, for example, mixing of materials in visual arts, like wood with metal or metal with clay. Other examples are mixing of languages and mixing of music styles, like spiritual traditionally inspired sounds and instruments with modern genres like hip-hop. There is also mixing of dance styles, like traditional dances with ballet, jazz or modern, as well as mixing of disciplines, like incorporating dance and painting in one performance. I would even dare to say that mixing is the main characteristic of contemporary art in Maputo.

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20 Translation: How brilliant. High art, satisfied, my way. […] Here’s the proof, we’re having fun. It’s peace, not war. You weren’t expecting it. We’re thrilled like you hit it on, I got my feeling on. What I am is what I know. What I give is what I show. Kill it on. Living, rapping, ditching, painting, spill it on.
3.2 Intuitive artistic filmmaking

“I want to find a dialogue between [...] ethics and aesthetics, form and content, theory and practice.” (Van Lancker 2013: 143)

My positionality and background played an essential role that inevitably shaped this research, its outcomes, and the relationship with my research participants, (MacDougall 1991: 2) I have migrated to Mozambique several years back. As some scholars have noted, this sort of displacement, of being part of a minority in one’s environment, of being at a state between insider and outsider, engagement and disengagement with the studied culture, often reflects itself in the audiovisual products of a filmmaker. (Marks 2000; Brutti 2008: 294) A second factor is my double role as researcher and artist. I studied anthropology with a focus on visual anthropology, but for the past years, I have been working independently in the creative industry in Mozambique as a documentary filmmaker and photographer. I also worked on several individual art projects involving videoart and sound. During my practice, I have interacted with many artists in Maputo, both on a personal or a professional level.

This double role can cause problems for an audiovisual ethnographic research about art. For example, during one filming session with David Aguacheiro, where I filmed him filming an interview, my role as a fellow filmmaker interfered with my own practice. At times he asked me for help to hold a reflector, or to set up the lavaliere. Since I know the importance of these aspects for the final product, I put my camera aside and assisted him, thus missing moments that would have been interesting for me to film.

Nonetheless, there is also a significant advantage, since I can explore the juxtaposition between art and anthropology more deeply because I practice both. They are not two separate parts, but instead, two facets of my professional work intertwined into a new integrated practice. (Schneider & Wright 2013: 2)

**Epistemological freedom**

The field of visual anthropology, although it might be considered more avant-garde towards experimental forms of knowledge production than the rest of the discipline, still continues to prioritize “realist-observational” documentaries as a format for audiovisual ethnographic products. (Cone 2015: 313) Documentaries in this style produce knowledge through descriptive, linear narratives. They try to stick as close as
possible to the ‘reality’ of the recorded situation, oftentimes even following a chronological pattern in their editing. (Grimshaw & Ravetz 2009) These documentaries can transmit a false sense of holism and objectivity, even if unintended, which poses a problem for the ethnographer and audience alike. They also mostly use closed interpretive structures that suggest a beginning and an end to a story. Because of these features, the audience assumes a more passive position towards the images they see. (Mjaaland 2013)

Lately, there has been a call from many anthropologists and artists to incorporate creative and experimental methods in audiovisual ethnographic research practices. This way it is possible to communicate sensory and experiential knowledge, beyond mere description, that actively involves the audience. (Pasqualino 2013: 152pp; Mjaaland 2013; Pasqualino & Schneider 2014; Van Lancker 2013) If this sort of knowledge production is allowed to be part of the discipline’s epistemology, the ethnographer can choose more freely from a broader set of methods and techniques, and adapt them to his specific research situation to improve his knowledge production. Considering the reflexive and sensory shifts in anthropology, this is much more adequate and “in tune with the theoretical intentions of modern social anthropology.” (Edwards 1997: 55, cited by Mjaaland 2013: 59) Rather than imposing a sense of holism or objectivity, a more experimental approach allows for the audience to critically and imaginatively engage with the images that are presented to them. (Mjaaland 2013)

In my efforts to incorporate more creative and experimental methods, I have borrowed some techniques from my intuitive artistic filmmaking for the research, that have helped create aesthetically engaging images, which are a central element of sensory ethnographies. (Nakamura 2013: 134) I opted for shooting my entire material with a handheld DSLR camera. The shallow depth of field and consequently a lack of context and a selective focus within the frame, although going against the anthropological image tradition of showing everything, help to engage the audience actively. “By emphasizing (rather than denying) the fragmental character of the [filmic] image, and the absences implied, the viewer can be involved in the filling in of a visual narrative.” (Mjaaland 2013: 57) I would sometimes shoot from behind another object, thus concealing but equally emphasizing certain parts of the image. Other times I would consciously exclude parts of the environment that are for example very present in the soundscape, so as to leave the viewer wondering and to engage his imagination about how the space might look like beyond the frame. This way the viewer’s focus is channeled towards selected aspects that my observations and
aesthetic learning have proven to be relevant. These are for example colors and structures of the artworks, sounds, or movements of the body.

At all times I tried to frame both the artwork and the artist in an aesthetically engaging way. Oftentimes during the filming practice, I made framing choices that are probably not conventional for the observational camera style that dominates visual ethnographies, and I often followed a creative and intuitive gut feeling, especially when having to quickly adapt or assess a situation and break it down into framed
images. This approach is highly subjective and sometimes even unconscious, making it harder to explain and analyze. Nevertheless, the framing choices made during the filming practice constitute an aesthetic (or embodied) pre-analysis that shapes the audiovisual material and impacts its analysis.

Figure 5: Aesthetic framing

My previous training and professional background in documentary filmmaking allowed me to shoot with the camera set to manual settings almost all of the time. In this way, the focus and exposure of each shot are a consciously made creative choice that reflects the filmmaker's presence behind the camera. For example, the focus, which can manually be shifted along the z-axis of the image between objects in front and the back, guides the viewer's gaze towards certain objects, thus following the filmmaker's personal assessment of the filmed situation. (Figure 4)

Another contribution that an attunement to one's own aesthetic instincts during practice brought to the research is increased flexibility through intuitive, practical choices. Intuition helps recognize important situations and immediately adapt the filming plan to include things that might not initially have been a part, but that turn out to be indispensable for an in-depth analysis of the topic, and for a strong impact of the final audiovisual product.
Performativity

Performance theory sees a certain performativity in any human action, but it becomes enhanced through the presence of a camera. Meaning that by simply being there with the camera, the level of performativity that artists would normally have during their work increases because they (un)consciously position themselves before the camera. Interestingly, this applies to all of the artists I worked with, not only those in performing arts.
When I filmed Shot B during his graffiti practice, his work attracted some passer-byes to stop and watch him. He told me that this is usually the case when he works outside and that he considers this passing audience part of his art practice. For him, they contribute to creating the momentum and atmosphere of his work. Similarly, David Aguacheiro’s welding mostly takes place outdoors in a suburb of Maputo and wakes the interest of many passer-byes when they see the unusual materials and forms of his work. The attention of a passing-by audience certainly reflects in how both artists position themselves while they work.

There is also performativity to situations that don’t involve audiences as I could observe during the songwriting session with Jazz P. There was a clear distinction in her entire body language and posture between the moments she knew I was filming and the moments when we were talking off camera. I made a similar observation about Idio when we were collecting garbage in the streets for his performance. Even the filmmaking itself can be a performative act. For example, the size of the camera the researcher uses has an impact on the embodied relation between subject and object. A smaller camera allows for a more “performative and corporeal dimension” while filming, it allows more freedom in search for images. (Van Lancker 2013: 146) The presence of the camera transforms participant observation into “material participation”. (Schneider 2013: 521) The visual ethnographer is actively collecting images that will later become a film, which can become re-inserted into the research context through screenings or other dissemination channels and therefore influence and possibly even change the context where it originated. The audiovisual intervention consequently changes the field during and after the research. (ibid.)

The performativity on both sides of the lens certainly influences the filmed situations, and maybe even entirely creates the moments that the camera can capture. Still, how does one know when the performance starts and when it ends? Also, does this affect the ‘authenticity’ of the research situation?

My specific research focus is art practice, a fragment of the protagonists' lives that is always a performative act, which is why I argue that their and my performativity within the research situation fit the objectives of this research perfectly. With it, the camera captures an integral aspect of art practice, even though it may seem ‘unauthentic’ at first sight.
4. Editing as Interpretation and Analysis

The aesthetically learned knowledge acquired throughout the fieldwork can be used to ‘write’ a film with the recorded images and sounds, that is more than a depiction of filmed situations. It can become a critical-analytical account of embodied understanding, creatively assembled in a film, installation, or other media-based output. To get the most out of this possibility, Visual Anthropology should be open to inspiration from experimental filmmaking. (Van Lancker 2015) Equally important, ethnographic film should not be bound to textual narrative structures. Anthropologists should not handle making a movie as if writing a text with images. (MacDougall 2005; also Høgel 2013: 214) Instead, they should explore the possibilities audiovisual media offer for an “anthropology beyond text.” (Schneider 2013: 522; also Van Lancker 2015) An example for this is the work of the Harvard Sensory Ethnography Lab to integrate art and ethnography in an effort to move anthropology beyond a discipline of words. (Nakamura 2013: 133)

The editing process can itself become an analytical and interpretative endeavor using various montage techniques. By taking advantage of the complexity and sensorial information that is present in the audiovisual material, new anthropological knowledge can be generated through the editing.

The thesis film “Living Art,” is not a story about individual artists, but rather an account of sensory knowledge and embodiment of contemporary art. Through montage it is possible to generate these “[...] less subject-centered and more dexterous and flexible insights into social reality.” (Suhr and Willerslev 2013: 17) The montage techniques I used are split screens and juxtaposition, decontextualization, soundscapes and repetition.

4.1 Recognizable structure – experimental forms

Overall the thesis film has a threefold structure, which repeats itself on two levels. (Figure 7) The first scene (green) contains the only directed interview speech of the film’s protagonists. The main body (violet) is divided into three acts. Much like in a theater play these acts are separated by a black screen, which gives the audience time to reflect on what they saw, and to mentally prepare for the next act. Each act deals with one of three different stages of art practice: preparation – art practice –

21 I still plan on making an installation with my audiovisual material from this study.
presentation. A title scene (gray) that introduces the topic through images and soundscape, and credits (gray) where each artist is presented with his name, frame the threefold structure.

![Figure 7: Film structure](image)

This three-act structure should be very familiar to most audiences since it is the norm for theater and film. Within this structure, which provides an orientation point for the viewers, there is more freedom for exploring the epistemological opportunities of using images in an experimental way that breaks with visual conventions. Through that hopefully, a new understanding of the topic can be achieved. (Mjaaland 2013:59)

The division into Parts 1 to 3 contributed to the aesthetic learning process during the editing. I forced myself to critically analyze and understand which stage of practice each aspect of the filmed art practices actually represents and what it expresses. This was especially challenging for Idio and Edna, because their artwork and their body are the same object, which makes it difficult to separate practice and presentation. The lines between these stages are blurry because both are performed through and with the body. Not so for most of the visual arts, where the presentation is clearly distinguishable from the other two stages because it involves a finished object that isn't part of the artist's body. Identifying aspects of preparation for all practices also made me understand how the artists’ environment influences their practice before starting to produce the artwork. Things that seem mundane oftentimes trigger inspirations for the final artworks. For example, showing Djive during his commute to the atelier gives an insight into the visual and audible inputs he absorbs on his way. During conversation he confirmed that sometimes even a color or pattern he sees on someone’s clothes on the street inspire him for a painting.

Throughout the entire film, there is an extensive use of close-ups, very few long shots, and almost no contextualization shots. Through this decontextualization a focus on experience replaces the focus on place, which is ever so present in ethnographic accounts. The audience “is denied the distancing effect of explanatory introductions
and establishing shots, (and) is left to experience the powerful, perplexing affect of the imagery." (Beugenet 2007: 8, cited by Van Lancker 2013: 148) The audience gets the opportunity of engaging more actively with the film because they have to try to understand the seemingly fragmented parts. This requires imagination, which is an integral part of knowing. (Mjaaland 2013: 57) The decontextualization helps the audience to get in tune with the sensory approach of the film for it can only engage with the experiential dimensions of the images. Additionally not providing any context about the protagonists, such as their names, or place of origin, makes them more human and more accessible for the audience because it cannot jump to pre-assumptions or preconceptions about them. For the same reason, there is no introductory information about place or time. When much contextual information dominates in a film, context is placed above experience, and the protagonists become labeled examples of certain standpoints and opinions, or social and ethnic groups. The lack of this information forces the audience to connect with them on a more substantial, emotional and inter-subjective level, which strengthens the sensory experience of the film even further. (Van Lancker 2013: 148)

Another key technique I used are split screens, which are already often used in installation art and experimental film. They offer the possibility of communicating multiple perspectives at the same time, something textual forms can only hardly, even almost never provide. (Schneider 2008: 173) This potential is indispensible for a project that seeks to understand the aesthetics of contemporary art because the multiple perspectives render the “multiplicity of the truth,” or in this case the multifacetedness of art, visible and more tangible. (Schneider & Wright 2013: 20; also MacDougall 1991) It becomes apparent for the audience that there is no one ‘true’ statement that can be made to explain or to show what contemporary art in Mozambique means, but that every possible combination of practices, and the insights they bring, are only one facet of the dynamic and ever-shifting whole that is contemporary art.

The juxtaposition of seemingly incomparable images is the only way to communicate and understand the relationship between them and also their in-between state. (Nielsen 2013) By in-between state, I mean the underlying aesthetic that transcends and connects the different practices.

This method is used in Part 2 of the film to juxtapose artists and their practices. The insights gained during the fieldwork were used to put them into relation with each other. Through this editing technique, various patterns became apparent, regarding movements, colors, and sounds. (Cone 2015: 315)
For example, the two dance performances of Edna and Idio (Figure 8) seemed completely different to me during the fieldwork and even when edited in succession. However, after juxtaposing them, a pattern became visible that showed similarities in the choreographic sequence of movements and moments of calm vs. agitation, while nevertheless emphasizing the differences between props (nature and garbage) and location (crowded street and tranquility of a city park).
In a second example (Figure 9), the juxtaposition revealed interesting insights about the corporality of visual art practice. Djive and Shot B use paint to create a picture on canvas, but while one is very private and almost meditative, the second is public and much more agitated. The corporeal involvement of the two is very different and can only really be felt with immediacy when juxtaposed, not when edited back to back.\textsuperscript{22} The soundscapes of this juxtaposition also emphasize said difference. In the atelier, the only sounds come from the painting activity (one can even hear the brush agitating the water in a glass), in contrast on the street there are car noises and loud music was playing from Shot B’s car in addition to the sound of the spray paint.

“Sound and image together can generate powerful synaesthetic responses, creating a heightened sense of space, volume and texture” (MacDougall 2005: 42) In general, Living Art has a strong emphasis on ambient sound. The non-verbal sounds characteristic to different spaces can “enhance both the connotative and experiential texture of a film for spectators.” (Henley 2007: 55; also: Feld 2015) The strategic use of ambiance sound thus helps make a thicker depiction;\textsuperscript{23} it channels the audience’s attention within the image and enhances the sensorial experience of the things seen on screen. This acoustemology, or “knowing-with and knowing-through the audible” constitutes another level of knowing that the editing-analysis phase contributes to the project. (Feld 2015) In the near absence of the spoken word throughout the film, the contribution of sonic ethnography becomes even more evident. (Nakamura 2013: 133p.)

The first scene of the film is the only chapter that includes interview speech. Each artist was asked to spontaneously describe in only three words what contemporary art is for them. Interestingly there were almost no repetitions in their answers. This exception got included right at the beginning of the film for three reasons. First, it helps the audience to frame what follows in the film around these statements. Second, it allows for a smoothened entrance towards the non-vocalized parts of the film. Third, it underscores my interpretation of indefinability of contemporary art and underlines the complexity and multifacetedness that the sensory sections of the movie help experience afterward. When the only section where the artists say something is at the same time a refusal to provide definite meaning or simplified understanding, it becomes evident why the argument this film makes about art has to be felt, rather than explained.

\textsuperscript{22} I tried cutting them one after the other and the argument did not become clear as it does in this way.

\textsuperscript{23} See Lucien Taylor (1996 : 86) on the idea of thick depiction.
To a smaller extent, I also used repetition as a technique. Some images were re-used throughout the film. They were used in succession and also in juxtaposition with other images. This way the viewer gets to experience the same realizations through the montage as I did while editing. Another reason for repetition was to give viewers a chance to reassess the message of some images after their vision has been trained throughout the film to see the sensorial qualities of the shots with a newfound understanding.

The film Living Art can be seen as a performative documentary, which “[...] underscores the complexity of our knowledge of the world by emphasizing its subjective and affective dimensions.” (Nichols 2001: 131; my emphasis)

4.2 Aesthetic knowledge
Through the method of aesthetic learning and the editing-analysis, I have gained some interesting sensory insights about contemporary art in Maputo.
For example, the calmness and serenity that are often associated with art practice in a Western context are not the common settings for contemporary art in Maputo. The spaces where artists work are often noisy, agitated, and populated. Also, most art is practiced outdoors, which exposes artists to sometimes extreme weather conditions during their work, like heat or strong winds. This, however, does not seem to interrupt the artistic process. On the contrary, these factors appear to influence and shape the art practice and artworks productively.
Apart from ambient sounds, the artists’ sonic perception of their materials is also an important factor. For example, David Aguacheiro ‘tested’ the sounds of the material he was buying. A very sensorial way of choosing material that has nothing to do with its functionality for the final artwork.
Regarding artists’ corporality at work, there are almost choreographed similarities in the artists’ bodily engagement with their artworks across the disciplines. A back-and-forth dynamic from-and-to the artwork is something present in nearly all practices. In visual arts it is more immediate, moving back-and-forth from the canvas. But it is also there in performance art, for example through videotaping oneself and watching it later, then using these insights to continue working. However, there are also many artist-particular dynamics and very noticeable differences within disciplines. For
instance, the three visual artists Djive, Bias, and Shot B have entirely different work dynamics concerning pacing and embodiment. With sheer observation from the outside they seem the same, but through aesthetic engagement with the camera, which calls for an active bodily involvement, it becomes visible that they are actually quite different.

For almost all artists I worked with, the environment and society they live in play a major role in the art they create. There is close interaction with their environment, be it for providing their working material, for example by recycling materials found on the streets, or giving inspiration, like seeing colors or patterns on the streets, on people’s clothes or in publicities, overhearing conversations, and through interactions with street-audiences.

These findings cannot be learned from the finished artworks, which is why aesthetic engagement during the art practice is crucial to get these sensorial insights. It is an affective knowledge that previously wasn’t part of the discipline’s scientific approach. (MacDougall 1998: 81) This knowledge makes way for a more empathic understanding of the topic.

5. Conclusion

As this thesis text has shown, there is a significant number of methods, approaches and techniques that are possible within a research that integrates both ethnographic and artistic practices. It opens creative possibilities for visual ethnographies to produce new kinds of knowledge, like the aesthetic or embodied types of knowledge I discussed. I have shown that experimental ethnographic film is a resourceful medium for communicating “the aesthetics as they are expressed and experienced” during art practice, and for creating the potential for “recognizing unrealized feelings and articulating under conceptualized knowledge.”

It seems that there is some degree of hybridity between art and anthropology to sensory ethnographic film. Because of this hybridity, the knowledge produced through the film Living Art can contribute to both disciplines, anthropology, and art. It offers anthropological insights into art, and into creative possibilities for research about art. The methodology used in this research generated aesthetic knowledge.

24 E-mail conversation with Dr. Mark Westmoreland from 30.10.2015
about sonic, experiential, and embodied facets of contemporary art practice. The imagery captured during the research also holds the potential for analysis of other aspects of contemporary art, such as working techniques, materials, colors, themes, and encoded meanings in the artworks. Observations about contemporary art in a more general sense were also inevitably made during this process. They include artistic tendencies such as repurposing and recycling of material; expression of social and political issues in artworks; or the most versatile and present tendency in all disciplines: hybridity of art through a mixing of techniques, materials, languages, and disciplines.25

At the same time, the film Living Art is an art product that will be part of the contemporary art world in Maputo, and hopefully also internationally, and can therefore stimulate dialogue and reflection about the inter-disciplinary aesthetic connections between different art practices, and maybe even between artistic practices in different art worlds. Considering the parallels between the form of the film Living Art and recent audiovisual contemporary artworks, it becomes clear that the focus and methodology chosen for this project are a good fit to convey an argument about and through art.

The double role as an artist-anthropologist, between wanting to elaborate an anthropological argument and making an appealing and engaging film, caused productive frictions26 for my own audiovisual practice. The combination of the two practices contributed to my personal skill set as a professional in the creative industry, which will be beneficial for future projects, be they anthropological or artistic.

The project has also opened the path for future collaborations with some of the artists, and there is even still a chance for continuity of this research project. The process of working with people and establishing long-term relationships that have to be constantly renegotiated becomes equally important as the finished product of this study. (Schneider & Wright 2013: 4)

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25 These aspects serve just as an example. I have made more observations of this nature but an entire account would exceed the limitations of this thesis.

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Appendix 1: Artist profiles

**David Aguacheiro** is a visual artists working with video, photography, painting, sculpting and installations. For his installations he often mixes various materials like scrap metal, plastic, clay and video. His main interests are social, political and environmental issues. He was trained at the National Art School ENAV in visual arts and design, has a BA in Design and is currently pursuing an MA in Design & Multimedia. He has won several prizes in Mozambique and internationally for his paintings, photography and documentary films. Besides his art, he is an entrepreneur who runs a creative design and multimedia company in Maputo, and he teaches film at the Art University ISArC.

**Samuel Djive** is a visual artists mainly working with various painting styles, and also with sculpting. His paintings range from oil and acrylic on canvas, to pen and aquarelle on paper. His work is inspired by his physical and cultural environment, as well as traditional Mozambican arts. He uses elements of local folklore and combines them with abstract expressions of his topics. He studied at the national arts school ENAV and is currently pursuing a BA in Design at the Art University ISArC.

**João Paulo Bias** is a visual artist working with painting. He began his career as a painter in 2001, and joined the Nucleo de Arte one year after. His particularity is working on canvases he fabricates himself and that are made of second hand jeans trousers. He uses mixed techniques in his paintings, and explores both abstract and more realist styles. He is currently finishing his BA in Communication Studies at the Polytechnic University Maputo. He is a member of the Nucleo de Arte, and works in the administration.

**Edna Jaime** is a contemporary dancer and choreographer. She started her career in traditional dance in 1996, and only came in contact with contemporary dance in 2001. In her work she combines diversified themes, always related to social issues of her quotidian and global reality. Her style has influences from traditional dance elements, which she mixes with a contemporary dance aesthetic/vocabulary, thus expressing the different dynamics of energy and emotions can be discovered in a human being and in human relations. With her dance pieces she seeks to investigate the inner
Idio Chichava is a contemporary dancer and choreographer. In his pieces he explores the physical environment he lives in and uses everyday objects as props. He likes to question social issues and to provoke his audience in a way that makes them reflect upon these issues. He explores unconventional spaces outside the stage for his pieces, and often works in collaboration with other dancers. He is currently pursuing an MA in Dance in France.

Phephile Hlope aka. Jazz P is a lyricist and singer, originally from Swaziland but now living in Mozambique. She started her musical career at a very tender age and had a serious passion for writing songs since the age of 5. In her music Jazz P speaks of spirituality, love, femininity and life and has been maturing to a blend of hip-hop with other genres like soul, blues, reggae and jazz with a seasoning of afro elements. “That’s the only way to get to know the Jazz P way.” (Conversation 14.01.2016) Her debut EP called “In My Heart” was released in July 2014. This year she will launch two new albums. She has collaborated with many Mozambican and international artists and performed at several music festivals. She also fashions ethnic jewelry made of a vast mix of materials. Besides her art she works as an English teacher in two primary schools in Maputo’s suburbs.

Bruno João Mateus aka. Shot B is a visual street artists and MC. He studied graphic arts at the National Art School ENAV. He is an internationally recognized graffiti artist who has done many national and international exhibitions. His first individual exhibition in 2006 was also the first ever graffiti exhibition to be held in Mozambique. He is also well known for his hip hop and beatbox music. Besides that, he explores video works, and produces most of his music videos himself. His art, both music and graffiti, is often inspired by the society he lives in and by politic-critical themes. “Bruno João Mateus inspirado por crianças, espaços urbanos e suas mudanças.”27 Besides his art he teaches graffiti as an after school activity at the American School in Maputo.

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