In 2015, I travelled around Europe and the US for a six-month working tour that included an artist residence in Apt, France, conferences in Kalmar Sweden and Berlin Germany, as well as a Creative Arts Fellowship with the Bellagio Center, Rockefeller Foundation in Italy, and an Artist Research Fellowship with the National Museum for African Art. Throughout this tour I seized every opportunity to take amateur photographs of all the foreign cities and places that I visited. Up until that point I had been improving my skills with 3D modelling using a computer program that enabled me to create architectural objects like landscapes and buildings, as a result spawning a futuristic city in the digital realm. However, in my two-month residence at the Bellagio Center I began to experiment with a technique of compositing 3D objects and existing photographs. This technique is used by CG artists and graphic designers to blend 3D objects into real-time images so that the two different elements appear as if they occur in the same plane or dimension; the imaginative and existing coinciding in an altered reality. A couple of months after my residence with the Bellagio Center ended I found myself sitting at a desk in an office that I had been assigned at the National Museum for African Art. I spent countless hours on the PC, looking through a rich database of objects from across the African continent. Each image was meticulously archived and corresponded to the original artefact in the museum’s storage vaults. But viewing these artefacts in two-dimensions on a flat computer screen lent them a mysteriousness that I did not want to demystify by going down into the vaults and viewing the actual artifacts. And so I put pen to paper and began sketching them just as they appeared to me off the computer screen, so I put pen to paper and began sketching them just as they appeared to me off the computer screen. 

With long legs, modish mohawk, and chiseled features, Ananiya takes on the corporate villains of a not too distant future. At seventeen years old, Ananiya is not the typical superhero. She’s female, she’s black, and she’s falling in love with a female robot. The Revolutionist, Lusaka-based Milumbe Haimbe’s graphic novel-in-progress draws upon the multi-national popular culture look of comics and superheroes—that have too long been dominated by images of white men—to imagine a time when empowered African women also look at home in these stylized pages and when discomfort with same sex attraction is absent from considerations of sexuality. Trained and based in Zambia, this emerging talent has crafted a visual language that readily crosses cultures and re-frames some of the most compelling issues of our times.

Born in 1974, MILUMBE HAIMBE studied architecture at Zambia’s Copperbelt University before receiving an MFA from the Oslo National Academy of the Arts in 2009. Her skill with perspective and space crosses media. Self portraits, such as the 2010 acrylic on canvas works, Phallus and Dragonfly City, depict the artist isolated in a vertiginous world in which the patterns of so-called Dutch Wax fabrics—vibrantly patterned textiles based on Indonesian batiks that have been produced in the Netherlands and the UK and exported across Africa—replace sky and ground. Her clothing is androgynous but the emphasis on her bare torso, in the case of Dragonfly City, or groin, for Phallus, force consideration of the construction of gender in a world in which patterns, textiles, and people travel and are categorized according to culture.

As a queer artist working within a city in which the first bachelors degrees in Fine Arts were awarded in 2013 (at the Zambian Open University) and homosexual activity remains a crime for men and women, Haimbe is acutely aware of the challenges facing artists and LGBTQ communities locally and globally. She has bridged the divide between local and global by re-presenting herself as an individual who shapes both. In her 2011 series, Spirit Husband, the artist superimposed her own face over that of both bride and groom in wedding photos she found on the internet of Muslim, Hindu and “White” (Christian) couples. No longer culturally and geographically bound, these images have become open to the World Wide Web and the vision of an artist who sees the connections and possibilities between us all.

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Cultures and expectations collide in the work of Milumbe Haimbe. Superheroes take on new origins and orientations, and the future is opened to Africa and Africans serving not as foils to the ‘development’ of the rest of the world but as an integrated force facing humanity’s challenges, choices, and solutions. Currently, the artist is working on multiple projects: the completion of her much anticipated The Revolutionist: Hybrid Cities, in which the artist interprets two-dimensional images of African objects as three-dimensional models on the computer, and fuses them with photographs to imagine futuristic cities; and, an initiative in which she explores her own mother’s little known story in Zambia’s independence government alongside the African space agenda of the 1960s.

By Dr. Karen E. Milbourne, PHD, curator at the National Museum of African Art, The Smithsonian Museum
No sooner had I returned to my hometown Lusaka from my carefree travels in Europe and the US than the rigors of regular life caught up with me. And then one day as I was skimming through the photographs from my tour, the cityscapes depicted in them suddenly seemed enchanted, as if my present reality and the dimming memory of my experiences were making them less real. I wanted to possess these enchanted cities before they regressed into the recesses of my mind forever. In a bolt of inspiration I wanted to colonize them. I proceeded to make 3D models of the African objects that I had sketched from the museum’s database a few months earlier. Just as I had experimented at the Bellagio Center with the technique of compositing 3D objects and existing photographs, I composited these 3D African objects and my tour photographs. The meaning of some of the cities was intimate but others are of greater significance. In Bellagio, the Villa Serbelloni, the property that houses the Bellagio Center, has a long history of being the fortification of the surrounding town that dates back to antiquity. It survived a NAZI invasion by the quick wits of a governess who in the midst of the cold, harsh winters of World War II convinced the invaders not to turn the culturally rich artefacts and antique furniture in the villa as well as the surrounding ancient gardens into firewood. Despite their vicinity to Lake Como, which was a busy trading port back in the middle-ages, the villa and surrounding villages escaped the black plague that was consuming Europe thanks to the foresight and initiative of the Lord of the villa at the time. In Berlin, the Berlin Wall once divided East from West, communism and capitalism, a line drawn in the sand on the battlefield of a long Cold War. In Kalmar, the castle was one of Sweden’s strongholds against the invading Danes in hostilities that were centuries old and predated the dark ages. In San Diego a stretch of highway signifies the border between the United States and Mexico. In an academic setting perhaps this could be the point of departure for discussions on south-to-north migration movements pertinent to today. In San Francisco the Golden Bridge is a marvel of architecture that has reached cult classic status. In Washington DC, the iconic obelisk is an instantly recognisable monument around the world. And then there is simply Los Angeles. Hybrid Cities imposes African symbolisms onto foreign cityscapes. Gigantic in scale and monolithic in structure they do not just impose, they attempt to transform. They are extraterrestrial, colonizing in nature, metaphorically creating hybrid cities.
Haimbe proposed to research the link between the socio-political contexts in Africa and the African space agenda using the proposed pan-African space agency, AfriSpace, as a point of departure. The decade of the 1960s, significant as an era when most African countries gained independence from colonial rule, would have played a pivotal role in this proposed research. As though by some galactic intervention, Haimbe stumbled upon a manuscript her mother had been writing before her untimely death in 2014. It is a memoir that spans the years 1963 to 1969. The author candidly narrates her incredible journey from humble beginnings to becoming the first indigenous personal secretary to the new Republican President by the age of twenty-one. Haimbe scoured the National Archives of Zambia, aiming to find photographs that would corroborate her mother’s story in its extensive database. Out of the thousands of photographs pertaining to this period that she sorted through, only one was of her mother. Considering the significant role her mother played in Zambia’s history and the odds she overcame to achieve this, what Haimbe found was the evidence of a woman written out of history. Her mother is not an exception to the rule, as many women who actively fought for the country’s liberation and contributed to its development are but distant murmurings in our collective memories. While her presentation, which concluded her research fellowship at the National Museum for African Art, was loosely based on Africa’s race to space, Haimbe took-off into the stratosphere as she discussed the dystopian compulsions in a selection of her works that included the graphic novel, The Revolutionist. The talk culminated with a discussion on the new approach to her research where the objective was to re-write her mother’s story into history using her own words. The artwork in this portfolio is created by compositing 3D objects into existing photographs. The concept behind this is to blend futuristic symbolisms into historical photos of Zambia and artefacts of Haimbe’s mother’s journey to create interesting dimensions.
WiseGeek describes 3D Modelling as a process of developing graphics and images that appear to have three dimensions. Using specialized digital software, the process involves generating a representation of any three-dimensional surface or object by connecting a set of points with various mathematical and geometric data. The product is called a 3D Model. It can be displayed as a two-dimensional image through a process of 3D rendering, or used in computer simulation. The model can also be physically created using 3D printing devices. The use of 3D modeling is popular in gaming, motion pictures, animation and other entertainment ventures, though it also has applications in medicine, engineering and architecture. The 3D models in this portfolio depict the futuristic city where my graphic novel, The Revolutionist, is set.
This graphic novel is set in the near future that is dominated by a corporation. Social conformity in the interest of the collective is subliminally reinforced through symbolism and iconology, while the economy is purely corporate-driven. Exploitation of human by human thrives and the insatiable appetite for sex robots threatens to tip the already delicate social balance. But the turning point arrives when news spreads that the corporation is developing a prototype robot that is so sophisticated that it is capable of replacing women.

This gives rise to the resistance. Calling itself the Army for the Restoration of Womanhood, its tactics include espionage and information dissemination. Ananya was only 13 years old when she joined the resistance. Now at 17 she has recently been appointed as an agent in the Covert Operations Division. In the ensuing standoff where the corporation increasingly maintains control with an ironclad fist, it is not long before the resistance galvanizes into a full-blown revolution. As the masses are thrust into a state of emergency characterized by curfews, police raids, censorship and propaganda, Ananya emerges as the most unlikely hero for the revolution. But not only does she have to contend with a cold war whose underbelly is often dark and ugly, but must also survive the perils and growing pains of being a teenager, as well as human. Will the revolution overcome?

The Revolutionist is a 3-part graphic novel consisting of Book I, Book II and Book III. Each book will be approximately 200 pages long. This gallery contains the full first chapter of Book I. Watch this space!
My understanding of Democracy is based on the changing nature of ‘Intimate Citizenship’. This is the notion that every person should be free to construct an individual identity and develop close relationships according to personal choice with respect, recognition and support from their society. While there are many ways of living that are meaningful and fulfilling new findings from a research from the Birberk Institute of Research show that in the majority of societies around the world people who live outside conventional families are being excluded from the rights of full citizenship. The question of what constitutes a legitimate union, therefore, lies at the heart of the matter. Who has the right, and who does not have the right to marry? Who has the right, and who does not have the right to a family? Who has the right, and who does not have the right to intimate citizenship? This work uses a combination of photography, digital editing and vector art to superimpose my facial profile on both bride and groom.
These are self-portraits of a queer African woman having a major meltdown. Too many faces lying beneath, too many masks to wear, and one last masquerade.

These are acrylic on canvas paintings, each 150 x 100 cm in dimension.

This project draws parallels between the caped super heroes of popular culture and the masked spirit dancers of African cultures. Whereas super heroes are typically super beings who fall down from the sky or regular men who through some sort of freak accident gain super powers in order to overpower villains and rid the streets of crime, the spirit dancers are pre-ordained men of the village who are possessed by the archetypal ancestral spirits that rise from the underworld. In deep trances the spirit dancers perform such extraordinary feats as to remind wrongdoers to change their erring ways lest retribution awaits them in the afterlife. Like the spirit dancer, the superhero has a secret identity or alter ego as part of a psychological defense mechanism. He dons a mask and wears a distinctive costume whose underlying motif or theme affects his name, personal effects, and other aspects of his character. For instance Batman resembles a large bat and operates at night, while the spirit dancer Likishi wa Mwana Pwevo who watches over the fertility of future generations wears seeds, fibre, resin and organic materials, and depicts a young woman who died at an early age. These parallels are morphed to abstract the common ideology of what I term as the Superego.

These are Superegos of cardboard cutouts and pencil on paper.
This is a project occurring at the convergence of many things—both things that are, and some things that are yet to be. My barometer of too many feelings indicates that your guess is as good as mine. Never mind!

CYBERNETICS
ACRYLIC ON CANVAS / TEXT

Dear Lilo Pt. I
(opposite page)
Dear Lilo: Obsession Pt. I
Hey. What u doing? Am in Amsterdam/Still sober in a strange town/The ladies-only club turns out to be a rodeo bar. By the canal, boats & stuff, no stars/I get lost! Classy girl from London takes my hands when her fiance goes to get a drink @ the bar. And the usual alienation prevails/Christina from Eastern Europe says she is 20 & her sister is 18 & her other sister is... I do not hear the rest. Their boundless energy is distracting/They’re on a frisbee tournament/The true question is what am I doing here?! But the guys on our team are reeeeeeaaally boring/Someone’s stacking up the chairs and sweeping out the bottle-tops. Where u @? LA? Who killed the lights?/Girls 4 sale in neon windows/I stumble upon a deaf bar. I stay just coz the music is so damn good. Lol/They’re flasching the lights. Means we’re no longer welcome even here/I meet Xina again. She says she forgot something somewhere. I say I been eavesdropping in a deaf bar. Lol/Cafe The Minds/What minds? Am getting brain-dead on cannabis fumes just sitting here in Cafe The Minds/OK. Too much testosterone. Where was I when this calamity happened? Half way to 70 means this is getting old anyways/ I guess I’ll be going back to Africa now/I must have seen folk swim across the Mediterranean just to come to Europe on the 9 o’clock The Sky is Falling News/And here am I going home/So excuse me while I piss on Spuistraat avenue/The point is, come just as u r/Only, dear Lindsay, Keep warm & dry/
xoxoxo
In exploring the quest for homogeneity in certain societies, this book satirically reduces the human being to an object. Human models fit in a mold in much the same way as cars are manufactured off an assembly line, and they come with users’ manuals too!

Jude Zimmerman is the Chief Game Designer and Animator at Virtuality. His latest project is a new virtual reality game called Here After-Land, that he developed with the help of neural scientist Thomas T Walters. After playing the game again, Jude realises that something is not quite right. He decides to investigate one night and finds a very disturbing part of the game that is vital for its existence.

Next day, he removes the vital part, but has to vanish without a trace so that it is never found. He escapes to Europe where he purchases a house and lives peacefully in a small village, until “They” find him, and they will stop at nothing to retrieve this crucial part of the game. This is my first attempt at writing novels and hopefully not the last.
Engagement and dialogue between distinguished individuals who represent a wide set of perspectives, approaches to work, and disciplines has long been the hallmark of The Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Center resident experience. For decades, the Center has hosted a unique residency program for artists, scholars, scientists, composers, and writers to live in residence, produce new work, and benefit from rich cross-disciplinary exchange.

From 2009-2015, to increase the capacity for outreach to accomplished artists around the world, The Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Center established the Creative Arts Fellows program. The program brought more than twenty acclaimed artists from across the globe to Bellagio, nominated by an advisory panel of leading international curators, for extended residencies to develop projects inspired by or related to social or global issues.

Having ended the Creative Arts Program, The Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Center remains committed to bringing in renowned international artists, and now works with regional and international arts outreach partners to attract top artists to the program. For more information about the Bellagio Center, please visit http://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/bellagio-center.