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INSTALLING ANATSUI: THE POLITICS OF ECONOMICS IN GLOBAL
CONTEMPORARY ART

By

Brandon Reintjes
BFA The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, 1998

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate School of the University of Louisville
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

MA in Critical and Curatorial Studies

Department of Fine Arts
University of Louisville
Louisville, Kentucky

May 2009

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A Thesis Approved on

April 6, 2009

by the following Dissertation Committee:

John Begley
Dissertation Director

Dr. Ricky L. Jones

Lida Gordon

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated, with love, to my two children

Beata Laine

and

Lauris Avery

who steadily kept me company

while I wrote nearly every word,

and to my wife

Alison

who was encouraging, but most of all loving.

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Thank you to the University of Louisville, Department of Fine Arts for funding my graduate research assistantship which allowed me to focus exclusively on my studies. The Department has been generous in supporting my endeavours—especially James Grubola, Department Chair, for his help facilitating interdepartmental connections and for his encouragement; Theresa Berbet for help resolving problems and friendliness; and Linda Rowley, Business Office Manager, for innumerable machinations and manoeuvres on my behalf.

Many thanks to my thesis committee for insight and guidance—John Begley, Academic Advisor and Thesis Director, Hite Art Institute Gallery Director and Critical & Curatorial Studies Professor; Ricky L. Jones, Associate Professor, Pan African Studies Department; and Lida Gordon, Professor of Art.

My gratitude to the following readers for reviewing inarticulate drafts and providing their comments, careful eye, and suggestions in shaping the final paper—Susan Jarosi, Assistant Professor, Contemporary Art History and Theory, Director of Graduate Studies; Peter Morrin, Director Emeritus Speed Art Museum, University of Louisville Arts and Culture Partnerships Initiative Coordinator, and Professor; Matt Hisrich and Alison Reintjes, both of whose comments are always pointedly on the mark.

I am grateful for the support of museum colleagues, including those I worked with at the Speed Art Museum—especially Carolyn Wilson, Lynn Cameron, and Dr. Charles Venable, Director and CEO. Thank you also to Arnold Tunstall, Collections Manager at the Akron Art Museum, for his continued friendship, support, and help in providing the images which grace this paper.

Finally, appreciation goes to both Gail Gilbert and Kathleen A. Moore for their work in the Hite Art Institute Art Library and for kindly bearing my many inquiries.

ABSTRACT

INSTALLING ANATSUI: THE POLITICS OF ECONOMICS IN GLOBAL CONTEMPORARY ART

Brandon N. Reintjes

April 6, 2009

This paper is specifically concerned with contemporary artist El Anatsui, and his impact upon the region in which he lives and works in Nsukka, Nigeria. El Anatsui's large-scale wall sculptures—created by joining recycled aluminum distillery labels into elaborate brocades resembling adinkra and kente cloths—has garnered him substantial critical acclaim, propelling him from a little-known artist to world-wide fame.

Using the 2006 installation of *Dzese II* at the Akron Art Museum as an opportunity to examine his inclusion in the canon of contemporary art, Anatsui's critical success—with the simultaneous development of an enormous market potential—allows for a consideration of how contemporary art can act as creative capital and a socioeconomic development tool. His art sales—which support a micro-economy in Nigeria—prompt questions concerning the impact of creative economies in Africa, the implications of the term 'global contemporary,' and the conditions of contemporary art—what its criteria are, how the canon expands, and what it excludes. El Anatsui's ability to leverage international capital to patronize local suppliers and materials has positive benefits for the local economy of Nsukka.

The paper also examines the economic implications involved in place-making on a global platform, as well as the role biennials play in transforming institutional authority.

Finally, it concludes by showing that Anatsui has been re-contextualized from solely an African artist into a transnational artist who is indispensable to global contemporary art. Anatsui will be presented as a unique combination of local and transnational influences, which—by pursuing a strategy of flexibility and the quality of being liminal as a means for transcending the constraints of his personal position—enable him to realize international success.

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE	PAGE
1. El Anatsui, <i>Dzesi II</i> , 2006, collection of the Akron Art Museum.....	1
2. Map of Nsukka, Nigeria.....	4
3. El Anatsui, <i>Dzesi II</i> , signature detail	8
4. El Anatsui, <i>Dzesi II</i> , detail	13
5. El Anatsui's installation at the Palazzo Fortuny, Venice.....	15
6. <i>Dzesi II</i> in its crate, folded and wrapped in protective plastic.....	19
7. <i>Dzesi II</i> , lying on a protective layer of archival material.....	23
8. Installing <i>Dzesi II</i> at the Akron Art Museum.....	24
9. Installation technicians making repairs to <i>Dzesi II</i> at the Akron Art Museum.....	25
10. El Anatsui, <i>Dzesi II</i> , detail.....	28
11. Education Panel: What Are They Made Of?.....	52
12. Education Panel: El Anatsui Lives In Nsukka, Nigeria.....	53
13. Education Panel: El Anatsui—A Relationship with Cloth.....	54

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	iv
ABSTRACT.....	v
LIST OF FIGURES.....	vii
CHAPTER	
I. PREFACE.....	2
II. INTRODUCTION.....	4
III. AFRICA'S ECONOMIC POTENTIALITIES.....	9
IV. INSTALLING ANATSUI AND THE CANON.....	12
V. MODERNISM AND CONTEMPORARY ART IN AFRICA.....	26
VI. THE BIENNIAL EFFECT AND PLACE-MAKING.....	29
VII. ANATSUI'S SOCIOECONOMIC IMPACT.....	35
VIII. CONCLUSION.....	42
REFERENCES.....	47
APPENDICES.....	51
CURRICULUM VITAE.....	55

El Anatsui, *Dzese II*, 2006, collection of the Akron Art Museum (photo courtesy Akron Art Museum)

I. PREFACE

"Ideas, cultures, and histories cannot seriously be understood without their force, or more precisely their configurations of power, also being studied."¹

A preface to any discussion concerning Africa should include a reminder that it is several things simultaneously—fifty-three individual nations (including several islands), the collective name of its inhabitants, a cultural identifier, a blanket misnomer used to erroneously describe a continent as a singular country, a political and cultural entity identified through trade resolutions, cooperation, and collective actions, and a place of vast, almost overwhelming diversity. Often, the term 'Africa' is used in a general sense by those who feel no need for specificity, or worse, as the repository of Western anxiety concerning race, civilization, or progress.

Salah M. Hassan recalls in his essay *The Darkest Africa Syndrome and the Idea of Africa: Notes Toward a Global Vision of Africa and Its Modernist Practice*, that the 'idea of Africa,' "is partly an invention and partly an affirmation of certain natural features, cultural characteristics, and values that contribute to the reality of Africa as a continent and its civilizations as constituting a totality different from those of...Asia or Europe."² Likewise, Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe describes the continent as "not only a geographical expression; it is also a metaphysical landscape—it is in fact a view of the

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¹ Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. (New York and Toronto: Random House, 1978), 5.

² Hassan, Salah M. "The Darkest Africa Syndrome and the Idea of Africa: Notes Toward a Global Vision of Africa and Its Modernist Practice." *Diaspora Place Memory*. Edited by Salah M. Hassan and Cheryl Finley. (Munich, Berlin, London, New York: Prestel, 2008), 130.

world and of the whole cosmos perceived from a particular position.”³ While I cannot inhabit the particular position of ‘Africa’, it is my hope that over the course of the following discussion I will, as Achebe guides the European critic, “cultivate the habit of humility appropriate to his limited experience of the African world and purged of the superiority and arrogance which history so insidiously makes him heir to.”⁴

That I am heir to the occidental view does not prevent me from considering the special attributes of cultural production by artists who lay claim to any one of the countries that comprise this continent. Moreover, in the discussion of recent topics that occupy the field of contemporary art—such as the politics of contestation, post-colonialism, de-centering, transnationalism, and globalization—this is, in part, my area of purview and responsibility as both a curator and a critic.

The perception of the continent is one plagued by media reports and images of genocide, war, health risk, and political instability. What must be avoided is accepting an Africa limited only to these images, or prescribing a marginal or anonymous level of humanity to people who are its victims. This is can be a difficult task, especially when considering official declarations such as the United States Department of State travel advisory to Nigeria of December 2, 2008, which includes the language, “American citizens should defer all but essential travel...because of the continued risks of kidnapping, robbery, and other armed attacks in these areas, especially against oil-related facilities and other infrastructure.”⁵ Such warnings are not without basis, but also

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³ Achebe, Chinua. *Hopes and Impediments*. (New York: Doubleday, 1989), 92.

⁴ Ibid, 73.

⁵ United States Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs website. “United States Department of State Travel Advisory: Nigeria.” December 02, 2008.” http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_928.html. (accessed February 15, 2009).

erringly have the power to reinforce fantastical and farcical views of a 'primitive' continent.

II. INTRODUCTION

In light of these provisions, this paper is specifically concerned with one artist, El Anatsui, his status as an international artist, and his impact upon the region in which he lives and works in Nsukka, Nigeria. This paper will:

- 1) explore the impact of creative economies throughout Africa, as well as the ways in which contemporary art can be leveraged as creative capital and a socioeconomic development tool.
- 2) provide a working definition of terms ‘modernism,’ ‘contemporary art’ and ‘the canon.’ Further, it touches on the implications of the term ‘global contemporary,’ as well as questions surrounding the canon of contemporary art—what its criteria are, how the canon expands, and what it excludes.
- 3) describe the process of installing El Anatsui’s work and the conditions that surround its display.
- 4) examine the economic implications in which contemporary art is involved in place-making on a global platform, as well as the role biennials play in transforming institutional authority.
- 5) consider El Anatsui’s ability to leverage international capital to patronize local suppliers and materials, as well as Anatsui’s ability to positively influence Nsukka’s economy.
- 6) conclude by showing that Anatsui has been re-contextualized from solely an African artist to a transnational artist who is indispensable to global

contemporary art. Likewise, Anatsui will be presented as a unique combination of local and transnational influences, which—by pursuing a strategy of flexibility and the quality of being liminal as a means for transcending the constraints of his personal position—enable him to realize international success.

As the field of contemporary art becomes increasingly global, examples of artistic redefinition such as this serve as the basis for rethinking the rigid parameters surrounding the term contemporary—how it has been used in the past, what it preferences, and how it is changing. As a result, the shifting frontier of contemporary art has become both more inclusive and exploitive—African artists and art are now asked to act as ambassadors in a multitude of conflicting ways.

During a recent discussion which took place at Art Basel Miami Beach 2008, titled “The Future of the Museum: Africa, America and the World,” a panel consisting of artist Georges Adéagbo (Cotonou, Benin), artist Glenn Ligon (New York, New York, USA), and curator Raphael Chikukwa (Harare, Zimbabwe/London, England), moderated by Thelma Golden, Director of the Studio Museum in Harlem (New York, New York, USA) and Hans Ulrich Obrist, Co-Director of Exhibitions and Programmes and Director of International Projects, Serpentine Gallery (London, England), engaged in a discussion of pivotal questions which are pressing when considering Africa today. Of particular note, “What are the challenges for producing, collecting, exhibiting, conserving, and researching contemporary art in Africa?” received myriad responses—all of which came to rest on the question of economic opportunity. This included discussions on the effects of globalism, art as a commodity, the perception Africa has of itself, and the perception the rest of the world holds when considering this continent.

The discussion of how to curate, exhibit, or collect in Africa can seem contradictory. At once it is arrogant to assume that the model of exhibition and collecting used in Western societies is useful or appropriate for Africa. On the other hand, it is fallacious to hold Africa as an exception, or a 'terrain of difference' where normative critical and curatorial practices are suspended or fail.⁶ Indeed, the continent is so diverse that both views prevail—counter to and reliant upon a Western institutionalized arts practice simultaneously.

Even though El Anatsui is categorized as an artist who acts in the sphere of a global contemporary art commanding international attention, he has most often exhibited in Nigeria. To date his greatest legacy is arguably his role in shaping a contemporary art movement in Nsukka as a professor and artist.⁷ Dr. Sylvester Okwunodu Ogbechie, Professor at the University of California Santa Barbara, reminds the current international audience in his essay for the Anatsui's GAWU exhibition catalog that placing Anatsui in a global contemporary context is a recent phenomenon. Ogbechie maintains that Anatsui has long been central to the critical evaluation of Nigerian art history—a frame of reference that is in the process of being reinterpreted for the global contemporary market.⁸

Though this paper concerns the economics of creative capital and socioeconomic development, here too are watchwords which must be approached carefully. In speaking about cultural production, Chinua Achebe once again cautions,

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⁶ Okeke-Agulu, Chika. "Venice and Contemporary African Art." *African Arts*. Autumn 2007 Vol. 40 Issue 3 (2007):5.

⁷ Okeke, Chika. "The Quest for a Nigerian Art." *Reading the Contemporary: African Art Theory to the Marketplace*. Edited by Olu Oguibe and Okwui Enwezor. (Cambridge: Institute of Visual Arts, London and MIT Press, 1999), 156; Ogbechie, Sylvester. "Wonder Masquerade: Transfiguration and Embodiment in the Art of El Anatsui." in *El Anatsui: GAWU*. (Wales: Oriel Mostyn Gallery, 2004), 12.

⁸ Ibid.

“The fallacy of the argument lies, of course, in its assumption that when you talk about a people’s “level of development” you define their total condition and assign them an indisputable and unambiguous place on mankind’s evolutionary ladder; in other words, that you are enabled by the authority of that phrase to account for all their material as well as spiritual circumstance. Show me a people’s plumbing, you say, and I can tell you their art.”⁹

El Anatsui, *Dzesi II* (signature detail), 2006, collection of the Akron Art Museum (photo courtesy Akron Art Museum)

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⁹ Achebe, Chinua. *Hopes and Impediments*. (New York: Doubleday, 1989), 83.

III. Africa's Economic Potentialities

There is a great deal of discussion and hope surrounding the potential of the creative economies—including theatre, opera, music, film, and visual arts— in Africa and worldwide, to benefit both the lives of individual artists and the communities in which they live. This has been a longstanding belief that is largely the result of a liberal ontology which places high stakes in the capacity of the arts for social betterment. It is also one which has recently received new credibility. In 2008, the United Nations (UN) Creative Economy Report identified the creative industries as among the “most dynamic sectors in world trade.”¹⁰ The result of a cooperative effort of a number of UN bodies, including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), this report serves as an analysis of the capacity of art to act as a socioeconomic tool, illustrated with global examples. Effectively a progress report on how the arts impact world economies and foster change, the Creative Economy Report provides encouraging insights into Africa and African art.

The term ‘creative economy’ can be slightly misleading however, as it encompasses such divergent activities which range from independent studio arts which are reported side-by-side with arts industries, such as fashion or the Nigerian film industry. Despite this, the report is optimistic, indentifying ‘intellectual capital’ as a feasible option to aid

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¹⁰ United Nations Conference on Trade and Development website. “Creative Economy Report 2008: The Challenge of Assessing the Creative Economy Towards Informed Policy-making.” http://www.unctad.org/en/docs/ditc20082cer_en.pdf. (accessed January 27, 2009), 4.

development for both advanced and developing economies. The report finds that the arts not only expand the job market, provide stable income, and form the basis for social stability, but also promote “social inclusion, cultural diversity and human development.”¹¹ The report, using statistics generated by UNCTAD, sites growth in creative goods and services at an unprecedented 8.7% globally between the years 2000 and 2005, with the value of creative product exports almost doubling from \$227.5 billion (€168.4) in 1996 to over \$424.4 billion (€314.2) in 2005.¹²

Given these promising figures, it is clear that the creative industries are not an inconsequential or trivial contributor, but capable—especially when paired with the almost unlimited potential of tourism from biennials to festivals—of transforming cities, driving national economies, and broadcasting a host of African interests and cultural contributions internationally.

These glad tidings, however, have some drawbacks, despite the documented ability for the creative economies to participate in and contribute to economic growth regardless of the health of the economy.¹³ The creative economies in much of Africa are fragmented, with the necessarily dependant market forces of production, marketing, distribution, and consumption remaining disconnected. Even wealthier countries such as South Africa and Nigeria do not benefit from a broad base of stable, discretionary

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¹¹ Ibid, 8.

¹² Williams, Stephen. “The Economic Power of Africa's Creativeness.” *New African*, July Issue 475 (2008): 58.

¹³ The report sites far-ranging examples from across the continent, “In some economic hubs—such as Dakar in Senegal, Cairo in Egypt and areas of South Africa, such as the province of Gauteng or the cities of Cape Town and Durban—production and consumption of a range of cultural goods and services takes place, while other strong economic hubs such as Botswana have a dearth of cultural production and economically distressed countries such as Mali, Mozambique, Rwanda or Zambia have significant production and consumption of cultural products.” United Nations Conference on Trade and Development website. “Creative Economy Report 2008: The Challenge of Assessing the Creative Economy Towards Informed Policy-making.” http://www.unctad.org/en/docs/ditc20082cer_en.pdf. (accessed January 27, 2009), 44.

income to perpetuate the cycle. To a large degree, the creative economies in Africa operate without the benefit of consistency that would allow for capital to meet basic needs while generating growth. Rather, all the elements are present and operating, but not necessarily coordinated. Rachel C. Fleming, writes about creative economic development and sustainability in the *Geographical Review*, "The relationship between creativity and the economy is complex and problematic, for the value of the creative process cannot be explained in economic terms and cannot be directly induced by policy."¹⁴ That said, attempts to coordinate arts policy across Africa have been largely unsuccessful.

As a result, the creative economies are restricted in their impact. In terms of international viability, artists are limited in their potential to act on the market. As noted in the Creative Economy Report, "Despite the profusion of talent on the continent as well as the richness of cultural tradition and heritage, there has been limited commercialization of African cultural and artistic creations on both the domestic and foreign markets."¹⁵ Even though there is an active contemporary arts scene in several major metropolitan areas across the continent, bolstered by the strong correlation between economic activity and cultural production, these activities do not constitute an industry.¹⁶ Anatsui, therefore, is reliant upon an external, global market, even while contributing to the local economy.

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¹⁴ Fleming, Rachel C. "Creative Economic Development, Sustainability, and Exclusion in Rural Areas." *Geographical Review*, January, Vol. 99 Issue 1 (2009): 61, 20 pgs.

¹⁵ Ibid, 42.

¹⁶ The Creative Economy Report states, "In the poorest countries, the majority of cultural production takes place in the informal economy and can typically be the only form of income-generation for entire communities. Even in more sophisticated markets, it is difficult to break out of the informality into the established industry. The value chain is simple (primary inputs combined to produce outputs sold directly to consumers); however, this does not translate into an industry where all aspects of the value chain are present." Ibid.

IV. Installing Anatsui and the Canon

Anatsui emerged as an artist during the atmosphere of the post-independence movements in Ghana and Nigeria. He was born in Anyako, located in the Volta region of Ghana—then the Gold Coast—in 1944. He was schooled in Presbyterian Mission schools, and his education was heavily influenced by a European curriculum—a vestige of colonialism which remained until Ghana achieved independence in 1957, with Nigeria following in 1960.¹⁷ Anatsui graduated from the College of Art at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Kumasi (or alternately Kumase), Ghana, (1965 to 1969) with a Bachelor's degree in Sculpture and a postgraduate diploma in Art Education.¹⁸ After a brief post as Professor of Sculpture at Winneba Specialist Training College in Ghana, he moved to the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, in Enugu Province, in 1975. The peculiarities of his biography have caused him to be claimed as both a Ghanaian and Nigerian artist. He is currently Head of Sculpture at the University, and his influence on young artists in Nigeria and specifically the contemporary arts movement in Nsukka—where he has lived for over thirty-four years—is profound.¹⁹

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¹⁷ Ottenberg, Simon. *New Traditions from Nigeria: Seven Artists of the Nsukka Group*. (Washington DC: National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997), 155.

¹⁸ Ibid, 156; Moore, Yasmin. "El Anatsui." *Audi Magazine*, 3.2008 (2008): 85.

¹⁹ James, Laura. "An Interview with El Anatsui." *Art Journal*, 67 (2) (2008): 37; Ogbechie, Sylvester. "Wonder Masquerade: Transfiguration and Embodiment in the Art of El Anatsui." in *El Anatsui: GAWU*. (Wales: Oriel Mostyn Gallery, 2004), 12.

El Anatsui, *Dzese II* (detail), 2006, collection of the Akron Art Museum (photo courtesy Akron Art Museum)

As an artist, Anatsui has employed a variety of approaches and mediums, assembling a large body of disparate work—ranging from early concrete works, carved and branded wooden platters, ceramic forms composed of broken sherds, and repurposed objects— though it has been his recent work with ‘cloth’ made of found metal for which he is best known internationally. These large-scale wall sculptures are created by joining recycled aluminum distillery labels into elaborate brocades resembling adinkra and kente cloths (see above).²⁰ Briefly, there are two types of kente cloth made by the Asante and Ewe people—both groups live mostly in southern Ghana. Anatsui’s

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²⁰ There are over 40 distilleries in Africa producing alcoholic beverages. These distilleries use interchangeable glass bottles which can be recycled at any plant; the thin aluminum label that carries the brand information, however, is discarded. It is from these discarded metal labels that Anatsui creates his work. Ibid, 37; Moore, Yasmin. “El Anatsui.” *Audi Magazine*, 3.2008 (2008): 85; Barlow, Martin. “Foreword.” *El Anatsui: GAWU*. (Wales: Oriel Mostyn Gallery, 2004), 5.

father and brothers made Ewe kente cloth.²¹ Ewe kente is recognizable because it is made from cotton thread and appears matt with muted colors. Asante kente, on the other hand, is usually glossy, made with silk thread. It has sharp contrasts and uses bright colors like red, yellow, and blue—the primary colors. The second type of cloth, adinkra, is also made by Asante people in Ghana. Adinkra is black and white with bold, repetitious patterns. The black dye is made from the bark of trees and is applied to the fabric using stamps carved from sections of calabash. The adinkra is printed in small squares and each square has a different pattern. The patterns are symbols with spiritual significance which are often reminders of proverbs. El Anatsui's sculptures are similar to cloth in the way he visits motifs repeatedly, but also in the basic structure of his work; his sculptures are made in strips that are later stitched together, so that small parts add up to make an integrated whole.

Anatsui's entry into the canon of contemporary art has been gradual, but persistent. He has enjoyed a rising international status due to participation in increasingly visible exhibitions, such as his role representing Nigeria in the exhibition *Five Contemporary African Artists* at the 44th Venice Biennale in 1990, the first ever to highlight African art, and later as a part of Africa Remix, which travelled for three years (from 2004 to 2007) to a host of prestigious institutions—including museums located in Dusseldorf, London, Paris, Tokyo, and Stockholm.²² But it was only after the critical acclaim and success of the 52nd Venice Biennale in 2007, that Anatsui's works became

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²¹ Ogbachie, Sylvester. "Wonder Masquerade: Transfiguration and Embodiment in the Art of El Anatsui." *El Anatsui: GAWU*. (Wales: Oriel Mostyn Gallery, 2004), 14.

²² Jack Shainman Gallery website. "El Anatsui." <http://www.jackshainman.com/dynamic/artist.asp?ArtistID=128>. (accessed February 1, 2009).

especially desirable and highly sought after.²³ His installation into the canon is the culmination of events from this period.

El Anatsui's Installation at the Palazzo Fortuny, Venice, 2007
(photo courtesy the October Gallery, London)

To understand the canon of contemporary art, a working definition of the term needs to be advanced and both parts of the term should be analyzed. The term 'contemporary' subscribes to a very specific set of factors, though it generally indicates, as critic and journalist Jonathan Jones of *The Guardian* says, "to mean art aware of modernism and its aftermath."²⁴ While this definition is temporally ambiguous, the lay

term 'contemporary'—employed categorically by institutions and art historical surveys—indicates a practical dating from 1945 to present. While this definition is reductive it still raises a number of questions—who defines contemporary? Why is it given preference over other forms of artistic production, not to mention ethnographic, popular, or historical art? However, rather than strictly a category of time or historicity, 'contemporary' also has political and aesthetic connotations, with the definition varying somewhat according

²³ Anatsui draped the exterior of the Palazzo Fortuny, located along the Grand Canal, with the sculpture *Fresh and Fading Memories* (2007) concurrently with the presentation of his work at the pavilion. His selections at the Biennale included *Dusuasa I* a 20-by-30 foot brocade that was strung, suspended, between the classical columns of the Arsenale. *Dusuasa I* was later purchased by the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art for their permanent collection. Stirt, Joesph. "Dusuasa I by El Anatsui." *BookofJoeBlog*, November 25, 2007. <http://www.bookofjoe.com/2007/11/dususua-i-by-el.html>. (accessed March 4, 2009); James, Laura. "An Interview with El Anatsui." *Art Journal*, 67 (2) (2008): 37.

²⁴ Jones, Jonathan. "Africa Calling." *The Guardian*, February 9, 2005.

to the standpoint of the user. It is a term that has been co-opted from strict art historical use, where the term takes on a number of connotations reflecting its inseparability from capitalism. Issues in contemporary art can be seen in part as economic issues of collecting and audience characterized by the continual need for expansion to both new markets and new consumers. Finally, the term contemporary has the ability to contend with opposing definitions, or rather to allow opposition to co-exist as part of its definition—including, under its umbrella, opposing interests such as Minimalism and the opulence of the Pattern and Decoration movement, while often pointedly excluding conceptual and theoretical work done in the crafts.

The canon, as the American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language reminds us, is a body of rules, principles, or standards accepted as axiomatic and universally binding in a field of study or art—a grouping generally accepted as representing a discipline. These definitions are, in one sense, self-referential; the canon of contemporary art is the collective consensus of its participants, what they aspire to in practice, theory, research, and dialog. The term ‘canon’ also implies inclusion or exclusion, a right or wrong derived from the word’s ecclesiastical origins. Canon formation for contemporary art is a delicate matter—some art historians shy away from the term when applied to contemporary art. There is some question as to how canonical contemporary art can be, since it is current and still in the process of definition. Decisions regarding the canon traditionally fall within the purview of authoritarian decision-making, which indicates an institutional presence that has traditionally remained part of a self-described Western aesthetic authority. Contemporary canon formation is now a problematic endeavor, as traditional museum and art institutional authority is being redefined in the wake of alternate forms of cultural production. Still, decisions regarding inclusion or exclusion are predominately made by the Western art world,

despite lip service praising globalization's ability to level the playing field. Inclusion in the canon, perhaps now more than ever, means an indispensability that artists seek to achieve. Christine Mullen Kreamer, curator of *El Anatsui: GAWU*, elaborates, "these metallic wall pieces especially have...become canonical as every major museum collecting contemporary art should have one, [or] should try and get one, and he [Anatsui] is quite backlogged with orders."²⁵ Anatsui's canonical status is reinforced dually. His work is now regularly purchased and collected by institutions as well as included in large-scale temporary exhibitions such as biennials and art fairs.

To this end, the list of institutions that have acquired Anatsui's work is impressive; he has been included in nearly every major public and private art collection in the United States—including the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York, NY), The Museum of Modern Art (New York, NY), the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LA, CA), the Rubell Family Collection (Miami, FL), Indianapolis Museum of Art (Indianapolis, IN), the National Museum of African Art at the Smithsonian (Washington DC), the St. Louis Art Museum (St. Louis, MO), the Newark Museum (Newark, NJ), the Fowler Museum at UCLA (Los Angeles, CA), the De Young Museum (San Francisco, CA), and the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art (Kansas City, MO).

Likewise, institutions across much of Europe and Asia have acquired work, including the Centre Pompidou (Paris, France), Iwalewa-Haus, University of Bayreuth (Bayreuth, Germany), The Hammermill Collection, Hellebaek and The International Peoples' College (both in Helsingør, Denmark), The Osaka Foundation of Culture (Osaka, Japan), Setagaya Art Museum (Tokyo, Japan), museum kunst palast (Duesseldorf, Germany), The Clarks International Art Collection (Somerset, UK), The

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²⁵ Moore, Yasmin. "El Anatsui." *Audi Magazine*, 3.2008 (2008): 84.

British Museum (London, UK), The Musée Ariana (Geneva, Switzerland), and Missoni (Milan, Italy), among others.

Anatsui's work is also collected extensively across Nigeria and Ghana, including The Diamond Bank of Nigeria (Lagos, Nigeria), The French Cultural Centre (Lagos, Nigeria), The National Gallery of Contemporary Art (Lagos, Nigeria), The African Studies Gallery, University of Nigeria (Nsukka, Nigeria), The Asele Institute (Nimo, Nigeria), the Ghana National Art Collection (Accra, Ghana), and at the Ghanaian Embassy (Copenhagen, Denmark).²⁶

A latecomer to the phenomenon of El Anatsui, I was not aware of his work until 2006, when I helped reinstall the permanent collection and galleries at the recently expanded and renovated Akron Art Museum in Akron, Ohio. During the course of reinstallation, we unpacked Anatsui's *Dzesi II*. The piece had recently arrived in its crate from the Jack Shainman Gallery. Though the art work was large, the crate was diminutive, the result of the piece being folded and lain in the box exactly as if it were a piece of cloth.

The ability of the work to assume a small, portable or 'nomadic' aspect is central to Anatsui's meaning and intentionality, and especially his internationality. It is in part this nomadic quality that allows Anatsui to play on the contemporary global platform, as the qualities of internationalism are liminal, interstitial, migratory, displaced.

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²⁶ Jack Shainman Gallery website. "El Anatsui." <http://www.jackshainman.com/dynamic/artist.asp?ArtistID=128>. (accessed February 1, 2009).

That his large-scale pieces can be easily folded to a fraction of their size and sent around the globe—unlike many monumental works—mirrors the migratory processes of both the Diaspora and globalism. Anatsui has engineered his work to be uniquely flexible—creating an artwork that is at once an expression of the artist, yet dependent upon curators and installers to drape the piece and determine its final appearance, in a sense involving the institution and exhibition structure. The ‘nomadic aesthetic’ as Anatsui calls it, allows each work to dually—just like contemporary transnational artistic practice—respond specifically to *place*, as well as to practically provide ease of transport and address the transportation issues which affect much of Africa, especially in regard to artwork.²⁷

Dzese II in its crate, folded and wrapped in protective plastic (photo courtesy Akron Art Museum)

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²⁷ Moore, Yasmin. “El Anatsui.” *Audi Magazine*, 3.2008 (2008): 89; Binder, Lisa M. “El Anatsui: Transformations.” *African Arts*, Summer 2008, Vol. 41 Issue 2 (2008): 29.

Contemporary African artists as a whole, have been described as ‘cultural nomads’ traversing, as Olu Oguibe writes in his *Time.Space.Movement* exhibition catalog, “the numerous geographies of contemporary art and reality; whether physical, conceptual, or metaphysical.”²⁸ In this way Anatsui is able to play off institutional assumptions while balancing the artist’s own self-perception against expectations to perform as an ‘African’ artist. Anatsui slips in and out of these roles, alternately assuming a local/nomadic position—a measure that does not refute, but surprisingly reaffirms his transnational status, as he and the work respond to the particularities of transport in Nigeria as readily as if it were an installation problem to overcome in Lagos, New York, Milan, Venice, or Johannesburg.

To clarify, not all Nigerian, or African, art has the quality of liminality, as described by Sylvester Ogbechie in his essay *Liminal Spaces*—the connotation being that the term implies a transition, with an under text of ‘progress and development.’²⁹ Instead, it is a quality to which contemporary art aspires—fugitive, in-between, mutable and transitory—mirroring the postmodern processes of globalization.³⁰ Anatsui’s work markets these qualities to appeal to the collector of contemporary art. This provides the art world with a newness that is an updated form of the ‘Other,’ a renewal, in a sense, of the past, as well as the ability to continually recast artistic production as ‘new.’

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²⁸ Ogbechie, Sylvester Okwunodu. “Issues of Locale.” (Review of John Picton, et. al. *El Anatsui-A Sculpted History of Africa*; and Olu Oguibe, *Crossing:Time.Space.Movement*). *African Arts* Winter 1999 Vol. 32 Issue 4 (1999): 91; Oguibe, Olu. *CROSS/ING: Time.Space.Movement*. (Tampa: University of Southern Florida Contemporary Art Museum, 1997).

²⁹ Ogbechie, Sylvester. “Liminal Spaces.” *The Nsukka Artists and Nigerian Contemporary Art*. Edited by Simon Ottenberg. (Washington DC: National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution and Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2002), 210.

³⁰ Ibid, 216. These considerations are another way in which the definition of contemporary is coded, so that while ‘contemporary’ does not implicitly list or acknowledge these qualities, they are gathered under the rubric of the term.

Edward K. Said, in his book *Orientalism* points out that the durability of the Other in the form of Orientalism is due not only to its theoretical and scholarly insistence, but also to the political and socioeconomic institutions—with considerable material investment—that re-inscribes the structure and concept of the Orient.³¹ Further, Said describes the concept of the Orient as “an integral part of European *material* civilization and culture,” deeply connected to the economic apparatus that inscribes and brokers power.³² The term ‘Orient’, while historically used to describe India, and later Asia, has come to stand in general for a host of European/non-European power relationships, of which Anatsui has been implicitly involved. Finally, Said sagely acknowledges that the extent a given field such as contemporary art operates politically to impact the cultural geography of cities, “comes from the possibility of its direct translation into economic terms.”³³

Homi Bhabha , in his essay *The Location of Culture*, proposing that boundaries and in between spaces are the places in which we find culture, describes the ‘new’ internationalism, “For the demography of the new internationalism is the history of postcolonial migration, the narratives of cultural and political diaspora, the major social displacements of peasant and aboriginal communities, the poetics of exile, the grim prose of political and economic refugees.”³⁴ Bhabha further explicates, using the example of literature instead of contemporary art— “world literature might be the study of the way in which cultures recognize themselves through their projections of ‘otherness...where once, the transmission of national traditions as the major theme of a

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³¹ Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. (New York and Toronto: Random House, 1978), 6.

³² Ibid, 2.

³³ Ibid, 10.

³⁴ Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. (London: Routledge. 1994), 5.

world literature, perhaps we can now suggest that transnational histories of migrants, the colonized, or political refugees—these border and frontier conditions—may be the terrains of world literature.”³⁵

There are several examples of El Anatsui acting on both an international and local stage, and his success is partly due to his ability to negotiate between these interdependent forces with remarkable fluency—being both global and local simultaneously. Gerard Houghton, in *A Sculpted History of Africa*, suggests that Anatsui can be described as ‘transvanguard’ or trans-cultural/avant garde together, capable of a global vision, despite the fact that he has emerged from one culture specifically.³⁶ Other authors have used the term transnational, instead of trans-cultural, though this term is sometimes reserved for African artists residing in foreign countries.³⁷

Denrele Ogunwa questions Anatsui in an interview from 1995 about how his dual allegiance to Ghana and Nigeria has influenced him. Anatsui rightly responds that instead of a Ghanaian influence, or a Nigerian influence, “Most of the time the two of them are acting together.”³⁸ The picture that emerges of the contemporary African artist is one of hybridity, unclear states, multiple allegiances, and innumerable contingencies. David Bunn, Professor of Art History at the University of Witwatersrand, South Africa, encourages those who want to separate the local from the international, the ethnic from

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³⁵ Ibid, 12.

³⁶ Ogbachie, Sylvester Okwunodu. “Issues of Locale.” (Review of John Picton, et. al. *El Anatsui-A Sculpted History of Africa*; and Olu Oguibe, *Crossing:Time.Space.Movement*). *African Arts*, Winter 1999 Vol. 32 Issue 4 (1999): 92.

³⁷ Kasfir, Sidney; Collier, Delinda; Okeke-Agulu, Chika; Nelson, Steven; Bunn, David. “The (Dis)placement of National Art in a Transnational World.” *African Arts*, Autumn 2008, Vol. 41 Issue 3 (2008): 10.

³⁸ Ogunwa, Denrele. “*El Anatsui: A Man of the Earth*.” Edited by Ali B. Ali-Dinar, 1995. University of Pennsylvania-African Studies Center. http://www.africa.upenn.edu/Publications/CL_anatsui.html. (accessed February 5, 2009).

the trans-cultural, to “Look by all means at the contemporary African artist at home. When you do, however, you are likely to find someone born in Kinshasa, now living in Harare, someone who is not a painter, and someone who is under threat of being expelled.”³⁹ This statement is an excellent synopsis of the dangers, as Enwezor says, of establishing ‘absolutist identities’ under globalization.

Installing Anatsui at the Akron Art Museum was a process that happened over the course of several days. First, to install *Dzesi II*, a protective layer of archival material was placed on the floor of the gallery where the work was to be hung. Then, the work was taken from its crate and carefully unpacked and unfolded by a team of art handlers, directed by the

Collections

Manager. Author

Lisa Binder, in her

recent essay on

Anatsui, describes

a similar work—

Dzesi I. This is the

initial work in this

series of which

Akron's *Dzesi II* is a complement. It is not uncommon for Anatsui to visit several iterations of a concept, working out formal arrangements in consecutive pieces. Binder indicates that *Dzesi I* was constructed for the touring exhibition *The Missing Piece: Artists Consider the Dalai Lama* and that its iconography “was meant to resemble a hole

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³⁹ Kasfir, Sidney; Collier, Delinda; Okeke-Agulu, Chika; Nelson, Steven; Bunn, David. “The (Dis)placement of National Art in a Transnational World.” *African Arts*, Autumn 2008, Vol. 41 Issue 3 (2008): 12.

or zero sign...[with the] title to reference a 'mark' or the 'marking' of empty space."⁴⁰

Here, Anatsui visually affirms the 'non-space' of global contemporary artistic practice, a concept that will be considered more thoroughly later, when contemporary art is discussed as a socioeconomic development tool.

When *Dzesi II* was completely open and flat, it was aligned below its final hanging position that had been previously selected and marked on the wall. The piece was then lifted *en mass* straight off the ground by no fewer than six people whose concern it was to evenly support the weight and minimize stressing the delicate connections between the copper wire and paper-thin aluminum. Once mobile, the piece was transferred from a horizontal to a vertical position. At this point, it was lifted to two more art handlers positioned on electric lifts who guided the piece onto the hanging hardware. The hardware was a series of small, fabricated bent L-shape brackets upon which the work was draped. When the piece was hung, small adjustments were made to position it properly and to drape the weight of the

Installing *Dzesi II* at the Akron Art Museum (photo courtesy Akron Art Museum)

material evenly so that the entire piece was largely without wrinkles or folds. Then, over the next several days, the small holes that had appeared as a result of travel or folding

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⁴⁰ Binder, Lisa M. "El Anatsui: Transformations." *African Arts*, Summer 2008, Vol. 41 Issue 2 (2008): 29.

were found and, in consultation with the Jack Shainman Gallery and El Anatsui, carefully repaired.⁴¹

It was this experience that prompted me to reflect on the process of installing a hitherto little known artist into the canon of contemporary art to the degree that the artist suddenly becomes indispensable to museums across the world.

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⁴¹ Lisa Binder describes the need to repair one of Anatsui's sculptures due to "transit." She notes, "Each individual liquor label was approximately one inch high and three inches wide with holes punched in the four corners. In some places the safety wire that had fastened the pieces together had torn through a hole; my task was to punch another and mend the piece with new wire." The repairs to *Dzese II* at the Akron Art Museum were far less extensive; no new holes were made, but new wire was used to thread liquor labels back in plane, effectively knitting together 'holes' that have appeared and which interfered with the how the sculpture draped. Binder, Lisa M. "El Anatsui: Transformations." *African Arts*, Summer 2008, Vol. 41 Issue 2 (2008): 29.

V. Modernism and Contemporary Art in Africa

The relationship between Africa and contemporary art began in the 1960s and 1970s, tangential to the period when most countries were firmly independent or in the process of abolishing colonial rule. This period, marked by resounding optimism and national pride, resulted in experimentation, and incorporation of a critical discourse with emerging existential, ideological, and philosophical influences. How these influences found resonance with specific locales and combined with various ethnic and tribal sources resulted in a multiplicity of modernist practice springing forth from this fertile period. Modernism is a plural, not a singular term, and not limited to the expression of a formal style or aesthetic. In *The Challenge of the Modern*, Chika Okeke-Agulu reaffirms this thought by saying, "It is reductive to speak about *an* African modernism; indeed we see diverse, contemporaneous modernisms in Africa," and "modernism is... the expressive form of political, ideological, and socioeconomic processes associated with modernity...it is not as a closed, historically and geographically situated phenomenon, but as a constellation of...strategies."⁴²

Aesthetic experimentation and modernist thinking were almost inseparable from the host of political and social changes that were occurring, prompting reinvention of cultural norms, a yearning for cosmopolitan recognition, and a desire to adopt a host of

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⁴² Okeke-Agulu, Chika. "The Challenge of the Modern." *African Arts*, Spring 2006, Vol. 39 Issue 1 (2006): 14.

contemporary ideals.⁴³ That such ideals were sometimes drawn from the very Europeans who were being negotiated with or expelled did not undermine the experiments. It is primarily a European bias, carried over from 'Orientalism,' that allows early Cubists to respond to the aesthetic potency of African Masks while simultaneously suggesting that African engagement with modernity resulted in a product that was somehow tainted, co-opted, or less original. Artists everywhere have long made a practice of being influenced from cross-cultural aesthetic sources. Many of the modernist expressions took as their project a revitalization of ethnic and national heritage. This took the form of intensely local iterations—uniquely refashioning and combining foreign influences.

The development of the contemporary practice which followed appeared quite different. A major shift in the field of contemporary art has occurred since the 1990s as the canon has attempted to expand its purview from an exclusively Eurocentric viewpoint to much more global one. However, counter to this move and perhaps driven by the quest for new market potential—contemporary art has paradoxically undergone a series of 'national trends,' which include 'discovery' of Indian, Korean, Czech, Chinese, Icelandic, and Taiwanese artists (the list continues), in a fascination akin to the emergence of Japonisme as Japan opened to trade in the mid-1800s, and again with the resurgence of its post-War economy in the 1960s and early 1970s.⁴⁴

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⁴³Diawara, Manthia. "Talk of the Town: Seydou Keita." *Reading the Contemporary: African Art Theory to the Marketplace*. Edited by Olu Oguibe and Okwui Enwezor. (Cambridge: Institute of Visual Arts, London and MIT Press, 1999), 237.

⁴⁴ Independent Collectors website. "Discussions/Dude, Where's Your Country// India." <http://www.independent-collectors.com/forum/topic.php?topid=17>. (accessed March 8, 2009).

As a result of globalization, many contemporary artists identify not as national or patriotic. They align themselves with a host of different value sets whose situation and concerns are specific, polyvalenced, and complex—not easily compressed in to a national label. These artists have adopted an aesthetic typified by moving away from traditional artistic expression in favor of new media, site-specific installation, sound-based works, and performance—in many cases, media that reinforce the transnational or a nomadic aesthetic.

El Anatsui, *Dzesi II* (detail), 2006, collection of the Akron Art Museum (photo courtesy Akron Art Museum)

VI. The Biennial Effect and Place-making

Over the past fifteen years, as the dialog surrounding contemporary art has moved to be more international and inclusive, a number of alternative sites of cultural production have emerged which don't prescribe a solely national value to the artist. These sites allow for nationality to play a historically informative, but not limiting role.⁴⁵ Though this is not to say the move toward inclusion doesn't still privilege Western aesthetic production.

The emergence of biennials as sites of artistic distribution (from the point of view of artists) and cultural production (from the point of view of curators and gallerists) separate from nationalized institutions or affiliation moved the dialog of contemporary art to an alternative 'place'—one outside of earlier regularized relationships. Reconciliation and inclusion of previously excluded postcolonial sites in response to liberal ideologies remains one of the main endeavors of the field. For art and artists this has had a radical effect, which underscores the base connectivities between contemporary global art and capitalism. David Bunn explains, "Therefore, the logic of place-based art curation and

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⁴⁵ Okwui Enwezor quotes Hans Belting, "For Western artists, the key point of their cultural practice was to become posthistorical (that is, to overcome the shadow of the Western classical tradition) and for "non-Western" artists, the struggle is to attain a state of being postethnic (in this case to overcome any identification with ethnic or racially based categories)" This argument has two problems, one, that Western artists have no racial or ethnic identification as a benefit or need to be overcome, and two, that "non-Western" artists have no classical history or tradition that must, likewise, be dealt with. Enwezor reconciles these concerns with the proviso that contemporary art encourages questions of nationality or ethnicity, but only when they do so 'historically.' Enwezor, Okwui. 2008. "Place-Making or in the Wrong Place: Contemporary Art and the Postcolonial Position." *Diaspora Place Memory*. Edited by Salah M. Hassan and Cheryl Finley. (Munich, Berlin, London, New York: Prestel, 2008), 111.

collection starts to mimic the logic of states under pressure from globalization: Citizens and artists are increasingly defined not as rights-bearing subjects of a nation, who may have come from elsewhere, but as ethnographic autochthons. This, in turn mirrors the tactics of neo-liberal capitalism itself, with its new focus on places (rather than nations) as sites of investment.”⁴⁶ In response, Delinda Collier, a scholar of Chokwe art and Angolan Identity, describes the development of the *place* as “the ‘non-space’ of the global art scene.”⁴⁷

Curator and scholar Okwui Enwezor, in his essay, *Place-Making or in the Wrong Place: Contemporary Art and the Postcolonial Position*, also discusses how the transformations in artistic practice, exhibition production, and art history emulate the geopolitical and economic transformations that are occurring as a result of globalization. Enwezor elaborates ‘place-making’ as “a type of active grounding of the potent marks of differenced artistic practices,” an activity that is not constrained by set or institutionalized parameters which surround economic, political, or cultural speech, but which seeks “to rupture those obstacles and barriers.”⁴⁸

As an example of these transformations, Enwezor points to the changes that the Venice Biennial has made in its operations. That the firmly entrenched *Biennale*—a symbol of Western fluency and cultural supremacy in the realm of contemporary arts—was necessarily pressured to expand to accommodate an increasing number of

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⁴⁶ Kasfir, Sidney; Collier, Delinda; Okeke-Agulu, Chika; Nelson, Steven; Bunn, David. “The (Dis)placement of National Art in a Transnational World” *African Arts*, Autumn 2008, Vol. 41 Issue 3 (2008): 12.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 11.

⁴⁸ Enwezor, Okwui. 2008. “Place-Making or in the Wrong Place: Contemporary Art and the Postcolonial Position.” *Diaspora Place Memory*. Edited by Salah M. Hassan and Cheryl Finley. (Munich, Berlin, London, New York: Prestel, 2008), 109.

participating non-Western artists is remarkable.⁴⁹ The result was that directors and curators of the Biennial responded to pressures exerted by other biennials and fairs which superseded the Venice model of national 'pavilions' in favor of a less biased, more equitable way of representing this increasing global reality. These changes point to the far-reaching impact of this globalization. That Venice still clings to national pavilions for participating countries, and allots Africa, as an entire continent, an 'African Pavilion' illustrates the problem and points to the direction future change must take.⁵⁰

Thus, the biennial as 'place' unto itself, separate from its host country, as a zone in which the participant artists interact with a site while leveraging aesthetic and intellectual capital stands in stark contrast to the example of a museum. The biennial, as a temporary, large-scale, fluid event allows art and artists to, as Ogbechie describes art of the current age, "operate in the liminal spaces of identities and locales in motion."⁵¹ The importance of biennials is captured in an anonymous press release gathered from a contemporary art listserv,

"Next to art fairs, today 'biennials' are the most important international format for art exhibitions. Especially for cities like Taipei, Singapore, Yokohama or Gwangju, they also provide an opportunity to present themselves to a 'western' international audience and to strengthen ties to the geographically remote European art scene."⁵²

Evidence perhaps, of the faith and belief in Biennials as an economic 'savior.'

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⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Egypt is the only African country to maintain an independent pavilion, which it has done since the 2nd Biennale in 1897. Okeke-Agulu, Chika. "Venice and Contemporary African Art." *African Arts*. Autumn 2007 Vol. 40 Issue 3 (2007): 1.

⁵¹ Ogbechie, Sylvester Okwunodu. "Issues of Locale." (Review of John Picton, et. al. *El Anatsui-A Sculpted History of Africa*; and Olu Oguibe, *Crossing:Time.Space.Movement*). *African Arts* Winter 1999 Vol. 32 Issue 4 (1999): 91.

⁵² "OK Offenes Kulturhaus presents BIENNALE CUVÉE." e-mail to the author from e-Flux Listserv. February 23, 2009.

A partial list of significant biennials which offer an alternate model include Dakar (Senegal), Gwangju (South Korea), Istanbul (Turkey), Cairo (Egypt), previously, but not currently, Johannesburg (South Africa), Shanghai (China), and recently (since 2006) Singapore. The São Paulo (Brazil) Biennial is worth mentioning, but since it is modeled on Venice and promotes a stated goal “to make contemporary art (primarily from Western Europe and the USA) known in Brazil,” instead of a more international—or even national—mandate of championing significant Brazilian or South American artists (even if this has become part of its de facto function), it hardly meets the criteria as an alternative.⁵³ New biennials are announced with astonishing regularity.

Due to biennial influence, contemporary art is not any more prevalent or visible, but instead has moved towards inclusivity as a result of this burgeoning global awareness, and perhaps more pointedly stated, as a result of the flow of capital into new markets. This means more voices from more locales—a move which has had the effect of challenging the ascendancy of the traditional Western arts market and gallery system with a series of temporary, pluralistic contemporary art events, platforms, and sites that bypass any sort of cultural or artistic legitimacy previously conferred on, and by, institutions. Okwui Enwezor elegantly describes this as,

“the significant emergence of contemporary art from postcolonial sites of production within the global network of artistic production, dissemination, markets, media, and institutional reception that would force reconsideration of the contextual place of artistic activities. Temporary, large-scale exhibitions would become the leading place for enunciating the pluralistic activities of contemporary artistic forms and strategies. They created a new network of artistic transactions beyond the traditional regulations of the Western museum and art market...This emergence established the broad role artists from postcolonial societies and transnational artists would play as important contributors in the refashioning of the field of contemporary art at large.”⁵⁴

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⁵³ Universes in Universe website. “São Paulo Biennial.” <http://www.universes-in-universe.de/car/sao-paulo/english.htm>. (accessed February 2, 2009).

⁵⁴ Enwezor, Okwui. 2008. “Place-Making or in the Wrong Place: Contemporary Art and the Postcolonial Position.” *Diaspora Place Memory*. Edited by Salah M. Hassan and Cheryl Finley. (Munich, Berlin, London, New York: Prestel, 2008), 107.

A new cultural geography is being written, as cultural capital from temporary, large-scale exhibitions replaces waning institutional influence and industrial production. Nations have adopted a strategy which replaces the 'hard modernity' of collapsing resources and industry to a 'liquid modernity' of aesthetic-based creative entrepreneurial endeavors. This process is described as a "city of re-invention" by curator John Wilson, who is involved with a re-imagining of the post-industrial city of Newport, England. Wilson notes, "as the new city seeks to balance the logics of capital and territory, the challenge of competing for regional-global investments and creating a vital local "space of place". A new spatial axis, defined more in terms of its *departure* from preceding civic and industrial expressions, takes the form of innovative cultural capital capable of competing for investment and status."⁵⁵

Institutions are in a revisionary process as well, the result of assaults on facets of their identities—their role, programming, scholarship, and operations are being challenged. Biennials, with their attendant academic symposia, scholarly publications, and research performed by independent curators are part of a new platform of cultural production. Galleries have adapted by imitating the biennial format with international art fairs, such as Art Chicago or Art Basel, while place-based institutions—stripped of their 'authority'—have less influence, and consequently, less power. In a move against this, a host of new 'traditional' spaces—museums, art centers, and exhibition venues—have proliferated throughout Eastern Europe, South America, and many African countries, which adopt experimental approaches in an effort to mimic the strategies of biennials and art fairs. There is also a widespread 'recovery effort' on the part of institutions,

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⁵⁵ Documenting the City, Curatorial Reflections (5) website.
http://art.npt.googlepages.com/towards_new_social_cultural_geography_ne. (accessed March 8, 2009).

who—in an effort to compete—are actively de-emphasizing the latent European attributes which prevail in their exhibitions and collections, in a determined effort to play down Western hegemony. The problem remains, however, that biennial control is largely dominated by the West—either situated within Western countries or in non-Western countries that host events and then invite Western-based curators to select artists and art, resulting in a power structure that continues to self-affirm. This system, now however more shared than in the past, is still the institution of privilege that elevates artists to international status.

Edward K. Said, examining West/non-West relationships, likens this power structure to Orientalism, explaining, “Orientalism depends for its strategy on this flexible positional superiority, which puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand.”⁵⁶

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⁵⁶ Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. (New York and Toronto: Random House, 1978), 7.

VII. Anatsui's Socioeconomic Impact

The questions surrounding the impact of art on local economies is fascinating, the example of Anatsui no less so. At root, these questions are intrinsically linked to the dynamic between the international and the local. Globalism has made the benefits of the local visible in a way not previously realized. Critics allege that globalism is synonymous with exploitation, while others are cynical that the attention given to regional and local cultures and economies is a surface trend, much in the way arguments surrounding multiculturalism are pointed out to be 'essentialist.' Globalism is criticized for being reductive and based on 'bottom dollar' capitalism. That said, despite the propensity of contemporary art for globalization, it may be the perfect socioeconomic developmental tool on the local level. Rachel C. Fleming observes that "art is not regulated, does not need much infrastructure in order to create, and visible results occur relatively quickly."⁵⁷

Anthony Barzilay Freund, editor of *Art + Auction* magazine, points out in the March 2009 issue the ways in which the arts are capable of providing a high level of return both 'intellectually and economically.' He cites the phenomenon of museum architecture, typified by the Bilbao effect—in which the Guggenheim Museum revitalized Spain's Basque region with Frank Gehry's architectural tourist-magnet phenomenon coupled with blockbuster highlights culled from the Guggenheim collection. Barzilay

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⁵⁷ Fleming, Rachel C. "Creative Economic Development, Sustainability, and Exclusion in Rural Areas." *Geographical Review*, January, Vol. 99 Issue 1 (2009): 8.

Freund reports that 10 years after the Guggenheim opened more than \$283.6 (€210) million had been generated for the region, a success which has prompted a number of cities to repeat the experiment by initiating building projects of their own. Barzilay Freund continues, pointing out that Art Basel Miami Beach, since its debut in 2002, has brought an influx of more than \$1 billion (€740 million) to benefit the city of Miami. Finally, turning to the example of New York, Barzilay Freund bluntly states how important the creative economies are to that city's well being, quoting a local nonprofit arts-advocacy group study which found that the combined economic impact of auction houses and commercial galleries from tourism alone (not counting sales and sales tax) equaled \$1.4 (€1.04) billion annually, employing over 7,000 people, while Christo and Jeanne-Claude's 2005 *Gates* project in Central Park is estimated to have generated a quarter of a billion dollars independent of the above figures.⁵⁸

In the case of Anatsui, he not only generates enough income from his sales to support a micro economy around Nsukka, an estimated half of his earnings bankroll a host of transport companies and art handlers, insurance companies, in addition to his galleries in America and Europe. Although Anatsui realizes a great profit from each sale—estimated between \$50,000 to \$500,000 USD (roughly €39,000 to €392,000)—his success is symbolic as well as economic.⁵⁹ Beyond the financial impact, his ubiquity represents success for independence in a post-colonial era. It affirms the establishment of a robust model of aesthetic production and recognizes the contribution of uniquely African contemporary and modernist intellectual and aesthetic modalities. It also

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⁵⁸ Barzilay Freund, Anthony. "Letter from the Editor." in *Art + Auction*, March (2009), <http://www.artinfo.com/news/story/30409/from-the-editor/>. (accessed on March 9, 2009).

⁵⁹ Moore, Yasmin. "El Anatsui." *Audi Magazine*, 3.2008 (2008): 89.

demonstrates the propensity of contemporary art to operate on an international field unbounded by or in spite of the strength of national economies.

Anatsui relies on local sources and suppliers to enable the production of an international export. His success is often measured not only in terms of aesthetics, but in how it acts on the market, or rather is synonymous with the international market potential of his work. The impacts of socioeconomic development, on the other hand, are largely measured on a local level—of market forces combining to increase the opportunities or productivity of a specific region or locale.

Conversely, artistic success is measured by its ability to appeal internationally. Put into analytic terms, the Creative Economy Report—using a study from the International Labour Organization (ILO) study on crafts and visual arts—found “that global trends define how visual artists see themselves, with international recognition being the ultimate mark of success.”⁶⁰ These questions gain a level in complexity when considering that, unlike many successful artists from the continent who leave their countries to pursue greater opportunity, Anatsui has achieved international recognition, but has pointedly stayed in Nsukka.

Despite a determined internationalism, Anatsui is especially sensitive to the local. He has been quoted as saying that “art grows out of the particular” and that he believes artists are “better off working with whatever the local environment throws up,” as well as

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⁶⁰ United Nations Conference on Trade and Development website. “Creative Economy Report 2008: The Challenge of Assessing the Creative Economy Towards Informed Policy-making.” http://www.unctad.org/en/docs/ditc20082cer_en.pdf. (accessed January 27, 2009), 42.

responding to specific sites to create art.⁶¹ This belief in the local translates directly into support, purchases, and patronage of stores, individuals, and markets in Nigeria.

Anatsui utilizes the resources of a “vast wholesale market” near Nsukka to supply the raw materials for the metal labels, tins, and lids he uses to produce his cloth series. Aside from studio assistants, Anatsui relies on a number of ‘material scouts’ from local villages and markets to notify him as desired materials become available. He regularly purchases bulk goods—often recycled, or ‘repurposed’ raw materials—from markets and towns close to Nsukka. These materials include, liquor labels, “roughly pierced metal sheets” to grate cassava, evaporated milk tin lids, used newspaper printing plates, local lumber, galvanized roofing tin, and “disused” wooden mortars.⁶² This influx of capital into local businesses engenders a micro-economy surrounding Anatsui’s artistic practice, one that has decidedly grown in proportion to demand for Anatsui’s production. His impact is so tremendous that, without overstating, the artist has said, “During my search for media, when my car is sighted in the village, word spreads round fast and several people wait along the route to take me in to see their disused mortars, house-posts, etc.”⁶³ Anatsui’s impact and ability to provide opportunities in both Nigeria and Nsukka has constantly expanded since 1999, which he cites as a turning point in the level of his artistic production.

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⁶¹ Houghton, Gerard. “An Interview with El Anatsui.” *El Anatsui: GAWU*. (Wales: Oriel Mostyn Gallery, 2004), 22.

⁶² Barlow, Martin. “Foreword.” *El Anatsui: GAWU*. (Wales: Oriel Mostyn Gallery, 2004), 5.
Ogbechie, Sylvester. “Wonder Masquerade: Transfiguration and Embodiment in the Art of El Anatsui.” *El Anatsui: GAWU*. (Wales: Oriel Mostyn Gallery, 2004), 14.

⁶³ Kwami, Atta. “Nsukka—A Place to Hide: Toward a Conversation with El Anatsui.” *El Anatsui: GAWU*. (Wales: Oriel Mostyn Gallery, 2004), 32.

In an interview for *ArtJournal* with Laura James, Anatsui identifies this turning point, which provides two insights.⁶⁴ First, it reflects the increased degree of production which is required of Anatsui to meet the growing demand for his work, and secondly, it reveals that the number of his assistants—both on a full-time and volunteer basis—has increased according to this demand. A *New York Times* article from February 22, 2009 identifies that Anatsui “employs more than a dozen assistants to cut and fold the aluminum bottle caps into blocks.”⁶⁵ The issue of how assistants are used in Anatsui’s studio is somewhat ambiguous. It is at once flexible—allowing for volunteer, walk-in help to bolster his full-time staff, but also rigorous, necessitated both by the high volume of production required and issues of quality, transportability, and intellectual content. Anatsui says,

“The big change is perhaps the ambience of the studio. Instead of a quiet place with me and one assistant, as was the case previously, it is now teeming with many people and activity, and consequently noisier, so the main challenge for me is how to stay focused in the midst of it all. How to harness creatively the different energies and atmosphere generated.

James: Does employing a large number of assistants bring up issues of labor while you work?

“I believe you are thinking about the kind of trade-union problems in industries? No. This is a studio and not a factory situation. It is a very flexible arrangement whereby one is free to come in at any time to help. Together we have worked out an open and transparent mode of identifying and tallying everybody’s contribution. In a month, for instance, some could come every time, one or two days, or not at all. Everybody works at his own pace...The arrangement started with two or three coming in to help with a project (sometime in 1999) and has gradually grown into a situation where their services are regularly needed.”⁶⁶

The specific date of 1999 may be in response to the creation of Anatsui’s *Peak Project*, which required several thousand evaporated milk tin lids to be joined together to form a series of self-standing cones—a process requiring hundreds of hours of work.⁶⁷ Anatsui

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⁶⁴ Binder, Lisa M. “El Anatsui: Transformations.” *African Arts*, Summer 2008, Vol. 41 Issue 2 (2008): 29.

⁶⁵ Worth, Alexi. “Meet the Artist Who Uses ‘Empties’ to Reinvent Sculpture. El Anatsui and a Thousand Bottles of Rum on the Wall.” *New York Times*, February 22, 2009: 155.

⁶⁶ James, Laura. “An Interview with El Anatsui.” *Art Journal*, 67 (2) (2008): 41.

⁶⁷ Barlow, Martin. “Foreword.” in *El Anatsui: GAWU*. (Wales: Oriel Mostyn Gallery, 2004), 5.

describes the incremental progress of hand tying hundreds of small pieces of aluminum together with copper wire on both the *Peak Project* and his cloth series, "It's a terribly laborious process. In a day you are talking about maybe half a square foot. Apart from my full-time studio staff, I have assistance from some of my students and largely from young men within the vicinity of my studio, especially when they are on holidays. They are friends of the studio and since 1999 have on many occasions done long hours with me. On a particularly full day, we could be up to fourteen pairs of hands spread out in the studio."⁶⁸ Anatsui notes the necessity of full-time studio staff and his reliance upon dozens of volunteers for ad hoc contributions. Given that many of Anatsui's pieces measure as many as 600 square feet, one can imagine the amount of labor required. Lisa Binder describes the changes this shift has enabled, "Assistants are now able to preproduce sections of like shape meant to be joined at Anatsui's discretion. The assistants have taken to giving the different sections code names. The practice makes it easier for Anatsui to explain his design ideas, thus streamlining production."⁶⁹

While tempting given the level of production at which Anatsui operates to describe his output as an 'industry,' this is inaccurate. This comparison was made again in the February 22, 2009 *New York Times* article, stating that "Anatsui's studio...is now a virtual factory: instead of waiting to find discarded bottle caps, he buys them in bulk from neighboring distilleries. More than a dozen assistants...work six days a week cutting and folding the aluminum pieces."⁷⁰ Despite these charges and being described as 'over

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⁶⁸ Houghton, Gerard. "An Interview with El Anatsui." *El Anatsui: GAWU*. (Wales: Oriel Mostyn Gallery, 2004), 22.

⁶⁹ Binder, Lisa M. "El Anatsui: Transformations." *African Arts*, Summer 2008, Vol. 41 Issue 2 (2008): 29.

⁷⁰ Worth, Alexi. "Meet the Artist Who Uses 'Empties' to Reinvent Sculpture. El Anatsui and a Thousand Bottles of Rum on the Wall." *New York Times*, February 22, 2009: 155.

produced' by Raphael Chikukwa in a comment following the Q&A session at Art Basel Miami Beach, Anatsui's work still manages to negotiate subtleties and remain sensitive to detail and intent.

Anatsui publicly recognizes the role of these assistants in a partial list at the end of the GAWU exhibition catalog, saying, "I wish to acknowledge the following and several others not mentioned here who, between 1999 and now, have assisted in many ways; scouting for media and doing long days in the studio or providing logistical backup in the realization of these works."⁷¹ Since these statements, the demand for, and consequently the production of Anatsui's work, has increased dramatically. Currently, in the estimation of the author, based on current demographics on Nigerian population and family size, Anatsui affects, in terms of employment and patronage, between two hundred fifty to a thousand people, possibly more.

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⁷¹ Anatsui lists 29 individuals: Onuora Ali, Victor Ameh, Chukwuma Chibueze, Ndubuisi Chibueze, Obinna Chukwukere, Chidiebere Ezeugwu, Chukwudi Ezeugwu, Linus Ezeugwu, Ndubuisi Ezeugwu, Onyebuchi Ezeugwu, Martin Iorliam, Endurance Jajaa, Amuche Ngwu, Chibueze Nwaogu, Solomon Odo, Sunday Odo, Ikechukwu Ohayere, Amarachi Okafor, Ozioma Onuzulike, Chukwukere Onyekachi, Erasmus Onyishi, Uche Onyishi, Afam Orji, Chibueze Ugwu, Christian Obinna Ugwu, Ifeanyi Ugwu, Kwubechukwu Ugwu, Okwudili El Anatsui, *Dzesi II* (signature detail), 2006, collection of the Akron Art Museum (photo courtesy Akron Art Museum)

VIII. CONCLUSION

Globalism has had a very specific effect on formerly provincial territories and small localities, encouraging, consequently, the expression of a particular brand of regionalism of which Anatsui is an example. The liminal non-spaces of contemporary art are effectively held in contrast to the fixity of the locale. The arguments surrounding the effects of globalism are particularly relevant in light of the question—does an increased connectivity and pervasive capitalism foster a monoculture or promote expressions of diversity? Isolated regions are beneficiaries of the interconnectivities of the global market, suddenly able to provide a steady supply of goods or services to capital-laden consumers—completing, incidentally, a market cycle not sustained locally. That a reactionary regionalism, both in terms of production and the ability to revitalize traditional ethnic and national culture, has come forward as an anti-global expression—an opposition culture, so to speak—may be one of the peculiarities engendered by globalism. In an interview with Mary and Harvey Flad, their analysis of Thai silk weaver production and textile development in Laos revealed similarities to Anatsui's production to such a degree that it may be inferred that Anatsui's studio is modeled on a traditional craft workshop atelier in terms of production approach, employing craft workers, basing work on traditional motifs, and the mandate of producing according to commission.⁷²

Anatsui's sales and impact relies in part on a rebranding and remarketing of the artist to appeal to global contemporary connoisseurs, i.e. consumers. Though the

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⁷² Flad, Harvey and Mary. Telephone Interview with Author. Louisville, KY. March 31, 2009.

circumstances which surround him—a colonial education, coming to artistic awareness in post-independence Africa, a displacement from Ghana to Nigeria, operating in Europe and America—help to describe him as transnational, Anatsui is intensely local, pointedly connected to Nsukka. Lisa Binder points out that his work should, “be considered in terms of a conceptual and historical space and given a localized reading of his practice of incorporating locally procured materials.” Anatsui’s ability to hold oppositions in tension—negotiating the numerous claims on him as Ghanaian, Nigerian, regional, or contemporary—and navigating positions of transnationalism and locality, the particular and the multinational—is a characteristic of his success. Further, one must predicate Anatsui’s success upon the fact that he is interconnected with an international market and has established a degree of control through his intellectual artistic creativity that has allowed him to negotiate that market fluidly to his advantage. Anatsui’s move out of the orbit of specifically African-based exhibits in the period between the 1990 and 2007 Venice Biennials has resulted in economic implications and potential that has increased his marketability exponentially; he suddenly became personally as well as aesthetically critical.

However, this is the exception to much of African cultural production. Indeed, Syvelster Ogbechie—recalling arguments of constraint put forth by Okwui Enwezor, Homi Bhaba, and Fritz Fanon—notes that of the 100 million people who populate Nigeria, less than one percent will have the means to physically transcend their constraints—national or economic borders—despite being, “increasingly subject to inundations of the international media and the machinations of the international financial markets.”⁷³

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⁷³ Ogbechie, Sylvester. “Liminal Spaces.” *The Nsukka Artists and Nigerian Contemporary Art*. Edited by Simon Ottenberg. (Washington DC: National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution and Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2002), 216.

Roger Malbert, in his introduction to the Africa Remix catalog, points out the difficulties of artists who necessarily operate within national or economic constraints. “Despite the supposed openness of postmodern culture, the privileged centres of influence remain overwhelmingly in command, their long-established commercial and critical infrastructures providing artists who happen to live within their compass with distinct preferential treatment. Artists from elsewhere, especially from economically disadvantaged societies, must, unless they are lucky enough to be ‘discovered’ by generous benefactors, devise skillful strategies in order to survive.”⁷⁴ Anatsui has pursued a strategy of flexibility and the quality of being liminal as a means for transcending the constraints of his personal position for the purpose of realizing international success.

Anatsui’s aesthetic has always been founded in the repurposing and re-use of local materials—essentially craft media—though the artist pointedly disassociates himself from references to ‘cloth,’ ceramics, or woodwork, insisting instead upon the label ‘sculpture’ to describe his production. This may be for primarily economic reasons as much as aesthetic and intellectual ones; contemporary art fetches a much higher return than craft. Despite Anatsui’s avoidance of the term, the characteristics of his aesthetic and mode of working may be in line with debates concerning recent craft theory and potentially indicate a willingness in the contemporary market to return to pattern and ornamentation—even beauty. In Nigeria and much of Africa, the mark of artistic success is confirmed in the form of financial success, or one’s marked ability to leverage the market.

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⁷⁴ Malbert, Robert. “Introduction.” *Africa Remix: Contemporary Art of a Continent*. Simon Njami, Lucy Duran, David Elliot, Jean-Hubert Martin, John Picton, Marie-Laure Bernadac, and Abdelwahab Meddeb. (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz Publishers, 2005), 11.

The virtual component of Anatsui's GAWU exhibition website champions his work as engaging, "the cultural, social and economic histories of West Africa." and explains that, "Through their associations, his humble metal fragments provide a commentary on globalization, consumerism, waste and the transience of people's lives in West Africa and beyond. Their re-creation as powerful and transcendent works of art—many of which recall traditional practices and art forms—suggests as well the power of human agency to alter such harmful patterns." ⁷⁵

Anatsui is reluctant to call his re-use of materials recycling, because the term implies an alteration in the material as it undergoes the process of collection, refinement, and use as a new product. Neither does he sanction the terms 'found object,' 'readymade,' or 'mixed media,' because the definitions resonate with a particular moment in Western art history.⁷⁶ These terms also are an inaccurate account of how Anatsui is responding to his materials. The terms 'found object' and 'readymade' connote something that is complete in itself, while Anatsui transforms his materials to suit his aesthetic purposes. Olu Oguibe describes this as, "the transfiguring intervention of human agency in order to be translated into sculptural form."⁷⁷ Anatsui himself describes recycling as a process in which an object is reconstituted and has the ability to be reused in perpetuity, while the materials he uses have reached the end of their use value and are transformed into artwork. Instead, Anatsui prefers the term 'repurposing'—his materials are in essence 'repurposed' into sculpture.⁷⁸ Anatsui, in an

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⁷⁵ El Anatsui: GAWU Exhibition website. <http://africa.si.edu/exhibits/gawu/artist.html>. (accessed March 2, 2009).

⁷⁶ Binder, Lisa M. "El Anatsui: Transformations." *African Arts*, Summer 2008, Vol. 41 Issue 2 (2008): 36.

⁷⁷ Oguibe, Olu. "El Anatsui: Beyond Death and Nothingness." *African Arts* Winter 1998, Vol. 31 Issue 1, (1998): 48, 9 pgs.

⁷⁸ Binder, Lisa M. "El Anatsui: Transformations." *African Arts*, Summer 2008, Vol. 41 Issue 2 (2008): 27. Moore, Yasmin. "El Anatsui." *Audi Magazine*, 3.2008 (2008): 89.

interview with Gerard Houghton, describes repurposing as, “You return them to use but it’s not the same function. It’s a different function...A higher function—maybe even the ultimate function. Each bottle top returning as an object of contemplation has the capacity to reveal to us a more profound understanding of life that it did as a stopper.”⁷⁹

Anatsui, re-contextualized, has undergone a transformation as well. No longer solely a Nsukka artist responding to his environment, Anatsui has been repurposed as global contemporary artist. Binder, noting a shift in his production from local to global, comments that Anatsui’s work, “in that it is produced for and displayed primarily in museums and gallery spaces, is transformed from a grouping of consumptive materials into its final manifestation as commoditized art object in the Western market.”⁸⁰ Similar to the aluminum distillery label which he sees both in terms of its material function and as a sculptural work with astonishing impact— Anatsui mysteriously remains an artist from Nsukka who continues to leave an indelible mark on the course of global contemporary art.

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⁷⁹ Houghton, Gerard. “An Interview with El Anatsui.” *El Anatsui: GAWU*. (Wales: Oriel Mostyn Gallery, 2004), 24.

⁸⁰ Binder, Lisa M. “El Anatsui: Transformations.” *African Arts*, Summer 2008, Vol. 41 Issue 2 (2008): 27.

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APPENDICES

EDUCATION MATERIALS FOR A PROPOSED EXHIBITION	Page
1) WHAT ARE THEY MADE OF?.....	45
2) EL ANATSUI LIVES IN NSUKKA, NIGERIA.....	46
3) EL ANATSUI—A RELATIONSHIP WITH CLOTH.....	47

WHAT ARE THEY MADE OF?

Each individual piece of metal you see has taken a long journey to become art.

El Anatsui uses metal from many sources—left over bottles caps, lids from cans of evaporated milk, pieces of tin used on the roofs of houses to keep the rain out, newspaper printing plates, and food graters to shred cassava, a root vegetable used to make *Gari* flour that most people in Nigeria cook with. The metal in this sculpture came from bottles of rum and whisky.

Once the artist collects hundreds of pieces of metal, he and his helpers flatten them out and fold them into different shapes. Then, tiny holes are made in the flat pieces and copper wire is used to tie them together.

The artist describes how difficult this is, “It’s a terribly laborious process. In a day you are talking about maybe half a square foot”—that’s smaller than a piece of paper. Since his sculptures are so large—as big as 600 square feet—he needs a lot of help. Sometimes, he says, “we could be up to fourteen pairs of hands spread out in the studio.”

El Anatsui believes that you can make big pieces of art—monuments—out of a lot of small pieces joined together. He also believes that art should be made out of whatever you can find around you. He got the idea to make this sculpture one day after he found a bag of garbage full of bottle tops. He kept the bag for a long time and started to experiment with the tops, until he came up with the idea to connect them together so that the final sculpture looks similar to cloth.

EL ANATSUI LIVES IN NSUKKA, NIGERIA

EL ANATSUI—A RELATIONSHIP WITH CLOTH

El Anatsui makes sculpture influenced by cloth called adinkra and kente. Cloth in Africa is very important because, besides being beautiful, it has symbolic and expressive qualities tied to the history and beliefs of the people that make and wear it.

There are two types of kente cloth made by the Asante and Ewe people—both groups live mostly in southern Ghana in West Africa. El Anatsui's sculptures are similar to kente cloth because they are made in strips that are later stitched together.

Anatsui's father and brothers made Ewe kente cloth. Ewe kente is recognizable because it is made out of cotton thread and looks matt with muted colors.

Asante kente, on the other hand, is usually glossy. It is made with silky threads which shimmer. It also has sharp contrasts and uses bright colors like red, yellow, and blue—the primary colors.

The second type of cloth, adinkra, is also made by Asante people in Ghana. Adinkra is black and white with bold, repetitious patterns. The black dye is made from the bark of trees and is applied to the fabric using stamps. The stamps are carved from sections of calabash, a gourd that has light green skin and white flesh. The adinkra is printed in small squares and each square has a different pattern. The patterns are symbols which are often reminders of proverbs, such as "no one should bite the other," or "peace."

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1995

PUBLICATIONS:

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