

## DETRITUS & ART / A personal point of view on Environment and Art by Rainer Stegmann

In this issue I present an unusual sculpture. It is created by Gonçalo Mabunda a sculptor from Mozambique, Africa who collected scrap metals and weapons used during the 15 year lasting civil war in his country. In 2012, in his Maputo workshop he created a series of thrones by welding the scrap to give them a new form and meaning.

Mabunda whose childhood and youth were shaped by the horror of war uses the throne as an element to refer to a traditional symbol of power of African tribal leaders.

*"The throne also stands for the ominous interplay between legal and illegal arms deals, national and international interests and regional conflicts".*

*"While embodying Mabunda's explicit criticism of African military regimes and their violent ruling, www.cise.com is not only a symbol of horror, but seeking to spark a positive reflection on the transformative power of art and the resistance and creativity of African Civil societies." (Making Africa – A Continent of Contemporary Design, Vitra Design Museum)*

This is an example of a politically motivated Waste to Art object. The artist sends a strong message against military conflicts and political leaders who thereby "ascended the throne" or, with other words took over illegally power; weapons as a basis for governing a country. Unfortunately, such military conflicts are still going on and there are no recipes to avoid this. Perhaps art is a medium to raise steadily awareness of this insane injustice.

But let me highlight another aspect which is of much lower priority but still of importance and that interests us as waste experts: what happens to the vast amounts of used weapons all over the world. I know this aspect sounds a bit cynical thinking of all the pain caused by these weapons, but we should not neglect this environmental issue. I think lot of the old weapons are stored at homes, used as scrap and melted down, thrown into the landscape, rivers and oceans and ending up in waste dumps. If we consider the huge amount of worldwide produced weapons, we get an idea about the number of discarded weapons. Perhaps there should be initiatives for controlled material recovery and recycling in the sense of the slogan used by peace activists in the former DDR: Swords to Ploughshares.

A huge environmental problem is the vast amount of chemical and biological weapons dumped after World War II into the oceans. The munition corrodes in the salt water and it is just a matter of time that the toxic substances emit into the adjacent water. This situation needs much higher attention; the only way to "solve" this problem is to recover the dumped weapons.



F GONÇALO MABUNDA / www.cise.com (Karen Green, flickr CC BY-SA2.0)

It is always amazing to me where the different conflict parties in Africa and elsewhere get their weapons from; they are in general not produced in the warring countries. They get them from arms dealers and from other more powerful countries who want to represent their interest. Theoretically conflicts could be avoided by cutting off weapons replenishment or better -as in Waste Management hierarchy- by avoidance of weapon production.

But this is a dream.

Mabunda presents his art to never forget about the great pain caused by armed conflicts and despotic politicians.

*In the next issue I will present an example of the annual Hat Contest at Lamu Island, Kenya. The local people collect waste from their beaches to create their hats.*

