



• Installation view of *His Master's Voice, Zonophone* and *Better*, 2010, digital prints, 78"x 78" each.
 edition: 2 + 1 artist proof.
 Epson HDR ink on Hahnemühle Museum Etching
 Fine Art Paper on Sintra.
 Anderson Gallery, Richmond, VA.



RECORDS

The prints on view in this exhibition—six from a set of twelve—mark the beginning last year of a new body of work that reflects the slow expansion of my record collection to include many different kinds of audio artifacts from South Africa. What is common to the records appearing in all twelve prints, and what initially drew me to the project, was the evidence of their use in the form of surface scratches and damages. I selected records that I found most engaging visually, in terms of both their signs of wear and their original label designs. I decided that there could be no repetition of any one label, and I thought that the set should encompass a broad range of musical styles and languages.

Physically, these prints are detailed scanned enlargements of individual records. In contrast to what a record collector might prefer to acquire, I chose items that were particularly distressed. I think of this damage as further markings by unknown authors who unwittingly contributed their history to these objects. The detailed images in the prints thus capture not only the historical audio visually in the form of the lines or grooves, but also the scratches, damage, and repair work done by subsequent owners.

The damage to the records that is evident in the prints suggests an intriguing contradiction. On the one hand, in visual terms, it represents a kind of decay or degradation. On the other hand, the damage is most often the direct result of use and reuse. It could be viewed as the by-product of the most amazing fun—a visual document of the artifact's everyday lived experience. The stylus has struck the shellac or vinyl countless times, until the walls of the grooves gave way; these records, in other words, have been literally played to death. This contradiction is heightened when one considers the political and historical context of the object's use.

The beginnings of the print project were serendipitous. I was examining a record trying to make out the performer and the track titles. The label was so badly damaged that I could not make this out. As an experiment, I decided to scan the record in high resolution to somehow get closer to its surface. The detail in the scan was incredible, and I was able to access the hidden information in part. I then proceeded to print the scan out in small sheets that I taped together to form a grid of the image in large scale. My motives at this stage were simply aesthetic.

But soon I was also drawn to the embedded information that was being uncovered in the scans. For example, it was only after enlarging the record by 750% that I was able to partially make out the name of the artist—Wilson Silgee and his Forces with *Vula No.1* and *Vula No.2*. The name of the label itself had also eluded me, but I was able to determine that it was indeed *Tempo*, a label which had been owned by GRC (Grammohone Recording Company), a subsidiary of Gallo Records, that was later transferred to Trutone Records in 1966. Based on the label design, the recording on this disc dates from the later Trutone period, probably around 1966.

Wilson 'King Force' Silgee, an icon in his own right, joined the Jazz Maniacs in the mid-30s as a saxophone player, and later led the group after their leader, Solomon 'Zuluboy' Cele, was murdered in 1944. In the 1950s, Silgee would go on to form his own band, the Jazz Forces. The damage on the record makes it now almost unlistenable. But for some, including myself, it has its own unique pleasures, sounding at moments almost like something remixed by Japanese noise artist, Merzbow.

In the print *Rave*, the chalky white area around the hole of the label is a Plaster-of-

EXHIBITION HISTORY

2009 | *Imaging South Africa: Records*
BANK Gallery, Durban, South Africa

2010 | *Records* (South African Edition)
Presented by the gordonschachatcollection
Johannesburg Art Fair, South Africa

2010 | *Mirian Make Ba*
Presented in conjunction with the exhibition
Darkroom curated by Tosha Grantham
Virginia Museum of Fine Art, Richmond, VA

- left: *Tempo*, 2010.
digital print, 78" x 78", edition: 2 + 1 artist proof.
Epson HDR ink on Hahnemühle Museum Etching
Fine Art Paper on Sintra.
Anderson Gallery, Richmond, VA.
- below: Installation view of *Rave* and *Tempo*, 2009.
Epson HDR ink on Epson Velvet Fine Art Paper.
edition: prototype, grid of 20 sheets joined.
BANK Gallery, Durban, SA.



• right: *Rave*, 2010.
digital print, 78" x 78", edition: 2 + 1 artist proof.
Epson HDR ink on Hahnemühle Museum Etching
Fine Art Paper on Sintra.
Anderson Gallery, Richmond, VA.

• below: *Envee*, 2010.
digital print, 78" x 78", edition: 2 + 1 artist proof.
Epson HDR ink on Hahnemühle Museum Etching
Fine Art Paper on Sintra.
gordonscahchatcollection, Johannesburg, SA



Paris fill done by one of the record's owners. This person appears to have re-created the centre after what could only be described as a dramatic deterioration. *Kwela Sax*, the title of the repaired record, has its own unique history. Spokes Mashiyane, its author, is credited with popularizing *kwela* or pennywhistle jive with his recordings *Ace Blues* and *Kwela Spokes* in 1954. In the four years that followed, he would remain one of the most famous and prolific proponents of this musical style.

The origins of the name *kwela* itself is quite elusive, but it is most commonly translated as "step up," referring to the nickname given to apartheid-era police vehicles. When people were arrested, policemen would order them to "step up" into the vehicle. In the introduction to the famous 1956 track, *Tom Hark*, by Elias and his Zig Zag Jive Flutes, one can hear the voices of a street-gang playing an illegal game of dice. One of the individuals shouts out: "Hier kom die kwela-kwela! Stop [...] want hulle gaan ons bo vat!" It has been speculated that white consumers of the music hearing the word *kwela* in this introduction applied it to the style of music. However the word *kwela*, sometimes spelled *quela*, can also refer to a specific style of dance and can be found in the titles of tracks recorded many years prior to *Tom Hark*.

Kwela Sax, recorded in 1958, is the b-side of *Big Joe Special* and, according to Rob Allingham, this record marks the first time that Spokes Mashiyane played on saxophone. As with his earlier *Ace Blues*, *Big Joe Special* was a sales phenomenon. The record became the trendsetting hit of that year and would inspire a whole new style of music. Sax jive—latter called *mbaqanga*—would dominate South African urban music for the next twenty years. Spokes Mashiyane, after his successes with Trutone Records and their Quality and Rave labels, was lured away by Gallo Records in 1958. At Gallo he became the first black musician to receive

royalties from his recordings.

Political exclusions aside, I could not resist including in the print series the Zonophone record of *Marching on Pretoria*. This is the earliest recording in my full collection and probably dates from around 1901-03. The song by Ian Calquhoun dates from the Second Anglo-Boer war and is sung from an overtly British, patriotic perspective.

After trying to find out more information about the record, I came across a thread on the web (at mudcat.org) discussing the origins of the song *Marching to Pretoria*. The discussion on the website traced the earliest history of the song, via Baden-Powell's scouts groups, to British forces in South Africa, though no one knew the original British lyrics as sung by British soldiers. A sanitized English version of the Afrikaans song was popularized by Joseph Marais, who introduced it to American radio audiences on his NBC show in 1939. In his book *World of Folk Songs*, Marais explains that the song was sung by both sides during the Boer War. Various contributors to the web discussion go on to tell stories of variations of the song from many parts of the world such as *Swimming to Victoria* in Canada and so on. Confused by the subtle distinction between "to" and "on" Pretoria, I joined in the discussion.

Growing up, I was often a member of the school choir, and I can remember singing on many occasions the famous Afrikaans folk song *Marching to Pretoria*. In retrospect it befuddles me that the lyrics would be in both English and Afrikaans. I had always heard the song as "to" and not "on" Pretoria. But I was struck by the Zonophone version, which most definitely puts Pretoria on the defensive. As the song was popularized in Afrikaans, I suspect it was more politically correct to shift the emphasis to going to Pretoria rather than attacking it.

This British patriotic song is different from the Afrikaans version both in lyric and melody. It is also sung from a home front





perspective rather than from the war front. Perhaps it too could have been derived from the battle version. But in any event, it is the “Hurrah!” in the Josef Marais version at the end of “We are marching to Pretoria, Pretoria, hurruh!” that makes me think that the various versions are historically linked. The “Hoorah!” in the British version is definitely the most catchy part—the hook if you like—and I suspect that, sung on battlefields, it might have been the thing that soldiers most responded to—Afrikaans or English.

Perhaps there is some irony on my part in including the *Zonophone* print in the series. The recording was made in England, the disc in Germany, and the singer is most definitely not South African. This disc would have only existed in South Africa as an import. In my research into early South African recording history, it was interesting to discover that businessmen like Eric Gallo (the founder of Gallo Records) would seldom record music by English-speaking South Africans, preferring tracks in Afrikaans, Zulu, Xhosa, and other African languages. The rub was that “superior” music in English was imported from the “homeland” and the United States; and therefore there was no market for local colonial culture. In some ways, I wonder if this attitude of not supporting local talent might have contributed to an English-speaking white culture of displacement. That is a culture with very few local icons that became obsessed with “overseas” and continually referred to England as “back home”.

But saying that there were few English-speaking musicians documented in early South African recorded history is a vast oversimplification. In my research, I was fascinated to discover that many icons of early Afrikaans music were not actually Afrikaans speakers. Some English, some Scots changed their names to appeal to an Afrikaans market, knowing that music by “Rooinekke”, according to Ralph Trewhela, would be dismissed. Artists like Wouter De

Wet en sy Voorslagorkes, were actually run by an Englishmen, named Walter Swanson; Les Kelly became Les Meintjies and so on.

In 1938, Pieter de Waal of the SABC approached Hendrik Susan about forming a band that would re-constitute an Afrikaans music in the form of a “boereorkes” for radio. These were the early days of Afrikaans broadcasting. The state-run SABC had only been formed in 1936 as an official act of parliament, after an investigation by Herzog into the financial dealings of its commercial predecessor, the ABC. South African radio prior to this time was dominated by English programming but, in 1937, two services were established in English and Afrikaans. Of the six members of Hendrik Susan’s band, three were English and had to change their names accordingly; and the music they played marked the beginning of what became known as “boeremusiek”.

Hendrik Susan and his band became political symbols when they chose to follow and broadcast each night from the 1938 centenary celebrations of the Great Trek. They were so successful that, for many years, they became identified with the National Party. Perhaps with some irony, it is interesting to note that Susan in his earlier years had performed (on sax and violin) with the Jazz Maniacs—Solomon ‘Zuluboy’ Cele and Wilson Silgee’s band mentioned above—at the Orange Grove.

Blikkiesdorp Vastrap by Hendrik Susan en sy Orkes is included in the print series on the HMV label—also known as His Master’s Voice—a choice on my part showing perhaps a little political irony. The famous dog and trumpet logo on the record is remarkably “censored” by a piece of cello-tape bearing the owners name, “Barker”.

• left: *Zonophone*, 2010.
digital print, 78”x 78”, edition: 2 + 1 artist proof.
Epson HDR ink on Hahnemühle Museum Etching Fine Art Paper on Sintra.
Anderson Gallery, Richmond, VA.
• below: Installation view of *Records*, 2010.
Artist Proof Edition
Anderson Gallery, Richmond, VA.
• bottom: *His Master’s Voice*, 2010.
digital print, 78”x 78”, edition: 2 + 1 artist proof.
Epson HDR ink on Hahnemühle Museum Etching Fine Art Paper on Sintra.
Anderson Gallery, Richmond, VA.

