

2010

Beyond the watch and the pen Public art in Paramaribo

“And between and around all these monuments rush the townspeople, except at night and the early hours of the morning, when Paramaribo is seen at its best. If monuments are ‘images of history’, then the people of Suriname appear not to have been poorly endowed.”

— Albert Helman, 1977

October 2008. There is an air of excitement in Paramaribo. The proprietor of a café on Waterkant is polishing his bar and mopping the wooden floor. Water streams out of the door, forming large puddles in the street. There are no customers yet, but the owner is setting the tone for the day. Ear-splitting reggae blasts from his boom-box. Capleton, the supreme voice of black consciousness, is applauding the rise of Barack Obama.

*People want change so dem sent fi Obama
Tony Blair and George Bush and him
drama
Everyday dem a search fi Osama
And they can't find him pon di corner!*

Obama T-shirts are taking over from hip-hop and reggae shirts in shop windows along Domineestraat. ‘Obama for President’ T-shirts had flown over the counter the previous evening in the artists’ café Tori Oso on Frederik Derbystraat. A large screen shows John Coltrane playing a mellow version of *My Favourite Things*; the nostalgic soundtrack recalls memories of the late 1960s.

A hundred yards past the commercial area of Waterkant, near the market, dozens of minibuses are parked in the bright sunlight. Travellers wait patiently for them to set off. Portraits painted on the minibuses add to the general atmospheric disorder of the car park, providing an illustrated history of the legacy that Don Drummond, Count Ossie and Bob Marley left to the Caribbean. All the subgenres of reggae are represented on Paramaribo’s buses. There is ‘culture’ (Morgan Heritage), ‘dance-hall’ (Beenie Man), ‘slackness’ (Elephant Man) and ‘black consciousness’ (Capleton). The buses stopped being mobile sound systems long ago, when government regulations put a stop to the huge speakers that used to be installed at the back. The portraits, too, seem to have been standardized and to have originated from the moulds of a single artist. The landscape of posters in the streets reflects the same love of Jamaican popular culture. The newest ones advertise forthcoming concerts of Morgan Heritage, Movado, Sizzla and Mr Vegas in the large Flamboyant Park.

Obama and reggae provide the dominant notes in Paramaribo's public space, but once you leave the main thoroughfares you find far more diversity. The main market overlooking the Suriname River is a sultry intercultural *favela* of narrow alleyways, steps and stalls, and corners where people gather to gossip. The omnipresent music takes many different forms here too: chutney, *bhangra*, *kaseko* and *kawina* mingle with local reggae. Dozens of CD shops sell illegally copied music: at the Royal Music Center I buy a pile of CDs with titles like *Sranang Hits Volume 19* and *Faya: Sranang Dancehall*. Taxis have a distinct preference for Latin American music. Digital merengue, salsa, reggaeton and cumbia alternate with Dutch-language hits by Guus Meeuwis and Jan Smit. In the restaurant of Kersten's, the famous department store on the corner of Steenbakkerijstraat and Domineestraat, the entire musical repertoire is Dutch. Here as throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, the local music world has sprouted a flourishing cottage industry. Not only are CD prints, sleeves, posters and T-shirts produced with varying degrees of care, but the music itself also tends to be made in home studios with a single synthesizer and a drum computer. This simple approach often produces real gems, such as *Suma Na Yu*, sung by Jo Ann & Tranga Rugie.

A new trend arrived along with the thousands of Brazilian *garimpeiros*, gold-diggers who are trying their luck in Suriname, and whose primitive, chemical prospecting methods pose a threat to the ecosystem of the rainforest. Little Brazilian bars, like the one just behind the popular restaurant 't Vat, have outdoor tables where young men swig large bottles of beer while underage prostitutes relax inside after work. Huge, home-made speakers emit the hard, raw rhythms of *baile* funk — the latest underground genre in Paramaribo. Young MCs rap their texts over samples of the club song of Fluminense Football Club in Rio de Janeiro, mixed with the sound of a pistol being cocked.

Curiously, popular culture scarcely plays any role of significance in the official imagery of the public space. A missed opportunity. Famous Surinamese performers like jazz saxophonist Kid Dynamite (1911-1963) and the singers Max Woiski (1911-1981) and Lieve Hugo (1934-1975) have not been immortalized in monuments or memorials. That is striking, as Paramaribo has the most statues and monuments of the three capitals of the Guianas. Once upon a time, a monumental tribute was erected in memory of Johannes Nicolaas Helstone (1853-1927). This composer of cantatas, psalms and marches was given a somewhat pompous monument at Kerkplein (Church Square) in 1948, but the statue makes a forlorn, neglected impression today. Helstone was the ideal hero of a colonial view of the world whose framework of reference was the European Enlightenment. His mazurka celebrating the birth of Princess Juliana (1909) was famous. His opera *Het pand der goden* ('The house of the gods', 1906) was even translated into German and performed in

Berlin, while the song *Welkom blijde morgen* ('Welcome, happy morning') narrowly missed being chosen as the Surinamese national anthem in 1959.

Suriname also has a significant connection with painting — a Dutch legacy. Much has been written about Nola Hatterman (1899-1984), who gave her name to the art school next to Fort Zeelandia. This Dutch artist and actress (whose career included performances with the company *Rotterdams Toneel*) inspired gifted young artists to achieve their potential and helped to create a flourishing school of painting in Suriname. Hundreds of children, many of them from underprivileged backgrounds, have since been taught drawing and painting at the Nola Hatterman Art Academy, which was established after her death. The academy's current director, the artist Rinaldo Klas, was one of those whom Hatterman's enthusiasm for painting inspired. This brings to mind the famous Alpha Boys' School in Kingston, Jamaica. Starting in 1892, when this Catholic school acquired a brass band, the white Sisters of Mercy made music education the core element of their teaching programme, laying the foundations for the biggest music industry in the Caribbean.

But unlike Jamaica, Suriname — a country isolated both geographically and in terms of mindset — has never offered many career opportunities for professional artists. Even today, many talented artists end up doing commercial work painting advertisements and decorating buses. Painting, here, tends to be a leisure activity. Paramaribo's urban landscape is littered with marvellous and colourful, if short-lived, murals, advertising products and services. Unfortunately, few recognize the value of this medium and its days seem to be numbered. That may change, as Chandra van Binnendijk, Paul Faber and Tammo Schuringa are due to publish a study of street art in Suriname in 2010. New forms of advertising, such as digital prints and billboards, are not only supplanting murals but are also proliferating boldly and taking over the public space. For instance, cut-throat competition between mobile phone providers is taking over the streets. Patrick Tjon Jaw Chong, the director of the city's Academy of Art and Culture — a teacher training college — bemoans this development. 'The art of mural painting deserves a new boost,' says this former commercial artist, 'it's a terrible waste that we're letting it be swamped by a mass of mediocre ads.'

The influence of this form of public art extends to Rotterdam. Aspects of Surinamese culture were presented here for the first time in 1980, in two huge murals by Ro Heilbron on the arches of the Hofplein railway line. They showed seven Surinamese women, painted against the background of the national flag and combined with an abstract impression of an Indian hut, expressing a mood of revolutionary euphoria. Unfortunately, these unique paintings were sacrificed to a programme of urban renewal, but artworks by Anton Vrede (Noordereiland) and Carlos Blaaker (Virulyplein) still brighten up parts of the city's public space today.

More consequential still, perhaps, is the rapidity with which trends in painting have made themselves felt in the public arena through Rotterdam's graffiti art. The first major crew in the 1980s was Bad Boyz Inc., a group of young men from Rotterdam with roots in Suriname. The main founding members — Faisel Rajjab (Jean), Navin Thakoer (Ates), Aniel Mohanlal (Sher) and Greg Oron (Time) — are all still active as artists today. Thakoer visited Paramaribo as an art school student in 1996 and produced a mural overlooking a desolate building site. Faisel Rajjab published a cookery book, *De avontuurlijke Surinaamse keuken* ('The adventurous cuisine of Suriname', 2005), and recorded his experiences on canvas as well. The high point of this gastronomic series was four separate portraits of cans of Fernandes, a soft drink that is one of Suriname's major export products. This 'Surinamese Warhol' forges an explicit link between painting and advertising images.

Another encounter between street images and the visual arts, this time in Suriname, took place in the work of the Rotterdam artist Jeroen Jongeleen. In 2008 he plastered graffiti slogans in the city where he had spent his youth: Paramaribo. With not a little irony, he sprayed the words 'art in public spaces' on a neglected little concrete structure in the Palmen Gardens — a nocturnal haunt for Paramaribo's junkies. He also added a monumental feature at the corner of Wanicastraat and Sophie Redmondstraat, close to the US Embassy. UNESCO may have declared Paramaribo's old, well-preserved city centre a world heritage site, but the small, wooden workers' houses, many of which have been neglected, do not enjoy that protection. Jongeleen painted one of those unlisted houses completely white, with window frames in light blue — the colour of UNESCO. His action introduced a new element into the visual culture of Paramaribo: 'culture hacking', or the power of art to react to and comment on the surrounding visual culture.

Jongeleen added a dynamic thrust to the art of the public space. And that was badly needed, since a static, *ad hoc* attitude to art in the public space is particularly detrimental to the country's collection of monuments and memorials. Paramaribo may have a rich tradition of sculptures, but there is not much reason to celebrate. There is no *catalogue raisonnée* of this work, and only a handful of assessments of its quality have been produced. Lou Lichtveld, better known as Albert Helman, 1903-1996, attempted a modest analysis of this collection in *Cultureel mozaïek van Suriname* ('Cultural mosaic of Suriname', 1977), at a time when the new republic needed to reassess its heritage from a post-colonial perspective. Helman was the right man for the job. A writer and activist with a strong commitment to social change, he saw himself primarily as a cosmopolitan figure and had an uneasy relationship with the country of his birth. Suriname plays an important role in his oeuvre. Having left for the Netherlands as a boy, he returned to Suriname in the 1950s and was soon appointed to public office. His positions included that of

education minister, besides which he defended Suriname's interests in the United Nations.

Helman did not mince his words in his assessment of Paramaribo's sculpture collection. Descriptions such as 'a ridiculously tall column', 'a rather shabby little monument', 'a huge, horrendous statue', 'ugly little columns', 'the work of a beginner' and 'conventional bust' overshadow the few bright spots that he recognized. He had kind words for the statue of Suriname's Creole Prime Minister, Johan Adolf 'Jopie' Pengel (1916-1970), which was unveiled in 1975. This statue, at Onafhankelijkheids-plein (Independence Square), was produced by the artist Stuart Robles de Medina, who also made the monument to Suriname's autonomy at Spanhoek — which Helman calls 'the city's most artistic and ideological memorial thus far'. Helman cites the statue by the Dutch artist Mari Andriessen in Sivaplein as a high point in the city's collection. It is called *Saamhorigheid 1940-1945* ('Solidarity 1940-1945') and was unveiled by Queen Juliana in 1955.

"The sweetest, yet most inconspicuous, piece of sculpture is a low monument in the intimate, almost triangular-shaped Sivaplein. It shows three little girls, evidently from different ethnic groups, hand in hand. Below them, also in bronze, are three plate-shaped plaques of children. A silent, unobtrusive lesson and a loving contribution to solidarity on the part of one of the Netherlands' best-known monumental sculptors. Do people look at it attentively — and understand it?"

Queen Juliana intended this sculpture as a tribute to Suriname in gratitude for its help during the Second World War. Cynthia McLeod (whose father, Dr J.H.E. Ferrier, was Suriname's last governor) wrote a number of books about slavery and colonialism in Suriname, and had a rather different idea about the supposed motif of solidarity. She writes in *Herinneringen: Suriname-Oorlog-Holland-Suriname* (Recollections: Suriname-War-Holland-Suriname, 1993):

Clothes, especially clothes. Not used clothes, oh no — what Surinamese mother would send used clothes to Holland? The main thing was that the clothes should be warm, so people bought flannel and got sewing. Even families that had to count every penny donated other things as well. Tins full of peanut biscuits, coconut biscuits and cornflour biscuits were packed in crates and shipped. And let's not forget cocoa, our own, nutritious, home-made cocoa; that was just what those anaemic little children in Holland needed to boost their strength. K'e Poti! Do they remember? Oh, I expect they forgot long ago.

Two monumental art traditions dominate the public spaces of Paramaribo: colonial and post-colonial leaders immortalized in bronze and stone (or 'ninnies on plinths', as the philosopher Awee Prins once quipped), and monumental art on or outside

government buildings and businesses, closely related to the art that was created in the Netherlands after 1951 in response to the government-funded drive for art in public spaces. The goal of spending one per cent of each construction budget on art became a national and municipal policy requirement. Decorations, adornments on façades, mosaics, tympani, woodcarvings and metal sculptures can all be found in Paramaribo. This is largely outdated, supply-driven art, of a type that is now under threat from bulldozers in the Netherlands as well. This art has become a somewhat curious collection of museum pieces, which says more about the Dutchification of Paramaribo and the European civilization offensive than it does about the special position of Suriname in Latin America and the Caribbean. Indeed, the frequently shabby and neglected state of these works is clear evidence of their sad fate.

If the critic Michael Kelly is right when he says that countries with authoritarian governments produce large numbers of artworks for public spaces but little public art, this observation certainly applies to the formal visual culture of Paramaribo. The vitality of the political culture of sculptures is noticeable — not surprisingly for a young country that, when it achieved independence in 1975, suddenly found itself landed with monuments for the Dutch royal family, former colonial ministers and deputy governors. It was a landscape of ‘forgotten or half-forgotten officials’, in Albert Helman’s apt phrase. In this context, the removal of the statue of Queen Wilhelmina was more than simply an illustration of the change in the political situation.

For that dismantling was almost a sacred event, which marked the public humiliation of the colonial power more than any other action (such as the renaming of Oranjeplein — referring to the House of Orange, the Dutch royal family — Onafhankelijkheidsplein, Independence Square). A wonderful photograph on the internet shows a crane literally removing the statue of Wilhelmina from her pedestal after it has been sawn loose. A thick rope has been knotted below her breasts and around her neck and then attached to the hook of the crane. A Surinamese labourer has taken her place by crawling onto the vacant plinth. He pushes the statue triumphantly away from the plinth as the crane hoists the queen upwards. The event took place in the middle of the night of 21 November 1975 — as if this was an act that could not bear the light of day. Little historical knowledge is needed to see a ritual inversion of Billie Holiday’s *Strange Fruit* in this performance. The removal of the statue in the form of a political performance was the young republic’s first autonomous work of art.

The statue of Queen Wilhelmina had been unveiled at Oranjeplein on 31 August 1923. The Dutch sculptor, Gerard van Lom (1872-1953), had surpassed himself and is still best known for this monument. The statue in Paramaribo was generally

considered to be the best statue of Wilhelmina, but Albert Helman felt it had 'little artistic value' and put the epithet 'majestic' in inverted commas. That opinion must also have played a part in the choice of the new location for the statue. 'A less prominent position' was chosen. But that is a euphemism. The monument, glued back on its plinth, was dropped off unceremoniously behind Fort Zeelandia. Here Wilhelmina took her place among the seventeenth-century Dutch cannons that had been banished to this spot with a similar nonchalance. Once the glowing focal point of Paramaribo, she now directs her wistful gaze across the Suriname River.

The vacant pedestal in Oranjeplein, now Onafhankelijkheidsplein, was given a statue of Jopie Pengel. That was a political act, but Albert Helman saw traces of irony in the design. Pengel had been in charge of three ministries in the 1960s and he regularly caused conflicts between them. It was a schizophrenic situation. For instance, as Minister of Home Affairs he did not hesitate to call the Minister of Finance to account. Helman remarked pointedly that Pengel's statue was 'appropriately positioned' by placing him 'with his back significantly turned to the dominating Ministry of Finance'.

Another monument to a politician was unveiled next to this statue in 2002: a tribute to the Hindustani party leader and parliamentary chairman Jagernath Lachmon (1916-2001). The artist entrusted with this commission, Erwin de Vries, became embroiled in a conflict with the organizing committee. He grumbled that the planned location of his statue was ridiculously close to the Pengel statue (De Vries took the view that works of art need space), and for its part, the committee took issue with his artistic interpretation. 'We don't see the watch and pen on the statue,' said the irritated committee, which saw the inclusion of Lachmon's trademark accessories as a criterion for quality. The height of Lachmon's pedestal was the subject of a heated debate, just as the height of Wilhelmina's pedestal had served as a frame of reference for Pengel's pedestal.

De Vries also produced a bust of the economic pioneer and government minister Frank Essed (1919-1988) in 1996 and, more recently, the statue of Henck Arron (1936-2000). Arron was the leader of the National Party of Suriname (NPS) and one of the instrumental figures in bringing about independence. The statue stands in the garden of the party buildings, next to the entrance to the Palmen Gardens and opposite the President's office. While the statues display respectable craftsmanship (and the Pengel in particular has a charming air of vitality), political pressure and funding prevented a better analysis of the right location and curtailed De Vries's artistic freedom, as he himself has acknowledged. In an interview with the artist George Struikelblok (2008), he said: 'I've been wanting to make free works in Suriname for years but they always refuse. I hope to see a real professionalization of art in the public space at some point.' In 2009, Suriname's

best-known artist was given a retrospective in the Kunsthal in Rotterdam.

These overbearing limitations on commissions are also reflected in monuments expressing Suriname's multiculturalism — the so-called immigration monuments. While sculptures like *Sana Budaya* (the glistening monument to Javanese immigration created by the Surinamese artist Soeki Irodikromo), the statue of Gandhi and the charming monument *Baba and Mai* on Kleine Combéweg (a monument to British-Indian immigration by Krishna Persad Khedoe) do not clash with their surroundings, they have little vitality and are too dutiful to be really pleasing — they primarily serve a social function. 'Monuments simply have a quality that attracts more public appreciation than abstract works or art or installations,' comments George Struikelblok insightfully in his discussion of public art in Suriname. 'This is because a monument often serves a function in the quest for recognition by a disadvantaged or traumatized section of the population.'

Suriname has certainly grasped the fact that a monument does not have to be a work of art. The many memorial trees it has planted are evidence of that. Countless flamboyant, yellow poui, neem, and mahogany trees commemorate as many national events. Wilhelmina's accession to the throne and the birth of Princess Beatrix are commemorated with trees, as are black emancipation, the abolition of slavery, and Indian migration. Trees exemplify 'slow but steady growth', wrote Helman; they are 'more delightful than the ugly pillars you keep coming across and most definitely more useful; but they do not speak the language of history, not even when they rustle gently in the trade winds.'

The monuments that deal with the abolition of slavery in 1863 are more moving. Suriname's most famous monument is undoubtedly *Kwakoe*, created in 1963 by the artist 'papa' Jozef Ludwig Klas (1923-1996). The bronze statue, at the corner of Sophie Redmondstraat and Zwartenhovenbrugstraat, shows a black slave breaking his chains. The statue was called *Kwakoe* (Wednesday) because the Netherlands announced the end of slavery on Wednesday 1 July 1863: it was common practice among slaves for children to be named after the day on which they were born.

Kwakoe may have been his most significant work but it was not his best. Jozef Klas, who was exhibiting work in Rotterdam as early as 1972, created a very special, frequently forgotten statue in Paramaribo's public space: the 'little boy' in the Palmen Gardens. The statue is unique because its unusual theme differs so much from the standard political, social and demographic agenda dominating most of Paramaribo's public art. The little boy is also unique because no other work of art in the city expresses selfless love, tenderness and comfort as well as this modest, inconspicuous little statue on its plinth amongst the greenery. Kneeling, hands folded in front of his chest, the little boy gazes into the distance from his

plinth.

The little boy is Ruben Klas, the artist's son, who shut himself in a fridge during a game of hide-and-seek and suffocated to death in 1966. Jozef Klas's statue both commemorated his own child and served as an admonition to other parents. 'It is a warning to the Surinamese community to take better care of its children,' says an accompanying caption. It is precisely this combination of private sorrow and public penance, expressed by the artist's craftsmanship, which makes the little boy one of the most significant works of art in the public domain. Unfortunately, the statue fell victim to vandalism. The penis was knocked off the statue a few years ago. But the statue will be restored as part of the intended renovation of the Palmen Gardens, a government spokesman said in the newspaper *De Ware Tijd*. Surprisingly, the little boy is not included in Albert Helman's survey. Was he not interested in an artwork that was not part of the socio-political debate?

A new generation of artists does value such work, although social issues remain high on the agenda. The artist Kurt Nahar constructed a striking sculpture in Paramaribo: a shabby, mobile Surinamese *roti* fast-food shop (2008). The aim was to explore poverty, entrepreneurship and creativity in the urban population of Suriname. In *Tip-Tip*, George Struikelblok made a series of monumental sculptures: gigantic sandals dispersed around Suriname (2008). The Javanese had introduced sandals of this type to Suriname in 1890. The *teklé* were soon bastardized to 'tip-tip' by the local people; they were made out of wood and discarded bicycle tyres. The leader of the new generation is Marcel Pinas, who also made a great impression at the Netherlands' National Academy of Art in Amsterdam and later had two solo shows at The Hague and Schiedam (2009).

Pinas, a descendant of Surinamese Maroons, modified Suriname's landscape of memorials by focusing on the disadvantaged Maroon population in a series of monuments. In 2006 he created a work for the 'Day of the Maroons' on the corner of Arronstraat and Pengelstraat: a traditional canoe sawn in half and placed on a simple, cement pedestal. Slaves used such little boats to escape to the interior of Suriname. The Day of the Maroons refers to 10 October 1760, when Maroon leaders and the colonial administration signed a peace treaty. Pinas built an intriguing installation in the square in front of the Nola Hatterman Art Academy; painted barrels display the language and culture of the Maroons in the public space of Paramaribo. His biggest commission was for a monument commemorating the victims of Moiwana. The Maroon village of Moiwana was virtually wiped out on 29 November 1986 by a National Army patrol looking for Ronnie Brunswijk's rebels. Thirty-nine men, women and children died and hundreds crossed the Maroni River to go into hiding in French Guiana. The monumental work consists of thirty-eight different, unique columns on which the names of the victims are engraved in Afaka

— once the language of the N'dyuka Maroons. A tall central column is surmounted by a Maroon symbol. This column commemorates Difjenjo Misidjan — the first victim at Moiwana. When it was unveiled in 2008, President Ronald Venetiaan delivered an official apology for the massacre, for the first time, on behalf of the Surinamese government.

The work of Marcel Pinas is closely interwoven with Maroon culture. After attending the Nola Hatterman Art Academy, he left for Jamaica. 'There I discovered who I am, and that I must depict my innermost feelings.' The Maroons and the Afaka script have been the focus of his work ever since. His stay in the Netherlands, too, led to a new stage of development. Pinas kept to the Maroon theme but added something new as well. 'He is constantly combining elements in new ways and thus gradually constructing his own world, which partly overlaps with Maroon culture but is still separate from it — a visualization of an ideal Maroon world that currently only exists in Pinas's head but is slowly putting out roots in the "real" world,' according to Hans den Hartog Jager in the Dutch daily newspaper *NRC Handelsblad* (10 June 2009). He continues, 'And since as a viewer you are never sure where the anthropology ends and the art begins, your interest is aroused, and you become curious to learn about both Pinas's work and about Maroon culture'. It is precisely this exploration of the tension between a social agenda and art that Suriname seems to need, for only then can dynamic art in the public space progress beyond 'history in sculptures', as Helman termed Paramaribo's collection in 1977. By then, perhaps, quibbles about watches and pens will also be a thing of the past.

In 2009, the artists Marcel Pinas, Kurt Nahar and Paul Woei were invited to make a sketch for a monument to commemorate the December Murders in Paramaribo. In 1982, fifteen Surinamese were tortured and shot dead in Fort Zeelandia by the Desi Bouterse regime. The initial idea was to put the work on the plateau next to the Fort — yes, the same place where poor old Queen Wilhelmina is still looking out over the old cannons, the Jules Wijdenbosch Bridge, and the wreck of the Goslar, the German ship that sank in 1940 and has since served as an artificial island in the Suriname River. Wilhelmina's statue is located in a guilty landscape. If you were to trace an imaginary line from the bridge to Hotel Torarica, you would be linking a series of statues that could be read as an intriguing, and dramatic, account of Paramaribo's history. New monuments should not just be experienced as incidents; they should also be open to a dynamic interpretation in the context of the entire collection. There is much to gain, too, from paying more attention to the choice of location — a sense of place. To date, the choice seems too often to be random. These are the challenges that might be presented to those deciding on the new December monument. And where will Wilhelmina go this time?

Nobody at the tables outside café Tori Oso is bothered about Wilhelmina's statue.

Young people stand around some parked cars in Frederik Derbystraat, discussing the background to a schoolboy stabbing in Domineestraat earlier that day. Digital reggae with a loud bass line blasts from one of the cars. It sounds like Junior Kelly, or maybe Junior Reid. Some musicians are plugging their instruments into amplifiers and a mixing table on the pavement in front of the café. A jam session is planned in the evening. Jazz, of course. Behind us, on the big screen, a thoughtful Jimmy Smith in a smart suit is playing a solo on his Hammond B3 — it is a nicely-angled recording of a concert. Five older black men sit silently on the benches in front of the video screen. And they are all wearing Obama shirts.