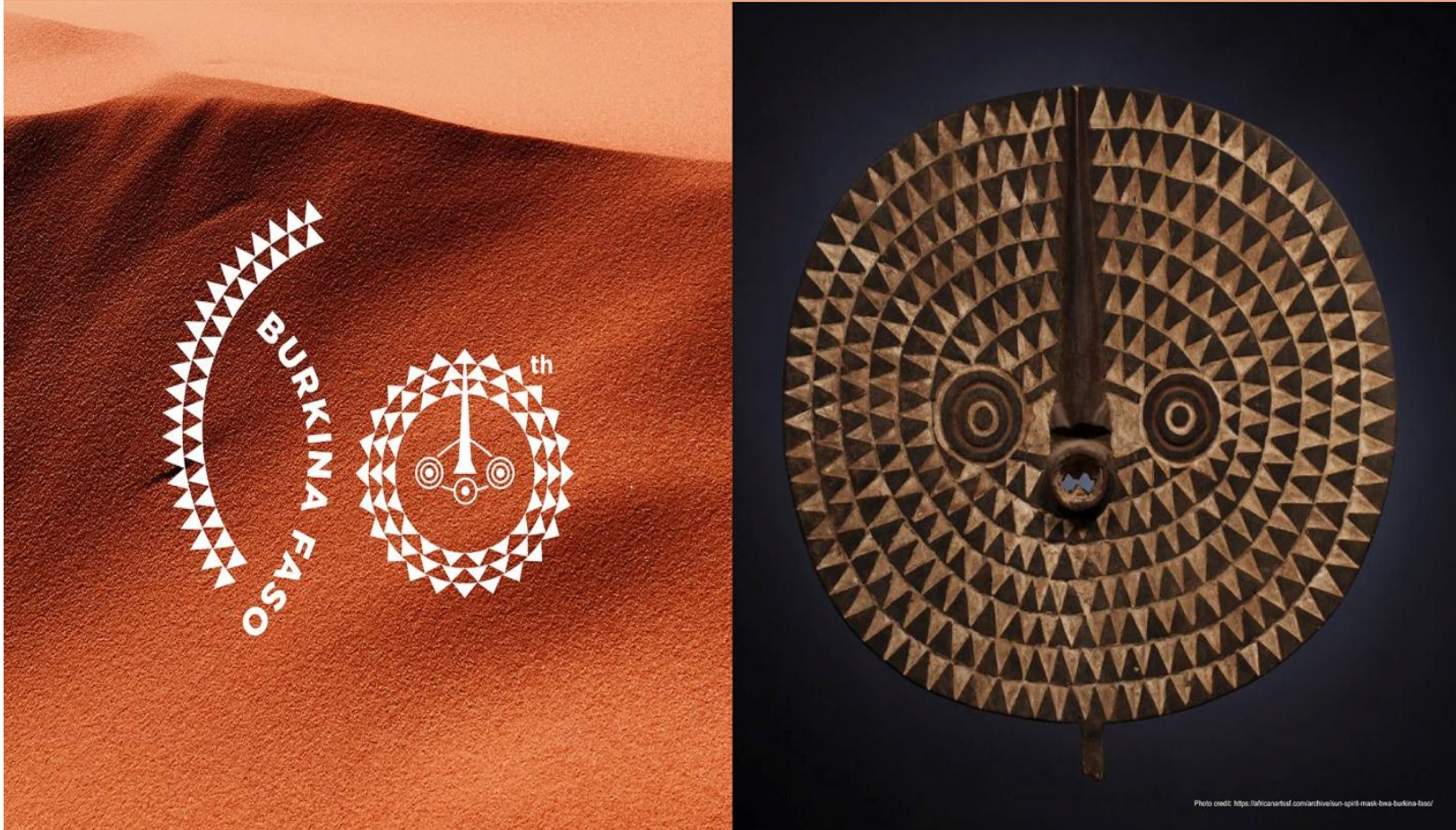


Design for All



"The Afrikan Design Issue"

Guest Editor : Prof Saki Mafundikwa

February 2021 Vol-16 No-2

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Saki Mafundikwa

Professor Mafundikwa has been a graphic designer, author, and educator for over thirty years. As a globally recognized expert on African writing systems, he has lectured, exhibited, and given workshops all over the world, including:

5-week Zoom Workshop, University of the Arts, Philadelphia, PA, 2021

Type design workshop, Greenside Design Centre, Johannesburg, SA, 2020

Speaker Annual Art History Lecture, Ringling College, Sarasota, FL, 2017

Type design workshop (with Rod Cavazos) WWU, Bellingham, WA, 2016

Speaker ICO-D International Design Congress, Gwangju, S. Korea, 2015

Keynote speaker Autodesk University (Education), Las Vegas, 2014

Speaker TED2013, Long Beach, 2013

Poster design & speaker Rio+20, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 2012

Type design workshop ICOGRADA Multiverso Conference, Turin, 2008

Speaker, Tasmeeem Design Conference, Doha, Qatar, 2006

Speaker CongresodeTipografia, Valencia, Spain, 2006

Speaker, Typo Berlin, 2005

Speaker ISEA 2004, Helsinki, Finland, 2004

Kinetic type design workshop Intuit Lab, Paris, 2002

UNESCO Workshop in Graphic Design and Textiles, Uganda, 1999

Speaker, ICOGRADA Johannesburg, 2001

Graphic Artists from Around the World, Echirrolles, France, 2000

Speaker Univesdidad ISESI, Cali, Colombia, 2000

Speaker London College of Printing, 1996

In addition to founding Zimbabwe's first graphic design and new media college – ZIVA, Zimbabwe Institute of Vigital Arts, he wrote and published a comprehensive review of African writing systems (Afrikan Alphabets, 2004) He's currently working on an updated edition that should be out this year, 2021.

Born and raised in Zimbabwe, he left his home country in the 1970s at the height of its civil war and arrived in the United States in January 1980. After graduating from Indiana University in 1983 with a B.A. in both Graphic Design and Telecommunications, he was accepted into the M.F.A. program in Graphic Design at Yale University, where he was taught by Paul Rand, Bradbury Thompson, Armin Hoffman and Alvin Eisenman. Upon completing his Master's degree, he moved to New York City where he worked as an Art Director, and ran his own design studio. Some of his clients included Random House, St. Martin's Press, Warner Brothers and Island Records.

While in New York, he taught design at Cooper Union for three years, creating a course, "Writing Systems from Non-Western Societies," inspired by his MFA thesis on writing systems in Africa – this was the

birth of his Afrikan Alphabets book. He had realized during the research for his thesis that there was no group of people anywhere on the planet who did not devise some form of writing or record keeping, yet relatively few of these are covered in contemporary graphic design courses. The Cooper Union course was wildly popular, sitting very well with their diverse student body. In the final year of his work there, the course morphed into "Experimental Typography," which is still being offered at Cooper Union today.

After 12 years of working in New York, he returned to his home country, now the independent state of Zimbabwe, and opened the Zimbabwe Institute of Visual Arts (ZIVA) in 1999. Though he intended for the school to be an African Bauhaus, that dream was railroaded by politics as prospective funders balked at Robert Mugabe's autocratic rule of Zimbabwe. Despite the challenges of running a school in a country with a dysfunctional economy, many of his students have found career success, abroad, in the US, Australia, Europe and closer to home – hired by prominent South African design firms and other corporations.

In the past decade he has turned some of his attention to documentary filmmaking. His first film, Shungu: The Resilience of a People (2009) has won awards, notably the Ousmane Sembene Prize at Zanzibar International Film Festival and Best Documentary at Kenya International Film Festival. It has screened all over the world, where it has been received very well by both critics and audiences, except in his own country where it was banned. The film follows the brutal Zimbabwean presidential election of 2008, during the campaigns of Mugabe and Morgan Tsvangirai, the leader of the opposition party. Shungu also explores the everyday survival

practices undertaken by the Zimbabwean people as they cope with political and economic strife.

He lives, works and farms in Harare.

Guest Editorial

I have dubbed this issue, "The Afrikan Design Issue" and contains articles by members of PADI – *The Pan African Design Institute* which is a two-year old multidisciplinary continent-wide initiative. I am an executive board member and such an issue would not have been possible without PADI which has gathered the designers of Afrika under one umbrella. This issue, therefor, pays homage to PADI! Although it's been always there in Afrika, Design is something designers on the continent are on a mission to own, we are beginning to realize that Design was actually born in Afrika! I'll quote briefly from an article I wrote for a PADI publication on how we have to gain confidence as far as Design is concerned:

During PADI's maiden Afrika Design Day in Johannesburg this past February, I was part of a panel that included Juliet Kavishe, Sam Nii Adjaidoo, Peter Ekanem and moderated by Felix Ofori Dartey. We interrogated the concept of "Afrikan Design" and concluded that what Afrikan designers lack is "confidence" in their work. This is mainly caused by the widely held notion that design is a "Western" concept. There is a reason why this is so: up until recently, most design pedagogy was Western. Students from around the globe went to school and were taught European design and if they were to be regarded as "good" designers, why, they had to master the grid, know Swiss design, be adept at the Roman Alphabet and be admirers of the Bauhaus and Modernism. Those were the rules and if you ignored them, you flunked as a designer. Period.

Afrikan design was marginalized, attracting labels like “primitive”, “tribal”, “craft”, “folklore”, etc. This is true for design from those parts of the world referred to as the “developing world”. Students from advanced and older traditions of design like China and Japan, had to re-learn design from a Western perspective if they were to pass or excel in the Western design classroom. The 21st Century has seen a retreat from that approach and seen the emergence of different voices in the design fields – a trans-disciplinary approach where there really are no discernable boundaries between the disciplines. The term of choice for that movement is “Decolonization”. That’s the buzzword *du jour* and it’s spreading like wild fire especially on college campuses across the globe. It is a good thing because it also stands for freedom from the yoke of political colonization, from which the masses from the developing world have suffered.

We are bombarded with Western standards of beauty and propaganda in every form of life – the media, education, but mostly the media! We never see ourselves on TV (although to be fair, that is changing albeit very slowly with many countries encouraging the creation of local content – Nigeria is leading that charge with the much acclaimed “Nollywood”). We see a definite lack of confidence especially by our women who straighten their hair or wear the hair of dead Asian and Brazilian women (weaves), which is a multi billion dollar industry! Even women from countries that are characterized as “poor” – they will find the money to buy these weaves from mostly Asian (Chinese) shops. Yet, in the not-too-distant-past, Afrikan women used to wear their hair in natural styles and designs

that were incredibly beautiful. There were distinct *Afrikan* hair styles, whose designs were distinctly *Afrikan*.

At the PADI celebration during my talk, I emphasized the importance of our Indigenous Knowledge Systems, that are our wealth in terms of innovation, ingenuity, intellectual capital and creativity. That is our Intellectual Property, there for our inspiration and for us to reference as we work on our designs. The West has countless books that students of design can reference; while for us, our libraries are the old people in our families and communities who are the custodians of our IKS and IP – the gatekeepers and the living libraries. We also must lay to rest the myth that Afrika had no writing – Afrika invented writing! Afrika invented civilization! Ancient Egypt was ruled by Afrikans who are responsible for all these achievements. This knowledge spread southward to Nubia and much later to the other parts of Afrika. There are monuments in different parts of Afrika that are visible evidence of this. On top of this, Timbuktu gave humanity its first university and there were manuscripts that survived up to this day that attest to this feat, but unfortunately, many of them were burned and destroyed by Islamic extremists just mere years ago during the “Al Qaeda” murderous rampage in Mali and environs. Turns out, these were just war games engineered by the West to destabilize the region so they could go in and loot the mineral wealth of that region. The more things change, the more they remain the same.

A huge part of the work that needs to be done is writing! We have to write books about Afrikan Design so as to provide the younger generations with resources that they can reference. Western Design

has volumes written by them for them, now it's time we write books for us, by us: FUBU. It's imperative that if we are to speak of Afrikan Design, we also have to provide the resources to guide the youth. This is what I heard mostly from young designers from home and those in the diaspora, especially after my TED2013 Talk: "Professor, you talk of us looking within, but when we do, we don't find anything." I realized there and then that it is an urgent need to create those resources. I had mooted a book project that I tentatively titled, "*The Afrikan Design Textbook*" that had piqued the interest of major UK publisher, Thames and Hudson, but unfortunately, one of the co-writers who had signed on to the project passed away unexpectedly. That put some brakes on the project, but it is a much-needed project. It has to be a book on DESIGN in Afrika, all the design disciplines have to be represented. The idea was to have three writer editors then have essays submitted by designers from the different disciplines. A truly collaborative effort – the African way.

So, with this issue, PADI designers are stepping to the plate and *writing* articles about Design in Afrika! I hope this is the beginning of Design Writing in Afrika!



Batsirai has over 11 years of experience as a design professional with a focus on digital executions. His Bachelor in Computer Science degree coupled with a lifelong passion for design and fine arts manifests into a best of both worlds approach to digital product design. He is currently with Memac Ogilvy, Dubai as an Experience Design Lead, having spent a year at one of the largest banking groups in the Middle East, Emirates NBD, as its Design Systems Lead. It was there he oversaw the implementation of scalable, best-in-class product design methodologies for the whole banking group including retail and wholesale banking platforms, Liv Digital Bank, and E20. Digital Business Bank.

Creating culturally inclusive Design Systems

"Our ability to reach unity in diversity will be the beauty and the test of our civilisation." – Mahatma Gandhi

I am excited to go on this journey with you into the state of digital design today, and what we can do to shape it into something better tomorrow. Now some of you might be thinking..."better" is relative and at its worst subjective, lacking the gravitas of subjective truth to back it up. Well, you can be rest assured that this series will attempt to do just that - offer a subjective truth that charts a path to a richer, more diverse, and down right spicier digital landscape.

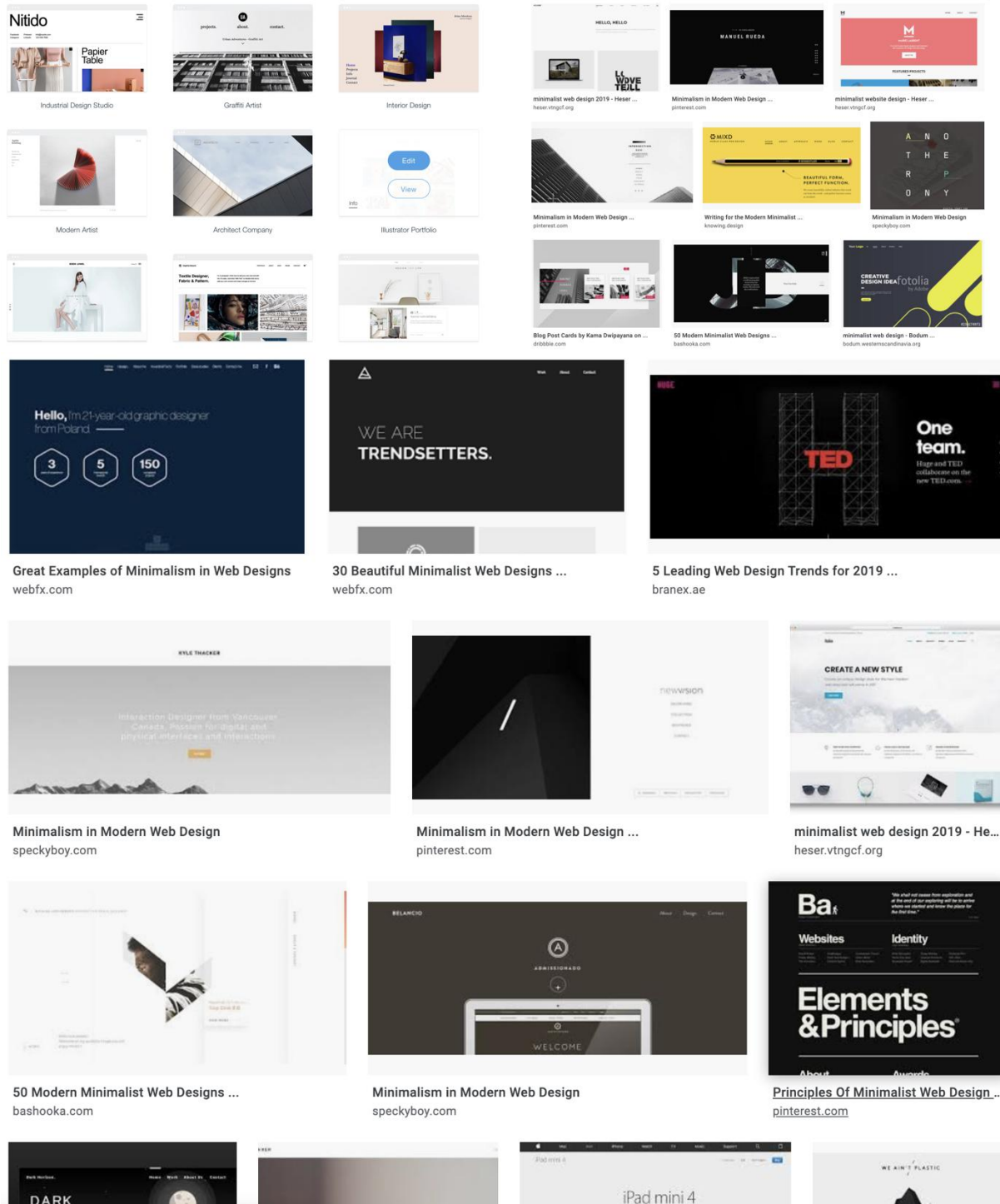
Lets start by going on a visual journey...





This is the world we live in, full of color, texture and vibrant character. Centuries of tradition and creativity have etched out visceral depictions of the different cultures and belief systems around the blue globe we call home.

This is our *physical* world...so how has the state of our *digital* world turned into this?



Where is the color, the texture, the character and more importantly where is the diversity? Words like “clean” and “minimalist” dominate the design world, but I fear in this pursuit of

less is more, we have lost what makes the world an interesting and beautiful place.

"How can you govern a country which has 246 varieties of cheese?" – Charles de Gaulle

And indeed how do you govern a world with possibly millions of cultures? The simple answer is you do not. Diversity is why the human race has flourished as much as it has. I propose instead, that we offer up a set of simple tools, methodologies and examples which encourage free cultural expression as we continue to evolve the digital frontier.

I have begun this journey myself, drawing upon my African heritage as a logical starting point. My hope is to inspire and ignite something within all digital designers, and set them on a path of self discovery that liberates them from the mantra "less is more".

Digital design is evolving, fuelled by the transformation of our societies to becoming digitally native. Designers must be cautious not to lose themselves in the midst of globalization, trends, **Dribbles** and opinions.

Let's discover how using typography and iconography, we can begin to reshape our digital landscape into a richer and more diverse place.

How culture can influence our typography

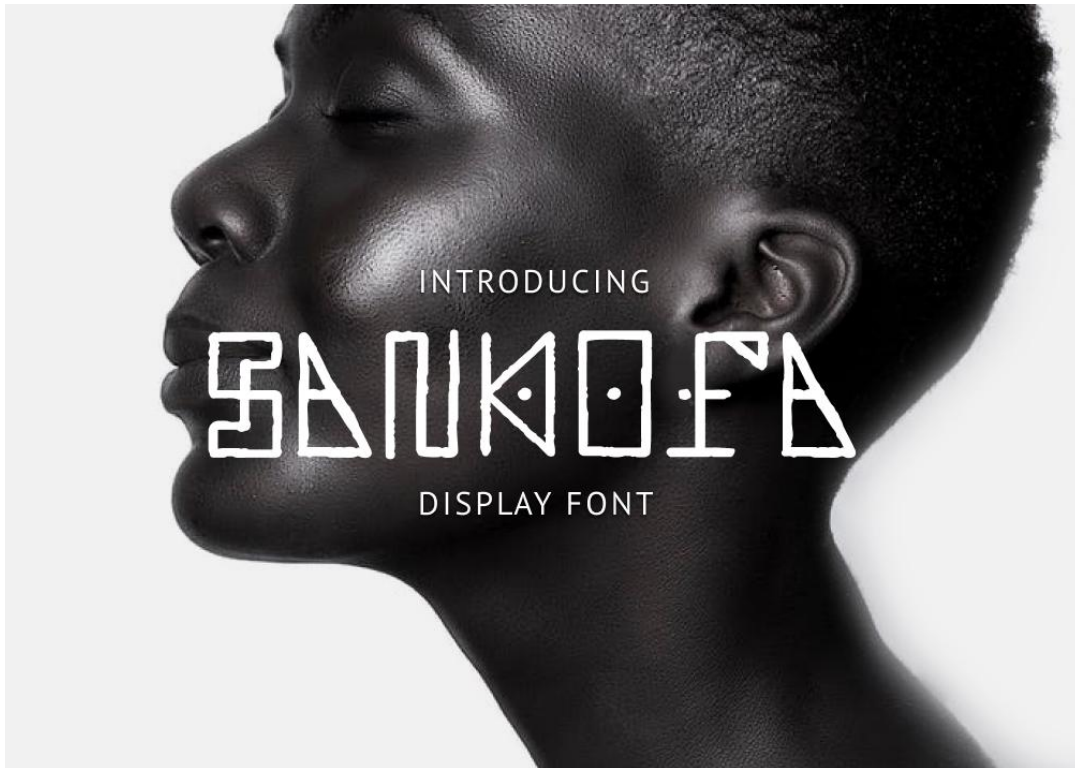
Serif and Sans Serif...to be or not to be?

Typography is such rich art form with longstanding heritage in almost every culture on the planet. Each one with its own character steeped in history and tradition. It is certainly true that function is paramount when it comes to typography in general. Content is how we drive sales and create great user experiences, so our fonts have to be clear, legible and beautiful. I'm looking at you Gotham...

Is there however, a space in design where we can experiment, have fun and express ourselves through type? Yes Display fonts! These group of typefaces are meant for large headline text so they can be more experimental.

Introducing the Sankofa Project

I started the Sankofa project to build design confidence in designers in-order to empower them to champion cultural inclusivity. The flagship display font was created to inject an authentic ethnic style to your designs that will set them apart.



<https://gum.co/yCPuf>



Sankofa icons are designed to give the user interface a more ethnic aesthetic. Their hand drawn look will offer a different look to most other widely used icon sets.



<https://gum.co/DxOdA>

The idea with the Sankofa Design System icon set, is to leverage our traditional rock paintings style and everyday African objects to create a visual language that resonates with the target audience, Africans. Sankofa is itself an Adinkra symbol from Ghana meaning, “Learn from the past”, which is exactly what culturally inclusive design systems aim to do.

But this is not just about Africa...it's about creating a blueprint that other designers can follow to bring their cultural influence into the design space.

Platforms like The Noun Project provide us access to a seemingly limitless supply of icons, but it quickly fails the moment you attempt to diversify the style of your iconography. A simple search for African, or Japanese on Noun leaves much to be desired. How can we improve this? By simply taking ownership and creating iconography that resonates with our cultural diversity as a species.

Some food for thought...

Design Systems can play a big role in making these concepts mainstream. So far we have seen the adoption of design systems at a brand level, but I see an opportunity for cultural adoption of these methodologies.

It has not only been greatly fulfilling, but extremely refreshing to approach product design with fresh eyes, unbridled by the philosophies of minimalism and "less is more". It's a step worth taking and a journey well travelled.



Cheri Hugo

"I am an African womxm, story teller, designer, a writer, teacher, social justice activist, dancer, swimmer, mother, wife, community leader, supporter of dreams, a builder of visions, a creator inspired by the most High, I am haunted, I stand on the dreams of my forefathers, I live my grandmothers wildest dreams..."

Cheri Hugo was born in Bishop Lavis, Cape Town, South Africa in 1980. She received the National Diploma from the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT), Cape Town, in 2002, and HEDHET 2010 and M. Tech 2016 also from CPUT. In 2010, she joined the Department of Graphic Design, CPUT, as a Junior Lecturer. After being appointed as

a Design Teacher/lecture at Belhar High School, Northlink College, Damelin, Rosebank College and Allenby College. These ranged during 2006 to 2009. Thus she has an understanding of a design student from high school through college both public and private and higher education.

She does not believe in the publication method of accreditation but here are just a few of her contributions. Most recently she contributed to a Book chapter for, Teaching in Extended programs which can be down loaded here <http://teachinginecp.com/download-a-copy/>. She is also part of an NRF project , Reconfiguring Higher Education: Doing Academia differently .

Publications: DHET accredited journal publications Garraway, J., Hugo, C., De Waal., B. (2014). Futures studies and scenarios of degrees in universities of technology. Progressio. 36 (1): 191-205.

Conference presentations

Design Develop and Research conference (DDR) , 2015, Mentoring Graphic Design Students, DDR Georgia Atlanta USA, September

First Year Experience conference (FYE), 2016, Mentoring ECP graphic Design students, Johannesburg South Africa, March 2015 & 2016

Non-accredited journal publications

Hugo, V. (2013). Design Degrees for the Future. In Garraway, J. and Rip, A (eds.), University Curriculum and Society Through a Scenario Lens, Paradigms (18): 26-31.

On (un)becoming in academia: a coloured female academic's narratives in post-student protest Higher Education in South Africa

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Abstract

I am embarking on an autoethnographic study, exploring narratives of coloured female academics in a post-student protest era. I am interested in how coloured women negotiate this space, what has been made possible through the unrest and what still holds us back. Autoethnography is an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyse personal experience in order to understand the broader cultural and social experience. This approach challenges colonial ways of doing research and representing others and sees research as a political, socially just and socially-conscious act

Hauntology - a concept explained well from Derrida (1994) - suggests that social-economic and political phenomena, such as apartheid, racism, inequality and injustice are not dead, but haunt and define our presence. My ghosts go back over 300 years when the first slave ships arrived from India and Ceylon. My ghosts have been with me for all my life, my mother's womb, from birth, through growing up, my studies and now my academic life.

In the current context of emotionally charged debates around coloured identity, I aim to explore shifts in how a coloured female academic is engaging with these ghosts of our past and how they may be use to help navigate these still troubled spaces. Weaving stories of my own becoming with black feminist theory, in particular the notions of respectability politics, anger and creative resistance, I will depict what is being made possible in our own academic and personal spaces through these shifts, when we embrace our ghosts, welcome them, free them and us.

Keywords: *Academic identities, coloured identity, autoethnography, decolonisation, counternarratives, hauntology*

Introduction

Hauntology - a concept derived from Derrida (1994) - suggests that social-economic and political phenomena, such as apartheid, racism, inequality and injustice are not dead, but haunt and define our presence. My ghosts go back over 300 years when the first slave ships arrived from India and Ceylon (Erasmus, 2001). My ghosts have been with me for all my life, in my mother's womb, from birth, growing up, studying and now performing an academic life (Lewis, 1996).

Against the current context of emotionally charged debates around decolonisation, positionality and raced (coloured¹) identity, I use narrative to explore how I - as a coloured female academic - engage with these ghosts of our past (materialised in my imaginary as

¹*Coloured is used as an ethnic label for people of mixed ethnic origin, including Khoisan, African, Malay, Chinese, and white.*

ballerinas) and how I might use them to help navigate these troubled spaces.

I have been drawn to ballerinas my whole life. I find ballerinas fascinating: these magical, spiritual creatures with near superpowers. They glide over stages, ghostlike figures who appear to be flying; they mesmerise audiences. When you study the audience, they are spellbound by the ballerinas on stage. Ballerinas are haunted and haunting. Beautiful and mystical. Edgar Degas, a well-known French artist, has managed to depict this in his pastel drawings and oil paintings, the loneliness of these dancers within their complex relationships with each (seen in Figure 1, the dance class).

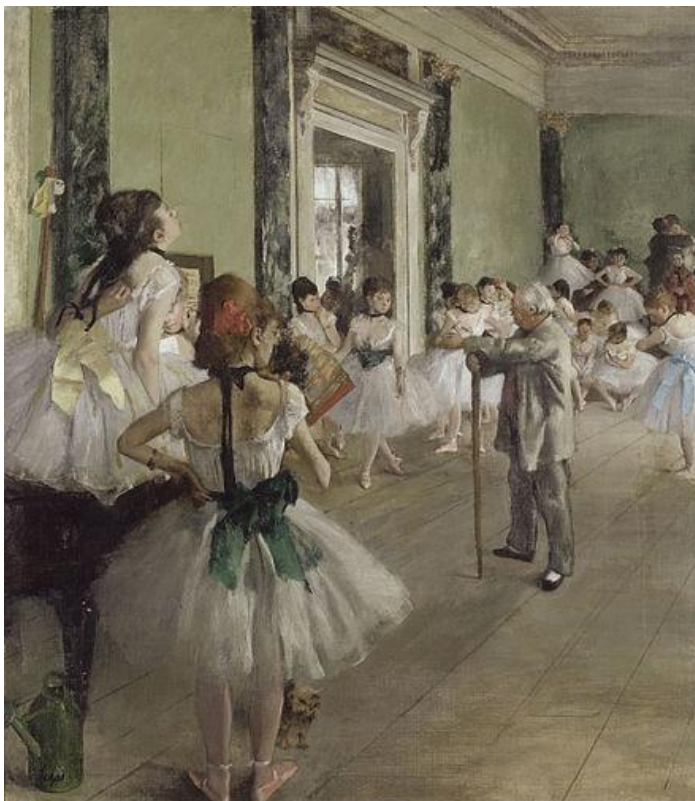


Figure 1:*The Dance Class (La Classe de Danse), 1873–1876, oil on canvas, by Edgar Degas*

And yet, ballerinas, as we think of them, are also white, fragile, precious, unique, valuable, far away on a stage, and represent bodies both in shape and meaning that do not look like mine. Why am I still so drawn to them if they represent everything I am not?

My stories talk about being dis- and misplaced (Hoosain, 2013). Like a ghost in the in-between. In the in-between space of excavating my PhD, I have to discover, who am I? Where am I from? Why do I feel so lost? In this chapter I am looking at scenes from my life, drawn both from my childhood and professional context, to show how I am experiencing the ballerina, this symbol of Western, white beauty and grace both as an oppressing and liberating force (Daigle, 2019; Clive, 2019). Weaving stories of my own becoming with black feminist writings on intersectionality, respectability politics and rage, I will depict what is being made possible in our own academic and personal spaces when we embrace our ghosts, welcome them, free them and us - a personal haunting that speaks to a larger political material symbolic haunting of South Africa, or the globe.

Coloured identity and current shifts in women's understanding of self

In 2019, a research paper about coloured women and their identity (Nieuwoudt, Dickie, Coetsee, Engelbrecht & Terblanche, 2019) started to possess me. In this paper, which caused an uproar in academia and was eventually withdrawn, the authors linked race to a limited brain ability. The call to fight back, to challenge a system that still allowed such racism, became loud and difficult to ignore. I felt the call to join women of colour in spaces such as "the kroeskop"²

²kroeskop /-kɔp/ [Afrikaans, kop head], an offensive term for (one with) frizzy or tightly-curved hair (used especially of the hair of black or 'coloured' people).

movement” on Facebook, a movement in which women of colour proudly wear their natural hair, where women refuse to adhere to Western standards of beauty, and where the personal becomes political.

These shifts, these calls started to whisper eerily in my ear: who am I? I am the firstborn of Peter Goetham, firstborn of Boeta Gummy Goutami, from 4 Tiny street, District 6. I was born of slaves, of people lost at the bottom of the ocean bed, of people never buried. I am from displaced people on the Cape Flats, I am of “kaapse klopse³” born from and within a life of superstitions. Comfortable with the unexplained and hair-raising presence of things unnamed. Evil was/is real, even if not spoken of, and successfully oppressed people like me for generations and generations (Chetty, 2010).

Academic context: a merged Extended Curriculum Programme

In 2002 the government proposed restructuring the institutional landscape of higher education (HE) in South Africa as a top-down government-driven vehicle of transforming society (Frans, 2008). The mergers were driven by an efficiency agenda that now characterises the academic sector, internationally but also in South Africa, following numerous shifts in policy to allegedly respond to inequality entrenched amongst Historically Black Universities (HBCUs) and particularly among universities of technology. However, what was not considered was the potentially traumatic

³The Kaapse Klopse (or simply Klopse) is a minstrel festival that takes place annually on 2 January and it is also referred to as Tweede Nuwe jaar (Second New Year), in Cape Town

impact of these mergers on the staff involved. As part of the consolidation process of the merger of several Technikons and Colleges in the Western Cape, I was moved along with my department to the District 6 campus (only recently renamed) from where my family was forcibly removed 70 years ago. Working as a lecturer in Design, teaching in the Extended Curriculum Programme on this site (this cursed place, a place stolen and haunted by unmarked graves), is strange and at times chilling.

Methodology

In my search for a methodology that would be able to allow an unpacking of my narratives I was introduced to autoethnography. Autoethnography is an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyse personal experience in order to understand cultural experience (Ellis, 2004). This seemed to be a good match for the kind of research I wanted to engage in. My personal experiences of being an academic in the design discipline, navigating the start to postgraduate studies, are the focus of this chapter. Describing my own and my colleagues' journeys feels important, bringing a perspective to the table that is often overlooked. Autoethnography challenges colonial ways of doing research and representing others and treats research as a political, socially just and socially-conscious act (Holman Jones, 2018; Ellis, 2004). I believe that research in higher education cannot be done without these considerations. As a method, autoethnography is both a process and product. This means I am personally involved in the research - "doing" and "writing" about my own experiences and those of colleagues in similar situations - while critically reading and

analysing this narrative along and through black feminist literature and theories (Daigle, 2019; Hoosain, 2013).

Scene 1: Ms Bernie's Ballet Class

Ms Bernie was a tall white slender lady. She glided across the floor and her perfect ballet feet were always on point. She had long blond hair that made the most beautiful ballerina bun. She always had food that I had never seen before. She would nibble on a celery stick long before it became glamorous. She drove a station wagon Peugeot 504. I knew no women who drove a car. She was like a superhero.

She had no kids and her husband was a doctor. A grown woman with no kids was unheard of in the coloured community I grew up in. Choosing to not have kids was crazy to me. Women didn't get to choose whether or not they wanted kids. She had a dog who was allowed in the house, a garden and a sea view. The most important thing about Ms Bernie was that she came from a white neighbourhood but came to teach ballet in my township. She was the first white person I knew. She taught me about white people. They were better, they were pretty and had it all. They didn't work to stay alive, they worked because they enjoyed it and could do what they were passionate about - as a job.

There were only five girls in her class when I looked through the open door. I was drawn there by the music. I have never heard music like that - it calmed me. I watched through the door for a few weeks, every Tuesday and Thursday from 3:30 till 5. One afternoon she opened the door and said: We already started - come now and get in line. I liked the way she never made a big thing about what I

was doing there or asked me any questions. I liked that she never had those “sturvie⁴” girls let on that I didn't belong.

As I walked to make the line, I struggled but loved everything about it. The music, the movements, even how hard it was. I loved how you had to fight through the pain in your feet. I felt addicted to the struggle of it. To get your body to act in such an unnatural way. To learn, it was the first learning I enjoyed. At the end of the class, she pointed at a big wooden box and said: Take what you need from there, wash it and see you next week. She was stern but friendly. I looked into the box and it had used ballet shoes and clothes. The pink colours in the box were beautiful. That small bag of used ballet things contained some of the most precious things I have ever owned. I felt so pretty and in all those mirrors, I loved myself like that: light and beautiful. I saw myself, really saw me. Here I was good, and she also saw me ...

Over the years Ms Bernie gave me books and music and paintings and pictures of ballerinas. She would record music for me on a cassette and give me special attention in class. She gave advice about school and bullies and family. She helped me cope and adjust to living in the township. Displaced from my mother and being raised by a hurting father and uncommitted grandmother. We did the best we could for all of us. Ms Bernie was my friend.

Then one day I overheard Ms Bernie tell the pianist that she was leaving. Her husband had found a job overseas and being white in South Africa was dangerous now. If he knew she was still coming to

⁴ *Sturvie - elegant or stylishly luxurious*

teach here he would be very unhappy, she said. White people would be chased into the sea in the near future. I stood in the same place; I stood that first day when she let me join the class. I felt my heart break harder than I have ever felt - it hurt in a way I could not explain. Harder than the day my mom left, the day Joany left, harder than anything. She continued to say that the department had already found a replacement and the lady was coming here today to meet the girls.

Ms Bernie was always kind and understanding to us girls. She once said: if I could I would take you five with me. Now she was leaving - just like everyone else in my life. I could not hold back the tears. We were all overcome by the news of losing Ms Bernie. She lined us up like we did every day we came for class. All the girls looked around, tears flowing. Ms Bernie asked us to be brave and not have the new teacher see us cry. We stood there lined up as the new teacher walked in, eyes front she said, as she entered from behind us. Ms Bernie showed her around and admitted that she had not always taught us the traditional way. Ms Bernie explained, the girls just loved to dance. They came to stand directly behind us; Ms Bernie introduced us each by name and strength. I heard the critique of each girl before me in the line. The new teacher just looked at us and I could see she was displeased. It was my turn, Ms Bernie said: And this is Cheri, she is the hardest working dancer, has good music calculation and often leads as she has excellent timing and master's complex techniques, with ease. The new teacher took one look and said: But she is overweight and short and all these pimples. She will never be a dancer. Ms Bernie said: Maybe, but she loves to dance

and if not, she can always teach. If she had Le-Donna's body, she would be a great dancer.

I felt like a horse on show, like where pa plays "peere⁵" horses. I felt something that would haunt me from that day - just not good enough, she said, as she looked me in the eye. I am never enough to make them stay. I looked up at this "kallid⁶ lady" with court shoes short, herself slightly overweight and I could not believe how much she looked nothing like a dancer at all. She said: Right girls, let's give Ms Bernie our last courtesy and let's get working. I knew then, I was done with a dance class. Through all the tears in my eyes, I looked up and saw Ms Bernie walk through the door. I stood numb as I listened to her car start up and drive away into the distance.

Scene 2: The shadows in the corridors on D6 campus

My ghosts have been with me - moving in my present. Their stories untold and nearly forgotten, stolen from their home and relocated here. People go on about the land.... but I am not from this land, my ancestors came here via a slave ship. Is it any wonder we wander ...we float like ballerinas, being moved from one continent to another, from one neighbourhood to the next, from one campus to another, we glide in this land never quite home?

The move from the Bellville to the D6 campus as part of the reconsolidation process during the merger feels like my ancestors

⁵ *Peere* – Horse racing -gamble on horses

⁶ *Kallid*- also Coloured, the speaking of Afrikaans and English called Kaapse Afrikaans also known as Cape Slang (Capy) or Kombuis Afrikaans, meaning Kitchen Afrikaans. Cape Coloureds were defined under the apartheid regime as a subset of the larger Coloured race group.

being moved from their home on the slave ships or from their home in D6 to Bishop Lavis. Being forced to move somewhere without a say. You could refuse, if you wanted, but it meant to destroy your livelihood: is that not an enslavement of sorts? This creepy, uneasy feeling of being moved and feeling like a ghost on the new campus. When I see the Bellville staff in the passages, like me, they lurk in the shadows and merge into the background, like ghost-like images of their former selves. When we were alive and thriving. We look like ballet dancers on the Cape Flats, pretty and lovely ghost-like beings that don't belong, neither in the past or the present.

As we dance through these shadows, we discover more dancers revealing themselves. From the depths of the oceans, from slave ships along the spice routes sold and enslaved, dancing on the parade all around the castle. I see the chains we carry now; we can only go so far. Told when to do what with eyes always watching you. We learn the ways; our feet dance the steps but our hearts hear the drum beats of home. Homesickness is showing up in our physical and mental spaces.

Is it strange that we feel like a ghost here? When parts of me call to me from across the sea on the "SuidOoster". Lost and displaced the cries from the dark five corners of the old castle shout to me in anger and frustration. I try to look away, to shake their voices from my head as I walk past. I see dancers along the way to the D6 campus. The grand jeté⁷ and pirouette⁸ where Tiny Street used to

⁷a ballet jumps in which a dancer springs from one foot to land on the other with one leg forward of their body and the other stretched backwards while in the air.

⁸an act of spinning on one foot, typically with the raised foot touching the knee of the supporting leg.

be. So, my heart calls for the old... for home, where I knew my job and had clear directions as to what to do. Where I was seen.

I greet the grand parade, I hear the beats, heartbeats to meet my feet and I know the rhythm and I know the steps. It's so much part of me, the klopse painted faces, are we still hiding under white face paint? I can even hear the "pedekar⁹" going by. We all dance to this loss and displacement while we hold our ballet hands and feet and smiles in place. The show must go on. Here we go, lights camera action. All dancers in place, showtime.

The ghosts from my past present today. Reminding me of that saying from my grandmother, "die slave van java kanni rusi wan julle is nie gevind en begrave ni, ons dra die seer¹⁰". I feel that haunting, I feel that hurt and pain. The generations now manifest that pain of old. We too feel invisible like ghosts as we kallid people fight to be heard and seen never enough. Not yet white and not black. Other times you look right at me but through me, like you see a ghost - like I am haunting you!

Scene 3 - performing at SAVAH

I am standing in a room at the Vega School of Arts. My heart is pumping. I am looking at an audience full of academics. Some are my colleagues and I get encouraging smiles from them. But some I have never seen. Lots of white women look at me expectantly. I try to talk. I falter. I stumble. I am at a loss of words. A loss of English words. I look at Amanda, I say things in Afrikaans and she finds the

⁹Horse carriage

¹⁰ the slaves of Java can't rest because they are not found and buried, we carry that hurt

right words in English. I continue. My emotions overtake me, but I continue talking. The audience is quiet. Spellbound. I have captured them as I imagine the ballerinas capture their audience. But I am not perfect, I am not swift, I am not graceful and elegant. I put myself out there. I show everything, I shock them with my honesty, my raw emotions. The beautiful music I play, the ghostly performance of Sam's movie gives me wings, and I am proud of my pictures of the ballerinas in the township. All of this gives me the courage to continue and finish my presentation. When I am done, I get roaring applause. I feel good, I feel victorious, like a prima ballerina, centre stage. The room is mine. Until this one white woman asks me the question I dread - why ballerinas?



Figure 2: PowerPoint Slide SAVAH 2019 presentation.
Images Pinterest with edits by C. Hugo in photoshop

Black women in academia/intersectionality

Academia is a difficult space to navigate for people of colour, but for women of colour in particular. We are not seen; we are not good enough. We are not seen to have the skills and knowledge needed as academics. We do not fit the look and the practices of an academic.

BEE,¹¹ nGAP¹², specific grants and other measures of redress help us get into spaces that were previously not open for us. But even if access is given, we are not necessarily given the space we need to flourish as ourselves.

Intersectionality was first used by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), who called for the recognition of multiple intersecting identities among women. Crenshaw recognised that women's feminism is affected by their social position through their race, colour, age, social class, ethnicity, culture, etc. Intersectionality helps me understand the differentiated oppression white women and women of colour experience in general, but in particular in academia, and to recognise the different implications it has for different races. Feminism historically was dominated by white, northern/western, middle class women representing the experiences of 'all women' as if they were unitary. This has long been critiqued by black, postcolonial, decolonial, and African feminists calling for a more nuanced engagement with feminist questions. Black feminist authors have given me terminology to put into words what I am feeling. Angela Davis(1983) reminds us that feminism must be for those at the very bottom of society: "Revolutionary hope resides precisely among those women who have been abandoned by history and who are now standing up and making their demands heard. I truly

¹¹*Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) is a racially selective programme launched by the South African government to redress the inequalities of Apartheid by giving black (African, Coloureds, Indians and Chinese) South African citizens economic privileges that are not available to White South Africans,*

¹²*The New Generation of Academics Programme (nGAP) is a prestigious programme under the Department of Higher Education and Training (the Department) which involves the recruitment of highly capable scholars as new academics.*

believe and men should apply this. That this is the era of women. I truly believe that. And I am referring not to the women who just have who only have to break the ceiling to get where they want to go, but I'm referring to the women at the very bottom poor black women, Muslim women, indigenous women, queer women trans women and angry women”.

'Respectability Politics'

Respectability politics is the belief that people of colour can overcome 'many of every day, acute impacts of racism by dressing properly and having education and social comportment' (Cooper, 2019, p. 147). The term was first coined by Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham (1993, p.187) who referred to African American's 'promotion of temperance, cleanliness of person and property, thrift, polite manners, and sexual purity'. Respectability was used as a strategy to uplift African Americans and had two audiences: African Americans, who were encouraged to be respectable, and white people, who needed to be shown that African Americans could be respectable. More recently this is known for example as 'performing a vanilla self' or 'self-editing' (Pitcan, Marwick, & Boyd, 2018) as seen in how young people of colour perform in social media spaces.

While these distinctions were and remain about class, they were and are expressed primarily in behavioural, not economic, terms. Respectability politics are deeply problematic because its emphasis on individual uplift ignores structural inequalities, which are not changed by ascending class status (Harris, 2003). Furthermore, respectability politics rather than challenging, reproduce dominant norms.

As women of colour, we know respectability politics in our bones. Through how we dress, how we speak and how we behave, we try to mould ourselves into a world that is not ours, that doesn't want us, but that might tolerate us as long as we keep quiet and play the game. A game where rules are made by others, which we have to follow without challenge or questions. We know from early on, how we should do our hair, how to sit (straight), how to talk (only when spoken to) how to make eye contact (ideally never, and never), how to move our bodies (in a non-threatening way), to keep our feet and knees together. These often painful, time-intensive and costly practices take their toll. But we adhere to these unspoken rules to be able to be part of the game. In a professional context, this means keeping our voices down, saying what we need to say, but in a polite way, not ever disrupting the status quo or making white people feel uncomfortable. Our biggest compliment by a white person: I sometimes forget you are black; you are not like them.

White women carry their own burden of 'respectability politics'. Anti-racism educator Robin DiAngelo (2018) explains the 'Good/Bad Binary' in the context of systemic racism, in her book 'White Fragility', emphasising how white women are socialised to be good. Racism is seen as something only 'bad' people can be. This makes it difficult for white women to recognise and acknowledge their own racism, which can express itself in more than simple, isolated, extreme acts of prejudice. Her argument is useful for white women who are open to engaging with their own racism, which she defines as a holistic, all-encompassing system, into which we are all born and that has affected all of us. However, for women of colour

'respectability politics' is more than that - it is a matter of survival. Respectability politics is a survival strategy in the face of a potential for violence. We know when we step out of line, brutal things can happen.

The power of black rage

Black feminist Brittany Cooper (2019) argues that respectability politics are at their core a rage management project. Learning to manage one's rage by daily tampering down this rage is a response to the routine assault on one's dignity. This regulation of one's rage is needed if one wants to keep one's job or expected if one wants to be an academic. But rage is resistance, a kind of refusal, to be made a fool of, to be silenced, to be shamed. Choosing to be respectable leads to regrets for women of colour: we regret not showing up as ourselves, not saying what we wanted to say in the words we wanted to use, wearing what we wanted to wear. We fear giving up on our opportunities to speak, we give away parts of us to appear "good", what we give up to have careers. And we slowly die inside. So, it's no wonder we struggle with who we are. As I try to find myself through this process, I have to embrace all the parts of me. even the impolite parts, the rude and "gham"¹³parts. I have to claim them all.

Reclaiming and recognising our rage is an important tool and strategy in disrupting academic spaces. South African feminist Dela Gwala (2018, p. 210) speaks of the transformative power of rage. It is the "electric current needed for a seismic societal and institutional shift". I find her sentiments echo with me, and are amplified. You

¹³ *Gham - uncivilized coloured*

should use that anger, she says quoting Maya Angelou, you write that anger, you paint, you dance it, you vote with it. She carries this rage and I can relate. Lashing out at anyone I feel is wrong, feels good. Her words could be mine: 'Ranting with friends, with colleagues, during pillow talk with my partner, is liberating. I rant over the phone, via email, via Skype, around a glass of wine with friends, colleagues, family members, standing up, lying down, sitting up' (p. 207). I feel the anger from the bottom of my belly. The anger comes over me, a ghost haunting and exercising its supernatural power over me. Possessing me, I feel the anger rise inside me and I lose control.

But anger also changes you. For Gwala (2018), anger became sadness three years after a gruelling experience of gender-based violence. For three years I was angry at the merger, the (re)moving us from one campus to the other, without consultation, like cattle, like slaves. Losing my teaching subject drawing to a middle-aged white woman, the daily reminder of the D6 land issue that I have to endure, the women in the Cape Flats being killed, being impoverished, losing my grandmother to a long sickbed of death, and my house through a fire. The three years of trying to move forward with this PhD. First, trying at Rhodes, then CPUT, UCT and again at CPUT. The money I spent on fees, travel and babysitters. The lack of support, information and loneliness. Struggling to understand what was required of me and how to do it. The constant reading of English texts. Never feeling like I belonged. All this made me mad, angry and outraged. Angry about the constant reminder that I was just not good enough, unseen, not taken seriously. This is not new anger. It's an anger that is older than me, older than my

grandparents' generation. An anger that is haunting me from the depth of the oceans.

Trying to disrupt respectability politics, that tells us not to show our anger in public spaces, in spaces where whiteness rules, is difficult and possibly detrimental to our relationships in academia and our academic career. It has become increasingly more difficult to control and temper down. I feel the build-up of the music, dancing politely is not working anymore. We feel rage, we live rage, we want to express rage, but if we do, we are seen as rude, as disrespectful, some of us are challenged with disciplinary actions.

My rage has left me ravaged. I suffer from sleep deprivation, I am isolated, ignored, by association attached to trouble. I got rapped over the knuckles over and over again when I stepped out of line, spoke out of turn, and challenged my colleagues, my institution. It has left me invisible and unwanted, misplaced and out of place. Ghostlike really. My rage has led to sadness and to burn-out. To give up and try again. I live like a ghost in the in-between, in the past and the present. My people have always made good with what they have, so if I have "rage" what can I make of it? Can rage be something else, something quieter (Dawjee, 2018) or even joyful?

Research Making

Through the rage, I find sadness but I also find joy (Gwala, 2018, p. 200). Joy for me right now is creativity. I had forgotten - buried under all that rage was my creativity. I didn't have it in me for a long while. My anger robbed me of a space to dance with it. I now dance, I actively dance with my anger (see figure 9), write my way

through my anger (see figure 4). Through all my feelings, even joy and sadness. I dance with research and thoughts supernaturally. "If I can't dance to it, it's not my revolution", a quote often linked to anarchist and feminist Emma Goldman, resonates so strongly (see figure 3). This has been the greatest sense of joy for me to understand that feminism is *creating*. Positioning these ballerinas in my township scenes, my daily life, is liberating. Reclaiming them for me, my space, my community. Their grace and beauty which so naturally engage with scenes of township life. Taking them places, to conferences and book chapters. Bringing them to life, creating a space where I can be, perform, show my own vulnerability and brokenness, where I am *seen*. Haunting the audience with my loss for words, my faltering, my academic (un)performance. I discover research making as both a mode of self-care but also as activism - that suspiciously endless joy is another resistance in society (Gwala, 2018).

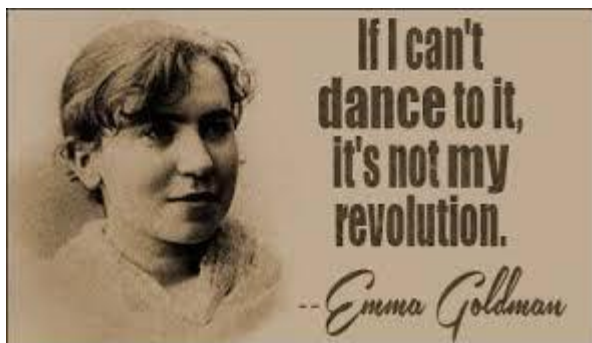


Figure 3: Emma Goldman - If I can't dance to it ...[pinterest.com](#)

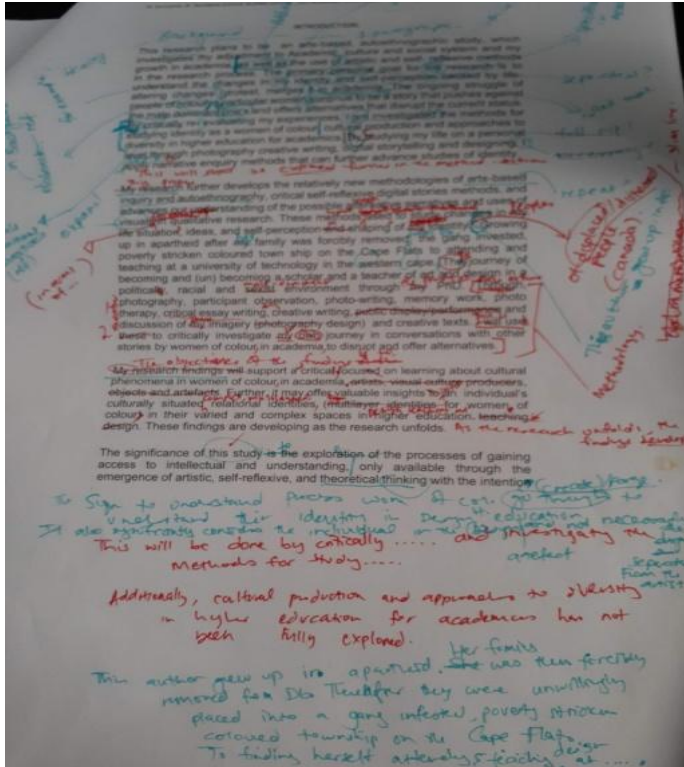


Figure 4 : My creative process of creating art with academic texts.

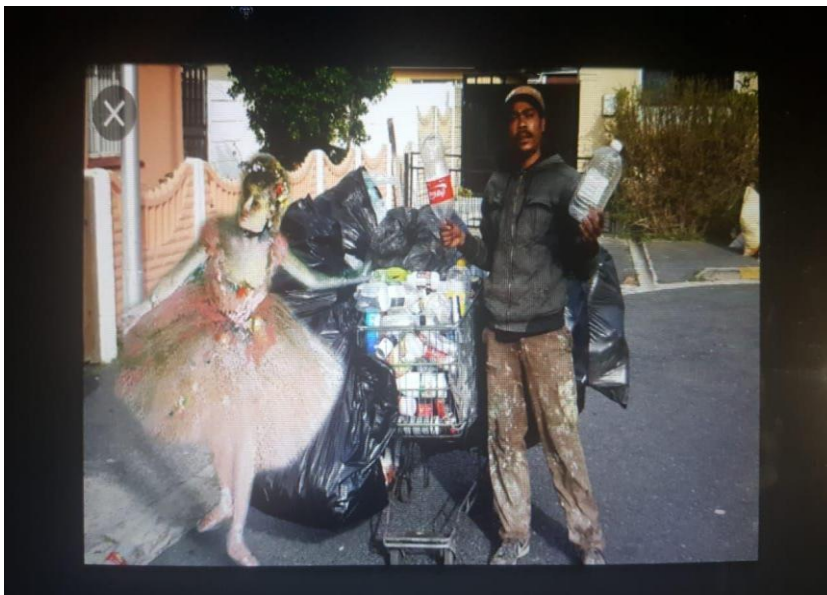
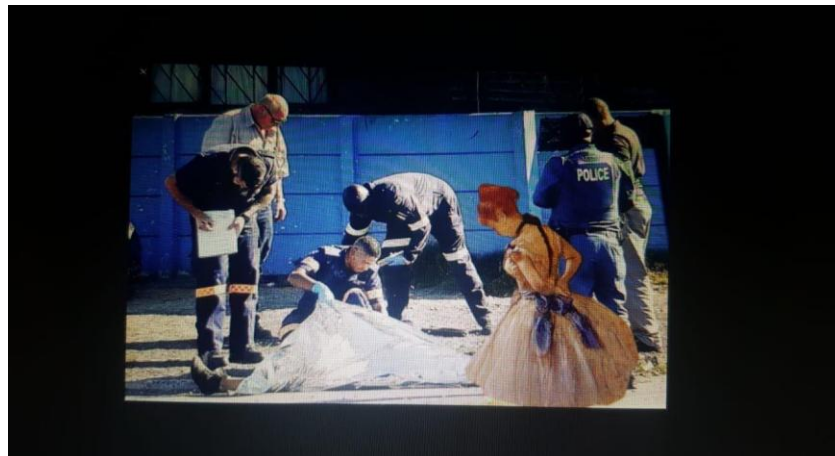
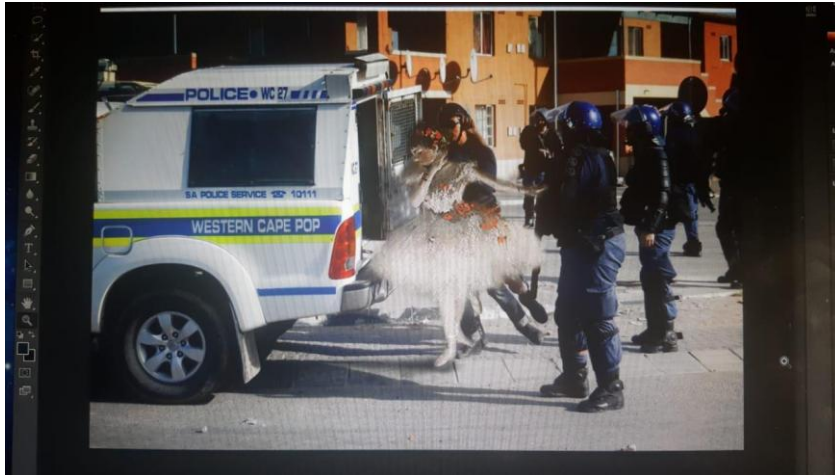


Figure 5: Ballerina on bin day.



**Figure 6: Always guilty, wrong place wrong time.
Figure 7: Victims and onlookers**

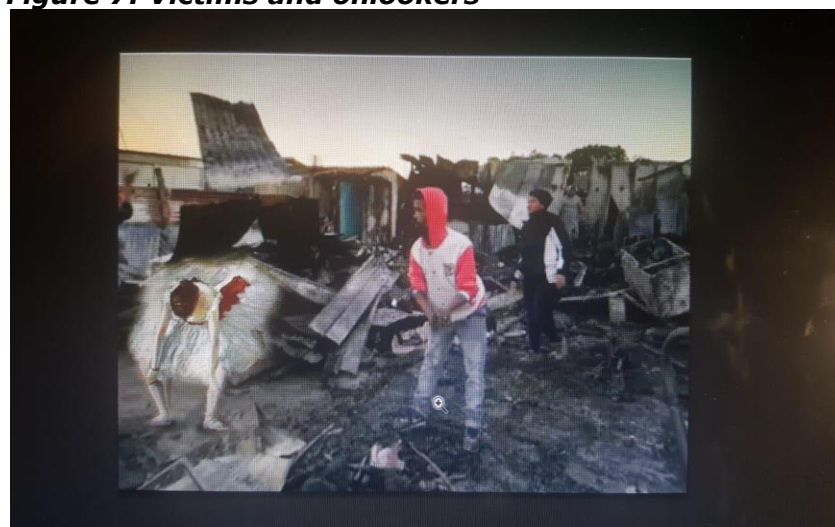


Figure 8: Unexpected treasure



Figure 9: Making a research an active process. Dancing through difficult concepts.

Embracing our ghosts

What is left for us? What ways are there to not adhere to respectability politics but not rage ourselves out of our jobs?

Over the last years women’s anger has been given a platform and has become more accepted. Student movements, gender-based violence protests and other outcries on social media have opened up a space to shout out in solidarity to the rising temperature of women’s anger. These movements have turned up the heat on policy changes that highlight the plight of women. Women have exercised their right to withhold labour and show up in masses to protest. Women like me have shown up at conferences and other platforms available to them. We show up as loud and angry and we are starting to embrace our anger, to fight back with joy. We use structures, laws and education such as PhD journeys, previously out of our reach for people like us. We learn to trust people slowly and make friends, even unlikely ones. We understand that rage goes through its process of sadness and loneliness and despair and like

all other ghosts we learn to live with it and evolve. We redesign, we change academic writing, we write books, we show up as ourselves more and more. We focus our anger and rage like snipers.

But beyond our rage, we also show our vulnerability in the spaces that permit us enough safety, in small reading groups and academic spaces where our research is supported. Like I did at the SAVAH conference or in this chapter, I perform against respectability politics. I control the performance and audience - I choreograph this performance to show up as myself and to tell my story.

Finding allies and using their skills, understanding your own shortcomings, is essential. Looking at allies, asking for help: I had to look across the room of the SAVAH conference to my colleague and friend for the correct pronunciation of words. Even though I practiced them all week, in front of a crowd of academics and researchers, at that moment, they were gone. Calling on our friends and allies during a presentation as I have, co-creates a space of engaging and performing differently. Showing that there is solidarity from other women of colour. Allowing other women to participate, to be part of the performance of my presentation, creates new practices of co-performance, questions and counters 'how things are usually done in academia': the individuality, the perfectionism, the flawless performances.

Hauntology is "ongoing conversation with the ghosts of the past, aiming at inventing a different future rather than fixing the past" (Lewis, 1996, p 21) This is not about fixing the past, it's about recognising the past in the present and the future. Our bodies will

haunt you - we represent the past in the present - you cannot, not see us. We remind you on an everyday basis about the past, you might ignore us but we are becoming more powerful by the day.

Avery (2008) writes, that haunting is one way in which abusive systems of power for instance dispossession, appropriation of resources or slavery, make themselves known and how their impacts are felt in everyday life. Injustices need not wait for some future remedy, because "now" is always already thick with possibilities disruptive of mere presence. In showing up, as uncomfortable as it may be, we disrupt.

The above images reveal the process of visually working through my research. My "rage" turns to joy when I create. I find the shock of the ballerinas (mis)placed in my township environment a way to disrupt ideas about where "ballerinas" are supposed to be. By placing the ballerinas in my community, I create counternarratives. I challenge concepts that have been held dear by society. I push against the ideas of patriarchy and whiteness. The ballerinas are ghostly figures, invisible to the obvious eye. They represent the past in my present. In figure 9, I show up at a dance class where I am the only woman of colour. It is hard but it is also liberating. The process to emerge myself into participating through visual art and performance art allows for the platform and space to be creative with my "rage" and find ways to fight back with joy.

Back to the Ballet Dancer:

Most recently I read an article by The Sordid Truth behind Degas by Julia Fiore, Oct 1, 2018 on her blog in which she shows up my fav

artist in ways that we have always known but could not dare say about these great men in art. She describes the dark off-stage parts of the dance that is not well choreographed. The sexual and gender transgressions by the on lookers and the manner in which Degas see the dancers as near animals enduring harsh hours and uncomfortable poses. The objectifying of the female body and bare legs. Dega even calls the dancers, "his little money girls". All the above mentioned, brings to question why we still study the figure in this way and why we still draw women (white) in these fragile poses. This further perpetuates the gender norms and leaves me raging that I am complicit in teaching figure drawing in this way. The call to decolonise design education is so needed and a reconfiguring of the womxn in design evenly so. We have to start teaching differently.

Anencore:

I am a stage, it's dark, my subconsciousness is a lonely light, a candle caught in a draft, it flickers, one minute this way then the other - everything else lies in the shadows, in the shade, but they are there. In the "off stage" areas, hallways, staircases, trap doors, at all times. Everything that lives within us or that wanders around within us, is all here, it acts, it dances, it lives on this stage that is me. Instinct, survival, rage, beauty, fear and taboos, forbidden inner thoughts, forbidden inner desires, unspoken dreams. Memories we don't want to see in the light, as we have displaced and suppressed them out of the light. Perhaps to make the trauma of life bearable, a performance is needed. They dance around us in the darkness, they trick, torment and poke us, they stork and haunt us they whisper. They flaunt themselves and scare us. They make me crazy. They

make me angry; they make me a hysterical, "raging" coloured woman. But they also make me dance.

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Chrissa Amuah

Chrissa Amuah is the Founder and Creative Director of AMWA Designs, an Adinkra-inspired luxury homeware and interiors brand. She is an MA graduate from the world-renowned Chelsea College of Art and Design, University of the Arts London.

Chrissa has described living with a sense of duality. Although born and raised in London, her heritage stems from Ghana, Togo and Benin; but it is from Ghana that she draws most of her design inspiration. Following an international debut at Milan Design Week 2015, Chrissa has gained global recognition with press features in Elle Décor Departures magazine and the FT's How To Spend It, to name a few.

In 2017, she established AFRICA BY DESIGN; a concept of love intended to showcase and celebrate the best of Africa's design talent. AFRICA BY DESIGN works to create international commercial opportunities for its featured designers. Since its launch, AFRICA BY DESIGN has exhibited in five cities across four continents.

In 2017, Chrissa was also recognised as a 'Rising Star' in the Black British Business Awards Consumer & Luxury Category.

Chrissa is often called upon as a guest speaker for design focused panel conversations. In March 2018, she was invited by the internationally distinguished auction house, Sotheby's, to moderate, 'African Art & Design: Beyond A Trend', a conversation exploring the significance of African art and design.

In August 2020 Chrissa Amuah was announced as a member of the Allgood Collective, as a brand ambassador for sustainable footwear brand, Allbirds.

In December 2020, Chrissa made her Design Miami/ debut in collaboration with, Lagos based architect and product designer, TosinOshinowo. Together they have been selected by luxury car brand, Lexus, to design its installation at Design Miami/ 2020. Design Miami/ is the global forum for design. Each fair brings together the most influential collectors, gallerists, designers, curators and critics from around the world in celebration of design culture and commerce. It is the premier venue for collecting, exhibiting, discussing and creating collectible design.

A selection of Chrissa's work feature in Designed by Women, a website organized by the Stewart Program for Modern Design. An objects-based travelling exhibition is also planned in collaboration with the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, tentatively scheduled for 2023-2024.

2021 will see the launch of A Sense of Duality, her collection with multi award winning, Bernhardt Design – one of America's largest and most highly reputed textile and furniture manufacturers.

Career highlights to date also include her collaboration with renowned architect, Alice Asafu-Adjaye, to represent Ghana for the London Design Biennale 2021. The London Design Biennale is a global gathering of the world's most ambitious and imaginative designers, curators and design institutes.

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Africa's Power in Solution Led Design

Chrissa Amuah

PULL QUOTE: 'Given the right information, human beings are adept to innovation and resourcefulness in a way that is all too often underestimated.'

As the global impact of Covid-19 became apparent, many of the world's eyes turned to Africa and predicted disaster.

The continent has historically bore the brunt of viruses and pandemics. With Ebola not too far in our distant memory, none could foresee its scope to manage such a crisis with its undermined medical infrastructures.

The virus' rapid contagion inspired a global public service announcement, 'Stop the Spread! Stay At Home'. A [video](#) posted by Seun Kuti (son of Fela) called attention to the idea that this was yet another example of Africa imposing on itself a Western methodology incompatible with its own socio-economic and cultural parameters.

On a continent of 54 Countries and 1500 to 2000 languages, the majority of its 1,336,943,499 population, earn their incomes from a daily cash economy. In an almost universal culture of compound living, social distancing becomes virtually impossible.

So what are Africa's alternative options?

The success of Africa's future, ultimately depends on it regaining its voice and confidence to design its own solutions to its problems. Given the right information, human beings are adept to innovation and resourcefulness in a way that is all too often underestimated.

Omar Degan, an architect from Somalia, works tirelessly to promote the beauty and historical context of Somalian design and its relevance to modern innovation. Particularly significant in a region, which has been overshadowed by many years of civil conflict and terrorism. In response to the Coronavirus pandemic, he and a group of medical and renewable energy experts, have been collaborating to design and build the first of many fully-equipped portable screening facilities; to help increase testing capacity in remote areas around the country, where people would otherwise not be able to afford it. It will be manned by volunteer nurses, who will collect Nasopharyngeal (NP) swabs to be sent to Somalia's Ministry of Health's main lab in Mogadishu for testing. Administrators will also help to distribute leaflets and explain the pandemic to the general public in their native languages.



In conversation last year, Degan said, “Design is hope. Design has the extraordinary power not only to unite, but to give a strong sense of belonging and pride. For too long the narrative of the continent has been dictated by a vision of pessimism and Eurocentrism. We live on a continent that’s self-belief is still thwarted. Its ability to create and be part of the new world avant-garde is severely handicapped. I believe that to undo this, design can be the key.” In the face of a global pandemic, never has this mindset been so urgent.

Designers, such as Funfere Koroye, an industrial designer based in Lagos, Nigeria, are evidence that the knowledge, talent and innovation is homegrown and exists across the continent. However, the biggest challenge that designers, such as Koroye, face is the lack of investment and perhaps more importantly, the macro support and desire of governance, to try the new and do things differently, “On a tech level, there is zero to no focus on this part of design across Africa. Bad supply chains, inconsistent electricity and no raw

products being processed, makes talk of local production just a funny conversation,” Koroye says.

“The existing giants of industry in Africa, need to pivot their mindsets so that manufacturing can grow. We have rich people who have the resource, space and marketing capacity, but at this point they need to look inwards to see how they can add real value by diversifying their portfolio and collaborating with local product designers and innovators,” Koroye concludes.

Koroye’s response to the potential impact of Covid-19 in Nigeria, was to create ‘Nupair’. “We noticed developing nations were struggling with flattening the Covid curve among healthcare professionals and essential workers, as well as patients.

Using personal funds and a small grant from the Nigerian Government, we developed an open-source product that could easily be deployed within a short time frame anywhere in the world,” Koroye explains.

‘Nupair’ is a kit of parts consisting of a modified Respirator, an off-the-shelf full-face mask, a custom (3D-printed) adapter, and an HME filter cartridge.

The primary benefit of the N99 mask is providing 360-degree protection and an airtight seal; while allowing for controlled intake and exhaust flow through the top of the mask.

The respirator also delivers 100% filtered oxygen from the environment through dual ports into the mask, which prevents fogging and carbon dioxide toxicity.



Effective design need not be complicated or even sophisticated. Does it work? Does it fix the problem and if so how can it be made to be more aesthetically pleasing? These should be the driving agendas. Africa and its people intimately know the truth of their needs. This is not to say that all imports of ideas are bad, however, the culture has to evolve from simply absorbing imposed ideas to generating and inspiring new and relevant strategies.

Degan says, "We must consider the reason why certain designs are imported. If the reason is that they are being imported because there is no trust in the African system or because in Africa there are no local alternatives, we have a big problem, a problem that we must resolve by trying to change the perception that the world has of the products made in Africa, by Africans."

Omar Degan and the team leading the portable Covid-19 portable screening facility project, are just £3,000 shy of their target. Please

see their GoFund Me link [here](#), should you wish to see their progress and make a donation.

NOTES

Chrissa Amuah is the Founding Director of AFRICA BY DESIGN and Creative Director & Founder of AMWA Designs.

Omar Degan, CEO of DO Architects, Mogadishu

<http://www.degan-omar.com>

Covid-19 Screening Facility, Somalia, GoFund Me

FunfereKoroye

<https://www.instagram.com/funferekoroye/?hl=en>



JULIET KAVISHE

Juliet Kavishe is a Professional Interior Architect and alumna of the University of Pretoria, South Africa. Her education was further bolstered by a traineeship focusing on bridging the gap between spatial design and curatorship of artworks at New York's Guggenheim Museum.

Over the course of a career spanning 13 years and two continents, Juliet has worked as an Interior Architect on projects with a focus on high-end residential homes and commercial and corporate workspaces.

Her keen interest in education has afforded her the privilege to invigilate and moderate design exams from undergraduate to postgraduate level at various design institutions in South Africa for the past decade. Her passion for the promotion of her profession, particularly within a broader African context has led to various opportunities for Juliet to share her expertise in Interior Architecture, including a lecture in 2013 on sustainable design and

traditional African building practices at the World Policy Institute in New York and her call-up as Juror for the Caesarstone Student Design competition in 2019.

A self-proclaimed Afro-minimalist, she brought her personal ethos as an ambassador for the African Institute of the Design Profession (IID) in 2018 and contributed to the Pan Afrikan Design Institutes (PADI) panel discussions around the identity of "Afrikan Design" in February 2020. She has subsequently been appointed to be an interim board member and editor-in-chief of the PADI publications committee and has recently been appointed as one of the Directors of the IID.

Her upbringing in four countries on two continents and her extensive travels in later years have inspired Tanzanian-born Juliet to create spaces influenced by her global citizenship, some of which can be seen in publications such as SA Décor & Design, SA Home Owner, Designing Ways, Africanism, and Archdaily.

Her personal Design Motto is that Architecture or Design is achieved once you consider the complexities and interrelationships of human beings and their surroundings.

THE POWER OF DESIGN FOR ALL:

How inherently African design approaches are human centred and have been successfully portrayed in varying design disciplines in contemporary design.

By Juliet M. Kavishe (2021)

KEYWORDS

African Design: refers to the various forms of design from the African continent and its diaspora withing the context of the built environment, product, art, and fashion

Beliefs: faith or and trust within the context of differing religious practices

Culture: customs, religions, ideals, and social practices of a particular society

Genius Loci: the protective spirit of a place or the distinctive and cherished aspects of a place.

Objet d'art: small artistic or decorative items, usually a collectable or a certain value

Sankofa: to reflect on the past to build a successful future.

ABSTRACT

In interrogating successful design across the disciplines of Product, Interiors and Architecture on the African continent, it became clear that westernised framings of what successful design may look like have been quite misrepresentative (Broke-Utne 2002; Wiredu 1998). Whether a designer is based on the African continent and has a global client base, or based in Europe with an African context, what has been quite evident is that when the design is human centred, it is deemed successful.

This article discusses notable design cases in Africa be they traditional or contemporary to articulate the attributes of African Design that can inform design discourse that is solely rooted in the various human experiences be they cultural, belief systems, environmental, habitual, or societal exposure.

SPIRIT OF PLACE

***Genius Loci*¹⁴ is also known as the spirit of place that exists by virtue of the human experience, and what that means is that any space that is inhabited by humans creates a sense of *Genius Loci* which is the sense of place. For example, what makes the Guggenheim museum in New York, successful in enforcing its sense of place is enhanced due to the cyclical nature of the interiors and architecture. Frank Lloyd Wright was clear in how he wanted people to view the artworks and navigate the different gallery spaces. Whether one was ascending or descending the spiral ramp surrounding the museums lobby, the specific nature of movement, art display and transmission of light, unique to this museum,**

¹⁴*Genius Loci originates from Roman mythology and refers to the protective spirit of a place, however in the context of architecture, it was adopted to mean the distinctive and cherished aspects of a place.*

enforces your memory centre, your lived experiences whilst inhabiting that space, hence reinforcing the *genius loci* of the Guggenheim Museum successfully.

Another great example of this concept is when one goes dancing, and how we have been dancing on the African continent for years. What is at one moment a clearing, café, or sports field, is immediately converted into a dance floor when the music comes on, and the space is cleared and we all flood onto the makeshift dance floor. The spirit of that place changes by virtue of our presence there, moving our bodies in unison to the beat of a percussive instrument.



Image1. Infographic of the influences and considerations that lead to successful design solutions

In interrogating *Genius Loci*, one realizes and notes that the consideration of the needs of human beings is important when it comes to human centred design and solutions that are interrogating these five tenants being a consideration for the culture, beliefs be they traditional or religious, environment and context, exposure to different societal structures and habitats, can lead to successful design.

INTERIOR DESIGN

Belief and Culture

Human centred design has an influence in interior comfort through décor, light placement, interpretation, and utilization of spaces. One of the most underestimated design opportunities in interior spaces are staircases. For buildings that need a vertical transition other than an elevator or escalator, staircases can become a focal if not sculptural design element.

With all safety regulations considered with regards to tread depth and riser heights, balustrades allow us the designers to explore avenues of creativity. The modern minimalistic take of balustrades could be a simple glass pane. Whereas in most Swahili¹⁵ traditional homes in Zanzibar, despite different influences in design, limited variety of building materials and local craftsman skills balustrade designs are elaborately decorated with intricate carved coral or plasterwork (Sheriff, 2001), for example, taking Islamic geometry to create perforations in otherwise solid balustrade walls.



Image 2: Photograph of a Swahili Staircase by Zelda Green in Zanzibar 2011 (via www.500px.com)

¹⁵Swahili is the native language of the Swahili people. It is spoken in Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, some parts of Malawi, Somalia, Zambia, Mozambique, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. However, the Swahili people mainly reside in the island of Zanzibar.

What then happens when one combines the idea of transparency and cultural paternity? A product that marries the two by taking a traditional idea of a screen, modern use of mild steel sheeting and combining laser cutting methods to deliver a beautiful balustrade. This is human centred design with a consideration for culture.



Image 3& 4: Staircase at the Godden Cres House by Dorrington Architects & Associates, Auckland, New Zealand (via www.daa.co.nz)

PRODUCTS

Culture and Habits

Product and furniture design can oftentimes tow the line between functionality and *objet d'art* in space. Products affect us immediately in an interior space, be they décor, lighting, or utility. On the African continent, that which we deem as artifacts were everyday objects that had a specific utility.

The Oromo headrest from the Oromo tribe in Ethiopia and Akan stool from Ghana are similar in the basis of their design to serve an immediate function. They were both carried for the Kings and Queens of these tribes and in as much as they were adorned in jewels and carvings, their shape was derived from the ergonomic needs they needed to serve, resting one's head as they slept to not disturb the intricate hairstyle's worn at the time and a seat to rest on during travels and important events.



Image 5 & 6: The Oromo Headrest and Ashanti stool from The Bryce Holcombe Collection of African Decorative Art, Bequest of Bryce Holcombe, 1984 (via www.metmuseum.org)

The Ethiopian American product and industrial designer Jomo Tariku of Jomo furniture, drew inspiration from both historical artifacts and interrogated their form, function, and aesthetics to produce products that are culturally inspired and yet find a place in our modern homes. His choice of materiality, and the emphasis of his joints through tectonic resolution adds to the success of his Boraatii Stool and Ashanti Stool in the 21st century home.



Image 7 & 8: The Boraatii Stool and the Ashanti End table by Jomo Furniture (via www.jomofurniture.com)

The question we as designers should continuously ask ourselves is, can we create truly intuitive solutions for seemingly everyday challenges and needs be they handrails, handles, doorknobs, chairs, end tables or even baby carriers. Can we take what was deemed a

functional object in our various African cultures, aesthetic additions notwithstanding, and use them as a basis to solve our everyday needs?



Images 9&10: The Citi bike station in TriBeCa and the BMW 525i by Dr. Ester Mahlangu

Another great example of how traditional African aesthetics have been used successfully in a modern interpretation is the Ndebele¹⁶ artworks of Dr. Ester Mahlangu, a South African artist. The Ndebele paint their households with distinct abstract forms in bright colours off-set by a stark white and black background and Dr. Mahlangu has taken this aesthetic to the world, through her paintings and various collaborations with South African Tourism and Citi Bike in New York by painting a Citi Bike station in Tribeca at the corner of Franklin Street and West Broadway in 2017. (Levantesi, 2017). She was also the first African and female artist to paint a BMW Art Car in 1991. It was the BMW 525i. (Mun-Delsalle, 2019)

ARCHITECTURE

Environment, Exposure and Culture

Architecture tends to be driven by either form or function and a myriad of influences like aesthetics, context, and environment,

¹⁶*The Ndebele tribe and language have existed for over 185 years in Zimbabwe and South Africa and are popularly known for painting the outside of their homes in geometric patterns.*

however for the Maasai in East Africa, emphasis rests on the coexistence of people, land, and wildlife. (Algotsson & Davis, 1996) The Maasai¹⁷ Manyatta (homestead) is a form of dwelling that the Maasai inhabit in East Africa. Though seemingly primitive in materiality, every part of its construction is eco-friendly for it is sourced from the immediate environment. The Maasai dwell and migrate between southern Kenya and northern Tanzania which is characterised by a savannah climatic zone. The Manyatta is constructed using timber poles, interlaced with small branches which is then plastered with a mixture of water, mud and cow chip. The roof structure appears to blend with the walls and is covered in cow chip as well to repel the harmful tsetse flies common in these areas and ease rainwater off it.

The Maasai still live in Manyatta's to this day and what we can learn from them is how to use locally sourced materials to serve our dwelling needs, but also how the architecture's materiality is in tune with the environment it is placed in, that being quite warm during the day and cold at night and how the layered walls of the manyatta absorb the sun's rays during the day, providing a warm interior homestead at night.

¹⁷A Nilotic ethnic group inhabiting Central and Southern Kenya and Northern Tanzania



Image 11: A typical Maasai Manyatta (via www.kenyatourism.in/)

The nomadic lifestyle of the Maasai necessitate the temporary nature of their dwellings and after a season or two, the huts decompose and return to the earth, proving yet again that Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) from Africa can be referred to, to provide ecological solutions.

Another exemplary example is the Lideta¹⁸ Market completed in 2016 that was designed by the Barcelona based Architectural Studio Vilalta. Vilalta undertook the task to create a Shopping Centre in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, however they understood the local need for markets and the cultural significance of an open-air markets with a consideration for temperature, lighting, and ventilation, and created a mall that emulated and was influenced by this need. A market on the African continent is characterised by colour, sound, streams of light through temporary coverings, excitement, and open expression, and with this in mind, they created a building that served as a backdrop to house these daily activities.

What is also worth noting is how the punctuations of light that seep into the building were influenced by fractal geometric pattern known

¹⁸The Lideta Market was awarded the UNESCO Prix Versailles for the world's best shopping centre in 2019

as the Tibeb¹⁹ design pattern commonly seen along the hems in the traditional Ethiopian clothing. At night, with all the interior lights on, this pattern is further enounced serving as a structural beacon in Addis.



Images 12 & 13: A typical Tibeb pattern and a view of the Interior of the Lideta Market (via www.vilalta.studio/)

This design, however derived from a Spanish based studio, exemplifies how understanding one's local context, environment and culture can produce thoughtful and beautiful buildings that are environmentally sound and human centred in expression and utility.



Images 14 & 15: Day and night exterior view of the Lideta Market in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (via www.vilalta.studio/)

¹⁹*Tibeb* refers to the decoration or pattern which is handwoven with supplementary weft into the border of the traditional dresses worn by women and men in Ethiopia and Eritrea

CONCLUSION

***Sankofa* is a term derived from the Twi language in Ghana that means to reflect on the past to build a successful future. If one then reflects on how far we have come as a society when it comes to design and interrogate our various cultures, habits, beliefs, and environment, we will create better designs that are rooted in human needs. The spirit of Sankofa which emphasises that one should reflect on what has been done and achieved to do better in the future, can have another nuanced approach of African design through local design practitioners and thus reveal that the ideas of human-centred and hence successful design are inherently part of our cultural landscape. (Ambole, 2020)**

In conclusion, architecture or design is achieved once you consider the complexities and relationship of human beings and their surroundings and what this means is that we create successful designs once we truly interrogate what influences us as human beings and understand what those nuances stemmed in culture and beliefs contribute to the success of contextual design.

ENDNOTES

1. "Norberg-Schultz (1980) describes a space where life occurs to be places and as such have character hence the spirit of place". Norberg-Schulz, C.1980. *Genius loci: Towards a phenomenology of Architecture*. p 5
2. "Sheriff (2001) states that in as much as the Swahili homes appeared somewhat plain from the outside, the interiors were always intricately decorated" Sheriff, A. 2001. *Zanzibar Stone Town an Architectural Exploration*. p 15
3. "Algotsson & Davis (1996) mention that a Ndebele woman may paint the exterior of her home in a geometric pattern that is unique to her and her alone, resulting in an explosion of colour in the village" Algotsson, S & Davis, D. 1996. *The Spirit of African Design*. p 44
4. "Algotsson & Davis (1996) note that the Maasai seem to best embody the nomadic lifestyle of East Africa" Algotsson, S & Davis, D. 1996. *The Spirit of African Design*. p 18
5. "Prix-Versailles 2017 Special Prize Exterior winner under the Shopping Mall category" via <https://www.prix-versailles.com/2017-awards>
6. "D'Abbadie (1868), Stern (1852) and Plowden (1868) are the first to describe the ceremonial dresses as having a silk border, or Tibeb, woven in diamond shapes or checks". Tournerie, P. 1986. *Color and Dye Recipes of Ethiopia*. p. 6-7.

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LANI ADEOYE

Lani Adeoye is an artist designer, driven by conceptual curiosity, craftsmanship and cultural expression coupled with a thirst for innovation. She uses design as a mediation tool; fusing tradition and modernity, merging Art, Craft & Design; whilst expressing intangible cultural concepts. Her designs are versatile in nature, yet they express an overall organic rhythm and a sense of visual harmony. As a multidisciplinary designer, she also works as a design consultant, developing concepts, products and experiences for various brands such as Google, YouTube and NetGear.

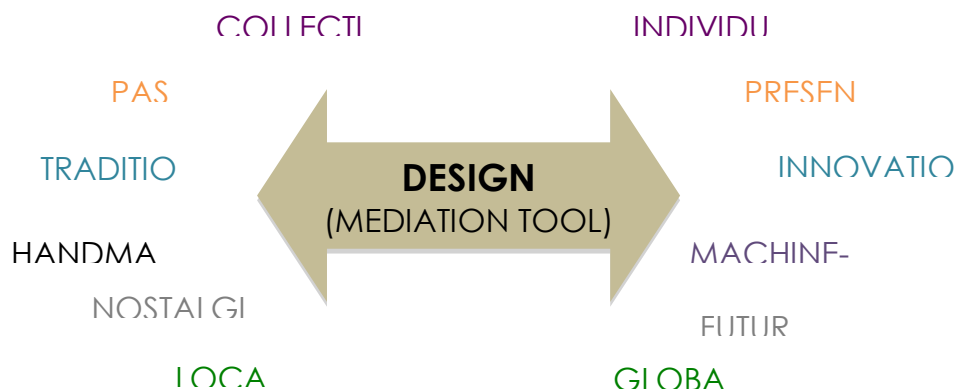
Prior to studying at Parsons - 'The New School,' Lani worked as a Strategy Consultant to Fortune Global 100 clients; following her graduation from McGill University. Her versatility as a designer is a testament to her eclectic roots and diverse life experiences, having lived in four major cities, namely Lagos, Montreal, Toronto, and New York.

Most recently she was selected by Elle Décor as part of its 'Women of the World' 75 Global Female Designers worth celebrating. In 2017, Studio-Lani won the Wanted Design's Launch Pad furniture competition in New York City. Studio-Lani has been featured in Architectural Digest, Design Milk, Elle Decor, Vogue, Core 77, Design Indaba and Dwell amongst other publications.

DESIGN AS A MEDIATION TOOL(LANI ADEOYE)

LANI ADEOYE

As a designer, I'm driven by conceptual curiosity, craftsmanship and cultural preservation coupled with a thirst for innovation. My design practice Studio-Lani, has taken me to various parts of Nigeria, to learn about almost forgotten craft techniques in order to extend their use in a contemporary manner. I am not motivated by trends, but rather I aim to create timeless designs that can be embraced today and celebrated in the future. As a multidisciplinary designer, my work often deals with navigating various worlds. I believe strong synergy can be achieved, at the intersection between two seemingly contradictory areas. I seek to leverage design as a mediation tool, to harness the beauty at this tension points.



TRADITION VERSUS INNOVATION



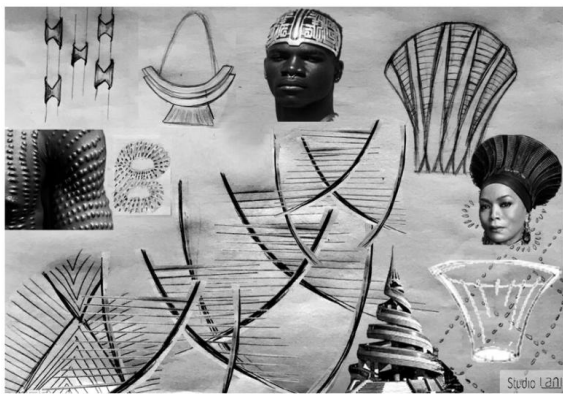
My first collection was inspired by the traditional West African Talking Drum (Dundun), which means 'sweet sound' in the Yoruba language. The Talking Drum has a rare ability to mimic the human speech. It was originally used as a communication tool, due to its power to convey messages from one community to another. It is now commonly used in celebrations such as birthdays and weddings. My first product was a talking light (Candle holder), inspired by the talking drum (middle image). In subsequent collections, I deconstructed the talking drum further, the outer leather chords became metal lines. These metal lines initially echoed the hourglass silhouette of the solid interior expressed as the Dundun coffee table (left image). These metal lines over the years have taking on their own rhythm; they've morphed into other silhouettes especially as sculptural lighting fixtures (right image – Ite light, SisiEko&Ite_x light). This is an example of how my heritage and learning about various traditions inspire me to create modern interpretations.



COLLECTIVE VERSUS INDIVIDUAL IDENTITY'S



As a design Consultant I work with Brands to merge their Brand Identity and a community's cultural identity appropriately. For example when YouTube hosted it's second annual YouTube Black Fanfest in Washington DC, I was asked to conceptualize a design for the event's immersive stage as well as design concepts for marketing material. Black panther had just been released; black pride was definitely at an all time high during that period. African Futurism informed my design direction and influenced the visual narrative for my concept across the board. Using this as a design foundation, I collaborated with the Youtube team and GoodSense NYC, to incorporate Youtube's strong branding into the overall look and feel of the space. We achieved great synergy, by leveraging Youtube's iconic brand colors and typologies at strategic touch points alongside African inspired motives. Activating this cultural consciousness added a powerful dimension to the YouTube Black Fanfest event and created a heightened experience for the YouTube audience.



GLOBAL MINDSETVERSUS LOCAL SOLUTIONS



In the wake of the global pandemic, there were many global authorities prescribing global solutions with great intentions to manage the virus and protect everyone. However being in Nigeria at the time, I was aware that some of the great recommendations weren't feasible in our local context. It was crucial to learn from these global insights but take into consideration local constraints, to be globally conscious yet locally sensitive.

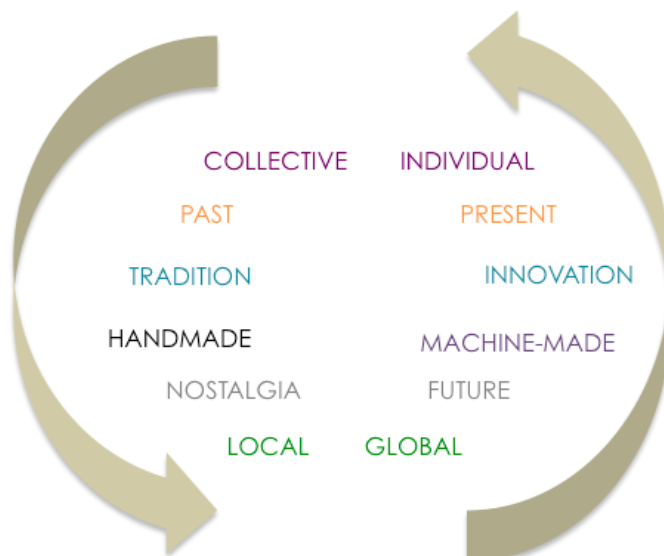
I am in no way an expert, but the anxiety of the period and ongoing conversations, encouraged me to conceptualize this idea. Focusing on Personal Hygiene; there were some key points to keep in mind. Not everyone has access to do the necessary and seemingly basic hygiene practices. In addition when poverty is high in certain areas, hunger would take precedence over hygiene. Basically a man who is hungry would buy food not soap/sanitizer. Furthermore social distancing is a luxury in many places, where multiple family members live in small rooms. Additionally, due to the survival nature of Lagos, a lot of folks initially undermined the virus and believed God would protect them, which created complacency. Therefore, there was an increasingly urgent need for additional preventative measures. I believed we needed a catalyst to disrupt the complacency and provoke a change in behavior.

The catalyst needed to be something that was Affordable, Accessible and Adaptable. After analyzing these guiding principles I developed, I selected 'Pure Water Sachets'. Think of a bottle water but affordable in a nylon sachet. The Pure Water Sachets are affordable; already a staple part of the average man's budget. Water is essential, so it is a frequent purchase. It is accessible as it is distributed frequently to various areas in volumes. And adaptable, it is flexible and not in a rigid form.

I proposed the PURE HANDS CONCEPT using Pure Water as a vehicle; by attaching sanitizer/soap for people to use and to constantly remind people about personal hygiene. (More info on the Pure Hands Concept is available upon request.)



Disrupting a seemingly mundane yet essential product like 'Pure Water' could introduce shock whilst serving as a critical visual cue & constant reminder to many. Perhaps raise consciousness and encourage a change in behavior.



Essentially I use design as a mediation tool in various realms. As an artistic designer connecting tradition and modernity, as a design consultant fusing cultural identity effectively with a brand's individual identity and as an Afropolitan constantly seeking ways to merge local and global insights for our collective good.



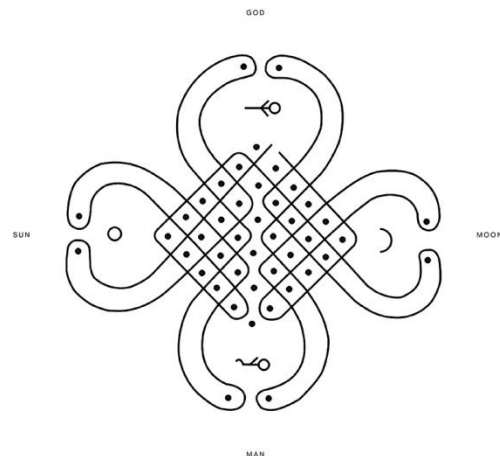
Osmond Tshuma

Osmond Tshuma is the award-winning co-founder and creative director of Mam'gobozi Design Factory. Over the years, he has worked on numerous brands across Africa, from MTN, Telkom, RMB, SABC, Apartheid Museum, and McDonald's, just to name a few. Invited to speak at the Typographics NYC 2020, Dex Atmosphere 4.0 conference and ATYPI 2020 Pan Afrikan Dialogues, Osmond's unique designs have been featured on the Obama Foundation website and he has had projects published in both Singapore and the USA. He has worked on memorable campaigns, like the iKwekwezi FM rebranding and the launch of the limited-edition Soweto Gold '76 commemorative beer. His accolades include awards from the Pendoring show, Loeries, the New York One Show and Cannes Awards.

Afrika: love Letters

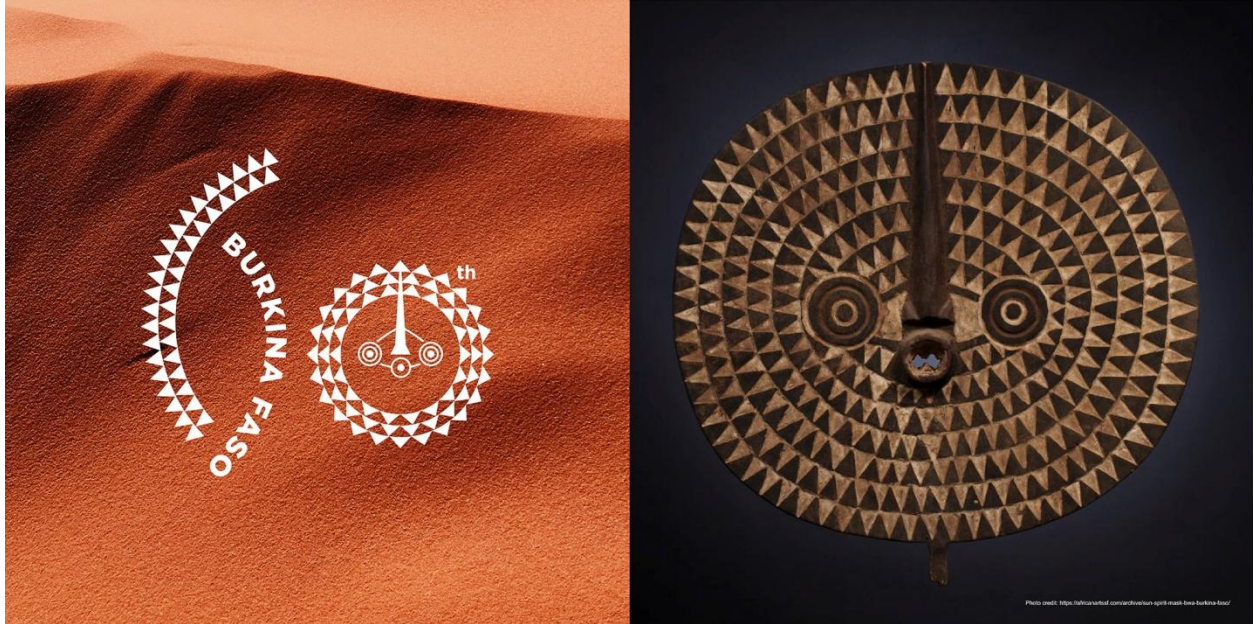
Osmond Tshuma

“This self-initiated project is based on celebrating Afrikan countries independence from colonial rule through an exploration of lettering and letter forms. This was initiated by the disturbance of the xenophobic attacks happening in South Africa towards other Afrikan nationals. In educating myself further about each country, I started critiquing the state in which it is in, by means of ancient cultural symbols, art, sculptures or patterns. I also attempt to explore the similarities we have with one another. By doing so I am able to realise that it’s more about learning from the past, and from other cultures so to preserve who we are and also celebrate one another.”



Angola 45 - Inspired by the Lusona writing system native to the Chokwe people. Lusona is an ideogram that functioned as mnemonic

devices to record proverbs, fables, games, riddles and animals, and to transmit knowledge. The ideograph reference illustrates the oral story of the beginning of the world among Chokwe people. The top figure is God, the bottom is man, on the left is the Sun and on the right is the Moon. The path is the path that leads to God.” - (Bastin, 1961, page 39).



Burkina Faso 60- Inspired by the sun spirit mask of the Bwa people of Burkina Faso, which is used to celebrate the farming season.



Chad 60- Inspired by the ancient Wodaabe face tribal scar tattoos which symbolise beauty.



Eritrea 29- Inspired by beautiful hand-made patterns called Tibeb on a Habesha dress. A Habesha dress is a traditional attire worn by Habesha women. Throughout the history of Eritrea, women have played an active role.



Gabon 60- Inspired by the Bakota reliquary guardian figures (mbulu ngulu), traditionally the Bakota believe in the ancestors powers of the afterlife.



DWENNIMMEN
Symbolises strength and humility

Ghana 63- inspired by the Dwennimmen Adinkra icon which symbolizes strength and humility.

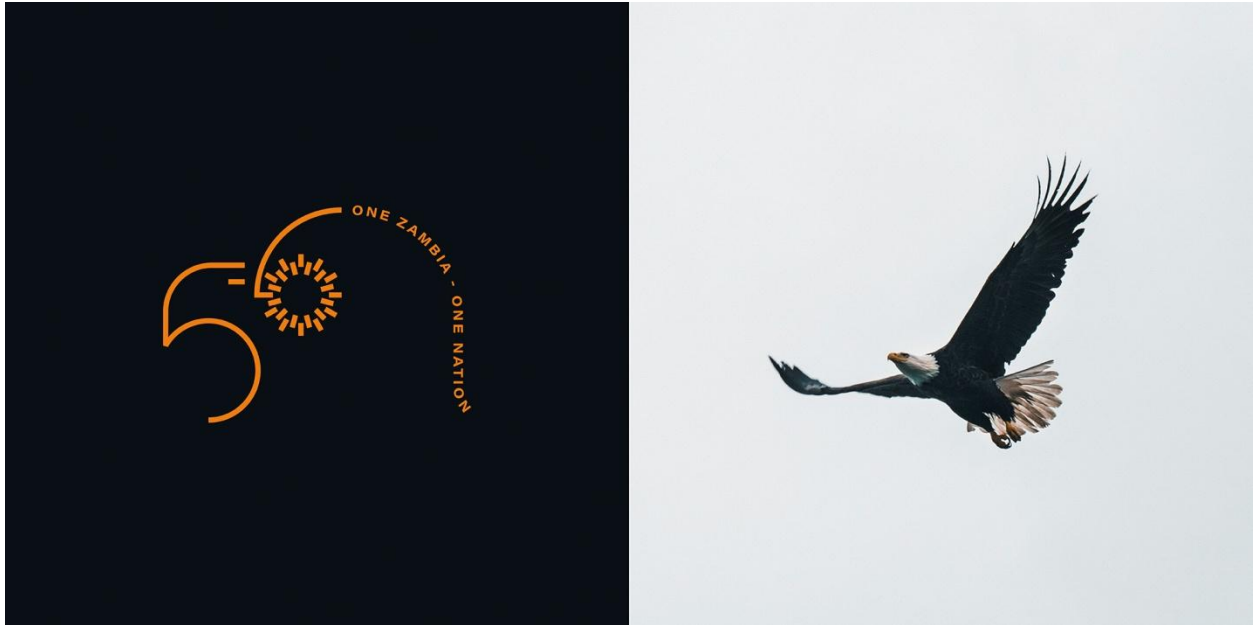


Morocco 64 – Inspired by colourful Moroccan mosaic patterns called Zellij, which is a craft that dates back to at least the 700s. This craft can be found in many architectural structures in Morocco; like mosques, gates and opulent palaces.



Nigeria 60- Inspired by the Queen Mother Pendant Mask while the ascender for the 6 is inspired an altar tusk. In the Kingdom of Benin, ivory was related to colour white a symbol of ritual purity that's why

it was used in many altars. The Queen Mother Pendant Mask is one of many masks and artefacts that were looted 123years ago by the British.



Zambia 56- Inspired by the African fish eagle, the national bird of Zambia, the design on 6 is inspired by the waving patterns on the Makenge baskets.



'SegunOlude runs a collaborative graphic design studio, teaches graphic design. His professional portfolio includes 11-year dossier of teaching graphic design at the University of Manitoba, while also producing various editorial and magazine design, corporate identities, web design, commemorative postage stamps for Canada Post, local and international event branding, including the event branding and publicity materials for TEDxWinnipeg.

'Segun is involved in various professional and community organisations in Canada. He participates annually in community development missions with his wife. 'Segun also teaches professional development courses each year in Canada and Nigeria. An engaging presenter, he is often called up to present or speak about topics ranging from human rights, immigration, integration, and multiculturalism, through Historica Canada and Passages Canada.

Deeper Than Decolonisation

How we retrace a path back in the age of technology

'Segun Olude, CGD

ABSTRACT

Yoruba language utilised oral traditions for communication and preservation of history before contact with the Northern, Arabic, and Islamic influences, and later, the arrival of Europeans. There is an opportunity to capture, archive, and share the stories and adages in electronic format to make them widely accessible for learning and storytelling. However, there are some challenges—there are not enough compliant typefaces and fonts and no cohesive educational or cultural policy to guide such endeavour. By consciously working to create the tools and define multiple outputs, it is conceivable to change Yoruba language's status from a likely death to a viable digital language of education, business, and industry.

Keywords:

Yoruba; Yorùbá; language; history; oral traditions; typeface; multilingual font; latin extended font; language death; visual language; pattern;

Earlier in the history of Yorùbá people, stories were passed on by word of mouth through poetry and song. It was a simpler time. People used what they had to tell their stories—words. They had time to tell stories as they worked on the farm, did their chores, or went on hunting expeditions.

In traditional Yorùbá settings where families lived close to one another or within compounds, they shared everyday experiences. During their interactions, stories were told and retold. It had a curatorial and editorial effect on stories that were edited, embellished, and passed on.

Today, Yorùbá families are widely dispersed around the world. Opportunities to learn or retell the stories that once passed down from one generation to another are slowly disappearing. Everyone is busy. Time is limited, work and family life are demanding. Lack of geographic cohesion among family members is mostly absent. Family members have drifted off to urban centres, many have moved abroad. Each person has access to a plethora of electronic entertainment options on personal hand-held devices for those living closer together.

There is an opportunity to capture, archive, and share the stories and adages in electronic format, accessible to anyone interested in learning the language. However, there are some challenges—not enough compliant fonts and a lack of policy to collect and store stories. Keeping the language alive requires active use—tools are needed to teach Yorùbá as first-language to the young. The importance of language and culture must be the foundation of such education.

In our differences, we find our similarities. Let me explain. Everything discussed in my book, *Ìtàn ati Àṣà Ìbíle Yorùbá: The Yorùbá Narrative in Words and Images*, can be said about any other

culture, language, tribe, or people. We all eat, drink, dress up, and believe in some higher power. In the case of the Yorùbá, we call God by His many names—*Baba wa, Ọlọrun, Olódùmarè, Oluwa, Ọba Ogo*, and such our narrative is extensive.

Stories are a form of packaged communication. Therefore, idioms, allegories, folktales, adages, and proverbs can be building blocks of narrative. Cultures around the world use or have used various forms of oral traditions to preserve knowledge and share their cultural histories.

The Aborigines of Australia use *songlines* to preserve and retell the story of creation and navigate vast geographical spaces. Cherokee legends contain the knowledge of rituals, magic and healing methods. *The Torah*, later *The Holy Bible*, are rich in the narrative of middle-eastern Jews. The Yorùbá have a highly developed culture and structured societies, and a complex, layered oral tradition system. They have a very expressive tonal language that contains direct, indirect, and hidden clues to religious beliefs, social and political structures, history and lineage, and other essential aspects of Yorùbá life. Words, phrases, idioms, and stories coalesce into the foundation of Yorùbá language. It is necessary to use proper accents and diacritical marks to show the language's full tonal range.

I chose to focus on Yorùbá narratives because many Yorùbá indigenes living outside their country of origin have lost or are losing their connection to the language and culture. If I thought this predicament was unique to my family, I soon found out it was a general problem. Like other migrant groups abroad, Yorùbá-born

expatriates stop speaking their birth language, and their children often never learn it. In one generation, the language is lost or dead.

In my study of Yorùbá language and culture, I used transcribed interviews, observation, discussions, and various methods of investigation of real-life Yorùbá people from different walks of life, both in Nigeria and in the diaspora. The project's culmination is a collection of stories that reveal the true identity of the Yorùbá from historical influences present in the culture, expressed as a book, a series of educative poster panels, pronunciation keys, typographic explorations, and beautiful photography, and video [interviews] conversations.

The study also looked at the Yorùbá alphabet, words, phrases, idioms, and stories. That led to creating working typefaces, with complete accents and diacritical marks, a necessary step in the transition from an oral tradition to digital expressions. The refinements found in older Yorùbá books are mostly missing from digital communications, for self-evident reasons.

Apart from oral traditions, there is a rich visual language of patterns and designs on crafts, sculptures, and cloth derived from the history, stories, and cultural beliefs of the Yorùbá. I attempted to collect and arrange the various components of the narrative of the Yorùbá people and their culture, study their importance within the context of their tribal identity, and highlight the influences of storytelling on cultural identity. I utilised elements of qualitative and quantitative research, transcribed interviews, observations, discussions, and

investigation of real-life Yorùbá people from various walks of life, both in Nigeria and the Yorùbá diaspora.

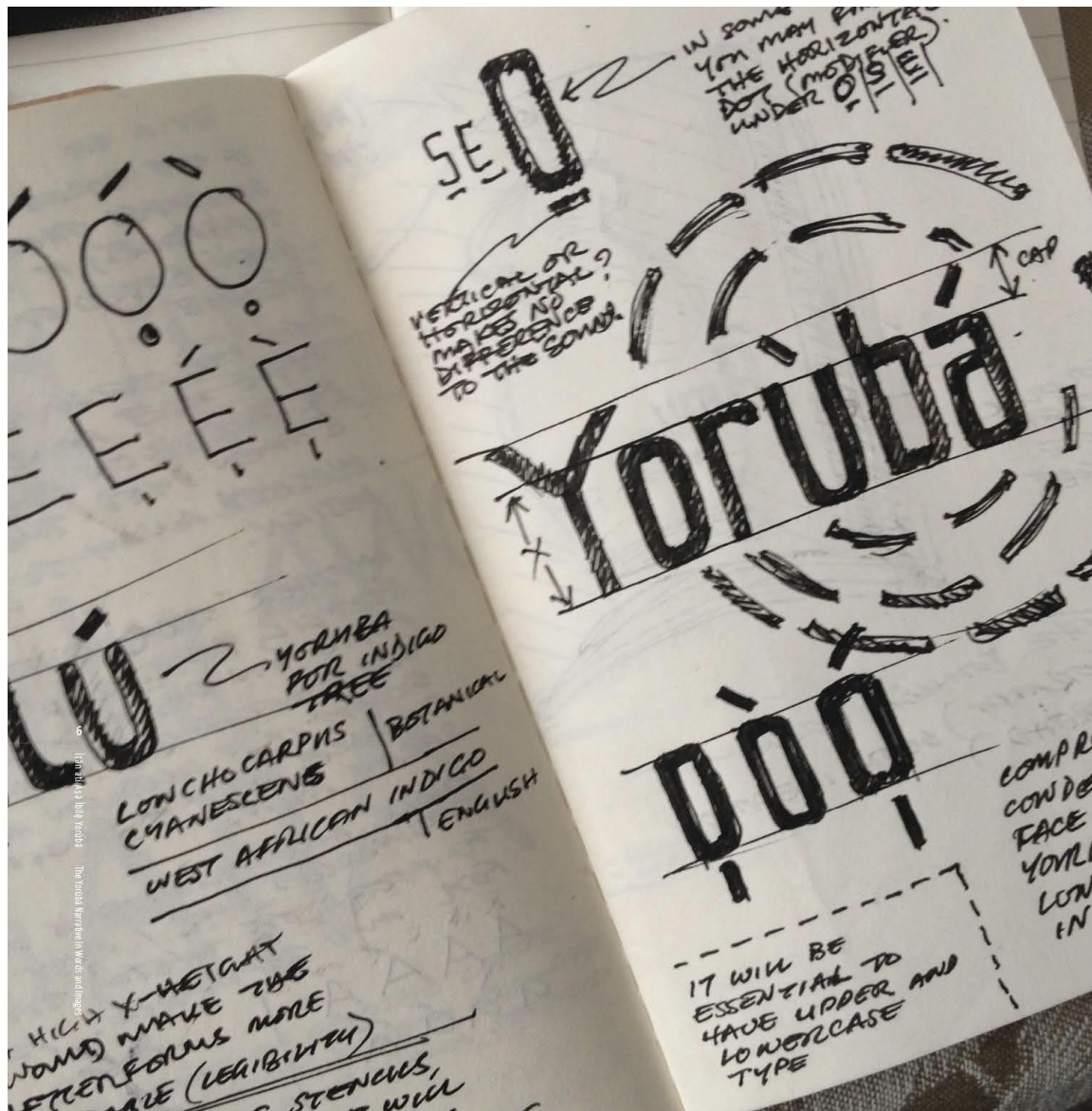


Figure 1. A page from a sketchbook, examining the form and structure of Latin extensions for Yoruba alphabet, trying to make logical decisions that would benefit the typical user.



Figure 2& 3. Two page spreads to show the layout of the book, with images on the left, text on the right, backed by margin notes to give context. Some pages have relevant adages in both Yoruba and English.

A Challenge to Oral Traditions Citation

It is worth stating that one of the greatest challenges of documenting oral traditions is the western educational institutions' view of citations. How do you cite oral traditions that have no written records but an aggregation of agreed meanings? I believe it is time to redefine a different trajectory for studying indigenous languages like Yoruba as we retrace a path back to our pre-colonial past, to reestablish place and meaning.

A Taxonomy for Yoruba People

For the sake of clarity and ease of communication, I was pressed to developed a rudimentary taxonomy and classified Yoruba people into three main groups—Historical, Traditional, and Contemporary Yorùbá. This classification is only to understand the perceptions of the different groups. Some of the extremes I have encountered range from the Yorùbá traditionalist who does not think the language could ever die, to the contemporary Yorùbá who think the

language should fade away already, for the sake of Nigerian unity, a national identity, or other personal reasons.

Historic Yorùbá are those who we only know through oral traditions and the writings of people like Samuel Ajayi Crowther, Samuel Johnson, and the first Yorùbá historians. They had access to “purer” oral history sources. It might be worth considering that the Yorùbá transported across the Atlantic to Brazil, Cuba, and The Caribbean, who kept the traditional religious practices, are, in essence, historical by their traditional practices. This is because they retained pre-colonial beliefs in the new lands.

Traditional Yorùbá are Yorùbá of the period before the pressures of modernisation and foreign education set in. They lived with little or no modern conveniences, used herbal medications all the time, and produced crops by tiling the earth with traditional hand-hewn implements. There still are traditional Yorùbá today who live close to the land in more remote villages or enclaves within larger urban centres. Also, a traditional Yorùbá might be someone who has decided to reconnect with their heritage and live close to the land. They are sometimes referred to as “Traditionalists” or “Revivalists,” whether they live at home or abroad. I wish to use the term “neo-traditional Yorùbá,” but have not found a perfect fit for it.

Contemporary Yorùbá, as the name implies, are those who live in a post-colonial Nigeria, have an education and are exposed to modern amenities values of microwave, automobiles. They may or may not speak the language with fluency and have less affiliation with the culture. I could break this group into two sub-groups, but it

might get messy. Some Yorùbá who cannot speak or write the language yet have a legitimate claim to being Yorùbá—legal, hereditary, choice, marriage, or genetic—fit into this group. Also, Yorùbá living abroad in various parts of the world as Yorùbá in Diaspora belong in this classification. I, the writer, belong to this group.

Not originally in the taxonomy matrix, but included among the contemporary Yorùbá classification are those that I loosely refer to as “**Digital Yorùbá.**” They were born in the last 20 years and live contemporary Yorùbá lives. They have educated parents, grew up with computers, own digital devices, access the internet, and identify more with the western world than their Yorùbáness. Some digital Yorùbá are curious about their heritage and fantasize about the past heroics they have heard in stories. This class is growing fast as more Yorùbá youth join this group. Some even anglicise the spelling of their names to look or sound more western. This challenging group is my primary audience.

From Oral to Digital Stories: Keeping the language alive through use.

To keep language or heritage alive, it must be used. It cannot be kept in museums. Yorùbá adages, idiom, and essential knowledge was committed to memory and transmitted with words and song. It depended on the ability of the storyteller to memorise stories and retell them accurately. Then, there’s the challenge of dialects and regional differences in pronunciation.

The written form of Yorùbá developed after contact, first with Arabs through trans-Sahara trade and *jihads*, and later with European traders who travelled over the Atlantic Ocean. The final choice of a Latin-based Yorùbá alphabet was made after deliberation over the complexity of the Arab script, as cited in Isaac Adejoju Ogunbiyi's paper: *The Search For A Yorùbá Orthography Since The 1840S: Obstacles To The Choice Of The Arabic Script*. Ogunbiyi noted that there were inconsistencies in the written form of the language and some pronunciation limitations that would have interfered with the spoken language's tonality.

The *Ajami Script* could not capture the vocal nuances of the Yoruba language and was dropped. With influence from early Christian missionaries in Yorùbá land, the Latin alphabet based Yorùbá supplanted the Arabic script to become the de facto form of written Yoruba.

Comparative table of Arabic/Yoruba, 'ajamī and Romanized alphabets

S/N	Arabic	Yoruba 'ajamī	Romanized Yoruba	S/N	Arabic	Yoruba 'ajamī	Romanized Yoruba
1	ب	ب	b	19	س	س	s
2	م	م	m	20	ر	ر	r
3	و	و	w	21	ش	ش	s/sh ¹
4	ف	ف	f	22	ي/ي	ي/ي	y
5	–	ب/پ	p/kp	23	ك/ك	ك/ك	k
6	–	ب/غ	gb	24	غ	غ	g ²
7	ت	ت	t	25	ق	–	-
8	د	د	d	26	ع	–	-
9	ث	–	-	27	هـ	هـ	h
10	ذ	–	-	28	ء	–	-
11	ظ	–	-	29	fatha	َ	a
12	ط	–	-	30	kasra	ِ	i
13	ض	–	-	31	damma	ُ	u
14	ل	ل	l	32	–	آ/إ/ع	e
15	ن	ن	n	33	–	و/أ/عوا	o ³
16	ج	ج	j	34	–	ي/ع	e ³
17	ز	–	-	35	–	و/عوا	o ³
18	ص	–	-				

1. 'Sh' used by many writers until recently instead of 's'.
2. The Yoruba 'g' is pronounced like the Cairo ج .
3. Recent innovation/modification.

Figure 4. Yoruba Ajami Script, credit The Search for a Yorùbá Orthography Since the 1840s–Obstacles to the Choice of Arabic Script by Isaac Adedoku Ogunbiyi.

By the time Nigeria became an independent nation, The Yoruba Bible and a few other books had already been written and published in the Yoruba language. As we all know, the old technology used to print books is mostly gone. The old letterpress and hot type publishing are gone, replaced by computers and other digital devices. Today, Yoruba authors find it easier to access books, but many do not have proper accents and diacritic marks. To retain the authenticity of Yoruba stories, it is necessary, in my opinion, to retain the marks because they help differentiate words and sounds. One word could mean five different things in Yoruba language. For instance, *Owo* could mean money, trade, hands, respect, or a particular plant.

Could graphic design be a means of collecting, conserving, and regenerating interest in the Yorùbá narrative? Could graphic design help present Yoruba in visually engaging ways that are easily-accessible in analogue and digital forms? Those questions are answered on the following pages. These are my proposals for using design to facilitate learning Yorùbá, and keeping Yorùbá stories alive, especially among Nigerians living abroad.

The use of computers in everyday communications has made a difference in the world. Over the years, computer industry has been slow to include Yoruba at the system level or offer fonts that include the full suite of Yoruba Latin, Latin extensions, and modifier glyphs. It is good to see that Google has done much work in this direction. Apple has also included Yoruba as one of the alternate languages in settings, but more needs to be done. May I take this opportunity to

invite typographers to join in creating or extending their type designs to include the full set of Yoruba glyphs and modifiers. Below are panels designed to show the Yoruba alphabets and accents.



Figure 5. Pronunciation key for the basic set of characters of written Yoruba, designed as a first introduction to Yoruba for a beginner.

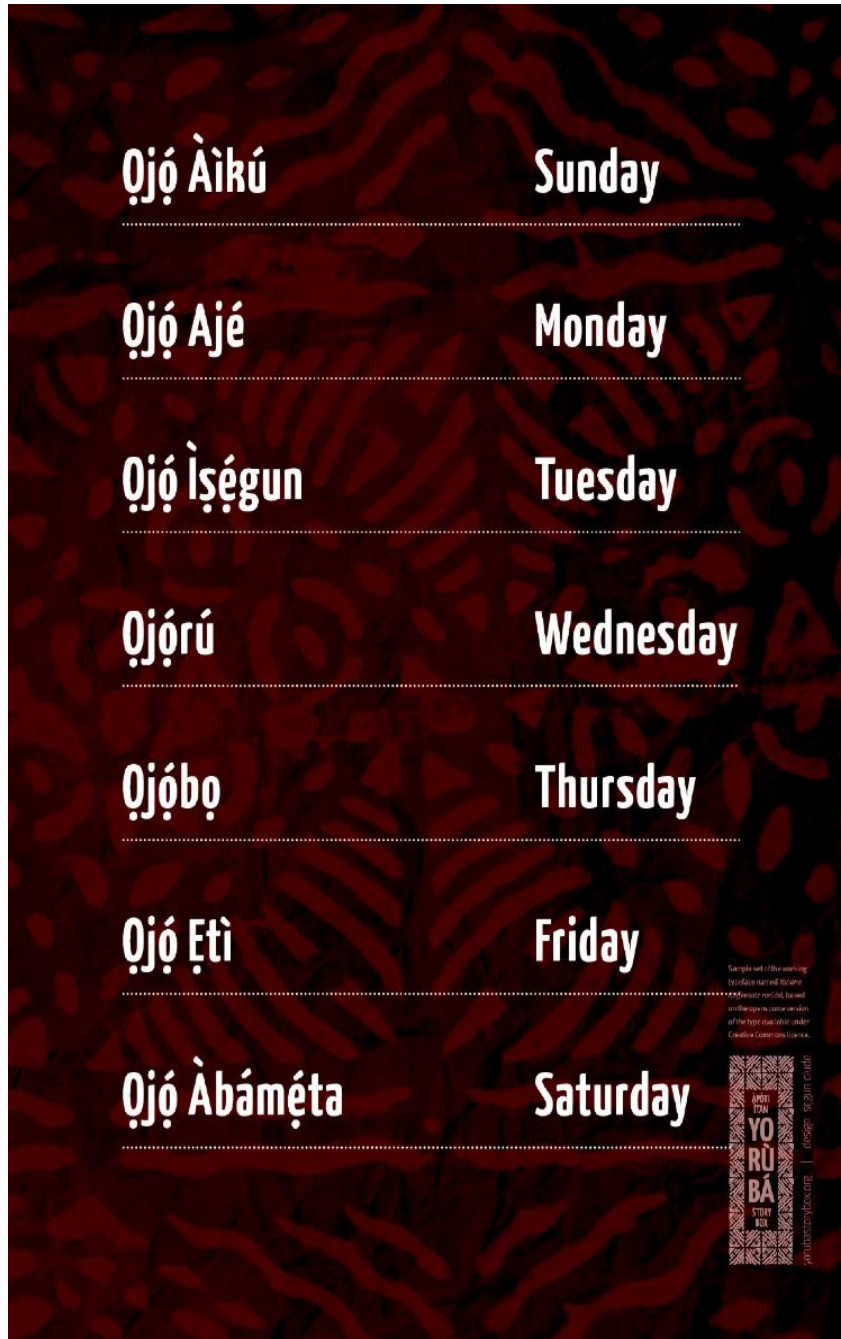


Figure 6. Days of the week in Yoruba. This is useful for schools and institutions to have on classroom walls. Community groups may also find this useful at events as conversation starter.

Ṣẹ̀rẹ̀	January
Èrẹ̀lẹ̀	February
Ẹ̀rẹ̀nà	March
Ìgbé	April
Èbìbì	May
Òkúdu	June
Agẹmọ	July
Ògún	August
Owẹ̀rẹ̀ (Owẹ̀wẹ̀)	September
Ọ̀wàrà (Ọ̀wàwà)	October
Bélú	November
Ọ̀pẹ	December

Sample set of the working
hybrid method for the
Affixes method, based
on the experience version
of the typeface under
development.

YORUBA
STUDY
BOX
www.yoruba.org | design: segun olatun

Figure 7. Yoruba names of the month calendar. In a flat format, it is a poster. In an interactive format, it is a quiz (in development). Learners would test themselves as they try to recall the names of weeks and months.



Figure 8. Yoruba names for colours are sometimes subjective. Very often, they are comparisons or attribution to some existing phenomena, bird, animal, or plant. For example, the colour green, àwọ̀ ewéko simply means, the colour of vegetation.

Conclusion

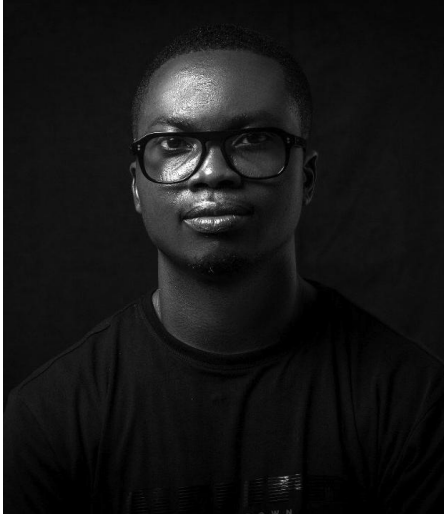
Five hundred seventy-three extinct languages are listed on the linguistlist.org database. A combination of factors lead to the loss of

a language—war, disease, famine, natural disasters, displacement, politics, and other causes. It happens quickly in some cases, while in other cases, it is a slow process until the language ceases to be written or spoken.

Some languages are only alive in their written form but have ceased to be spoken. That can happen again, especially because many emerging economies adopt English as their official or business language. Indigenous languages are under constant threat. New releases of software and apps inch many languages towards extinction, slowed only through an intentional effort to save rare and dying languages.

As designers, we need to be aware of our responsibility in saving dying languages. Saving a dying language saves not just stories but cures for diseases not yet known to the western world. Keeping a language alive may mean keeping indigenous knowledge systems alive before other less efficacious solutions supplant them.

Saving a language from dying is deeper than decolonisation. It is how we retrace a path back to our divine-human indigenous origins, even in the age of technology. Changing technology or economies do not have to lead to loss of language. We have work to do, to save our different languages by creating new digital tools and making old one more accessible for the digital indigenes.



Simon Charwey

Founder of @africandesignmatters, online directory cataloguing good works of Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC), Afrikan descent, and Afrika-born creatives-- a relevant and timely initiative in solidarity and in support of the underrepresented creatives, globally. The ADM mission is to call for a richer, diverse and inclusive art and design history and curriculum that represent all cultures.

Charwey believes design is a cultural response; hence, he is collaborating with creatives and design educators in building a memberful cross-cultural creative network for the next evolution of creatives who are able to learn from different cultures and create from multiple perspectives.

He is a brand identity designer and anthologist on indigenous Afrikan design systems and AfrikanSymbology.

Charwey is a member of the Pan Afrikan Design Institute (PADI; www.thepadi.org), which is the Design Council of Afrika. He is also the secretary of DesignGhana, a chapter of the PADI.

The most important issue facing cultural and creative industries in Africa Today

CHARWEY, Simon Kweku

ABSTRACT

Some countries in Afrika are beginning to identify cultural and creative industries (CCIs) as part of its government development agenda. But, they are yet to begin realizing a strategic way to creating a funnel for possible billions of turnovers into their respective economies in comparison to their UK counterpart, among other developed countries. In the past decade, many issues and challenges remain on top of the conversation among key actors within Afrika's CCIs. The objective of this study is to identify the real issue facing cultural and creative industries (CCIs) in Afrika today and why that is the case. Thus, this research is concerned with one research question, "What is the most important issue facing cultural and creative industries (CCIs) in Afrika today, and why?"

The study explores different culturally intelligent ideas/call-to-actions (CTAs) that address the need for a culturally competent and creative leadership within Afrika's CCIs sector. The author establishes that it is important to bring on board Afrika's culturally intelligent luminary creatives who, evidently, will be able to imagine, influence and initiate tourism and heritage projects that underpins Afrika's rich and heterogenous cultures and honours Afrika's creativity and civilization. The study also identifies some culturally intelligent and competent luminary creatives like Sir David Adjaye, Dr. Esther Mahlangu, Prof. Kwame H. Addo, Victor Ekpuk, among

others who should be leading Afrika's CCIs. And not just anyone at with the title "cultural heritage expert" or all the titles one can think of.

KEYWORDS: *cultural and creative industries, leadership, cultural competence, cultural intelligence, culturally intelligent, Afrikan governments, creativity, tourism and heritage projects, heterogenous cultures, Afrika's economy.*

INTRODUCTION

Most arguments and conversations, for the past decade, on issues within the cultural and creative industries (CCIs) had and continue to be centred on the mid-century conversations: government development agenda, national policy, cultural policy, international trade, foreign exchange earnings, diversity and inclusion, decolonising design/creative education, among related topics. As much as these values mean a lot to me as a culturally intelligent thought leader in design and an anthologist on indigenous Afrikan design systems and Afrikan symbology, I am getting practically impatient with these conversations that are leading to no tangible actions from us as leaders--design educators, cultural entrepreneurs, policy-makers, and creatives influencers, stakeholders, among other key actors--within the CCIs system. In South Afrika, "Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) sector have high recognition on the South Afrikan government's development agenda. Yet, the contribution of the sector to the economy appears to be extremely low in comparison to its counterparts in the developed world"(Shafi, Sirayi & Abisuga-Oyekunle, 2020)¹. So what

then is the most important issue facing cultural and creative industries in Afrika today...and why?

Leadership

The most important issue is one of leadership; but not just the lack of it. Rather, it is a leadership without a cultural competence. Why? Culturally competent leadership is about embracing all cultures and influencing a culture of creators within the CCIs. Culture drives leadership. And culturally driven leadership instinct leads to culturally competent and empathetic skills to lead, especially in a space like Afrika's CCIs. This is a quintessential skill every key actor within any cultural and creative industries should have and continue developing. The need to nurture culturally intelligent creators/creatives within Afrika's CCIs is key to creating a funnel for possible billions of turnovers into Afrika's economy.

In his *Six Strings and a Note* memoir, a compelling and relevant portrait of the artistic life of Daniel Kwabena Boa Amponsah, known around the world by his stage name, Agya Koo Nimo, he reveals that "the curiosity to create is often born in people from a myriad of experiences"(Obeng-Amoako,2016)². This is one of the culturally intelligent (CQ) creative personalities my upcoming book--Being Culturally Intelligent--is featuring. He has a deep appreciation and understanding of his culture (the Akan and Ghana culture). One could also think of Dr. Esther Mahlangu, of South Afrika, for her love for the Ndebele culture; Sir David Adjaye, a British Ghanaian architect, for his cultural restoration and heritage projects; Victor Ekpuk, of Nigeria, for his reinterpretation of the Nsibidi symbols

through his abstract art forms. These are the kind of CQ leaders that should be part of Afrika's CCIs leadership. Not just anyone at all with the title "cultural heritage expert," or any leadership title within the Afrika's CCIs.

In order to see ourselves achieving this culturally competent leadership goal, there should be the need to begin acting upon culturally intelligent (CQ) call-to-actions (CTAs) that are strategically aimed at investing in (i) Afrika's cultural ideas, values, and creations, including its tangible and intangible cultures, and natural heritage (which includes culturally significant landscapes, and biodiversity); (ii) tourism and heritage projects that honours the magnitude of creativity and civilization in Afrika; and (iii) creating support systems that focus on nurturing potential culturally intelligent and visionary leaders in creative network of cross-cultural and interdisciplinary communities. Evidently, achieving these CQ CTAs will require a culturally competence leadership, within the Afrika's CCIs sector, able to imagine and initiate tourism and heritage projects that underpin the rich and heterogenous cultures within each Afrikan country.

"The real crisis is rather one of [culturally intelligent (visionary and creative)] leadership... Our mission is for Dubai to become an international, pioneering hub of excellence and creativity, and we are already striving to make it the world's premier trade, tourism and services destination in the twenty-first century. We are confident we can reach this ambitious goal thanks to our dedicated leadership and by providing the necessary infrastructure and environment" (Al Maktoum, 2012)³.

My initial research revealed that the UK boasts a vibrant Creative and Cultural Industry, with a 2018 turnover of about £111.7 billion to the UK economy for identifying the CCIs sector as part of its Government's annual strategy(GOV.UK, 2020)⁴. Again, it is about leadership; one that appreciates and values their culture and its unique cultural ideas, values and creations as tangible and intangible contributions to a country's economic development goals.

In my home country, we are about seeing new visionary and creative leadership, but more importantly, one that seeks to honour Afrika's culture. A typical example, as a point in case, is when I had the rarest opportunity to begin playing a key role in the ongoing Asanteman Goldtown Resource Park;a "Legacy Project" in Asanteman, conceived and designed by Prof. Kwame Addo, a Ghanaian-international development architect, in collaboration with Manhyia Palace.This project is a transformational mixed use 'destination' development initiated by Otumfuo Osei Tutu II, King of Asante from the heartland of Asanteman, enabling an integrated platform of commerce, culture and industry.

This leadership promptness also follows a question that members of DesignGhana--designghana.net; a chapter of the Pan Afrikan Design Institute (PADI; thepadi.org)--have been trying to answer: "How do creatives get to influence Government's economic strategy?" Professor Kwame Addo's comprehensive visualised maps project is a coherent strategy towards encouraging a collaboration between the Government of Ghana and the key actors within its CCIs sector. And the same sentiment was shared by members of PADI that, Uganda's

"Nyege Nyege Festival" is typical proof that CCIs are major drivers of economies but the initial government reaction clearly explains why Afrika is at the bottom of the heap on the list of global revenues from CCIs and also has the least number of people employed by same"(Mafundikwa, 2019).⁵

Three examples of true visionary and culturally intelligent leadership could be gleaned from Ghana's first prime minister, Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah's economic legacies(Annor, 2009)⁶; Sheikh Zayed, former member of the Federal Supreme Council of United Arab Emirates, drilling artesian wells (underground water reservoirs) in the desert and using the water for farming and other benefits later discovered in present day, despite many critics from the United Arab Emirates and overseas; Sheikh Rashid, father of HHS Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates and Ruler of the Emirate of Dubai, choosing one of the world's harshest deserts--and one of Dubai's remotest and most isolated areas--to invest hundreds of millions of US dollars in building the world's largest man-made port and the Gulf's largest free trade and industrial zones, despite many critics from all around the world (Al Maktoum, 2012)³.

Again, the real issue facing Afrika's Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) is culturally intelligent leadership that understands that creativity can be nurtured. Because creativity is intrinsic in all cultures. Thus, creativity as a central idea in design – or any creative field, is a culturally inclusive concept. Culturally competent leaders and/or key actors within Afrikan CCIs can all learn from the reliable advice on nurturing creativity and culturally intelligent creative

leadership from HHS Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, as he examines aspects of the UAE's unique development experience: "The only thing that could ever guarantee success is to have the largest number of excellent achievers on board, because the race for excellence calls for exceptional participants. The tools for creativity are available in the market and we can buy them whenever we want to, whether from the United States, Japan, Europe or elsewhere. But creativity itself is not a product we can buy and nor is enthusiasm. We have to look for those who have these characteristics and nurture their talents." (Al Maktoum, 2012)³.

In the Singapore story (1965–2000), "From Third World to First," founding father Lee Kuan Yew shares how Singapore's economic transformation was achieved partly through nurturing and attracting talent: "It had taken me some time to see the obvious, that talent is a country's most precious asset. For a small resource-poor country like Singapore, with 2 million people at independence in 1965, it is the defining factor... After several years in government I realized that the more talented people I had as ministers, administrators, and professionals, the more effective my policies were, and the better the results." (Yew, 2000)⁷

Conclusion

In order to achieve all the aforementioned, Afrika's governments, cultural entrepreneurs, and key actors within the cultural and creative industries (CCIs) should begin seeing the investment in the CCIs as part of their respective national development goals. This way, we can begin to influence and initiate high-value tourism and heritage projects. This way, we can fully harness culturally intelligent

ideas, values, and creations from Afrika's heterogenous cultures and see CCIs as a major driver in Afrika's economic development.

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Tsholofelo has been a Visual Communications lecturer at the Tshwane University of Technology in Pretoria (South Africa) for the past 10 years. She has been teaching subjects such as African Design, Information Design, Illustration and Drawing. Her interest in Afrikan Identity stems from her own sociopolitical and educational upbringing that transcended into her questioning her own Identity as a Motswana and as an Afrikan. Her undergraduate degree as well as her research in writing her master's dissertation brought her to an understanding of the need to include more Afrikan content within the design curriculum. This includes designing projects that would foster students' interrogation of their own cultural identities or political history and intentionally instilling a sense of self-worth and cultural pride. Tsholofelo has recently enrolled at the University of Johannesburg pursuing her PhD in Design.

Afrika: Design, Change Mindsets, Educate and Shine

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Abstract

Afrika's²⁰ visual culture and its myriad of rich aesthetics offer designers much to draw from. Concomitantly, Afrika has always had to navigate through a multiplicity of identities. However, the latter is further complicated seeing as globalisation has contributed to various layers of identities that resonate with the individual and not so much (or even exclusively) for the advancement of the collective. Thus, this paper discusses the self-determination of Afrika with specific reference to South Africa's response to globalisation contexts and the Afrikan agenda. This paper also reflects how young Afrikan designers are unapologetic as regards their inherent Afrikan identity, including how South African (and Afrikan) design education should assimilate Afrikan contexts such as African cosmologies and the young Afrikan designers. The goal here is – and should be – to impart self-determination and cultural pride.

Keywords: *Afrikan design; Afrikan identity; Young Afrikan designers; Afrikan agenda; globalisation*

1. Introduction

²⁰ *I use the term Afrika as a conscious reminder to critically inspect and question the construction of Afrikan epistemology through languages, visual cultures, history and Afrikan identity. Thus, the use of the term Africa will be used in direct quotations and when referring to South Africa as a country.*

There is no doubt that Afrika's visual culture has vast, colourful arts and symbols that, over time, have come to be commodified. The everyday consumption of global cultural entities perpetuated by globalisation sees the continuous devaluing of Afrika's rich history and culture. Georghiou (2004:176) rightly states that "Globalisation is causing distances to shrink and knowledge and ideas to be shared in what can be characterised as a movement towards a 'borderless world' with a 'common culture'." Georghiou furthermore highlights how the effect of globalisation in Third World countries continues to suppress Cultural Identities. In Umeogu's (2013) paper titled "The Aftermath of Globalization on African Identity" it is suggested that globalisation's intentions have inversely resulted in 'the loss of cultural identities and heritage' and has perpetuated the socio-economical gap of a country such as Nigeria. When it comes to globalisation within an Afrikan context, cultural identity and contemporary socio-economic structures cannot be separated from Afrikan nations' colonial creators who continue to influence Afrikan cultures to this day.

Georghiou and Umeogu both reflect on cultural deterioration and the increase of ethnocentrism – the purported superiority of a specific culture as opposed to the inferiority of the 'other' (Georghiou, 2004; Hammond and Axelrod, 2006; Mbembe, 2016). For instance, America's cultural 'superiority' is overtly exposed to the world through digitisation with the use of varied media platforms; thus, the consumption of American products, trends, and inventions is merely a click away. On the other hand, Umeogu (2013:177) suggests that "people [should] slow-down in the consumption and

thirst for foreign products and life so as to salvage [their] culture, [their] identity, [their] pride". However, the concept of salvaging a culture can be construed as a fallacy, as culture is fluid, ever absorbing and discarding as it moves along. Culture's fluidity, thus, results in it being continuously shifting, and the question of (cultural) identity and authenticity is and remains ongoing (UNESCO, 2009). Within the context of previously colonised nations, salvaging of culture speaks to correcting the narrative that has helped perpetuate Imperialism, segregation, and apartheid education systems such as previously employed in South Africa (Letseka, 2012; Umeogu, 2013). In South Africa, this would result in Eurocentric approaches giving way to an Afrikan agenda.

2. Afrikan Agenda

The Afrikan agenda could be the reassertion of the Afrikan "organic epistemological centre" (Nyoni, 2019:2), contributed and disseminated through various media platforms, Afrikan intellectuals, Afrika's creative industry and through formal educational institutions (such as Universities). The hybridity of ideas should be mobilised to contribute to Afrika's advancement and to the glocalisation of Afrikan cultures. As a postcolonial concept, the term 'glocal' or glocalisation is defined as the merging of global and local culture. This concept revolves around how glocalisation cannot exist without local participation (Ashcroft, Gareth and Helen, 2013). The assimilation or the adaptation of global cultural identities into local cultural identities gives the foreign culture a localised touch (Tong and Cheung, 2011). For example, the Coca-Cola brand tailors its messages to the South African market, or the serving of "pap" (i.e.

porridge made from maizeflour) in South African-based Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) outlets. Even though glocalisation benefits the local economy, we should nonetheless remain mindful that international companies mostly own these products and services and as such capital flows out of Afrika.

Within the South African context, the transformation or assimilation of foreign goods and services for local consumptions also serves as a reminder that Southern Afrikan designers and marketers are catalysts in the glocalising of products and services. Southern Afrikan designers also perpetuate the altering of local contemporary cultures into absorbing a global – which is to say mostly an Americanised – culture. As a marketing concept, glocalisation is inspired by everyday human behaviour expressed through the adaption of local languages and local visual cultures (Erić, 2007).

Despite the absorption of global cultures, Ashcroft, Gareth and Helen (2013: 147) nonetheless found that the relationship between local and global communities is "marked by a far greater degree of self-determination". Over time, local cultures appropriated and adapted foreign products, thus assimilating them to the point of becoming a local brand – for example, the 'Three Cats' Da Gama textile fabrics also known as *Shweshwe/Seshoeshoe* (in Sesotho) or *Leteise* (in Setswana) or *Ujamani* (in isiXhosa) (Pheto-Moeti et al., 2017; Disele, Tyler and Power, 2011). The 'Three Cats' (indigo cotton fabric) originated in Germany and was introduced to South Africa by the missionaries but is now manufactured in South Africa. The assimilation and further hybridisation of products such as Shweshwe came about because "[amaXhosa] women responded to pressure to

dress in a European style, often choosing Shweshwe prints sewn in the current European fashion" (Farber, 2010:144) as the women initially wore animal skin. Pheto-Moeti, Riekert and Pelsler (2017:25) also suggest that young amaXhosa women saw that the "indigo gave them a blue hue that was beautiful on their skins" but the selection of the fabric could have also been due to the fact that the fabric was cheap and durable, on account of its original intended target market which was poor whites and Trek-Boers (Farber, 2010). Within the 20th and 21st century, the Shweshwe has evolved into a local brand that offers various fashionable patterned cotton fabrics, and it is culturally associated with modern traditional weddings locally. Furthermore, specific Shweshwe colours and patterns distinguish cultural groups. For instance, in wedding ceremonies such as Magadi (Setswana name for dowry negotiation), Basotho and Batswana women wear skirts of a specific blue or brown colour that visually locate their sub-group or clan.

The distinct ownership of Shweshwe fabrics, as shown by the localised use of specific colours and nicknames given to the Three Cats Da Gama textiles, underlines a sociopolitical undertone of self-determination and ownership to Southern Afrika's cultural heritage. This powerful ownership of the Shweshwe fabric pushes forth an Afrikan agenda rooted in the colonial past that can never be ignored or forgotten. That is why Afrika's push for self-preservation and self-determination forms part of the African Union Agenda 2063 and its Seven Aspirations (African Union Commission, 2015). The Agenda 2063's 5th Aspiration advocates for:

"An Africa with a strong cultural identity, common heritage, shared values and ethics: inculcating the spirit of Pan Africanism; tapping Africa's rich heritage and culture to ensure that the creative arts are major contributors to Africa's growth and transformation; and restoring and preserving Africa's cultural heritage, including its languages." (African Union, 2020).

In light of the above, the inevitable question of how many of Southern Afrika's young designers (not limited to fashion designers) know about or have been educated on Shweshwe fabric history, now came to the fore. And so did the question of how the assimilation of the patterns used on the fabrics have influenced Southern Afrika's visual culture.

3. Afrikan design education

Within the context of South African design education, design students navigate dual or multiple realities; for example, the school and home cultures force students to assume multiple personalities and use different languages in different social settings. Simultaneously, students try to understand foreign design principles and philosophers and understand or uphold Afrikan cultural value systems and languages. Yet some design students find little value in preserving their Afrikan cultures, but rather seek and often find familiarity in Western, Eurocentric, Manga and global views of what is constituted as sound design, thus reiterating Georghiou's (2004: 176) thoughts on globalisation's 'borderless world'.

In 2015-2016, conscientised students raised the drive for self-determination and self-preservation in movements such as

#Rhodesmustfall, #feesmustfall and the hair policy protest at South African universities and high schools. Movements such as #Rhodesmustfall tapped into postcolonial theories that played a role in planting the seeds for decolonisation and transformational activism. The aforementioned movements directed mirrors to the South African higher education system and forced changes on the curriculum and old institutional policies formulated during the apartheid era. It is worth noting that South Africa's design education was not excluded from the transformational and Decolonisation discourse.

South Africa's design education should never be contend with 'making things look pretty'. Afrikan design students should develop cultural consciousness that would allow them to question their socio-economical stance that form local, Afrikan and global perspectives. Thus, Afrikan designers and design education must equally interrogate the history of the Afrikan diaspora, Afrikan aesthetics and further develop an understanding of Afrika's Indigenous knowledge systems – this categorically includes complex discourse on Afrikan spirituality (Marumo and Chakale, 2018). Afrikan designers armed with such a plethora of knowledge serve as gatekeepers of Afrika's visual culture; they potentially can teach and change mindsets of the viewers or consumers of local products – and thus increasing Afrika's self-determination to a level of consciousness and an appreciation of Afrika's cultural identities.

The complexity of self-determination and cultural identity can position designers into identifying themselves through a specific genre or design philosophy. Magazines such as *Ijusi* and *Design*

Indaba assist Afrikan Designers or visual artists by providing platforms to showcase their work and design philosophies to not only Afrika, but the world. Over the years, the Design Indaba conference and its online counterpart have featured various Afrikan artists, artisans and designers who have made a meaningful contribution to Afrika's creative industry. As Design Indaba celebrates its 26th anniversary, it is also fitting to remember that the birth of Design Indaba "was one far bigger than design – one inspired by societal issues and intrinsically tied to the story of Africa" (Design Indaba, 2020). The Design Indaba's online magazine is also a tremendous archival tool for recording contemporary design trends that continue to change South Africa and Afrika's creative economies as it is also an indicator of Afrikan and global design trends.

Over the years and in addition to the Design Indaba, social media platforms such as Instagram and Behance have given young Afrikan designers a platform to express their views on topics such as Afrikan identity and other contemporary sociopolitical constructs. Young Afrikan designers such as Osmond Tshuma, Zana Masombuka, SsanyuSematimba, Karabo Poppy Moletsane, Karo Akpokiere, SonwaboValashiya, Zana Masombuka and MasonwabeNtloko are unapologetic about their conscious assertion of their Afrikanness through their work or in how they see Afrika. For instance, Moletsane states that she is "inspired by the visual aesthetic of Africa, both contemporary and traditional" and further notes that "[our] aesthetic has a long rich heritage rooted in constant innovation and hybridity" (Moletsane, 2013).

On the other hand, these young Afrikan designers also reflect steadfastness in their identity and on how one cannot ignore the fact that Afrikan design is political. Afrikan design should not accept to be labelled as the exotic, according to Masombuka "Africans need to interpret their history themselves and seek to reinvent Africa according to their own terms" (Design Indaba, 2019), thus reiterating Umeogu's stance. Young Afrikan designers are catalysts to bridging the knowledge gap in teaching Afrikan designers to first and foremost valuing themselves as well as their diverse cultures. Ntloko states that, "The main reason we as the youth don't know much about our culture is the way it's being taught to us, so I came up with a way to teach my peers in a way they will understand, through art and social media" (in Gadgil, 2018).

Due to culture's fluidity, continuous radical shift in community ideology will always be present, but the instilling of cultural pride, Afrikan values and norms must be attempted through any and all means available. Afrikan design should continuously interrogate our value systems and how we fit into this world. Within the context of South African design education, a concerted and deliberate effort to include relevant Afrikan designs, cosmologies, philosophies and even Afrikan folktales and proverbs in the design students' educational experience will significantly advance efforts towards a better appreciation of Afrikan aesthetics, Afrikan culture and the concept of self. According to Nyoni (2019:6), "An African intellectual should promote Afrocentric developmental agendas and not look to the West to proffer solutions for African challenges." In so doing, they are contributing to the ongoing debates on 'decolonising of the

mind' (Ngugi wa Thiong'o, 1998; Kgatla, 2018) or towards 'de-caging the mind' (Nyoni, 2019).

4. Conclusion

The challenges brought by living in a global village are that it necessitates that we demonstrate tolerance for and understand other cultures. However, it does not mean that value must only be placed on outside influences brought about by globalisation and colonial past; the unlearning of the colonial and Eurocentric brainwashing has to be dismantled as it will forever overshadow Afrika's glory. Thus, glocalisation can to a degree make us value our own cultures.

The creative industry should celebrate the new ever-increasing number of conscientised young Afrikan designers coming into the mainstream media. The young designers unapologetically celebrate their Afrikan identities and whilst navigating global acceptance. I advocate that South Africa's design education needs to develop more critically conscious designers who can navigate the intersectionality of globalisation and the Afrikan Agenda. Afrika, let us design with a purpose; let us promote African pride, change mindsets and educate future generations on the value of knowing thyself.

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