Authenticity in the growing Digital Age: How Cultural Heritage Shapes

Contemporary Visual Language

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DECLARATION

I, Marleine Louw; 210262, hereby declare that this thesis for a BA Honours in Visual Communication is my own work and that it has not previously been submitted for assessment or completion of any postgraduate qualification to another University or for another qualification.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores how visual communicators within the contemporary era draw upon their cultural heritage and lived experiences to craft an authentic visual language that challenges the notion of authenticity within visual language. Through evaluating how the growing influences of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the excessive visual consumption of digital media affect authentic visual communications. The study makes use of concepts such as intertextuality and its various modes, such as appropriation, parody, and pastiche. Austin Kleon and Julia Kristeva suggest that originality within visual communication derives from previous ideas and influences (Kleon, 2010:7). To support these theoretical concepts, a visual analysis is conducted on contemporary visual communicators such as *Jack Parow, Kiff Kak,* and *Trali en Chompi's* visual language. The analysis showcased how these visual communicators use the influences of their hybrid cultural heritage and the various modes of intertextuality to achieve an authentic visual language that resonates with their identity and creative persona. My research has allowed me to craft my own authentic creative visual language that encapsulates my own hybrid Afrikaner identity. I achieved this by drawing upon my own cultural heritage, from growing up on a farm near my hometown, Malmesbury, as my main source of inspiration. By engaging with the topic of authenticity in the growing contemporary digital age, I have found that through the incorporation of one's personal lived experiences and cultural heritage, visual communicators can craft an authentic visual language that reflects their own personal narrative.

Keywords: Authenticity, Creative persona, Cultural Heritage, Visual language

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Within the following research paper, I aim to investigate how visual communicators in the post-modernist era challenge the notion that there is a loss of authentic visual language. This investigation will be accomplished by analysing and unpacking my three chosen visual communicators, named *Kiff Kak*, *Jack Parow,* and *Trali en Chompi*. Their work demonstrates how space and place and cultural heritage influenced their lived experiences in order to convey a so called authentic visual language that feeds their creative persona.

1.1 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT TO RESEARCH

Theorists have been debating for various years regarding the loss of authenticity within visual culture. During the height of modernity and the Industrial Revolution, Walter Benjamin critiqued the rapid reproduction of images through industrialisation and mass production of printing. He argued that the most essential characteristic of visual culture lies in its authenticity, which embraces its true origins, which he refers to as the *aura* of an artwork (1935:4). In this regard, Benjamin argues that in order for a visual to uphold its authenticity, the original must be present and derive from its historical context (1969:3). Arguably in the modernist era, the creation of authentic visual language was still relevant, as social development was centred around logic and rationality in relation to the natural world (Grisworld, 2006: 41).

As Dutton defines it, authenticity refers to what is "real," "genuine," or "true" (2003:258). During the late 20th century, significant intellectual and cultural transformations disrupted the foundations of modern thought and culture (2006: 43). These disruptions evoked substantial cultural reactions that contributed to the prevailing of the post-modernism era. Theorist Jean-Francois commented on the above-mentioned cultural reactions. These reactions consisted of speculation towards grand narratives (Lyotard, 38:1979), which led to society re-evaluating the underlining ideologies that originally offered fundamental truths. With the re-evaluations of the fundamental truths, plurality and diversity emerged as defining characteristics underlying post-modern society as various identities and opinions became endorsed (26,43:1979).

With the shift from modernism to post-modernism, it has been seen as evident that the creation of authentic visual language is influenced by elements of the past. As the postmodernism perspective emerges as a cognitive process that challenges the notion of absolute truth and offers an endless recycling of reality (Erickson, 2009:16). By combining aspects from numerous periods in history, visual communicators can create visual imagery that is considered rich and more complex. Therefore, it is important to liberate ourselves from the burden of pursuing complete uniqueness and instead "embrace the influences of the past" (Kleon, 2012:8). As it is seen, visual imagery that was created within the post-modernist era showcases the use of intertextuality through recycling and reproducing visual imagery that has been obtained by past eras.

As within the contemporary era, the rise of digital media has become more apparent in everyday life. From surfing around on the internet to scrolling through social media, society is in a constant state of consuming visual images. With the growing popularity around generative artificial intelligence (AI) and the widespread acceptance of social media platforms, generative AI is suppressing the human connection within the design process, as there is no sense of personal authenticity that is drawn from one's own interpretations and lived experience but rather a computerised interpretation (Mitrović, 2023).

This leads to the question: How can visual communicators create authentic visual language when everything is recycled, reproduced, and artificially generated? As suggested by Geertz, in order to effectively create an authentic visual language within today's contemporary era, visual communicators could lean into their lived experiences and cultural background as the main source of their inspiration (1973: 89). As one's identity is notably shaped by their cultural heritage, which stems from a broad range of cultural elements such as representations, expressions, knowledge, language, and locations that are associated with them (Pfeilstetter, 2017:613). Through drawing from these sources for inspiration, visual communicators work will not only be considered authentic, but it will reflect their own cultural richness, adding depth to their work. This cultural richness can include their use of language, depictions, and stereotypes, which can be achieved through using the various

modes of intertextuality within their visual language. Intertextuality is a connection that exists "between and among texts" (D'Angelo, 2010:33) thus meaning that visual communicators can reimagine and redefine cultural narratives. Therefore, resulting in the creation of authentic visual languages that derive from one's cultural heritage and lived experiences.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The following problem statement serves as the focal point of the research in this paper:

How can the overconsumption of visuals on media platforms and AI-generated visual language in the contemporary era be challenged by visual communicators through drawing upon their cultural heritage and lived experiences as a source of inspiration to create "authentic" visual communication.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions have been informed by the problem statement:

1. How can visual communicators use the various modes of intertextuality in order to convey an authentic visual language while drawing from their cultural heritage as a source of inspiration?
2. How can visual communicators use their cultural heritage as a source of inspiration in the creation of an authentic visual language?
3. How can space and place contribute to the formation of a creative identity?

1.4 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this research paper is to uncover and unpack how visual communicators within contemporary times use the influence of space and place as well as their cultural heritage as a source of inspiration to construct an authentic visual language. Therefore, creating a framework through analysing and unpacking the visual language of current South African visual communicators who evidently draw upon their own rich South African heritages and lived experiences in order to create and convey an authentic creative persona that is depicted through their visual language.

The objective of this project is to discover and create my own unique creative persona and visual language through drawing upon my lived experiences, which derive from my hometown. By incorporating my own cultural influences into my work, I aim to create a range of collaterals. The design of these collaterals will be influenced by the modes of intertextuality; through the use of humour, I aim to touch on stereotypes that have derived from Malmesbury and my Afrikaner identity.

1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

By obtaining information from multiple sources, I will ensure an in-depth understanding of my research topic, enabling me to answer the research enquiries mentioned above to the best of my knowledge. My research approaches consist of academic texts, desktop research, and the analysis of visuals. To support my argument, I have used scholarly literature from several online platforms, such as JSTOR, and academic publications authored by renowned theorists.

The desktop research involves utilising Google Scholar, academic journal articles, reliable sources, and various online resources to gain a comprehensive understanding of the issue I will be exploring.

1.6 SCOPE OF PROJECT AND LIMITATIONS

The project will be influenced by my own cultural heritage and how my lived experiences within a space have influenced the formation of my identity. Therefore, ultimately, I will create my own visual language through designing a range of collaterals with the aim to showcase my own cultural heritage. The scope of the project involves the creation of a range of designs using graphic design principles, focusing on print publications and the making of physical visual imagery.

The limitations within this research project can constrain potential biases as the visual communicators and their visual language that has been selected to be analysed will derive from my own interpretations of their work. Also to be noted is that my project will be specifically based on my own lived experiences as a white freeborn woman in Malmesbury,

South Africa. Consequently, the conclusions and understandings may not accurately reflect the whole of the Afrikaner identity but will represent my own perspective.

1.7 CHAPTER OUTLINES

To fully comprehend how an individual's personal lived experiences and cultural background influence the development of their authentic visual expression, it is necessary to have a comprehensive understanding of the loss of authentic visual language within the contemporary era. Chapter Two will include a comprehensive analysis of the existing findings of various theorists through a literature review. Within chapter two, the loss of authentic visual language in the contemporary era will be discussed, as it serves as a critical part in the understanding of how authentic visual language is brought into question within the contemporary era. Following the loss of authenticity, I discuss how the post-modernist art movement has shifted the thinking of individuals within this era as the influences of the past have started to become evident in their work. Furthermore, the modes of intertextuality, which consist of parody, appropriation, retro, and pastiche, are discussed, as it serves the purpose of showing how visual communicators can use these modes in order to create an authentic visual language. Following this, I discuss how the search for authenticity can derive from visual communicators cultural identity and heritage within the South African context.

Within Chapter Three, a visual analysis is performed by analysing the work of three South African visual communicators. The theory discussed in chapter two is evident in all their work. Chapter three starts by analysing the work of *Kiff Kak* while specifically focusing on their use of cultural heritage and various South African influences. Furthermore, unpacking their hybrid cultural references found in their visual language. These themes are also discussed in the work of *Jack Parow* and *Trali en Chompi,* specifically focusing on their cultural background and the use of their heritage and cultural influences. As these influences are evident in their visual language through the modes of intertextuality.

Within Chapter Four being a reflection on how the above-mentioned sections and chapters has influenced how I have uncovered and formed my own creative identity by drawing from my own lived experience and heritage to ultimately create a body of visual imagery.

Within Chapter Five, the conclusion addresses the question of whether authenticity can be found in visual communication. As Walter Benjamin argues, the reproduction of an image is an unauthentic depiction if the original is not present. Austin Kleon challenged Benjamin's notion as he states that no creative work is entirely authentic as it draws upon previous ideas and influences. Furthermore, Butler describes the post-modernist era as the representation of plurality and inclusiveness, ambiguity, and change as essential elements of modern existence through the use of intertextuality, appropriation, parody, and pastiche. As South Africa is made up of various diverse hybrid identities, Robert Young perspectives on hybridity emphasise the creation of new paradigms through cultural integration. This is evident in the work of *Kiff Kak, Jack Parrow, and Trali en Chompi,* as their visual language showcases rich cultural references to heritage and location through the use of intertextuality.

Finally, the conclusion argues that in order for visual communicators to create an authentic visual language, they can draw upon their lived experiences and cultural heritage through the use of intertextuality, parody, pastiche, retro, and appropriation.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Within the following chapter, the theories regarding the concept of authenticity in visual culture will be critically evaluated and discussed. The discourse regarding authenticity has been widely explored by philosophers and various theorists. As a result of the reproduction of visual imagery with artificial intelligences, it challenges the preservation of authentic visual language. This chapter examines the conceptualisation, displacement, and reinterpretation of authenticity in the contemporary digital age.

Firstly, this chapter will introduce the historical origin of authenticity; Walter Benjamin claims that for the notion of authenticity to exist, the original must be present (1969:3). The chapter further discusses how theorist Austin Kleon claims that no creative work is entirely original and authentic, as it always draws upon previous ideas and influences (Kleon, 2010:7). Furthermore, the chapter explores how visual communicators can use the various modes of intertextuality to develop an authentic visual language. Lastly, the significant influences and inspiration that can derive from one's cultural heritage and how visual communicators can use their cultural heritage to craft an authentic visual language will be discussed.

2.2 THE LOSS OF AUTHENTIC VISUAL LANGUAGE IN CONTEMPORARY DIGITAL ERA

The term *Authenticity*, particularly in relation to visual culture, has been widely discussed and considered by philosophers and cultural theorists. According to *Authenticity in Art* by Dennis Dutton, he defines authenticity as what speaks to being "real," "genuine," or "true" (Dutton, 2003:258). It implies that something is not forged or an 'imitation'; instead, it conforms to or is founded on actuality (Merriam-Webster, 2024).

The complexity of authenticity when images are reproduced and copied has been widely considered and critiqued by philosophers, visual culture, and media theorists. As early as

16th century European philosophy, the term *authenticity* was discussed by French philosopher and scientist René Descartes as adhering to 'a moral inner voice' that dictates responsible thought and behaviour (Bick Har, n.d.). Prior to Descartes, the prevailing concept of identity was that an individual's moral beliefs were shaped by their position in society and influenced by factors that were beyond their actual state of being (Bick Har, n.d.). With the rise of reproduction during the Industrial Revolution, Benjamin, in his critique of reproduction, stated that the fundamental attribute of something is in its authenticity, including its actual origin (1969:4). However, Benjamin upheld critiques regarding the reproduction of images and how the authenticity 'aura' is lost in the process when images are reconstructed and reproduced. Benjamin defines the 'aura' as a "unique phenomenon of a distance, however close it may be" (1969:21). Benjamin states that for the notion of authenticity to exist, the original must be present (1969:3). Linking this to another statement Benjamin makes as he states, a work of art's distinctiveness cannot be separated from its historical context (1969:6). To emphasise how the above-mentioned statement supports my argument regarding the importance of authenticity within the creation of original works of art, it can be suggested that one cannot create original works that are not inherently influenced by lived experiences, one's cultural heritage, and moral values.

Austin Kleon contends in his book, *Steal Like an Artist,* that no creative work is entirely original and authentic, as it always draws upon previous ideas and influences (Kleon, 2010:7). Kleon argues that it is necessary for us to liberate ourselves from the weight of striving for absolute originality. Instead, we should abandon the pursuit of creating something entirely new and instead "embrace the influences of the past," rather than avoiding them (Kleon, 2010:8). This standpoint directly relates to my project, as I am investigating visual culture in relation to societal influences and authenticity. Kleon's perspective correlates with the postmodernist approach, which rejects conventional concepts of originality and authenticity. As within postmodernism, the use of intertextuality, pastiche, parody, retro, and appropriation becomes apparent by drawing upon previous era's work in order to produce new bodies of work.

2.3 POST MODERNISM: INTERTEXTUALITY, APPROPRIATION, PARODY

During the late 20th century, there were substantial changes in the intellectual and cultural that profoundly disrupted the fundamental principles of contemporary thought and culture (Grisworld, 2006: 43). The development of modernity[1] sparked significant cultural responses that have given rise to the post-modernism age. The postmodernism perspective arises as a cognitive phenomenon that rejects assertions or facts of absolute truth and presents a different comprehension of reality (Erickson, 2009:16). Postmodernism represented plurality and inclusiveness, ambiguity, and change as essential elements of modern existence (Butler, 2002). As attention is brought to plurality and circumstances, this framework offers an alternative view on language/communication as the primary means for meaning creation. In the context of postmodernism, (visual) language is not regarded as a mere explicit and objective medium. Postmodernist art showcases an alternate viewpoint by intentionally incorporating influence from and critically analysing previous artistic eras and their extended cultural backgrounds by using intertextuality, appropriation, parody, and pastiche (2002:88). The above-mentioned methods used in postmodernist art will be unpacked and discussed thoroughly in the next section.

2.3.1 INTERTEXTUALITY AND THE ENDLESS RECYCLING OF IMAGES

Julia Kristeva initially established the concept of intertextuality in 1966. Kristeva defines intertextuality as the process of converting multiple systems of symbols into another (1984:60). She opposes the notion of a text as a self-contained and final creation, asserting that every text is the assimilation and alteration of another (1984:37). She further states that every piece of writing is composed of a collection of quotes because every piece of writing is the assimilation and alteration of another (1984:37). D'Angelo supports Kristeva's views by arguing that intertextuality holds a connection "between and among texts" (2010:33). How the two above-mentioned theorists' statements are relevant to my argument as authenticity and originality within the contemporary era of visual communications are only a mere

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[1] Modernity: the phase in societal development defined using rationality and the logical application of human creativity in relation to the natural world (2006: 41)

depiction of something that has already been done. It is important to note that intertextuality serves as the root of various modes that branch from it. These modes consist of Appropriation Parody, Retro and Pastiche[2].

Appropriation[3] is the act of acquiring, extracting, or appropriating the meanings of others for one's own use (Sturken & Cartwright: 2001, 350). I want to highlight the importance of appropriation within the post-modern digital age, as the media is overly saturated with reproduced visual images that are appropriated from the past. Sartwell critiques that appropriation refers to the deliberate undermining of the concept of uniqueness (1998:68). I, however, want to counter Sartwell's critiques. Although most postmodern art is based on intertextuality and may not be considered an original idea, the remake/remixing of the past within the present time can be considered a space where new creation and meaning-making can take place. In the postmodern tradition of art, which involves appropriation of images found in society and recontextualising them to create an entirely new meaning. Vilis Inde's support the views by the means that postmodern art is characterised by the practice of appropriating images from society and reinterpreting them to generate a completely new significance (1998:2). The production of new meaning can arise from an individual's personal lived experience, cultural upbringing, and heritage, as one's personal experiences are inherently subjective and cannot be replicated, resulting in a unique interpretation and an authentic creation.

The next mode of intertextuality that will be discussed is parody. Parody refers to the deliberate imitation of the style of an individual or the replication of a specific circumstance, with the aim of emphasising the distinctive traits or characteristics of the original in an amusing way (Jameson,1991:140). As Parody involves the act of imitating work, but with the specific intention of being recognised as an imitation and providing amusement (Dover, 1996: n.d). Thus, contemporary parody is a methodical approach to modifying, reproducing,

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[2] The modes of intertextuality consist of Appropriation Parody, Retro, Pastiche.

[3] Adaption and appropriation can easily get mistaken for one another. Adaptation speaks to the alteration of artistic content when it is transferred from a particular genre to another. (Hoesterey, 200:10).

creating, and recontextualising past works of art (Hutcheon, 2006:11). This imitation can be created in various forms, such as exaggeration, criticising the original, or a lack of harmony. This characteristic, however, can be seen in a negative light as a "mocking imitation" (Baldick , 2001:185). Thus, is it important to note that when using parody, one should be cautious of confusing a humoristic outcome with an offensive outcome. Hutcheon argues that ironic inversion is a fundamental element found in all forms of parody (2006:6). Thus, Hutcheon is stating that the anticipated result or significance is intentionally reversed in order to generate irony, accentuate absurdity, or underscore a more profound truth. As postmodernism conceals the boundaries between authenticity and replication, Jameson suggests that parody is not only unattainable but has been substituted by the more naturalistic expression of pastiche (1991:140), as pastiche is a style that involves taking segments or themes from multiple sources and combining them together. Constructing a combination of distinct or borrowed artistic styles (Wales, 1989:339). With the use of pastiche, it does not undermine the previous work that it borrows from but rather places emphasis on it. As it comprises a deliberate and transparent replication "of the style of an original object or text" (Murfin & Ray, 2003:160). With a combination of various works, Pastiche offers a space where originality can grow. Supporting the above-mentioned statement Jencks states, pastiche exemplifies the concept of "double coding," which involves blending modern characteristics with those inherited through the classical past (1987:15). By the use of combining work, it allows one to collect from the past while also inserting present influence into the work, relating back to my argument that although theorists argue that originality is lost in the postmodern era, original work is in fact built on top of the past with the influence of lived experiences and cultural heritage.

Lastly, touching on the final branch of intertextuality is Retro, at times also referred to as recycling. Retro describes the act of taking previous eras, forms, and styles and giving them new meaning and context (Sim, 2001:297). It is not simply copying or imitating but frequently contains a humorous perspective towards the earlier styles with the influence of contemporary time (2001:297). Jameson uses the term "nostalgic mode" to describe how contemporary postmodern culture imitates and represents the past through cultural style

(1991:153). As with this mixing of the past and the present cultural influences, it can be said that there is a formation of a hybrid space.

With the merging of the past and the present in postmodernism through the use of the various modes of intertextuality such as appropriation, parody, and pastiche, it can suggest that originality is in fact lost. This, however, does not mean that the authenticity of the work produced is lost as well, but rather that authenticity emerges through the deliberate reinterpretation of past influences relating back to one's own cultural heritage and cultural identity.

2.4 A SEARCH FOR "AUTHENTICITY" THROUGH CULTURAL IDENTITY AND HERITAGE

In the contemporary era, visual communicators can attempt to create an "authentic" creative persona and visual language by using their cultural heritage and identity as a source of inspiration. However, it is still important to note that this form of "authenticity" is based on intertextuality, and it may not be considered an original idea. The remake/remixing of the past within the present time can be considered a space where new creation and meaning-making can take place, thus making it as "authentic" as it can be. The core of this "authenticity" resides in the distinctive identity and unique influence of visual communicators lived experiences and cultural influences. As Taylor suggests the approach of being human, he encourages one to live a life in one's own unique way (Taylor, 1991:29). Being genuine to oneself requires recognising and expressing one's uniqueness and as an individual. You are the only one who can 'articulate and discover' your own originality (Taylor, 1991:29). In the postmodern era, creators typically combine elements from the past and present to create a unique visual language that is enhanced by their own perspective that can be influenced by their cultural heritage and identity, arguably. Heritage refers to a universal notion including practices, depictions, expressions, knowledge, abilities, and places of culture linked with them (Pfeilstetter, 2017:613). As heritage has always existed and has consistently been created by individuals in accordance with their current preoccupations and encounters, it can be noted that with the progression of time, one's

heritage is in fact not static and can be reformed and reshaped as time progresses. Meaning that with this influence, one's heritage is constantly evolving, serving the means of being "authentic.".

2.4.1 CULTURAL IDENTITY AND HERITAGE IN SOUTH AFRICA

Within the following section, I want to place emphasis on the importance that space and place hold on the formations of one's identity and potential "authentic" visual communication. Space is a construct that is formed by our perception of a certain location (Shield, 2013:11). The understanding and evaluation of our perceptions within a space serve a crucial role in shaping our identity and our understanding of the world around us (2013:11). As these perceptions are arguably influenced by the cultural upbringings with a certain space. These spaces shape and form part of home, which is subjected to individuals to create a personal sense of belonging (Lippard, 1997:27). As home is an extension of your soul and spirit (1997:27) it supports my views regarding the influences space and places have in the formation of identity (1997:27). Our perception of space seeps into our lived experiences. (Lippard, 1997:27). One's lived experience refers to their personal account of the events and circumstances they have encountered in a particular environment and the objective world surrounding them (Asmal & Iqani, 2024). These narratives provide a deeper understanding of their perception of the world and how their observations influenced the development of their identity. (Asmal & Iqani, 2024).

Relating the above-mentioned statements regarding the perceptions and observations of space and place to the South African context, it is important to note that identity within South Africa has been significantly influenced by Colonialism[4] and Apartheid. Therefore South Africa comprises a wide variety of ethnic groups, resulting in complex identities. With the end of Apartheid in 1994, South Africans were left with fragmented cultural identities. Uncertain how to glue these fragments back together, South Africans started mixing the known heritage with new fragments of contemporary heritage to create a sense of in-

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[4] Colonialism: the deliberate action taken by a governing authority in one region to establish control over another (Murrey, 2022).

betweenness. Consequently, South African identities are composed of a wide range of influences and identities, resulting in a distinctive and evolving hybrid identity.

Robert Young describes hybridity as the subtle process by which two or more cultural groups blend together to form a new paradigm (Young, 1995:21). Furthermore, he states that it is an expression of "doubleness," where it combines and merges different elements while still preserving their distinctiveness (Young, 1995:22). The interactions and combinations brought about by hybrid processes introduce fresh viewpoints on the world and give rise to artistic expressions that can blend several "styles, languages, cultures, and genres" (Guignery & Pesso-Miquel & Specq, 2011:3). This statement reinforces my notion that South Africa is composed of hybrid identities. The mixture of colonial influences has generated a space wherein new identities arise. Homi Bhabha characterised hybridity as a transformative process that challenges and destabilises conventional boundaries and classifications (Bhabha, 1994). This implies that it confronts and adds complexity to previous concepts and standards. Simultaneously, hybridity is also generative since it produces novel and inventive manifestations, concepts, and cultural (Bhabha, 1994). Although hybridity may lead to destabilisation or uncertainty by dismantling traditional thought patterns, it also creates opportunities for expansion and innovation. Thus, I argue that the space wherein new hybrid identities arise can be considered a productive space for new innovative creativity. This can be applied to the South African context of identity and heritage and therefore can be reflected in using cultural heritage and identity to create creative personal and visual language.

2.4.2 AN "AUTHENTIC" CREATIVE PERSONA AND VISUAL LANGUAE

Embedded within humanity lies one's cultural heritage, lived experience, place, and identity, shaping our core values and sense of belonging. I argue that these lived experiences and cultural heritage can serve as a significant backdrop to the depiction of one's identity and, within the context of visual communication, the formation of a creative persona and visual language.

According to Burner, a creative persona is characterised by a distinct blend of qualities, actions, and ideas that set individuals apart from others (Burner, 1993:1). He further states that the creative persona possesses the ability to bring about profound change in a culture, which is both evident and nuanced (Burner, 1993:1). Burner highlights the importance of a creative persona as it has the ability to modify and surpass cultural norms, reflecting visible influences (Burner,1993). However, he also raised a concern regarding authenticity within society as society turned into a predictable environment subject to norms and societal pressures. Relating Burner to Goffman's previously mentioned views that in order to maintain relevance within society, individuals tend to have an inaccurate representation of one's self-image (2008:1623). I continue to believe that Burner's statements are relevant within the context of contemporary times, as societal pressures still have significant influence on individuals' authentic identities. As he states, society has developed into an environment where individuals in a short period of time fled in search of moments filled with excitement, innovation, and change, 'only to return transformed' but drained, leading a dull existence (Burner, 1993). I thus want to return to what I stated before: that one can overcome the false self-image by incorporating the influence of their cultural heritage and identity, particularly their South African hybrid identity, which provides rich points of reference in order to convey an authentic creative persona and visual language.

As Richard Marsden states, the concept of 'heritage' encompasses the value that individuals attribute to objects they regard as having historical importance (Marsden, 2024:3). As cultural heritage provides a sense of comfort and belonging, it can be considered a familiar concept to many people. Culture may be described as a collection of symbolic representations that are historically passed down, comprising inherited beliefs conveyed through various modes of communication. These symbolic forms are utilised by people to convey, preserve, and enhance their comprehension and viewpoint on life. (Geertz, 1973: 89). With the above mentioned viewpoint, it suggests that culture service is the process in which concepts and meaning are passed along, all serving as the building blocks of how cultural influence can shape one's identity. As within visual communications, an individual's

creative identity is centred around and strongly influenced by their cultural heritage and can form part of a distinctive authentic creative

In short, it can be suggested that visual communicators' creative identity, visual language, and creative persona seep into their cultural heritage and lived experiences, which leads to an accurate depiction of their authentic creative expression. As Burner and Goffman comment on the growing societal presence of inauthentic depictions of one's self in order to fit in with the masses, this however can be prevented by the incorporation of one's cultural identity. By engaging with one's hybrid South African identity, which holds rich cultural influences, visual communicators can challenge the misleading depictions upheld by societal norms by crafting an authentic representation of oneself.

CHAPTER THREE: VISUAL ANALYSIS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is focused on linking my theoretical ideas to examples of other visual communicators in order to inform my own practice. I will be analysing and discussing the work and collateral of the South African brand *Kiff Kak*, followed by the cultural production of South African rapper *Jack Parow,* and finally discussing another local brand, *Trali & Chompi*.

3.2 KIFF KAK

In the previous chapter, I discussed and argued how one can use their cultural heritage as their main source of inspiration in order to create an "authentic" visual language. The brand *Kiff Kak* serves as a good example of this complex connection. Founded by Courtney Hodgson in 2019, she stated that her cultural upbringing served as her main inspiration with the curation of the brand (Hodgson, 2021). During her formative years, she attended a school in Crystal Parks; being the only white person, she developed a deep appreciation for different cultural backgrounds (Hodgson, 2021). As Hodgson has situated herself in various locations, from Crystal Parks to Benoni and ultimately to the Afrikaans-dominated milieu of

Pretoria, the locations and spaces have significantly influenced her creative persona and visual language (Hodgson, 2021). Shields argues that space plays a crucial part in shaping our identity (2013:11), Hodgson design of the brand *Kiff Kak* is a brilliant example of how identity and our understanding of the world around is shaped by our lived experience. As her lived experience consisted of various cultural environments, Hodgson used it as her main source of inspiration.

Kiff Kak represents the rich cultural reference of South African heritage and tradition. The brand consists of various collateral designs ranging from mugs, t-shirts, coffee table books, stickers, and more, all of which can be found and shopped on her website, 'Kiff Kak'. The visual language and design of the collaterals all showcase evidence of various cultural references. Thus, it can be argued that the brand *Kiff Kak* is an example of a hybrid and multi-cultural brand; by drawing from these various cultures and traditions, it supports Young's views that the blending of two or more cultural groups is a new paradigm (Young, 1995:21). These cultural influences and references will be discussed and analysed in the following section.

3.2.1 CULTURAL HERITAGE AND INTERTEXTUALITY: A BREWING 'POTJIE' OF SOUTH AFRICAN CULTURE

As Hodgson's lived experience is filled with numerous cultural influences, being that she has situated herself in different locations, *Kiff Kak's* visual language showcases rich references to these cultural influences and heritages. Within the following section, I will discuss *Kiff Kak's* cultural references through analysing their visual language.

Looking at Figure 1, titled *Braai Guy* Product Range. Figure 1 depicts the range of collateral that consists of an apron, a lucky packet, stickers, an embroidery patch, and a toy figure. It can be suggested that the visual language in Figure 1 references a hybrid culture as it draws inspiration from the Afrikaans culture, popular culture, and location and space. Referring to Figure 1, though the use of different modes of intertextuality, the visual language of the range is considered a humoristic depiction of the typical Afrikaans speaking. This is made evident

as she uses a mixture of visual markers and a distinctive play on Afrikaans words. Furthermore, supporting my statement, I want to compare Figure 1 to Figures 4 and 5, as it is a prime example of various cultural influences and references combined and forming part of visual language.

Zooming in more closely to the product range depicted in Figure 1, I have added in multiple figures that consist out of the range to unpack it more clearly. Directing the attention to Figure 1.2, the comically drawn male character. It can be suggested that the inspiration for the range derived from popular culture, with the title and character style having reference to figure three, *Family Guy*[5] thus suggesting that the character is the South African version of the *Family Guy* as well as Courtney's lived experience when she was situated in Pretoria, as she was surrounded by predominantly Afrikaans speaking people (Hodgson,202). Thus, suggesting that the character is the South African version of the *Family Guy*.

His clothing consists of a tucked-in two-toned shirt, jean shorts, socks, and sandals, which are generally worn by Afrikaans-speaking males. The jean short that surpasses the middle of the waist in order to cover the belly can serve as a signifier of two things: the first plays on the saying of 'below the belt jokes', which places emphasis on how unfiltered and untactful Afrikaans-speaking men can be. And secondly, the big belly can also be referred to by Afrikaans-speaking people as a 'bier pens'[6]. Thus these signifiers can be seen as a way she uses parody to communicate her views of the stereotypical Afrikaans male. This supports Dover, as parody involves the act of imitating work but with the specific intention of being recognised as an imitation and providing amusement (Dover, 1996: n.d). Furthermore, the character's arms and legs are slim and bony, as it plays on stereotyping the Afrikaans-speaking males as having 'knop kniëe'[7] and little to no muscle. As the character is depicted in an exaggerated form which serves to criticise the depiction of Afrikaans males, it supports the views of Hutcheon as contemporary parody is a methodical approach to modifying, reproducing, creating, and recontextualising past works of art (Hutcheon, 2006:11). The

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[5] Family Guy: An American adult animation television series.
[6] Bier pens: Someone that drinks a lot of alcohol and have gained weight in the belly area due to it.
[7] Knop kniëe: Someone who has lean legs and knees that look bony

combination of the slim bone structure and a big belly can potentially place emphasis on how Courtney perspective of the Afrikaans speaking male is depicted as socially driving people who enjoys social occasions which involves alcohol and braaiing. It can be suggested that these depictions are influenced by Hodgson's lived experiences within a space as it supports Shields' argument that space is a construct that is formed by our perception of a certain location (Shield, 2013:11).

The character is holding a raw lamb chop in his hand suggesting that he is going to braai. The notion of braaiing is also considered a big part of South African culture and heritage. Directing the attention to the setting in which the character is situated outside, what one can argue is a backyard it can be suggested that the character is going to 'braai' hence the braai that is depicted on his left-hand side and the title of the product range, *Braai Guy Product Range*. The *Braai Guy Product Range* can be considered a rich reference to the cultural heritage of South African people. As the range consist out of most products used at a braai, the concept of braaiing is a well-known concept to the majority of South Africans. As Heritage Day which occurs on the 24th of September also known as 'Braai Dag' is celebrated nationwide as it is an extension of South African cultural heritage. As Richard Marsden states the concept of 'heritage' encompasses the value that individuals attribute to objects they regard as having historical importance (Marsden, 2024:3). Cultural heritage provides a sense of comfort and belonging it can be considered a familiar concept to many people, thus making the depiction of *Braai Guy* so relatable to various South Africans.

3.2.2 THE USE OF INTERTEXTUALITY AND HYBRID CULTURAL REFERENCE IN VISUAL COMMUNICATION

Within the following section, I will discuss and analyse Kiff Kak's use of hybrid cultural references in their visual language. As the visual language comprises multi-cultural influences, I firstly want to discuss the use of mixing different languages together to compile and form a new distinctive hybrid language therefore, relating back to the influences of different cultural backgrounds Kiff Kak draws from and merges together.

Directing the attention to Figure 3, the die-line of the comic character and Figure 4, a screengrab from the Kiff Kak website iron on merch. The language used can be seen as a mixture of English and Afrikaans to create a new and distinctive language often referred to as 'code-switching' or 'mengels'[8]. The mengels text in Figure 3 on the left-hand side and middle section of the die-line reads as follow:

> "Hi ek is Jan- Die braai man. There is a lot a steak when it comes to a braai.
>
> Bok, Tjop and Dop isn't for sussies. So maak hierdie doos oop, gooi aan jou
>
> best plakkies and two tones: Because nou gaan ons braai!"

and,

> "Plakkies and socks form agility"

And the text from Figure 4,

> "Spoeg and plak is making a comeback"
>
> "...lekker shirt"
>
> "Wait till the iron is moerse hot"

As the mengels texts derive from different cultural languages, the merging of these languages can suggest Hodgson's sense of belonging to different linguistic or cultural groups. This arguably could have derived from her lived experience within various locations, which consisted of different cultural backgrounds, meaning that the influence of these cultures has merged and formed a hybrid language (Young, 1995:21). Referring to another text from Figure 3 that reads, "Content bladdie hot," the substitution of 'bloody' with "bladdie" and similarly to Figure 4, "A naas t-shirt," with 'nice' being substituted for "naas". The language highlights the phonetic spelling and pronunciation in a manner that showcases the informal or dialect manner of speaking; thus, it can be suggested that Hodgson is touching on the pronunciations or accents that can be distinctively recognised from specific regions within South Africa. This can be supported by Lippard, as she argues that our perception of space seeps into our lived experiences. (Lippard, 1997:27).

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[8] Mengels: Is an informal blending of Afrikaans and English within the same sentence or dialogue.

Lastly, I want to discuss how hybrid cultural references are conveyed through intertextuality and the modes of parody and appropriation within the language. Pointing to Figure 3, the visual language of the figurine box has clear indications of the mode of parody. As seen on the left-hand side, the character's name is "Jan." The name holds great cultural and historical significance as it is an inherited name that is generally passed down from generation to generation to the Afrikaans male within the Afrikaans culture. Thus, it can be suggested that the mode of appropriation is evident in this depiction, as it supports Sartwell's view that the name's uniqueness is deliberately undermined and generalised (1998:68). To highlight another quote from the visual that reads, "Meet Koos in a Doos." The text indicates the mode of parody as it is a play on words through rhyming words. Another point to note is that the word "doos" conveys a double meaning. In traditional Afrikaans literature, a doos refers to a box, but in modern Afrikaans literature, a new meaning was created for the word as a swearword that refers to someone who is mean and not very likeable. Comparing it to the quote "There is a lot at steak," which is considered a pun. The play on words is seen as the word "stake" is substituted for "steak" and is considered to evoke humour and satire. Through the double meaning and play on words, humour is created through the mode of parody. In the Figure 4, it is also evident that Hodgson uses generalised cultural idioms, "Nou gaan ons braai" and "Aangename kennis, my naam is nie Dennis." These idiomatic statements possess specific cultural significance yet are universally recognised and valued by diverse cultural communities due to their frequent usage. These unique expressions are strongly ingrained in Afrikaans culture, which is being referenced within the visual. Referring to Figure 6, the language used with the visuals is considered a hybrid cultural reference to Cape Town's slang and dialect, as the text reads, "Bladdie, beautiful braai bru." By abbreviating 'brother' to 'bru,' the inclusion of ethnic slang enriches the realism and relevance of the figure. It mirrors the casual way of speaking, which correlates to cultural identity and the daily vocabulary of distinctive cultures. The understanding and evaluation of our perceptions within a space serve a crucial role in shaping our identity and our understanding of the world around us (2013:11).

Lastly, referring to Figure 7, an illustration of bird feet with the caption, "walky talkies." This, however, can be a clear indication that the illustration of bird feet is actually chicken feet. The use of 'walky talkies,' a well-known South African street food that is composed of chicken feet and heads, further enhances the ethnic character and authenticity. The utilisation of these informal expressions emphasises Hodgson's association with indigenous traditions and cuisine. Thus, it links to Shields argument that space is a construct that is formed by our perception of a certain location (Shield, 2013:11).

3.3 JACK THE PAROW PIRATE

Within the following section, I will discuss and analyse how the Afrikaans rapper, Jack Parow, references his cultural heritage and lived experiences growing up in the 80s and early 90s in South Africa through various visual markers found in his music videos, Instagram posts, and lyrics. These references serve as an indication of the hybrid cultural identity Jack Parow created.

As Jack Parow is notoriously known as the guy who raps in Afrikaans, uses foul language, and wears an extremely long cap and moustache, there is so much more to unpack regarding his hybrid persona. Zander Tyler (Jack Parow) was born and raised in Bellville, Western Cape, South Africa, in the early 80s. It can be said undoubtedly that his lived experiences from growing up in Bellville have served as a significant source of inspiration for the depiction of his creative persona. Before branding himself as Jack Parow, Zander stated in an interview he grew up listening to artists like 'Snoop Dog, DJ Jazzy Jeff, and The Fresh Prince (Williams, 2022). He decided from a young age that he wanted to pursue a career as a South African rapper. After completing his studies in multimedia, he decided to quit his corporate job as a creative director in advertising and return to his mother's house in order to follow his aspirations of being a rapper (Williams, 2022). At first, Zander rapped in English but soon discovered that he preferred his home language, which is Afrikaans. Influenced by the location and his mother's tongue, his lyrics had conservative Afrikaners raising their eyebrows. With his provocative language and visual imagery in his music videos, Jack Parow

has reinterpreted the meaning and views on what it meant to be an Afrikaans-speaking individual. To note, I will be discussing and analysing Jack Parow's visual language and not his music and lyrics.

3.3.1 JACK OF ALL TRAITS: JACK PAROWDY, JACK APPAROWPRIOATION

To touch on his stage name, it can be suggested that the compilation of Jack and Parow is a mode of appropriation. Created from the influences of the location he was situated in and the release of a well-known movie at the time. He stated that the name Jack derived from the main character in the movie Pirates of the Caribbean, Jack Sparrow. Subsequently, he combined it with 'Parow,' a nearby area to Cape Town, thereby formulating an acronym that effectively embodies his cultural heritage and geographical roots (Williams, 2022) as the Afrikaans pirate of Parow.

Referring to Figure 8, the album covers titled *Afrika 4 Beginners*. The album cover has evidence of numerous modes of intertextuality, as it is important to note the direct connotations Figure 8 holds with Figure 9, *The National Coat of Arms emblem* of South Africa. Therefore, it can be suggested that the mode of appropriations is evident in Figure 8 as Jack Parrow recontextualised the Coat of Arms emblem, creating an entirely new meaning for his own creative expression (Sturken & Cartwright: 2001, 350). Directing the attention to the two chicken heads previously mentioned and discussed as 'Walky Talkies[9]'. Jack Parow is not only making cross-cultural references to Indigenous traditions and cuisine but mockingly comparing the national bird seen in Figure 9 to 'walky talkies'. Thus, it can be suggested that the mode of parody and appropriation is evident in his work, as he is extracting the meaning and adapting it to evoke humour. This can also be seen with the references to the spears and palm tree leaves, making them distinctively recognisable as an indication that he is referencing the *Coat of Arms emblem*'s spears and wheat symbols. The play on words *'Afrika 4 Beginners'* seen at the bottom of Figure 8, can also be seen as a

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[9] Walky Talkies: A South African street food, that is chicken feet.

humoristic imitation and reference to Figure 9. As the text at the bottom of Figure 9 reads, "!
KE E : /XARRA / IKE" which translates to diverse people unite. However, the title of Parow's
album can be considered a sarcastic reference to the comprehension that understanding
the complex context of African cultures is as easy as reading a manual and following the
instructions accordingly, when in reality it is much more intricate and complex. Thus, it can
be suggested that through the use of satire and humour, Parrow portrays himself as the
educator of the alternative Afrikaans culture. A last point to note is that through the use of
these various cultural references made within the album cover, it is evident of hybrid visual
language as the mixing and reinterpretation of various meanings and visuals is evident.

Lastly, I touch on the mode of retro that is evident in Figure 10. The figure consists of various
items, all deriving from earlier periods in time. Thus, it can be suggested that through the
mode of retro, Parow is creating a sense of nostalgia. As the majority of these items are
commonly found in households from the 80s, thus it can be suggested that Parow is once
again using his lived experiences as a source of inspiration in order to convey and
communicate his sense of identity and belonging as he imitates and represents the past
through cultural style (1991:153).

Zooming in on some of the artefacts seen in the figure 10, you can see porcelain sculptures
in the front; on his right, a decorative bowl of fake fruit; an 80's or maybe 90's television; the
'oros mannetjie'; an antique baby bottle; and buckhorns. All these above-mentioned
artefacts are items commonly found in Afrikaans households. And to touch a bit more in-
depth on the buckhorns, it is commonly known that within the Afrikaans culture, South
Africans like to hunt and preserve the buckhorns as it signifies the 'trophy' which they display
by mounting it onto the wall within their homes.

By emphasising both historical and contemporary cultural influences and events, it
enhances the understanding of the cultural value gained from the past, as it is not simply
copying or imitating but frequently contains a humorous perspective towards the earlier
styles with the influence of the contemporary time (2001:297). With all these artefacts found
in Figure 10, Parow is also stereotyping and generalising the traditional Afrikaner identity as

this depiction can be relatable to many Afrikaners. Therefore, it can be suggested that Parow is commenting on the distinctive Afrikaner culture through revisiting his cultural heritage in contemporary times. By mixing the past and contemporary influences with each other, it can be suggested and argued that Parow has formed a hybrid space for creative expression filled by his lived experiences, which embodies his identity as an alternative Afrikaner.

3.4 TRALI & CHOMPI

Lastly, I discuss and analyse *Trali en Chompi*. *Trali en Chompi* is an eccentric Afrikaans stationery brand owned by Cherie Codier and her husband Ricardo Liut. The brand embraces Afrikaans nostalgia by combining their own designs, ideas, and preferences into innovative stationery products (Folk Tattoos, 2021). Their use of language and copywriting is of specific interest as it forms part of their creative persona.

3.4.1 THE USE OF HERITAGE AND CULTURE IN VISUAL LANGUAGE

Referring to Figures 11 and 12, I want to highlight and place emphasis on how the mode of pastiche is event in their work. As they use their language, which is seen as Afrikaans, the body copy of their visual language effectively conveys their creative persona. As figure eleven reads "*Punt in die wind"* and referring to figure twelve, "*So waar as wraagtig,"* their use of vocabulary can be considered a mode of pastiche. As within Afrikaans literature, these two sayings derive from a conservative and formal way of speaking the Afrikaans language. With this, I mean it almost sounds like hearing an Afrikaans grandmother speaking; therefore, I suggest the mode of pastiche is used within their visual language as it comprises a deliberate and transparent replication "of the style of an original object or text" (Murfin & Ray, 2003:160). To further support my statement that *Trali and Chompi* use the mode of pastiche through how they depict their body copy within the visual language. By mixing the conservative and formal Afrikaans and combing it with current visual aesthetics, it offers a space where originality can grow. Supporting the above-mentioned statement, Jencks states that pastiche exemplifies the concept of "double coding," which involves blending modern characteristics with those inherited through the classical past (1987:15).

Therefore, by combining their conservative body copy with current visual aesthetics, it can also be considered a mode of parody, as humour derives from it. By deliberately taking from past cultural influences and reinterpreting in the present time, it can also be considered that *Trali en Chompi* has created a space where new meaning can be created; thus, it supports my previously mentioned statement regarding Parow and Kiff Kak that Trali en Chompi can also be considered a hybrid cultural identity that is influenced by their cultural heritage to inform their visual language.

3.4.2 CONCLUSION

To conclude my visual analysis, it can be seen through the multiple references made that it is evident that the visual communicators I have discussed and analysed all embrace their cultural heritage and lived experiences. As they extract meaning and create an authentic visual language that is influenced by their cultural identity, this creates a new space that can be considered a hybrid cultural identity.

These visual communicators, *Kiff Kak, Jack Parow, and Trali en Chompi,* achieve this by using the various modes of intertextuality such as parody, appropriation, and pastiche within their visual language; this allows them to create authentic creative personas. These creative personas reflect the essence of hybrid South African identities in the contemporary realm.

CHAPTER FOUR: REFLECTIVE

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Within the following chapter, I critically reflect on how the writing of this thesis has significantly influenced and informed my creative body of work. Initially, my focus for this year was on human-centred design, where I aimed to launch an investigation on why individuals with learning disabilities such as ADHD, often experience difficulty sitting still and comfortably for long periods of time while studying. I aimed to design and craft a chair that would ensure comfortable seating and ensure productive academic focus. During the investigation phase, I came to the realisation that my interest in this matter decreased, and I no longer wanted to focus an entire year on solving this problem. As a result, I shifted my focus to whether originality and "authenticity" remain relevant within the visual language of contemporary visual communicators.

4.2 LINKING RESEARCH TO CREATIVE PRACTICES

Through engaging with various literature and academic readings, it became evident that visual communicators can still create "authentic" visual language in the contemporary era by drawing upon and reinterpreting their past (Kleon, 2012:8). This perspective informed my creative practice as I began to reflect on my past lived experiences, influenced by space and places as a source of inspiration, particularly the small town that I grew up in, Malmesbury. Furthermore, Pfeilstetter states that an individual's identity is notably shaped by their cultural heritages (2017:613), with my creative practice, I have begun to look inward at my own cultural heritage. As I was raised in a conservative Afrikaans speaking home, in the midst of the 'platteland' near Malmesbury. I started to draw inspiration from my surroundings. My mother was one of the many Malmesbury 'tannies'[10] who enjoyed collecting Delft crockery, making the majority of her food from scratch and never having to buy milk as we have a dairy farm which provided fresh milk daily to our household. These

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[10] Tannie: Afrikaans translation for aunty

above-mentioned small fragments seep into my lived experiences and comprise my cultural heritage.

This informed the conceptual making of the Delft dinner plates. Throughout the thesis, I have also investigated the ways in which crafting an 'authentic' visual language requires a merging element that combines one's lived experiences and cultural heritage. Julia Kristeva introduces the concept of intertextuality and its various modes (1984:60); I found it to be an essential tool for incorporating my personal lived experiences and cultural background into my visual language. In the conceptualising of the delft dinner plates, I used the modes of parody and appropriation to achieve a stereotyped humoristic depiction of the traditional delft plates, which my mother displays in her home. This appropriation and parody of elements allowed me to engage with cultural artefacts that derive from my cultural heritage as a source of inspiration, thus contributing to the creation of my visual language as an authentic creative expression. This allowed me to write quirky suggestive body copy that holds more than one meaning, as the meaning relied on how the viewer interprets the body copy.

Once I established an understanding of authentic creative expression I conducted a visual analysis of visual communicators namely, *Kiff Kak*, *Jack Parow* and *Trali en Chompi*. The brand, *Kiff Kak's* [11] visual language is showcased as a mixture of their rich Afrikaner identity and their various lived experiences. Through the comically portrayed figurine seen in Figure two, her work broadens my understanding of how to use the modes of intertextuality to convey a visual language that's built on humour. As for the visual analysis of *Trali en Chompi* their visual language displays evidence of the mode of pastiche, as their entire body copy is in Afrikaans; their visual language effectively conveys their creative persona. This served as a significant insight into the crafting of my own body copy as I started to extract and combine humour through the modes of parody and pastiche. The use of different modes of

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[11] Kiff Kak: was founded by Courtney Hodgson in 2019. Her cultural upbringing as an Afrikaans individual born after apartheid, this served as her main inspiration with the curation and development of the brand

intertextuality helped evolve my creative practices. I crafted my own hybrid visual language which reflected my personal identity as well as my creative persona.

4.3 ADRESSING THE CONCEPT STATEMENT AND ACHIEVING MY OBJECTIVES

Having grown up on a farm near Malmesbury, an agricultural town in the Western Cape, I realised the rich inspirations that lay within. Therefore, I created a series of collateral that is directly influenced by the space I call home. *"Wat Eet Ons Vanaand?"* I started by creating a series of dinner plates derived from the delft plates in my mother's home. These plates have been a collector's item not only in my own home but are commonly found in the homes of Malmesbury locals. The design of the plates includes modes of intertextuality and parody through comically photoshopping the faces of male Afrikaans musicians onto the bodies of Renaissance figures, as these plates are normally displayed alongside historical portraits. This series is titled *"Wat Eet Ons Vanaand?"* which enhances the humour within my designs as this is a common phrase a farmer would ask his wife when he gets home after a day of work.

Nou dis *"Blêrrie Lekker,"* I crafted a brand identity titled *"Blêrrie Lekker."* For the designs, I draw inspiration from the wayfinding road signs I see every time I drive home to the farm over the weekends. With the design, I crafted a character named *'Willie'*.The character showcases a stereotypical depiction of how Malmesbury farmers would commonly dress and be seen in the local Kaap Agri Mark [12].

Thirdly, I devised a comical t-shirt that is in the form of a comic strip. The format of the t-shirt design is reminiscent of the Sunday newspaper my dad would always buy after church, *Die Burger*. Within the *Die Burger* at the bottom of the page, there was always this cartoon-illustrated comic that served as inspiration for the creation of my own cartoon-illustrated comic.

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[12] Kaap Agri Mark: an Agricultural shop that sells farming equipment and daily equipment

I created a series of products that are commonly found at farmstalls in my surrounding areas. The products consist of branding and packaging from rusks titled *Beskuit J*uself.* As the word "beskuit" has more than one meaning, I used the mode of parody to achieve a play on words that is double-coded and enhances the humour. Similarly to the rusks, I created the brand *"Mama Mina,"* which focuses on jams. Mina is an integral part of our family and has been for more than 30 years. The name of the jams is also double-coded, as it plays off of the movie title, *Mama Mia*.

Lastly, I created tea towels which were inspired by all our farm animals, but especially our pet sheep, Josef. The illustrated animals are drawn with human qualities and personalities which are reminders of the 'ooms[13]' en 'tannies' from Malmesbury as the animals are personified to mimic some of 'their humans' behaviours.

All these pieces of collateral address the concept statement through an authentic visual language that is constructed from my cultural heritage and lived experience. This challenges impersonal visual languages such as AI-generated media in a world where we are inundated with images, memes, and other visuals. I chose to spend this year creating an authentic visual language that speaks to where I am from.

My research, along with my making process, helped me gain critical insights into the significant role cultural heritage and personal narrative have on authenticity. This project helped me to recognise and embrace my lived experience and upbringing, using it as a source of inspiration in my work. Through my project, I challenge impersonal visual languages such as AI generated designs. I achieve this by integrating aspects of my Afrikaans culture, local history, and nostalgic references. Within my process, I make use of parody and double coding to add playfulness and humour to my design, ultimately making it more relatable. Through the development of my project, I have realised the important role design plays in preserving cultural heritage and identity, as it reflects community values. My

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[13] Oom: The Afrikaans translation for uncle

research and making process worked together in emphasising the power that authentic personal storytelling has on our creative expression and identity.

4.4 CONCLUSION

To conclude, the overall project enabled me to reflect on the importance of creating my own 'authentic' visual language through the exploration of my own cultural heritage and lived experiences. With the shift from my initial human-centred design to exploring the significance of how visual communicators can establish their own creative persona within the contemporary era. I draw inspiration from my own personal experiences that were influenced by the space and places I grew up in, Malmesbury. I achieved this through integrating the various modes of intertextuality, which allowed me to craft a body of work that resonates with my own hybrid Afrikaner identity while simultaneously connecting to a wider cultural context.

During the creative making process, I realised the richness of my own lived experiences as an Afrikaans speaker and how it has contributed to directing my creative approach. Not only did the development of my own brand, *"Blêrrie Lekker,"* and various forms of collateral, as well as the *"Wat Eet Ons Vanaand"* Delft dinner plates, represent my own 'authentic' narrative, but they also confronted the disconnected characteristics of AI-generated media. By referencing my own cultural heritage and lived experiences through the use of humour and double-coding, my body of work reflects the importance of portraying an 'authentic' narrative that preserves and honours my Afrikaner identity and cultural heritage. Thus, this project highlights the importance of how visual communicators should not look past their cultural heritage and just relay on aesthetics but rather embrace their unique lived experiences as a rich inspiration in order to achieve creating an 'authentic' visual language.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

To conclude the research paper, the question regarding whether visual communicators can still create an authentic visual language within the contemporary era has been thoroughly debated and argued. The theorist argued that the reproduction of the visual imaginary is considered a copy of the original. Making it an unauthentic depiction, this was supported by the views of Benjamin, who stated that for the notion of authenticity to exist, the original must be present (1935:3). However, the notion has also been challenged by Austin Kleon, who argued that no creative work is entirely original and authentic, as it always draws upon previous ideas and influences (Kleon, 2012:7).

Therefore, with the shift that occurred from modernist to a post-modernist era, Butler argues that postmodernism represented plurality and inclusiveness, ambiguity, and change as essential elements of modern existence (Butler, 2002). Making the postmodernist era a prime example of an era that showcases an alternate viewpoint by intentionally incorporating influence from and critically analysing previous artistic eras and their extended cultural backgrounds by using intertextuality, appropriation, parody, and pastiche (2002:88). Furthermore, supporting the argument that authenticity within the post-modernist body of work derives from one's own interpretation of the past, making it arguably original. As argued, one's cultural background derives from their lived experience, which is influenced by space and location, forming part of the creation of one's identity. Which Lippard supported as one's lived experiences seep into their depiction on a space (1997:27). As it is mentioned that South Africa comprises various complex identities and a variety of ethnic groups, the merging of these numerous heritages forms part of the hybrid identities. Which supports Robert Young's views that hybridity is the subtle process by which two or more cultural groups blend to form a new paradigm (Young, 1995:21). Thus, relating to the visual analysis that has been conducted, the South African visual communicators show evidence of past cultural influences in their visual language. These interpretations derived from their cultural heritage and location, serving as a significant influence in the creation of their creative identity. Therefore, it supports the argument that the in-between space

created gave rise to artistic expressions that can blend several "styles, languages, cultures, and genres" (Guignery & Pesso-Miquel & Specq, 2011:3).

As previously discussed in the visual analysis chapter, the brand *Kiff Kak* has created an authentic visual language; see Figures 1, 2, 4, 5, 6 and 7 which showcases rich cultural references of heritages and locations. These cultural references made through the visual language showcase influences of Hodgson's cultural background. By incorporating her cultural heritage, she depicts it in a humour's way; therefore, it can be seen through the modes of intertextuality, such as appropriation and parody, that Hodgson creates a unique narrative of her lived experiences, which undoubtably form part of her creative identity.

Jack Parow's visual language has also been thoroughly unpacked; see Figures 8 and 10. The visual language shows evidence of cultural influences, referencing his cultural heritage and lived experiences growing up in the 80's and early 90's in South Africa. His lived experiences from growing up in Bellville have served as a significant source of inspiration for the depiction of his creative persona. Therefore, supporting the argument that space and place seep into ones lived experiences. Parow's use of the modes of parody, appropriation, and retro within the visual language prevails his own perspective of his cultural identity as an alternative Afrikaner.

Lastly, Trali en Chompi, whose visual language uses the mode of pastiche, see Figures 11 and 12. Through the use of their home language in their visual language, their body copy effectively conveys their creative persona. By mixing conservative and formal Afrikaans with current visual aesthetics, Trali en Chompi has created a space where originality originate from.

Therefore, it can be ultimately argued that visual communicators can draw upon their cultural heritage and lived experiences as a source of inspiration. By using the various modes of intertextuality, such as parody, appropriation, retro, and pastiche. They can create an authentic visual language that feeds their creative persona. This approach ultimately addresses the concern regarding the overconsumption of visuals on media platforms and AI-generated visual language.

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Figure 1: Courtney Hodgeon. 2021. Braai Guy.

Figure 2: Courtney Hodgeon. 2021. Braai Guy.

Figure 3: Seth MacFarlane. 2019. Family Guy.

Figure 4: Courtney Hodgeon. 2021. Braai Guy.

Figure 5: Courtney Hodgeon. 2021. Iron ons.

Figure 6: Courtney Hodgeon. 2021. Iron ons.

Figure 7: Courtney Hodgeon. 2021. Iron ons.

Figure 8: Jack Parow. 2024. Afrika 4 Beginners.

Figure 9: Unknown. 2024. Coat of Arms.

Figure 10: Jack Parow. 2024. Afrika 4 Beginners.

Figure 11: Trali & Chompi. 2024. Punt in die Wind.

Figure 12: Trali & Chompi. 2024. Punt in die Wind.

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7. FIGURES

Figure One*:* Kiff Kak, *Braai Guy Range*. 2021. Screengrab. (Behance).

Figure Two*:* Kiff Kak, *Braai Guy Range*. 2021. Screengrab. (Behance).

Figure three: Family Guy: *Peter Griffin*. 2019. Screengrab. (Wikipedia)

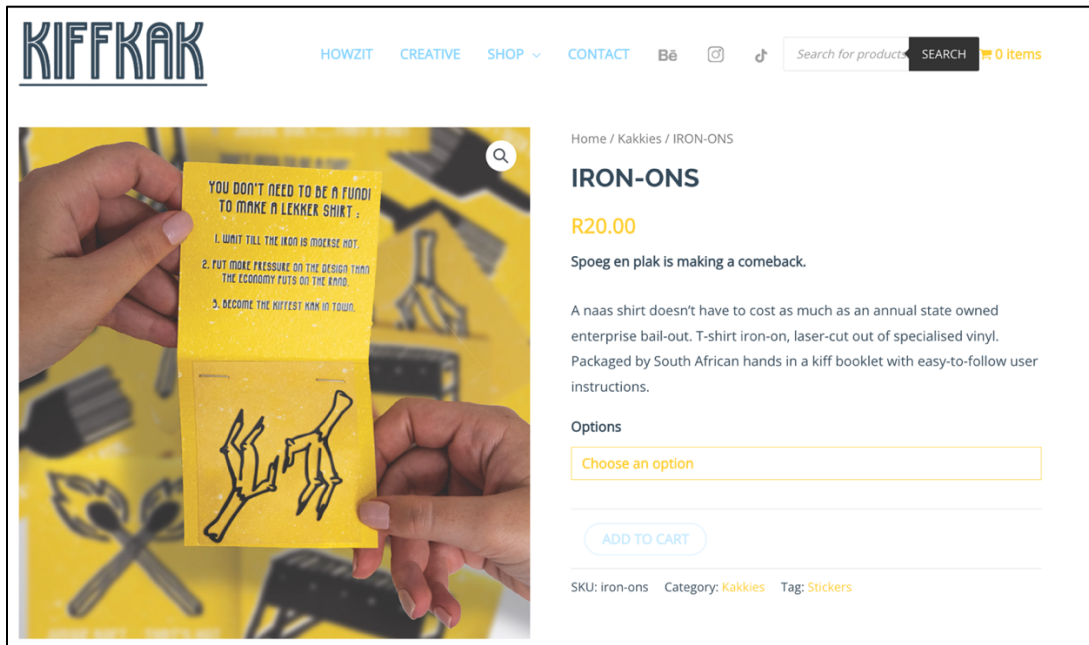Figure four: Kiff Kak, *Braai Guy Range*, Figurine Packaging box. 2021. Screengrab. (Behance).

Figure five: Kiff Kak. *Iron-ons*. 2024. Screengrab. (KiffKak).

Figure Six: Kiff Kak. *Iron-ons*. 2024. Screengrab. (KiffKak).

Figure Sevens: Kiff Kak. *Iron-ons*. 2024. Screengrab. (KiffKak).

Figure eight: Jack Parrow. *Afrika 4 Beginners.* 2024. Screengrab (Sporify).

Figure nine: Coat of arms. 2024. Screengrab. (Wikipedia).

Figure Ten: Jack Parrow. *Afrika 4 Beginners*. 2024. Screengrab (Sporify).

Figure Eleven: Trali en *Chompi. Punt in die wind*. 2024. Screengrab (Folk Tattoo).

Figure Twelve : Trali en *Chompi. So waar as wragtig*. 2024. Screengrab (Folk Tattoo).