

AUT UNIVERSITY

One Story to Another

A storytelling approach to fashion design

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ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material which, to a substantial extent, has been accepted for the award of any degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning, except where due acknowledgement is made in the acknowledgements.

Signed:

Dated:

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A special thanks to all of my friends and colleagues who supported and encouraged me through the process of researching this exegesis.

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To my husband Les, and children John and Hannah, thank you for believing in me and ensuring that I saw this project through to its end.

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ABSTRACT

One story to another: a storytelling approach to fashion design

This practice-based inquiry explores the potential of narrative to augment both the design process and the resulting garments, which form a capsule collection. The project is a response to an emerging consumer shift in fashion consumption. As a reaction to the current climate of mass produced fast-fashion, it is argued that a growing clientele have a desire for an authentic product. This investigation considers the *ntsomi*, the South African Xhosa people's approach to storytelling. The aim is to use the *ntsomi* storytelling strategies to inform the development of a new working method within the fashion design process that is appropriate for the constructing and re-telling of stories. This project explores the development of authenticity in fashion design by focussing on establishing an personal "designDNA" by means of the application of this bespoke storytelling approach.

“The story was his [the bushman’s] most sacred possession. These people knew what we do not: that without a story you have not got a nation, or culture, or civilization. Without a story of your own, you haven’t got a life of your own.”

Sir Laurens Van der Post (as cited in Simms, 2011, p. 63)

INTRODUCTION

The world of fashion is in perpetual cyclic change, with seasonal trends influencing the direction of collections. While these normative cycles will continue, the industry currently faces an unprecedented shift. The adjustments are so significant that the emerging industry will bear little or no resemblance to the current *modus operandi*.

A new type of consumer who is weary of an over-industrialised design is driving this realignment. As a result of mass production and globalisation, a culture of copying has permeated the fast-fashion industry resulting in homogenised clothing. However, the aspirations of the emerging consumer are moving towards products that carry a distinct mark.

This project explores storytelling as a means of negotiating an authentic handwriting within fashion design. As a potential method, this project looks to the strategies of oral Xhosa¹ *ntsomi*² (storytelling), as a fundamentally different working philosophy to inform the creative process.

¹ Pronunciation of Xhosa: 'click'-orsa, without pausing between the two syllables. The 'click' is neither hard nor soft and is produced by snapping the tongue against the teeth. The 'h' is silent (Crampton, 2004, p. 322).

² Pronunciation of *ntsomi*: nn-saw-mi

I position myself, the designer, as a storyteller. I have researched stories from my homeland, the Eastern Cape of South Africa, as a means of discovering my designDNA³. It is through the retelling of these stories within this project that I have sought to explore a clearer view of my distinct design handwriting in order to function as a designer of an authentic product. Notions of authenticity are reinforced through the design, pattern-making, materiality, colour palette, surface decorations, and construction finishes.

The primary site of my research is a collection of garments constituting 80% of the project. The practice is supported by the discussion in this exegesis that sets out the rationale and process integral to the development of a capsule women's wear collection.

The exegesis is divided into three chapters. The first identifies the contextual framework. The second discusses specific methods and methodologies, arguing for the application of the essence of the *ntsomi* method to this creative practice. Chapter Three applies the new working model (creative performance) to the development process, in seven expansions, with a focus on the tension between the conceptual and technical development processes.

³ I have coined the word designDNA to mean the unique warp and weft threads that encode our personal designer handwriting and inform how we function as an authentic designer.

POSITIONING STATEMENT



Figure 1: Lohrentz, A. (2013). *Xhosa woman* [Pen and ink illustration].

MY STORY

“Humans live in story [in fact] we are all born into stories of our families and communities, and continue articulating these stories until we die.”

(Krippendorff, 2006, p. 170).

McManus (2014) suggests “the story that shapes who we are informs everything we make” (p. 114). With this in mind, I commenced this research project by asking the question: What is the story that has shaped me?

Part of my story starts in 1911 with my paternal grandfather, James Miller, leaving the security of home and family in the Orkney Islands of Scotland. James first emigrated to Tikokino in the Hawkes Bay of New Zealand. However, his adventurous spirit enticed him to South Africa where, in 1930, he bought a block of land close to the dusty village of Addo. He named the farm “Woodall”, which was located at the entrance to the Sundays River Valley in South Africa’s Eastern Cape. It was here that, in the searing heat with less than 450mm of precipitation annually, he set about taming the land with his childhood sweetheart, Jeanie.

My family, the Millers, were among the first of the early settlers to “The Valley.” They quickly wove themselves into the fabric of the Addo community (local Xhosa people and a small band of hardy souls primarily from the British Isles), tenaciously planting citrus groves while contending with droughts and disease (Figures 2 and 3).

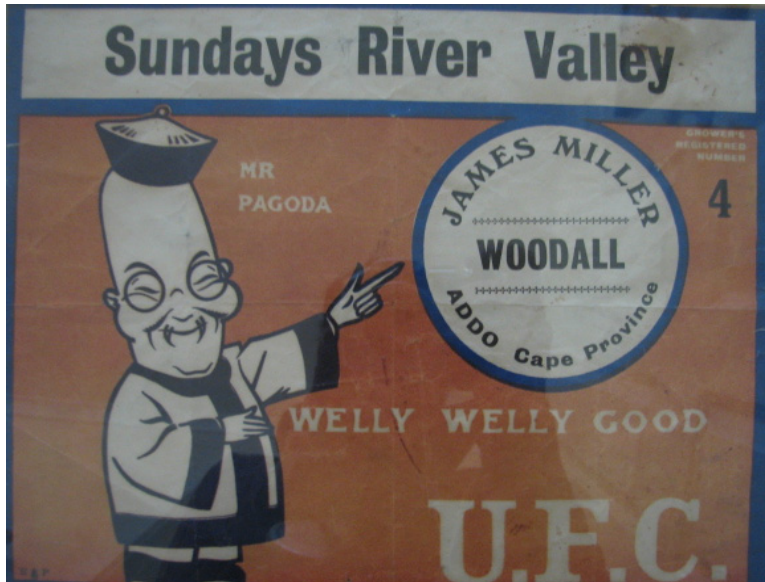


Figure 2: Woodall citrus farm advertising [Advertisement]. (1930). Addo, South Africa.



Figure 3: Woodall citrus farm fruit tissue wrapper [Advertisement]. (1930). Addo, South Africa.

James and Jeanie had two sons, the younger, also known as James, was my father. When he was in his thirties he married my mother, Grace Browne, who was a city girl from the coastal town of Port Elizabeth. In the 1960's, I was born into the community of The Valley.

My genesis came attached to two stories: the British pioneers and the local Xhosa people, who lived on and near Woodall. My genesis is like a colourful and intricately embroidered cloth forming a mysterious pattern: an alchemy of known, whispered and silenced stories.

From a young age I sought to understand my world through clothing. As a child, I observed my mother's fabric cutting and construction techniques. Also, my grandmother, Jeanie, lived with us. Her clothes, brought from Scotland, became my dress-up box: Harris Tweed, velvet and fur coats, detailed evening gowns (Figure 4), kid leather shoes and gloves, cloche hats, ostrich feathered bags and embroidered shawls. These pieces of clothing whispered of another world, and slowly released the hidden secrets of fine handwork, embroidery techniques, crafted construction, and historic pattern-making processes.

Figure 4: Jeanie Miller 1920's black satin evening gown: interior detail [Photograph].



But this is only half the tale.

My other world was alongside the Xhosa people, who voiced an entirely different way of creating clothing. They were also known as the “red blankets” (Elliott, 1970, p. 13) due to their custom of smearing red ochre on their bodies and clothes. Skins and the geometric shape of blankets and cloth defined the shapes and proportions of their clothing. The practice of draping a single uncut length of cloth around the body formed the foundation of Xhosa dress. There was also an element of European influence with the use of long panelled skirts, braided with black trim or made in *shweshwe*⁴ fabric, tobacco bags, regal head-dresses and a profusion of beads (Figure 5).

Stories and storytellers have always been a part of my life. Some of the rich embroidery of South Africa’s oral histories, filtered down through the generations, were only whispered, or completely silenced in some cases. It appears that the effect of apartheid (a policy or system of segregation or discrimination on grounds of race) was to censor these streams of knowledge. In the words of Crampton (2004), this “drew my attention to the fact that so much of what should be the common currency of South African history, our diversity and unity as equal parts of a complex and interesting whole, has as yet to be discovered” (p. 12). This, I was driven to explore.

⁴ *Shweshwe*: South African patterned discharge printed cotton fabric. Pronounced: sh-wesh-where

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Figure 5: Tyrrell, B. (1947). *Married Xhosa women* [Watercolour]. Scott Private Collection, Melbourne, Australia.

CHAPTER ONE

CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK



Figure 6: Lohrentz, A. (2013). *Red Blanket woman* [Pen and ink illustration].

INTRODUCTION

In the 20th Century, the craft of making clothing was taken out of the hands of the maker and embedded into the industrialised design processes. Standardisation enabled the mass production of garments, turning customers into consumers, and the loss of craftsmanship to the constraints of efficiency. British designer, Shelley Fox contends that the loss of the age-old artistry embedded in craftsmanship is “leech[ing] the industry of its life-force” (as cited in Quinn, 2009, p. 142).

Some of the industry’s participants are no longer satisfied with limitless choice integrated with homogenous design (Lewis & Bridger, 2000, p. 45). This dissatisfaction is pushing the industry into a time of great change. American author Shel Silverstein stated that we are in a period of “momentous social and cultural [change]” – a “tesarac” moment where capitalist society is rearranging itself (as cited in Lewis & Bridger, 2000, p. 2).⁵ The result, Lewis and Bridger (2000) suggest, is a shift in consumption attitudes, the rise of the “New Consumer” (p. 3). This new force rejects mass produced garments in favour of a product that can claim, in some way, to be authentic (Lewis & Bridger, 2000, p. 10). This exegesis will argue that authenticity in design can

⁵ Note that Shel Silverstein initially coined the concept of “tesarac.” He suggests that “during a tesarac, society becomes increasingly chaotic and confusing before reorganizing itself in ways that no one can accurately predict or easily anticipate.” These changes are so “profound that nobody born one side of the ‘winkle in time’ will ever be able to understand fully what life was like before it occurred” (as cited Lewis & Bridger, 2000, p. 1).

be discovered within the framework of story, because these rich anecdotes of history and myth reveal the distinct mark of the designer (McManus, 2014, p. 114).

INDUSTRIALISATION: THE STARTING POINT

This framework starts with the understanding that mass produced fast-fashion has not only affected consumer attitudes but also the essence of the industry and the position of the designer. Industrialisation has resulted in cookie-cutter fashion: racks of clothing that are marked by sameness and a lack of authenticity. This has radically changed the relationship between the industry and its customers because the speed at which new trends reach the market enables widespread consumption⁶. This insatiable appetite towards the latest trends has fuelled the pervasive culture of the copy (Rohwedder, 2004) and perverted the historic practice of craftsmanship inspired by local culture and contexts.⁷

The practice of creativity in craftsmanship is best seen in the work of Madeline Vionnet (Paris: 1876 – 1975) who recalibrated the industry through her unique system of cutting. Kirke (1998) notes, that

⁶ Where collections were once seasonal, the ability to continually produce clothing has emphasised a perpetual need to consume with customers perceiving garments as disposable items – not collectable pieces (Finn, 2008, p. 11).

⁷ Jouve (2005) notes that Balenciaga's Spanish heritage is evident in his work and "was the source of those blacks, browns, those embroideries heavy with jet-encrusted trimmings, the brilliant whites, the graceful Infantas, the austere duennas, of black lace suffused with pink..." (Jouve, 2005, p. 11)

Vionnet's distinct approach to creating garments was the result of an "amalgam [of] experiences and impressions [that] accumulated in the designer's mind through her lifetime" (p. 39). She acquired a self-taught and self-realised aptitude towards the recalibration and re-imagination of everything from garment structure, to pattern-cutting and construction techniques, and to the inherent properties of fabric. The image and pattern of a barrel cut dress consisting of four quadrant pieces exemplifies her innovative approach to pattern making (Figures 7 and 8).

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Figure 7: Madeleine Vionnet
1922 Pattern 17: in-out-in.
(Kirke, 1998, p. 97).

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Figure 8: *Madeleine Vionnet 1922 red silk crepe romaine dress demonstrates a unique barrel cut bodice with petal skirt.* (Kirke, 1998, p. 97).

These “seeds of creativity” formulated a truly unique way of creating clothing (Kirke, 1998, p. 39). Her craftsmanship within the creative process engaged a personal and authentic handwriting that “set fashion on a new path, deviating from the time-honoured tradition of disguising figure flaws” (McDowell, 2007, p. 431). Kirke (1998) suggests this was driven by her “progressing towards her own concepts” and unique design identity (p. 36).

By comparison, industrialised design is a shadow of such creativity. Krippendorff (2006) elaborates as follows:

The industrial revolution ... appropriated the word ‘design’ for its emerging need to make mass production acceptable to many and expand the market of products. Designers became ‘industrial’ designers. By agreeing to shape material products that could be produced in ideally large numbers, designers made themselves subservient to the needs of mass production and came to live in the shadow of industry (p. ii).

Consequently, this raises the question whether standardisation within fast-fashion has taken the vital merits of craftsmanship and creativity out of the industry. Where Vionnet focused on a “thoroughly calculated” process of design, the mechanisation of the process now demands a thorough calculation of efficiency and speed (Kirke, 1998, p. 16). Krippendorff (2006) is right when he theorises that “design finds itself at a critical point” (p. iii). The industry has replaced an authentic design process with a culture where copying is called design in order

to meet the time constraints of efficient production.⁸ But the New Consumer is no longer accepting this practice (Lewis & Bridger, 2000, p. 5). This paradox has pushed the industry towards an epoch defined by radical and unprecedented change.

TESARAC: NEW CONSUMERS IN AN EMERGING MARKET

Such a period of change is defined by Silverstein (2000) as a tesarac (as cited in Lewis & Bridger, 2000, p. 2). The change in attitudes towards consumption is driving this proposed shift within the (fashion) industry, and is generating a post capitalist society (Lewis & Bridger, 2000, p. 2). Drucker (1993) expressed a similar view suggesting that this “sharp transformation” can be likened to the “changes that took place in 18th Century Europe when the centre of communal life moved from the countryside into the city” (p. 1). Prominent theorist Evans (2007) clearly recognises this shift when she suggests that, “we are currently in a stage of capitalist transition as important as those of the sixteenth, seventeenth and nineteenth centuries” (p. 10).

Locally, this transition in the fashion industry is evidenced by the changing face of the retail landscape in New Zealand. British fashion retailer, Topshop, is preparing for a major nationwide chain expansion throughout New Zealand. Topshop is known for its fast-fashion and

affordable collections based on the latest runway trends and collaborations with leading international designers (Adams, 2014, p. B11). Walker, Viva’s Digital and Fashion Features Editor, believes this will accelerate the need for local designers and retailers to “adapt and re-evaluate what makes their brands special and to offer something original” (Adams, 2014, p. B11). She suggests that with the arrival of Topshop, local designers simply won’t be able to get away with copying anymore because “consumers will be able to get the same thing at a much cheaper price” (Adams, 2014, p. B11).

While the change for New Zealand designers in this example might be seen to be driven by the presence of this retailer in the market, the greater force behind the shift is the rise of the New Consumer.⁹ As the fashion industry is presently in a tesarac, we cannot accurately predict or define the effect of this new group of consumers on the “New Economy” (Lewis & Bridger 2000, p. 2). There is, however, growing evidence of the emergence of a “new, sophisticated consumer” who is fast becoming a potent force (Kress, Ozawa & Schmid, 2014, p. 4). Lewis & Bridger (2000) noted that “at the heart ... of the New Consumer lies a desire for authenticity” for products that are perceived to be in some way distinct and authentic (p. 4).

⁸ “The fashion industry in the second half of the twentieth century seemed to have been more interested in plagiarizing and plundering past eras than attempting to solve current – and, more importantly, future – problems” (McDowell, 2007, p. 428).

⁹ In the New Economy power is shifting increasingly to the new consumers. They are well-educated individuals with the discretionary income to dictate market trends (Lewis & Bridger, 2000, p. 3 and Kress et al., 2000, p. 4).

The allure to the New Consumer is a crafted product endowed with what the “Japanese call *miriyokuteki hinshitsu*: a quality that fascinates” (Lewis & Bridger, 2000, p. 11). Therefore, the interface between authenticity and the product resides within “exceptionally high engineering and quality of construction” (Lewis & Bridger, 2000, p. 11). Craftsmanship that enables design-led, distinct products is, therefore, a key criterion for the New Consumer. Accordingly, manufacturers in the emerging industry must increasingly endow their brands with a distinct handwriting.

THE CASE OF THE NEW DESIGNERS

The pressure on manufacturers to offer authentic products can only be answered by a new breed of designers, equipped as craftsmen, each with a unique handwriting. This refocus on craftsmanship is recognised by Kettley (2010) who argues that, “such intangible qualities as meaning, authenticity, commitment, engagement and passion are becoming central to contemporary design, qualities that arguably not only characterize but constitute craft” (p. 12).

Further, McManus (2014) contends that craftsmanship within fashion is, “never simply about making a product” (p. 114). As already noted, McManus suggests that “the story that shapes who we are informs everything we make,” implying that a crafted product is “an extension” of the designer/maker (p. 114). In support of this argument, Belgian designer, Guerra suggests that “craftsmanship links us to the past; it’s

the way to know who we are, where we come from and where we are going” (as cited Derycke & Van de Veire (Eds). 1999, p. 154).

Perhaps the example of fashion designers who have answered the call for craftsmanship is seen in Japan in the 1980s (Figure 9). Issey Miyake, Rei Kawakubo and Yohji Yamamoto spearheaded an industry transformation with their innovative new genre of clothing which transcended nationality (English, 2011, p. 20).¹⁰ Nevertheless, their creativity had its genesis firmly rooted

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Figure 9: Yohji Yamamoto, (Spring/Summer 2002). This outfit shows the use of traditional dyeing techniques (yuzen). The design is applied to the fabric using stencils and rice paste. This technique references traditional Japanese dress while the belt is reminiscent of the date-jime, the sash used to tie and hold the under kimono and outer kimono (Salazar, (Ed.). 2011, p. 21).

¹⁰ The work of these fashion designers is evidence of a “radical change in direction” within the industry (McDowell, 2007, p. 428).

in a retelling of their unique cultural stories. Jennings (2011) suggests that their “ability to unapologetically infuse their creativity with their cultural heritage” served as a precursor towards distinct, authentic, and meaning laden products (p. 148). Bénaim (1997) refers to this phenomenon as walking “backwards towards the 21st Century, and [it] offers suggestions for the future” (p. 7).

Fukai identifies examples of how their work expresses the story and aesthetics of traditional Japanese culture in her essay “a new design aesthetic” (as cited Mitchell, 2005, p. 22). These examples include the use of exaggerated proportions with an “excess of fabric that creates drapes,” which Fukai proposes reference “the culture of kimono” (p. 22); while the practice of employing monochromatic colour palettes reference traditional Japanese ink drawings (Mitchell, 2005, p. 26), and the use of intentional flaws and asymmetrical drape exude the Japanese wabi-sabi philosophy.¹¹ Fukai also suggests that Miyake's pleated garments are “firmly rooted in the Japanese dressmaking tradition that regarded the fabric as vitally important” (p. 25) (Figure 10).

Further examples of cultural influences on their work and unique craftsmanship are identified by English (2011). She suggests that the “concept of the kimono and the traditional Japanese way of packaging in which everything is somehow folded, wrapped, revealed and

shaped” informs the work of all three designers (p. 20). This is evident in the pleating, draping and folding throughout their work (Figure 11).

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Figure 10: Issey Miyake (2010). *Collection 132.5 demonstrates innovative folding techniques*. Retrieved from http://thrucolorfuleyes.files.wordpress.com/2010/11/issey_miyake01.jpg?w=577&h=450

¹¹ Wabi-sabi (侘寂) represents a comprehensive Japanese world view or aesthetic centred on the acceptance of transience and imperfection. The aesthetic is sometimes described as one of beauty that is “imperfect, impermanent, and incomplete” (Salazar (Ed.), 2011, p. 23).

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STORYTELLING AND A NEW INDUSTRY

Lewis and Bridger (2000) believe that mass market commodities will fall by the wayside to be replaced by a limited run of products that are, in some way, “stamped with the mark of authenticity” (p. 21). Authenticity is best uncovered by looking at ourselves and at the stories that shape us (McManus, 2014, p. 114). Finn (2008) argues that “New Zealand [fashion designers have] a unique opportunity to rebuild this connection between designer and maker to create distinctive design and a sustainable fashion industry” (p. 75). And, as Walker notes, the New Zealand designer will have to consider what defines their distinctive handwriting (Adams, 2014, p. B11). This questioning is necessary to recover an authentic basis to the process of design. Accordingly, the suggested starting point is to embrace our own stories, allowing these active memories to inspire and influence our work. McManus (2014) suggests “all design is informed by story and in the end fashion is all about storytelling” (p. 37). Such storytelling is a means to unearth an authentic handwriting, and in so doing embed craftsmanship back in to fashion.

Figure 11: Issey Miyake 'Pleats Please' Coat demonstrates innovative fabrication techniques (Spring/summer 1995). (Mitchell, 2000, p. 69).

CHAPTER TWO

METHODS AND METHODOLOGY



Figure 12: Lohrentz, A. (2013). *Nokukhanya a Red Blanket*. [Pen and ink illustration].

METHODOLOGY

This practice-based research project is positioned within the domain of creative practice. Art and design research projects employ many methods; however, there is no set design methodology. Further, such projects have not established or confirmed any preferred methodologies because divergent opinions are rife with regards to what is most appropriate for practice-led research. Gray and Malins (2004) argue for flexible and adaptable methods, suggesting custom-built, multi-method approaches are best suited to respond to the specifics of individual research projects (p. 72). This directed my inquiry towards a heuristic approach in order to uncover a bespoke set of methods and methodology to inform my practice.

HEURISTIC INQUIRY

Heuristic inquiry ¹² was developed by Moustakas (1990) who emphasised the phases of engagement, immersion, incubation, illumination, and explication with the conclusion of the enquiry in a creative synthesis (p. 27). Moustakas (1990) notes the heuristic inquiry is autobiographical, designed for the exploration and interpretation of experience, which focuses upon “the self - the researcher” (p. 15). He suggests that the process commences with a “personal challenge and puzzlement,” which the researcher endeavours to clarify or solve “in

¹² “The root meaning of Heuristics comes from the Greek word ‘heuriskein’, meaning to discover or find” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 9).

the search to understand one's self and the world in which one lives" (p. 15). As a design practitioner, I sought to explore the stories that shaped me in order to have a clearer view of my distinct design handwriting; so that I could function as a designer of an authentic product. Through a self-reflexive process, the inquiry involves "self-search, self-dialogue, and self-discovery [where the] research question and the methodology flow out of inner awareness, meaning, and inspiration" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 11).

STORYTELLING AS DESIGN

Grimaldi, Fokkinga and Ocnareescu (2013) note that a number of design studies have investigated the use of storytelling in the design process (p. 201). As examples, Beckman and Barry (2009) explore the role of stories to both inform the design process and motivate new thinking in organisations. Lloyd (2000) investigates the value and mechanism of storytelling in the engineering design process. Further, Steffen (2009) discusses how narratives are used in product design. Expanding on this knowledge, Grimaldi et al. (2013) examined the role and function of story in design. They suggest a typology categorises the occurrences of story in the design process. Consequently, I decided to explore the potential of a storytelling approach as a possible system of methods to inform this project and, to enable an authentic mark in design.

WHO AM I AS A STORYTELLER?

All stories need a narrator. In order to position myself as a storyteller/designer, I applied heuristic methods, in conjunction with reflective practice, to answer the question: Who am I as a storyteller? The heuristic inquiry is useful here because it is "a process of internal search through which one discovers the nature and meaning of experience" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 9). As such, I endeavoured to gain a degree of "self-awareness and self-knowledge" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 9) [through] "the conscious and deliberate process of turning inward" (p. 11).

Moustakas (1990) suggests that the heuristic process involves "getting inside the research question, becoming one with it" (p. 15). Through this heuristic process, I came to understand that growing up in apartheid dominated South Africa had blurred my understanding of, and personal positioning in, my own story. There were many stories I had not experienced or been affected by because they had been censored or completely silenced. Thus, the enquiry allowed me, as the investigator, to have a "personal encounter with the phenomenon being investigated" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 14). The resulting "autobiographical connection" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 14) has facilitated an on-going process of uncovering more of my personal story.

This process led me to position myself as a storyteller/designer within my cultural, historical, and mythological roots - anchored in the cultural landscape of the peoples of the Eastern Cape of South Africa.

***NTSOMI* – THE STORYTELLING**

METHODOLOGY OF THE XHOSA PEOPLE

Through the process of heuristic inquiry, I discovered the traditional oral Xhosa storytelling approach called *ntsomi*. The *ntsomi* is, simultaneously, an incredible fairy tale and a repository of knowledge and wisdom (Scheub, 1970, p. 119).¹³ The nature of each *ntsomi* is a performance, a “lively mixture of verbal and body language” (Pellowski, 1990, p. 143). The centre of the performance is the core image, which is expanded and developed during the actual process of narrating the story. While the basic fabric of the core image is retained, the storyteller is afforded the liberty to manipulate, expand, rearrange, and interlock details. Crampton (2006) notes, “somewhere among the layers of fact and fiction,” a new story emerges (p. 24).

WHY *NTSOMI*?

On reflecting and analysing this approach to storytelling, I recognised that this method resonated with my heritage. While not originating from the Xhosa people, we had grown up together. Consequently, I had assimilated elements of the Xhosa culture and intuitively understood their vernacular and creative process. Thuynsma (1987) notes that our cultural background shapes and informs our “creative and artistic perspective” (pp. 81-82). It was my inherent connection to this style of

¹³ Crampton (2006) notes that “oral history was – and is – a form of entertainment as well as a tool for passing on a cultural identity and a system of values” (p. 24).

storytelling that led me to explore how I might develop a method based on the *ntsomi* approach and strategies.

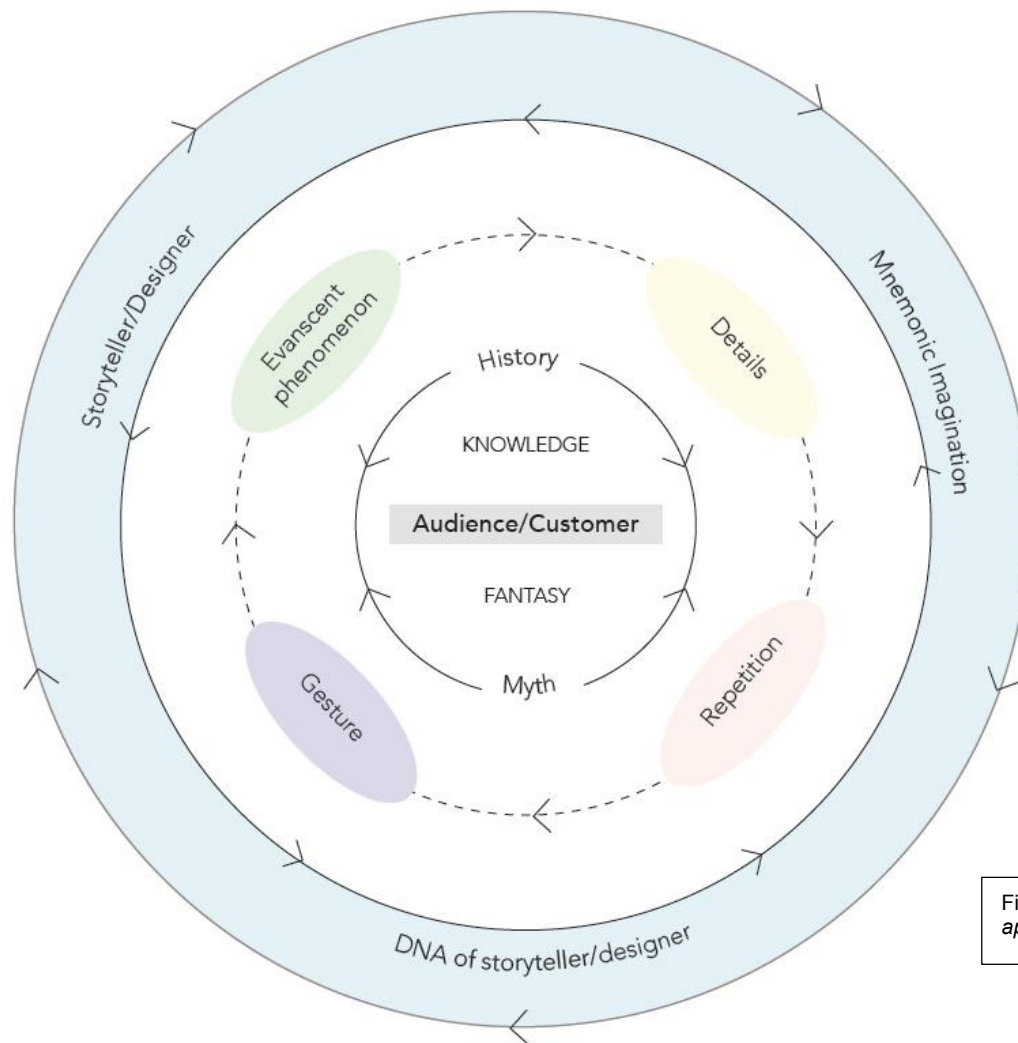
REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

I also accepted the *ntsomi* approach has a flexible essence that accords strongly with the methods of reflective practice. This further supported my decision to employ elements of the *ntsomi* to inform a new working method that engages in a dialogue between the conceptual and technical development within the project. Schon (1983) describes reflective practice as “reflection-in-action” and “reflection-on-action” (p. 50). This method causes the design process to proceed as “a reflective conversation with the situation” (Schon, 1983, p. 23). As such, my research process moves through several cycles of planning, crafting, observing, and reflection.

Supporting this process is the “knowing-in-practice” - or tacit knowledge (Schon, 1983, p. 50). As a design practitioner, I bring a range of skills and knowledge to the project. I have acquired these from a three-year study of fashion design where I learnt the craft, rigour, and discipline of pattern-drafting, garment construction, and principles of design. Following graduation, I have worked extensively in the fashion industry in the capacity of a designer and pattern-maker. I have exposure to a broad and eclectic range of apparel companies ranging from mass production to high-end fashion. It has been through this diverse experience I have accumulated tacit knowledge that intuitively guides my process.

THE *NTSOMI* APPROACH

The techniques of the *ntsomi* storytelling approach are illustrated in the following diagram (Figure 13) and then discussed below.



CORE IMAGES

Arising out of the consciousness of the storyteller's homeland, being both history and myth, the core images are narrative plots that stand as the central tenants of the *ntsomi* performance (Scheub, 1970, p. 121). These core images are "structural keystones," which are the irreducible constant around which the storyteller weaves and crafts the story (Scheub, 1970, p. 121). They are, Scheub (1970) suggests, "ancient and deeply rooted in tradition," but are not learnt in a prescribed or purposeful way (p. 122).

It was the discovery of the *ntsomi* storyteller expanding and negotiating the story "during the actual process of externalization" when I encountered the real wonder of the *ntsomi* storytelling approach (Scheub, 1970, p. 122). Scheub (1970) notes that, "at the very core of *ntsomi* composition lies this expansible image" (p. 128). And Thuynsma (1987) notes the narrator engages one or more core images, and with "little more than a nucleus of a story to build with" begins to shape the story with no clear idea of what outcome will result (p. 78). What really captured me was the story evolved and expanded in and through the performance, and it was in this creative process that a new story emerged.

Figure 13: Lohrentz, A. (2014). *Visual representation of the ntsomi storytelling approach* [CAD diagram].

THE STORYTELLER

In the creation of an *ntsomi* performance, it is the storyteller's role that is most important. Scheub (1970) suggests the storyteller assumes the position of "shaper" (p. 55), pointing out, with no script or memorized lines, the storyteller is afforded "unlimited freedom to extemporize" the use of details and stylistic effects (p. 119). The storyteller had two principal functions: that of communicator and that of artist (Scheub, 1970, p. 122). Inherited core images are imaginatively selected and rearranged. In so doing, the narrator builds and crafts a story that forges links between the past and their personal experience and imagination. Authenticity and integrity are established through the storyteller finding their own voice by crafting an original performance endorsed by history and tradition - while still transforming it into a contemporary story.

AUDIENCE

The composition of the audience also has a substantial effect on *ntsomi* performances (Scheub, 1970, p. 121). The narrator will make conscious decisions to manipulate and alter details, images, and aesthetics to position the narrative within the receiving group. So while the core image remains, its treatment is changed, and it can vary from a bold rendition to a more nuanced interpretation (Scheub, 1970, p. 121). Accordingly, cueing for the expansion of the core image emanates from both the audience and the dynamic imagination of the storyteller. It is at this junction that the "alchemy of the performer-audience relations" and the individual personality of *ntsomi* storyteller

result in the unique "evanescent phenomenon"¹⁴ of the *ntsomi* (Scheub, 1970, p. 119).

Therefore, the storyteller engages a "complex, free-associational cueing-and-scanning process," which facilitates the reordering of a number of variables (Scheub, 1970, p. 122). These include but are not limited to the configuration of the core narrative plots (the core images), the composition of the audience, the sensibilities of the location, and the narrator's knowledge and imagination. It is the result of the synthesis of these unique elements that an expansible image is continually evolving (from the core image) throughout the *ntsomi* performance (Scheub, 1970, p. 128). It remains malleable, developing, and expanding throughout the *ntsomi* performance (Scheub, 1970, p. 128).

STRATEGIES OF THE *NTSOMI*

In assessing *ntsomi* performances, there are several key strategies used by the storyteller (Figure 13). The storyteller skilfully restructures the original core images by means of expansion through engaging "the language of gesture", the use of repetition, and the use of interlocking and improvised details (Thuynsma, 1987, p. 77). It is in the alchemy of these elements that the essence and unique approach is realised: the crafting of a new story.

¹⁴ Scheub (1970) highlights the "evanescent phenomenon" of an *ntsomi* performance as a unique characteristic. The alchemy of elements come together briefly "at a certain time and in a certain place" resulting in a performance that cannot readily be repeated or recaptured (p. 119).

GESTURE

As suggested, this form of storytelling is not merely oral; it is also a performance. Thuynsma (1987) proposes the use of gesture “[embodies] the African aesthetic principle which values the creative moment more than endurance” (p. 78). The core images are actualised by means of physical gesture to illustrate the story. Accordingly, gesture functions are a strategy to progress the story.

REPETITION

Similarly, repetition is employed to highlight thematically important elements. Scheub (1970) indicates “repetition is the key structural device” in the *ntsomi* enactment and repetition frequently employed as a strategy (p. 125). The storyteller consistently and recurrently builds on and expands the core image. This thematic repetition is supported by a performance repetition where gestures and words are also used recurrently.

DETAIL

Thuynsma (1987) suggests the story is “recounted in extraordinary detail” and that “the choice of detail is deliberate” (pp. 84-84). The storyteller has grown up hearing and experiencing *ntsomi* performances, and as a result, has accumulated from these experiences a measure of tacit knowledge that enables an intuitive and complex process of recall (Scheub, 1970, p. 122). This technique

permits the manipulation and joining of interlocking and transitional details that are joined as a means to connect the plots and enable a new story to be constructed. If successful, Scheub (1970) notes, “one will not be able to treat one aspect of the performance without considering all the other aspects which are woven not only into the plot but into the very fabric of the production” (p. 124).

THE NEW WORKING METHOD

Based on my investigation and analysis of the *ntsomi* storytelling approach and strategies, I developed a custom built working method that “responded to the specifics” of my research project (Gray & Malins, 2004, p. 72). I illustrated this in the following diagram (Figure 14).

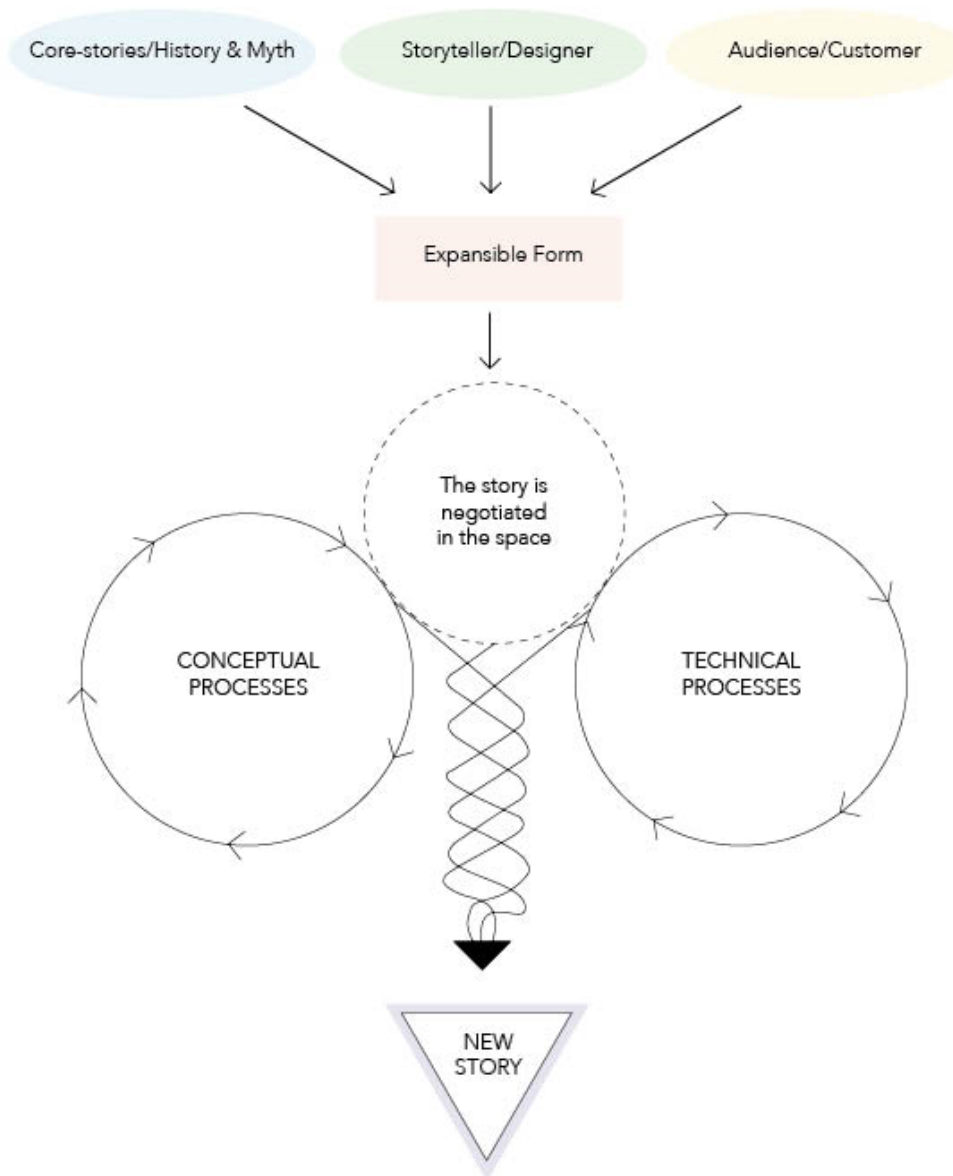


Figure 14: Lohrentz, A. (2014). *Visual representation of new working method* [CAD diagram].

THE EXPANSIBLE FORM

My design practice started organically with “little more than a nucleus of a story to build with” (Thuynsma, 1987, p. 78). It was in the discovery that the Xhosa storyteller chooses not to resolve a final story from the outset but to build on the core image (story) during narration, that I realised the potential of using the notion of, what I have called, the expansible form. This aligns with the idea of the expansible image within the *ntsomi* approach to storytelling. A significant component of this working method lies in the acknowledgement of the tension that exists between the conceptual and technical permeating the entire project (Figure 14). This tension causes the expansible form to continue to evolve until the end of the creative process, and is consistently altered by the dialogue between the conceptual and technical development (Figure 17).

These two vital parts of the creative process are held in balance because they exist in a symbiotic relationship (Figure 14). The resulting synergy exists by virtue of the perpetual tension created by them being positioned alongside one another, instead of chronologically. This enables creativity to thrive. While each phase operates with a sense of an internal autonomy, it is in the negotiated space between these two phases that a new story is crafted. The expansible form is thereby allowed to traverse through the design process, unresolved in its creative potential, until completion (Figure 17).

CRAFTSMANSHIP

In this process, a strategy is to employ craftsmanship because it aligns to the crafting of Xhosa stories. As already discussed, the *ntsomi* narrator imaginatively expands, builds, weaves, and embroiders the original core stories into a contemporary rendition with great skill and artistry. The *ntsomi* storyteller, with no prescribed idea of the outcome, uses the craft of gesture, repetition, and detail to embellish and create a new story. As such, the story emerges in and through the storytelling process. This approach is similar to the techniques of craftsmanship that Pye (1968) defines as “workmanship ...in which the quality of the result is not predetermined, but depends on the judgement, dexterity and care which the maker exercises as he works” (p. 4). Therefore, craftsmanship has been employed as a mechanism towards shaping and crafting the expansible form in and through each expansion.

I have approached craftsmanship via two avenues. Firstly, the “workmanship of risk” is expressed in vernacular personal artworks, applique, beading, and hand embroidery while, secondly, the “workmanship of certainty” is evident in machine constructed finishes, laser-cutting, and digital printing (Pye, 1968, p. 4). Although I am embracing both methods of craftsmanship in the project, it is the risk of uncertainty that offered the potential to explore the *ntsomi* strategies (gesture, repetition and detail). Additionally, this approach helped explore an authentic designDNA by implicating the hand of the designer through the vernacular handwork techniques.

CHAPTER THREE

CREATIVE PERFORMANCE



Figure 15: Lohrentz, A. (2013). *Sindiswa* [Pen and ink illustration].

This chapter discusses the new working method through the design process, and the development of a body of work. I have chosen to call the phases of development, of the design process and product, “expansions” as a means of demonstrating the notion of the expandable form (Figure 17). In a parallel approach to the narration of an *ntsomi*, I continually expand on a number of core images, which are stories from my cultural history. As the expandable form traverses through each expansion, the story is developed and negotiated in the space between the conceptual and technical components of the process (Figure 17).

In order to uncover my stories, my inquiry led me to explore some of the histories and stories of the Eastern Cape. This part of the study occurred through three avenues: an academic investigation, a dialogue based inquiry, and the analysis of artefacts. Even though I completed most of this research in New Zealand, a field trip to South Africa in 2013 afforded me the invaluable opportunity to gather data and stories.

FIVE WOMEN

Out of my research, I selected the stories of five women who have been a part of my history and have contributed to who I am as a storyteller/designer. These women come from diverse walks of life, but they have all, in some way, woven their influence into the fabric of my design thinking. Their life stories talk about where I come from. Each core story will manifest in a number of garments; a potential outfit that

forms part of a capsule collection. Through the development of this body of work, I tell the core stories of a Castaway, a Red Blanket, a Pioneer, a Mother, and a Nanny (Figure 16).

Bessie: This is a whispered story of Bessie, a young Scottish girl who was shipwrecked on the East Coast of South Africa in the 18th Century (Crampton, 2004, p. 26). She was found on the shore by the Xhosa people who accepted her into their tribe. They gave her the name *Gquma*,¹⁵ which means: “the roar of the sea,” (Crampton, 2004, p. 24). Bessie embraced the traditional culture and eventually became the “Great Wife”¹⁶ of Tshomane, a Xhosa chief (Crampton, 2004, p. 36).

Jeanie: This is a pioneering story about my grandmother, Jeanie. Hers is a story of tenacity and adaption to a new home on a remote and barren block of land,¹⁷ detached and isolated from the croft she knew on the blustery moors and empty hills of Stromness. I still remember her strong Scottish accent, and an equally strong character that complimented the unrelenting environment. Her quick gait and thick plait of red hair were symbols of a colonial lifestyle that bred

¹⁵ *Gquma* pronunciation: The ‘g’ is silent. Q is formed by a hard palatal click made when the tongue is pulled away sharply from the palate) followed by orma, without pausing between the two syllables (Crampton, 2004, p. 322).

¹⁶ Great Wife – the senior wife, mother of the chief’s official heir (Crampton, 2004, p. 319).

¹⁷ Popular belief is that Addo is the Hottentot word for “drought” or “dust” (Meiring, 1959).

resilience, and a certain kind of eccentricity.

Thandiwe: This is a cultural story of a traditional Xhosa woman, a Red Blanket woman. Hers is the story of life in a traditional homestead, a round hut with a grass roof, known as an *umuzi*. As a means of identifying her social status, each stage of her life required a specific dress code and beadwork. And as a married woman, she always kept her head covered with an *iqhiya* (a piece of fabric). The longer she was married the larger the *iqhiya*. Her traditional blanket clothes also consisted of an *ibhayi* (shawl) wrapped around her shoulders, and a long braided skirt. She used a *faskoti* (apron) when doing housework, and she might also be seen smoking a long elegant beaded pipe while carrying an *ngxowa* (tobacco bag). Hers was a very accepting society evidenced in the assimilation of western dress, especially the common adoption of a large beaded neckpiece.

Grace: This is a nurturing story about my mother, a career woman who moved to the farm, in a region ravaged by drought. Limited funds meant “make and make-do”; home sewing, knitting, and embroidery were her way of life. Deft with her handiwork, employing a selection of fabrics, and with her box of buttons never far from sight, she inspired my interest in making garments. Vibrant and colourful was her hallmark.

Shweshwe was her signature dress, and the distinct smell of this cloth still evokes heartfelt memories of a mysterious place.



Figure 16: Lohrentz, A. (2013). *Inspiration board containing images for each character from the core stories*

Figure 17: Lohrentz, A. (2014). Diagram showing the creative performance within the new working method. In each expansion, the expansible form is developed facilitating the continual process whereby the story is embedded into each garment with the capsule collection [Pen and ink].

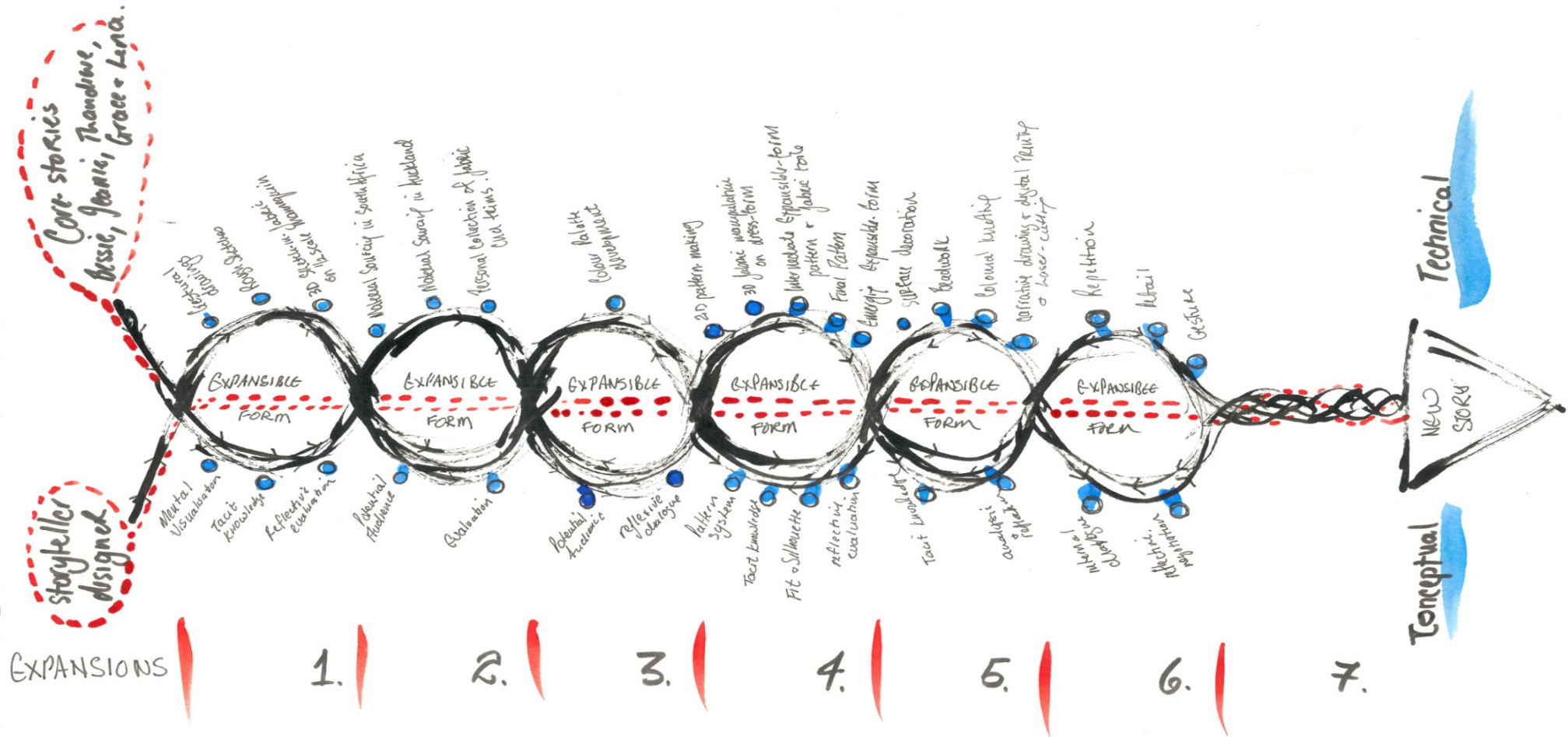




Figure 18: Lohrentz, A. (2013). *Designer thinking through the development of a gestural drawing as a means to loosely frame the potential silhouette of Thandiwe's story* [Pen and ink drawing].

EXPANSION 1

After establishing the core images, the first expansion in the design process involved identifying images and conceptual ideas embedded within each core story. This phase is organic. I put each individual story through a process of “mental visualisation” (Bilda & Gero, 2008. p. 2) in order to begin to imagine what the range of garments might look like. I work between gestural 2-dimensional sketches and 3-dimensional fabric developments on a half-scale mannequin to begin to realise a potential silhouette and form (Figures 18 and 19). This process allows me to loosely frame the design concept, a sketch-in-fabric, which remains flexible and ephemeral throughout the design process. For that reason, these shapes become the tangible nucleus of the story, the expansible form.



Figure 19: Lohrentz, A. (2013). *An example of the designer thinking through the development of calico 'sketch-in-fabric' on half scale mannequin* [Photograph].

EXPANSION 2

In the process of developing the story in the second expansion, I focus my attention towards sourcing materials. In accordance with the techniques of Xhosa storytelling, the materials selected are a means of externalising the core narratives. I used the materiality and physicality of the materials as a language to tell a story; as a mechanism for “seeing speech” (Thuynsma, 1987, p. 88).

Gordon (2011) describes textiles as “multivalent, imbued with many different qualities and characteristics that elicit evocative metaphors and strong associations” (p. 18). He is suggesting that, not only do textiles have significant storytelling capabilities, but they can also evoke in us strong emotional connections that “bind us to our families” (Gordon, 2011, p. 25) and, furthermore, “tie us to the spirit of our ancestors” (p. 212).¹⁸

Furthermore, the specific characteristics of *ntsomi* storytelling also underscore the concepts for material choices. The Xhosa storyteller has two central roles: that of communicating core images of the past, and that of artist imaginatively selecting and positioning these materials and sources in a contemporary interpretation (Schueb, 1970, p. 122). Consequently, the decision to use *shweshwe* fabric, Harris Tweed, leather, springbok hide, and woollen blankets is based on the

rich cultural heritage embedded in these materials and their link to the core stories (Figure 20). Conversely, decisions for selecting (as an example) a contemporary *shweshwe* design and an unnatural colour palette for the springbok skin was directed by the *ntsomi* storyteller’s intention to create a contemporary story, while still endorsing tradition.

Accordingly, the normal criterion for selection, based on the material’s properties (composition, weight, texture, etc.), was taken into consideration. However, it was the “intangible aspects” and the ability of material to connect with “consciousness and evoke the memory of prior experience” discussed by Nimkulrat (2010) that further informed the rationale for the selection (p. 7). Thus, both the physical elements

(texture, print, colour, etc.) and the intangible characteristics of the materials are used as a storytelling tool.



Figure 20: Lohrentz, A. (2013). *Fabric swatches showing the selection of materials used to tell each core story* [Photograph].

¹⁸ Gordon (2011) notes that, “according to Homer’s *Iliad*, Helen of Troy” employed weaving to express her feelings, and, memorial cloth facilitated apartheid sufferers to “speak out” and tell their personal stories through embroidered cloth (pp. 209, 212).

THE VOICE OF *SHWESHWE*

Shweshwe was used to establish a credible expression to the stories arising from the Eastern Cape of South Africa (Figure 21). *Shweshwe* fabric is widely recognised as the “tartan of South Africa” and is described as an “essential thread in the fabric of South African life” (van Niekerk, 2012. pp. 32-36). Ingrained within the distinctive geometric patterns of the cloth lie stories of “inter-woven lives” (van Niekerk, 2012. p. 36). Therefore, *shweshwe* is used repetitively as a metaphor to express this core image. This decision aligns with the repetitive storytelling technique employed within Xhosa *ntsomi* (Scheub, 1970, p. 125). In addition, it is used to visibly express the linking thread that runs between the stories and the author. *Shweshwe* carries a deeply significant personal narrative and memories of my childhood in South Africa.

Shweshwe is a fabric that appeals to the senses. The cloth is starchy to touch prior to washing, and has a salty taste. But it is the distinctive patterns etched on the surface based on the original rulebook and the pleasant but distinct smell due to special processing oils that evoke in me a powerful sensory experience (van Niekerk, 2012. p. 36). The distinct geometric patterns are illustrated in the fabric swatches in Figure 22.



Figure 21: Miller, D. (2013). *Anne Lohrentz and Nomonde (a Songoma) wearing shweshwe in Langbos Township, Addo, Eastern Cape, South Africa* [Photograph].

Figure 22: Lohrentz, A. (2014). *shweshwe fabric swatches* [Photograph].



THE VOICE OF THE WOOLLEN BLANKET

The evocative storytelling abilities imbued within traditional blanket clothing was identified as a core narrative image (Figure 23). The Xhosa tribe are often referred to as the “red blanket people” due to their custom of wearing blankets dyed with red ochre (Elliot, 1970, p. 13). The tribal blanket carries deep cultural significance, and it is worn in different ways to signify different stages in life.

In using the woollen blankets, it was determined that the residue of memory abiding within the worn sections of the fabric affords the cloth an “invisible energy” – a memory imprint (Gordon, 2011, p. 23). These “living qualities” (Gordon, 2011, p. 30) within the fabric strongly reference the traditional blankets worn by the Xhosa people (Gordon, 2011, p. 30). Furthermore, the textural qualities of the blankets are employed to express the high regard placed on tactile reassurance within Xhosa culture.¹⁹ Accordingly, these qualities within woollen blankets informed the decision to use over-dyed woollen blankets and not a piece of bought wool (Figure 24).²⁰

¹⁹ Mary Sleight (2004) suggests that the value of “tactile reassurance is demonstrated by African women, whose children for the first nine months are in constant contact [strapped] with their mothers bodies” (p. 7).

²⁰ I worked with Victor Desouza at Colour Factory in New Lynn to achieve a colour that captured and expressed the story of traditional blanket clothing.

Figure 23: Elliot, A. (1970). *Traditional Xhosa women wearing ochre dyed blanket clothing* (p. 20).

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Figure 24: Lohrentz, A. (2014). *Thandiwe blanket jacket made from a woollen blanket and dye in an ochre shade* [Photograph].

THE VOICE OF LEATHER AND HIDE

Leather and hide were used as storytelling mechanisms. These materials have been chosen to metaphorically represent the importance of animals, both wild and domestic, in the lives of the local people. This directed me to select the hide of the springbok, because this antelope has adapted to the harsh climate and proliferated in the region (Figure 25). Traditionally, every part of the animal was used, including the tendon fibre (sinew) to string beads, skin for clothing, and bone and other parts as ornamentation. This informed my approach towards conserving the hide because an element of the story resides within the resourceful use of the entire animal. Accordingly, I maintained the integrity of the hide by minimising wastage and using the entire skin through minimal cutting (Figures 26 and 27).

I selected pig suede as a reference to the traditional “kaross,” which was a cloak or blanket of animal skins that was allegedly worn by Bessie when her western clothes wore out (Crampton, 2004, p. 27). The size of the hide primarily drove the decision to choose pig suede. And this enabled me to maintain the integrity of the skin by limiting the amount of cutting that was required in accordance with the approach to traditional clothing. In addition, the blanket of animal skin worn by Bessie is described as being “tanned and treated with great skill until the leather was wonderfully soft” (Crampton, 2004, p. 27). This further informed the decision to select the pig suede for its strength and supple handling.



Figure 25: Lohrentz, A. (2014). *Dyed Springbok hide* [Photograph].



Figure 26: Lohrentz, A. (2014). *Springbok hide bag* [Photograph].

Figure 27 (below): Lohrentz, A. (2014). *Cut pieces of Springbok skin* [Photograph].



THE VOICE OF HARRIS TWEED

Harris Tweed is a cloth that has traditionally been hand woven by crofters at their homes in the Outer Hebrides of Scotland (Figure 28). It is made from pure virgin wool ideal for protection against the colder climate of the north of Scotland. This cloth has been selected as part of the narrative about my grandmother Jeanie's pioneering life in the Sundays River Valley of South Africa in the early 1900s. The fabric evokes memories of her wardrobe and the garments from Scotland that eventually became part of my dress-up box.



Figure 28: Lohrentz, A. (2014). *Harris Tweed fabric* [Photograph].

EXPANSION 3

COLOUR AS STORY

The colour palette used for the capsule collection is not trend driven. Rather, the work seeks to explore the evocative narrative and symbolic qualities of colour relevant to the stories (Figure 29). Accordingly, the colour selection has been directed by the sensibility and nuances of each character within the narrative.

As an example, the soft blue of the pig suede jacket references the story of the indigo dyes that washed up on the shoreline following Bessie's shipwreck. The brown plaid print gives voice to Bessie's Scottish heritage and the earthy tones of Africa, while the white linen and knotting references gives voice to the whispered genre of this narrative. Shades of ochre have been used to evoke the Xhosa tradition of using natural ochre to dye garments. The predominately earthy tones have been employed as a mechanism to externalise Jeanie's story (of the challenges of taming the wild African landscape), while splashes of colour allude to her and Grace's vibrant personalities.



Figure 29: Lohrentz, A. (2014). *Fabric swatches demonstrating different colour palettes for each individual character* [Photograph].

EXPANSION 4

Following the selection of materials and a colour palette, I moved to the pattern-making table where I built on the expansible sketch-in-fabric, developed in Expansion 1. Expansion 4 consists of three mini-expansions of pattern development that demand several iterations of planning, acting, observation, evaluation, and reflection to expand the narrative's progressions. Each mini expansion facilitates creative development.

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Figure 30: Elliot, A. (1987). *A group of well dressed Xhosa men and women in blanket clothing* (p. 24).

PATTERN SYSTEM

First, I established a system in respect of the storytelling aspect of the pattern-making process. I employed an ethnic (Xhosa) approach to clothing as a means to give credence to the seed of the story, which lies deeply buried in the Eastern Cape of South Africa. This system can be understood in light of the work of the French anthropologist, Andre Leroi-Gourhan (1945). He suggested there are “two radically different ways of constructing clothes” (as cited in Milenovich, 2007, p. 58). He places Western clothes in the category of cut garments, meaning that the fabric is cut in puzzle-like pieces to fit the body's contours. Alternately, ethnic groups use the fabric at their disposal in flat pieces to establish a pattern-making system of geometric shapes with minimal cutting (Figure 30). Accordingly, the starting point for imaginative re-interpretation was guided by the design principle of simplicity: strategic cutting to create simplicity through purposeful engineering (Figure 31).

Figure 31: Lohrentz, A. (2014). *Jeanie jacket demonstrating the use of rectangular shapes* [Photograph].



INTERMEDIATE EXPANSIBLE FORM

Following the establishment of the pattern-making system, I commenced the development of what I call an intermediate expansible form (or intermediate block) (Figure 32). To do this, I employed both 2-dimensional and 3-dimensional pattern-making methods as a means to build the story into the pattern design. This process of pattern-making has the human body as the focal point; thereby, the developing pattern has a conversation with the body. The dialogue is internal in nature, meaning there is a conversation within the storyteller/designer, between the elements (human body, fabric, core stories, and potential audience). It is at this point that silhouette, shape, scale, and proportions are considered and employed as a mechanism to tell the story.

The intermediate expansible form is made in toiling fabric to assess and fine tune the fit and silhouette of the garment. However, elements of the design details remain unresolved throughout the process (Figure 33).

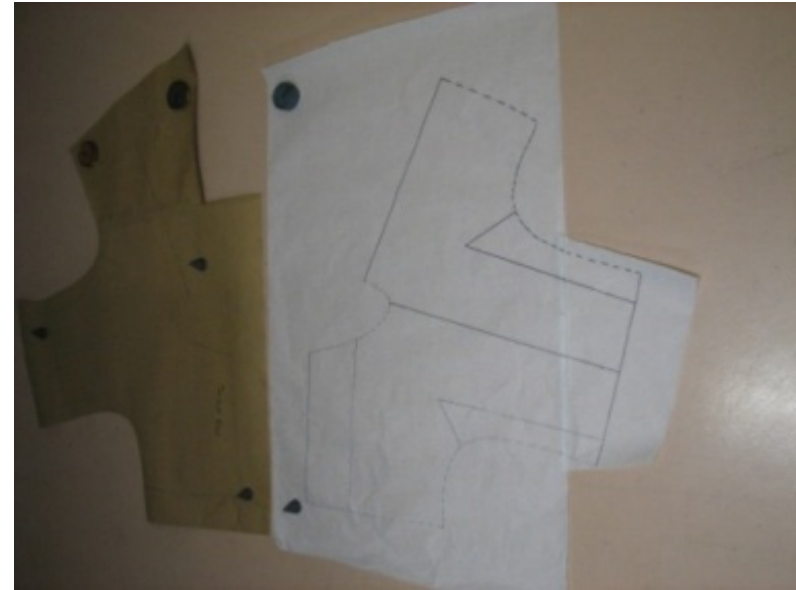


Figure 32 (above): Lohrentz, A. (2014).
*An example of the development of an
intermediate expansible pattern*
[Photograph].



Figure 33: Lohrentz, A. (2014).
*Intermediate expansible form made
in toile material* [Photograph].

EMERGING EXPANSIBLE FORM

After fitting the intermediate expansible form the next phase involves taking the resulting pattern back to the cutting table. Using the *ntsomi* “cueing-and-scanning process,” I drew upon a repertoire of remembered images and recollections of growing up in South Africa to identify “image segments” (shapes and design details) that expressed each story (Scheub, 1970, p. 122). As an example, the shape created by a child strapped to the back informs the blanket jacket (Figures 34 and 35).



Figure 34: [Untitled pencil drawing of a Xhosa woman with a child strapped to her back]. (n. d). Robertson Private Collection, Addo, South Africa.



Figure 35: Lohrentz, A. (2014). *Blanket jacket: back view* [Photograph].

I have also used the garment shapes and style lines metaphorically. For example, I used rectangular floating panels within the pattern-making for the jacket that tell Jeanie’s story. The detached panels have been used symbolically to reference her disconnection from her home in the Orkney Islands (Figure 36). The metaphoric use of



Figure 36: Lohrentz, A. (2014). *Jeanie jacket demonstrating the use of rectangular shapes as a metaphor within pattern-making* [Photograph].

pattern-making is also employed to create segregated skirts as a means of giving voice to Lena’s story about the effects of apartheid.

At this juncture, the cutting table becomes the pivotal point in the externalisation of each story. Because a single piece of material is used, a dialogue commences where the intermediate expansible form negotiates with the specific parameters of the material. For example, the pattern is informed by the size, unique shape, and blemishes on the pig suede skin (Figure 37).

During this process I listen to the “situation’s back-talk, forming new appreciations,” (Cross, 2011. p. 25) which guide the development of the pattern. I engage in a reflexive dialogue between the pattern and material. It is at this point I make decisions that become a “design node with binding implications” (Cross, 2011, p. 25). The outcome is a new pattern that has been engineered to exploit the distinctive characteristics and technicalities of each individual piece of material (Figures 38, 39 and 40).

By responding directly to the unique characteristics of the material in the cutting and design process, the garment is exclusive - unlikely to be recreated. This approach aligns with the unique character of the “evanescent phenomenon”²¹ evident in the *ntsomi* (Scheub, 1970, p. 119).

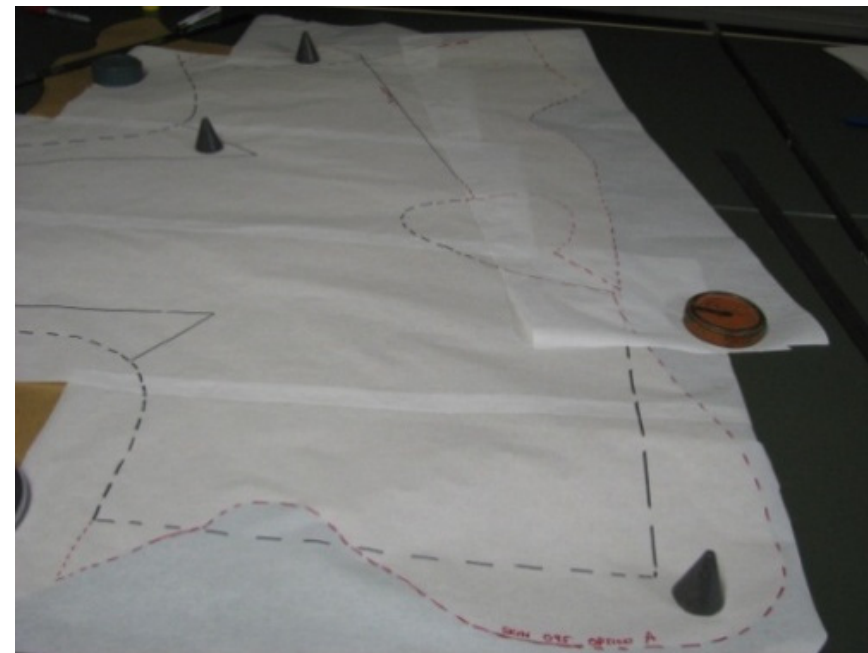


Figure 37: Lohrentz, A. (2014). *An example of how the intermediate pattern is reshaped by the specific parameters of suede pig skin* [Photograph].

²¹ Scheub (1970) notes that the *ntsomi*'s “unique and evanescent phenomenon” is a result of the performed happening at a “certain time and in a certain place... it cannot be repeated, it will never be recaptured” (p. 119).



Figure 38: Lohrentz, A. (2014). *Bessie jacket: demonstrates the process of developing the final pattern* [Photograph].



Figure 40: Lohrentz, A. (2014). *Bessie jacket made in pig suede and lined in shweshwe fabric* [Photograph].



Figure 39: Lohrentz, A. (2014). *Bessie jacket: final pattern that has been informed by the shape and size of the pig suede* [Photograph].

EXPANSION 5

EMBELLISHED STORIES: LANGUAGE OF GESTURE

Thuynsma (1987) notes that Xhosa *ntsomi* storytellers use the “language of gesture” (p. 77). He states “we accept gesture, bold or gentle, as essential components of an oral tale” (p. 82). The Xhosa storyteller employs gesture as a means of “seeing speech” (Thuynsma, 1987, p. 88). This idea of visualising the oral led to the use of surface decoration (such as handcrafted techniques, colonial knot stitch embroidery, beadwork, applique, laser cutting, and digital print) as a language of gesture: a visible mark that gives voice to aspects of the story.

Moreover, the decision to use surface details as a storytelling tool was taken because ornamentation is a major form of aesthetic expression and storytelling in Xhosa clothing. Traditionally this took the form of sun-fired clay beads, seeds, shells, ostrich shell and metal discs, and found objects like mother-of-pearl buttons. However, Broster (1967) notes that from the 1930’s embroidered details in the form of black braid and rick-rack trims were also hand stitched or appliqued onto clothing (p. 19).

Furthermore, specific colour combinations, patterns and motifs (diamonds, quadrangles, chevrons, circles, and parallel lines) of beadwork facilitate social identities: a person’s gender, age and marital status (Broster, 1967, p. 14). For example, orange pom-pom-like tassels are employed as a means to indicate that a woman has

married fairly recently (Elliot, 1987. p. 16) (Figures 41 and 42). I therefore, used tassels on Bessie’s outfit as a means to help tell her story and indicate her marriage (Figure 43).



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Figure 41 (upper left): Lohrentz, A. (2013). *Xhosa traditional wrap skirt* [Photograph]. Museum Africa, Johannesburg: South Africa.

Figure 42 (upper right): Elliot, A. (1987). *Young Xhosa woman wearing orange pom-poms* (p. 16).

Figure 43 (left): Lohrentz, A. (2014). *Bessie shirt: tassel detail on sleeve* [Photograph].

THE GESTURE OF BEADS AND BEADWORK

Beads and beadwork have been used as a means to embellish the story. Crabtree and Stallebrass (2009) note that the first written evidence of Venetian slave trade beads in Southern Africa, “came from sailors shipwrecked during the sixteenth century” (p. 35). This resulted in the Xhosa peoples developing a rich tradition of beaded regalia. Broster (1967) describes how the tradition of beadwork in Africa “signalled a sense of belonging to a people and place” (p. 14). She suggests that “the abstract elements of beadwork patterns play a key role in flagging [the differences between tribes] like the tartan kilts of Scottish clans” (Broster, 1967, p. 14). Additionally, detailed colour combinations, patterns, and motifs on beadwork enable social status to be ‘read’ (Broster, 1967, p. 14).²² For example, a woman wore specific beads as a means to indicate she was married (Figure 44). Therefore, I knotted a marriage bead design on Bessie’s outfit to help tell her story and indicate her marriage.

The beaded design was also employed in Thandiwe’s story to refer to the colonial influences on traditional Xhosa dress. Accordingly, this design was informed by an antique lace collar that belonged to Jeanie, (Figure 45) and an historic Xhosa beaded neck piece from the Bullen Private Collection (Figure 46). Figures 47, 48 and 49 show some of the beadwork development on one of the garments.

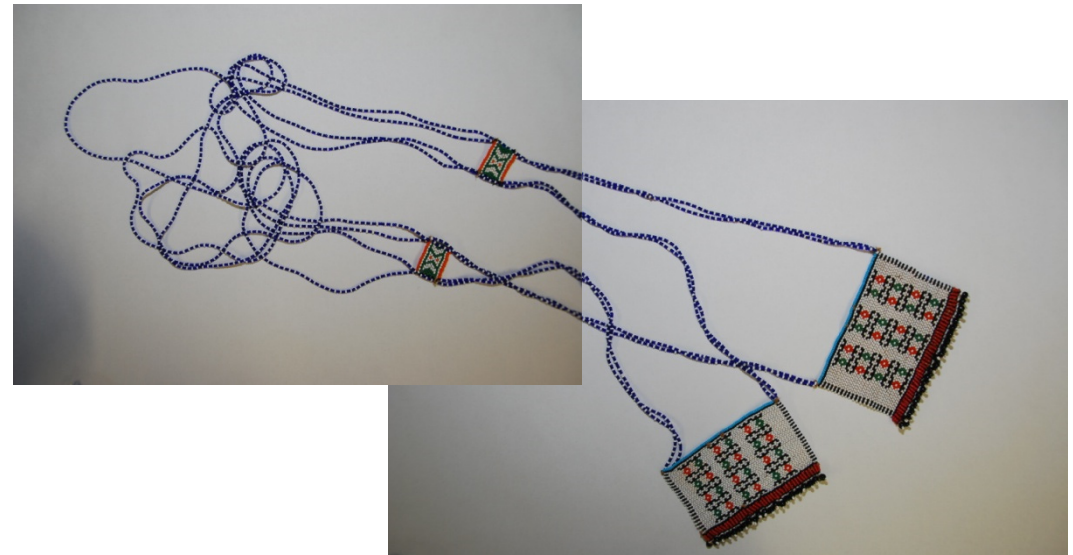


Figure 44: Lohrentz, A. (2014). *An example of a Xhosa marriage beaded ornamentation*
[Photograph] Bullen Private Collection, Auckland: New Zealand.

²² Tyrrell (1983) proposes that “in a culture without writing, these pieces of beadwork become valid legal documents produced as evidence in traditional courts” (p. 236).



Figure 45: Lohrentz, A. (2014). *Jeanie vintage lace collar* [Photograph] Lohrentz Private Collection, Auckland: New Zealand.

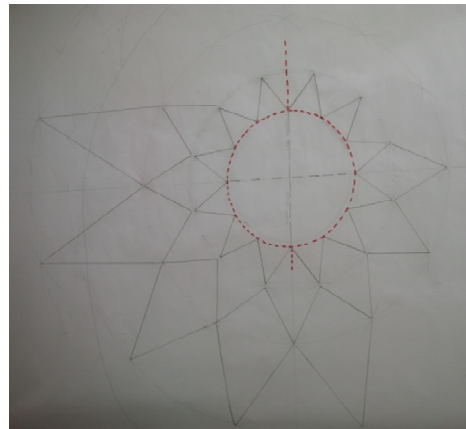


Figure 47: Lohrentz, A. (2014). *Thandiwe top: template for bead design on tracing paper* [Photograph].



Figure 48: Lohrentz, A. (2014). *Thandiwe top: bead design around neckline*. [Photograph].



Figure 46: Lohrentz, A. (2014). *Xhosa traditional beaded neckpiece* [Photograph]. Bullen Private Collection, Auckland: New Zealand.



Figure 49: Lohrentz, A. (2014). *Thandiwe top: beaded detail at neckline* [Photograph].

THE GESTURE OF THE COLONIAL KNOT STITCH

The rationale for the use of the colonial knot embroidery stitch in this project resides within both the conceptual and the physical action of creating the knot. Firstly, the colonial knot was employed in some garments to give voice to Jeanie's story and as a mechanism to express my colonial roots. Figure 50 shows the use of the knotting technique on one of Jeanie's dresses.



Accordingly, the “poignancy of the knot as metaphor” resonates with the core stories (Kuchler, 1999, p. 155). The structural composition of the intertwined knotted thread has, therefore, been employed to speak of interconnectedness within the tangled cultural landscape of my home region in South Africa. The knot has been used as a mechanism to tell stories of lives knotted together.

Additional significance resides in the potential metaphors that arise from the application of the knotting technique. The cotton embroidery strands suggest threads in conversations and stories, and therefore, narratives and hidden secrets. The process of moving the needle and thread out through the fabric and back into the fabric metaphorically references the entry and exit points encountered as a result of forced and voluntary migration (as evident in Bessie and Jeanie's stories - as well as my own). The physical process of the embroidery strands traversing and intersecting with one another in the action of creating the colonial knot also serves as a means to indicate the crossing of the paths of our lives.

Figure 50: Lohrentz, A. (2014). Jeanie Miller's 1920's black silk taffeta dress demonstrates colonial knot details at the waistline [Photograph]. Lohrentz Private Collection, Auckland: New Zealand

Furthermore, the repetitive nature of executing the knots aligns with the repetitive elements of the *ntsomi* as discussed. In addition, Thuynsma (1987) suggests that “the choice of detail is deliberate and her [the storyteller’s] relationship with her tale a conscious one” (p. 84). Accordingly, the knotted designs reference personal inherited heirloom items to establish a credible connection to the narrative thread within the work. Furthermore, the pattern that I have made with the knots has been informed by the detail on both an antique embroidered shawl and dress belonging to Jeanie (Figures 50 and 51) and by historic Xhosa beaded skirts (Figures 52 and 53). These have been transferred to the Jeanie jacket as illustrated in Figures 54, 55, 56 and 57.



Figure 52: Lohrentz, A. (2014). *Xhosa traditional beaded skirt* [Photograph]. Bullen Private Collection, Auckland: New Zealand.

Figure 53 (right):
Lohrentz, A. (2013).
Beaded Xhosa skirt
[Photograph]. Museum
Africa, Johannesburg:
South Africa.



Figure 51 (left):
Lohrentz, A. (2014).
Jeanie shawl detail
[Photograph]. Lohrentz
Private Collection,
Auckland: New
Zealand.

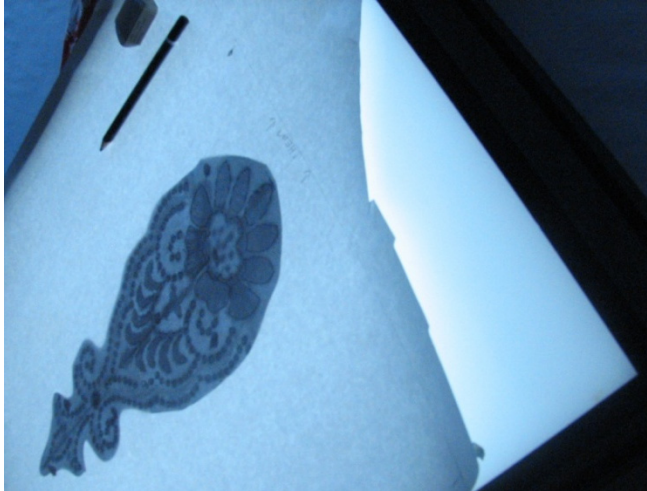


Figure 54 Lohrentz, A. (2014). *Developing colonial knot design* [Photograph].



Figure 55: Lohrentz, A. (2014). *Jeanie jacket: development of the colonial knot embroidery design* [Photograph].



Figure 56: Lohrentz, A. (2014). *Jeanie jacket: colonial knotting detail on sleeve inspired by antique shawl* [Photograph].



Figure 57: Lohrentz, A. (2014). *Jeanie jacket: colonial knotting detail on sleeve inspired by Xhosa beaded skirt* [Photograph].

NARRATIVE DRAWING AND THE DIGITAL

As a gesture to my designDNA, I have created artworks that engage evocative and suggestive lines, and inky washes (Figures 58 and 59). These operate as a language and a vehicle for referencing the autobiographical through the hand of the designer or artist. This links with the *ntsomi* approach to storytelling in which the narrator is afforded unlimited artistic licence. It is in the process of imaginatively merging historic core images with personal experience that a new story develops in and through the author discovering her authentic self.

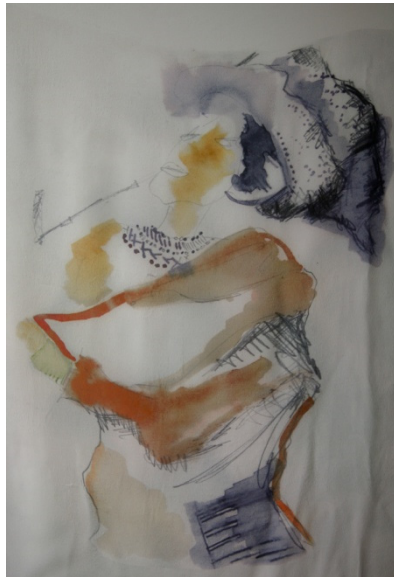


Figure 58: Lohrentz, A. (2014). *Pen and ink illustration of Xhosa woman digitally printed on silk georgette fabric* [Photograph].



Figure 59: Lohrentz, A. (2014). *Pen and ink illustration telling the story of blocks of land in 'The Valley' carved for citrus orchards* [Photograph].

Equally, the choice to re-interpret an inherited tapestry and traditional beaded artefact into an artwork for digital print aligns with the Xhosa storyteller technique of imaginatively selecting and arranging materials and sources from the past (Figures 60 and 61).



Figure 60: Lohrentz, A. (2014). *Tapestry cloth* [Photograph]. Lohrentz Private Collection, Auckland: New Zealand.



Figure 61: Lohrentz, A. (2014). *Grace top: an example of digitally printed heirloom piece (tapestry cloth)* [Photograph].

These artworks have then been digitally printed.²³ The vernacular hand drawings afford a sense of the hand of the maker, and are juxtaposed against machine executed laser-cutting and digital printing techniques (Figures 62 and 63). The sheer quality of the silk georgette joins with the ephemeral quality of artworks to capture the transient elements of the *ntsomi*.

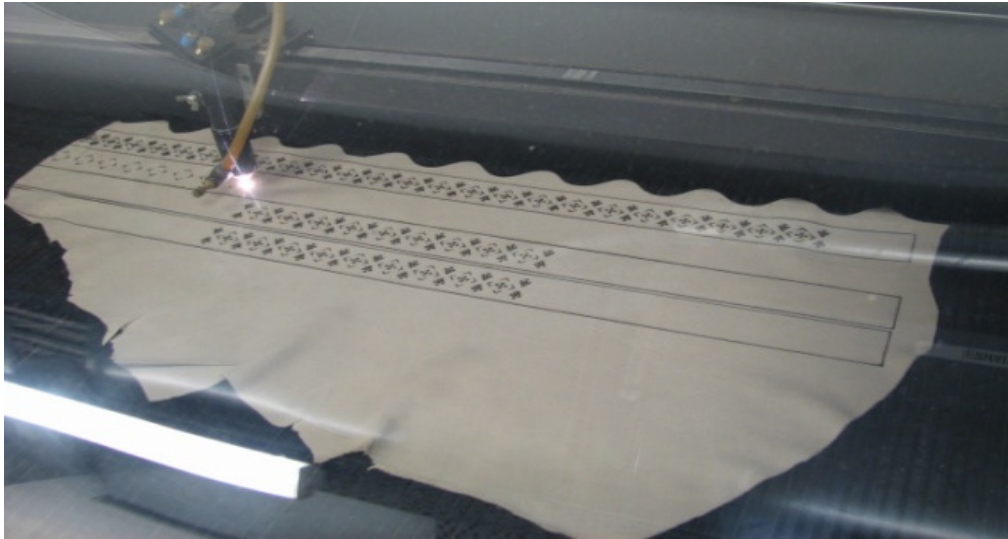


Figure 62: Lohrentz, A. (2014). *Demonstrating laser cutting process*. [Photograph]. 3D lab AUT, Auckland: New Zealand.



Figure 63: Lohrentz, A. (2014). *Jeanie jacket: laser cut rickrack detail on back of garment*. [Photograph]

²³ I worked with Angela Fraser to develop the digital prints.

EXPANSION 6

The key difference in the new working method (Figures 14 and 17) is that the design is not resolved prior to the commencement of the making. Rather, an expansible form (nucleus of the story) traverses through the process of conceptual design development and technical product development in a malleable state. It is in the tension between

these processes that the story is negotiated (Figure 14). Scheub (1970) notes the *ntsomi* storyteller employs stories from their culture (history and myth) and entwines these with their personal experience to create a “fresh, new story” (p. 122). The expansible image is, therefore, constantly expanded throughout the process of narrating the story (Scheub, 1970. p. 128). This approach to storytelling is mirrored in the expansions of



Figure 64: Lohrentz, A. (2014).
*Springbok skin bag with
shweshwe lining* [Photograph].

the new working method described above (Figure 17). The process involves bringing together the different core stories expanded to create, as with the *ntsomi* performance, a new story.

The sixth expansion, therefore, required the designer/storyteller to negotiate an amalgam all of the stories. This entails an internal dialogue by the designer/storyteller that mediated between the garments forming part of each core story, and the inter-connection between the outfits across stories. This negotiation between the disparate core stories was complex. The process involved all elements including but not exclusively the storyteller/designer, each garment and outfit, the capsule collection, the wider stories, and the potential audience. The medium of discussion and negotiation was the application and use of silhouette, garments’ style-lines, colour, fabric, surface decoration (gesture), and detailing. On reflection, the greatest tension existed between maintaining the distinctly different stories and characters, and developing linking threads to create an eclectic series of garments that form part of a capsule collection.

It was through the Southern African concept of “*ubuntu*” (Coetzee and Roux (Eds) 1998, p. 356) that I came to mediate the connections between each of the core stories: Bessie, Thandiwe, Jeanie, Grace, and Lena. As the expansible form moved through each expansion, the storyteller/designer used repetition as a strategy to embroider and create garments that link together and form part of an outfit, while also working together as a collective story. As an example, *shweshwe* fabric has been used frequently across the stories as a means to

symbolise interconnectedness between the core stories. Although used repetitively, the *shweshwe* is not always evident because it has been used as linings. For example, it has been used on Bessie's jacket, and in the pocket of the blanket jacket, and as a lining for the springbok bag (Figures 64 and 65). This decision was taken to underscore the nature of these connections: tenuous and not at first sight evident.



Figure 65 (above): Lohrentz, A. (2014). *Blanket jacket with Shweshwe lining in the patch pocket* [Photograph].

Further example of the use of repetitive details is seen in the use of the colonial knot and beads (Figures 66 and 67). This technique has been employed in each outfit as a means to voice the links traversing these core stories. However, they are not applied in a standardised manner. This maintains the individuality and integrity of each core story.



Figure 66 (right): Lohrentz, A. (2014). *Jeanie jacket showing repetitive use of the colonial knot stitch detail* [Photograph].

Figure 67 (left): Lohrentz, A. (2014). *Grace jacket showing repetitive use of the colonial knot stitch detail* [Photograph].



EXPANSION 7



Figure 68: Exhibition space at Bell House [Photograph].

The seventh expansion culminated with the presentation of the final work at an exhibition held at Bell House in Howick on the 2nd of October 2014 (Figures 68 to 82). The exhibition consisted of an eighteen piece capsule collection as well as a springbok skin bag (Appendix 6), five headdresses, swing tags, poems, a photographic study of the garments on live models and a DVD showing how the garments from each character combine in a harmonious way to create

a new story (Appendix 7). These items were arranged within the space on a collection of white plinths and custom made stands.

All the presented elements functioned together to tell the stories of Bessie (Appendix 1), Jeanie (Appendix 2), Thandiwe (Appendix 3), Grace (Appendix 4) and Lena (Appendix 5). Whilst each story is distinctly different and unique they come together to form part of a contemporary mix and match capsule collection. The culmination of these stories in the exhibition creates a new story of its own.

The creation of a new story lies at the very heart of the *ntsomi* approach to storytelling. As storyteller designer, I engaged a “complex, free-associational cueing-and-scanning process,” (Scheub, 1970, p. 122) which informed the re-ordering of the original stories. By assuming the position of “shaper” (Scheub, 1970, p. 55) I imaginatively built and crafted an original and contemporary capsule collection. Accordingly, the collection of pieces tells a story with links to the past but are overlaid and informed by my personal experiences and imagination. It was in the alchemy of bringing together all the elements, facilitated by the bespoke working method, that I discovered my own voice and designDNA. This approach climaxed in the making of the original contemporary story: a story that speaks of the drawing together of all the diverse threads from these five women to tell my story.

This outcome was due to the anomalous feature of the custom-built working method: the seamless merger of the conceptual (designer) and technical (maker) (Figure 81). As a result of the synthesis of these

processes, the expandable form continually evolved and developed throughout the seven expansions within my design practice. Each piece is crafted with skills that engage the techniques of “workmanship” (Pye, 1968, p. 4). Accordingly, the integration of design and make resulted in the final garments bearing the hallmark of craftsmanship.

IMAGES

Exhibition

One story to another

Bell House

Howick

Auckland

New Zealand

2 October 2014



Figure 69: exhibition space (left) dyed springbok skin bag and a length of shweshwe fabric on plinth, (right top) exhibition layout consisting of (image left) a 5 piece outfit depicting Thandiwe's story (image centre) a 4 piece outfit portraying Bessie's story (image right) a 5 piece outfit telling Lena's story (image front) dyed springbok skin bag on shweshwe fabric [Photograph].



Figure 70: exhibition layout consisting of (left) a 5 piece outfit depicting Thandiwe's story including a photographic study of the garments on live model displayed on wall, swing tag and poem, (centre) a 4 piece outfit portraying Bessie's story with swing tag and poem, (right) a 5 piece outfit telling Lena's story with a photographic study of the garments on live model, swing tag and poem [Photograph].



Figure 71: exhibition layout (left) depicting Thandiwe's story consisting of (image left) indigo blue wrap linen skirt with digital printed silk georgette panel and colonial knot detail and orange dyed wool blanket jacket (centre) photographic study of the garments on live model displayed on wall with barrel cut white linen top and orange linen panelled wrap skirt on stand and poem at base (image right) brown shweshwe headdress and swing tag, (right) detailed study of brown shweshwe headdress and swing tag [Photograph].



Figure 72: exhibition layout (left) depicting Bessie's and Lena's stories, (centre) detailed study of orange linen headdress with digitally printed beaded panel and colonial knot detail, (right) 4 piece outfit portraying Bessie's story with swing tag and poem including photographic study of the garments on live model displayed on the wall. The outfit consists of a white gusset cut linen shirt with mandarin collar and colonial knot and tassel details, a blue suede pig skin jacket with shweshwe lining, pleated wool trouser and webbing belt [Photograph].



Figure 73: exhibition layout of the 5 piece outfit depicting Lena's story, consisting of (left) photographic study of the garments on live model, digitally printed designers pen and ink drawing on silk georgette barrel cut top, wrap shweshwe skirt with slim cut shweshwe trouser on stand (centre) linen wrap shrug with colonial knot and drawn thread centre back detail and poem (right) shweshwe headdress with colonial knot detail and swing tag [Photograph].



Figure 74: exhibition layout (left) photographic study of the garments on live model displayed on wall and digitally printed designers pen and ink drawing on silk georgette barrel cut top with bone and wooden trinkets on back tie closure, (right) Lena exhibition display consisting of 5 piece outfit [Photograph].



Figure 75: exhibition layout depicting Jeanie's story consisting of (left) photographic study of the garments on live models displayed on wall (centre) digitally printed designers pen and ink drawing on silk georgette top, brown wool wide leg trouser and laser cut leather belt and linen vest with drawn thread hem detail, silver and wooden trinkets on back tie closure and poem at base of stand (right) shweshwe headdress and swing tag (far right) rectangular cut linen, silk and cotton floating panelled jacket with laser cut zigzag back detail, colonial knot hand worked design on both sleeves and hanging trinkets [Photograph].



Figure 76: exhibition layout (left) depicting Jeanie's story consisting of a 5 piece outfit including laser cut belt, swing tag and photographic study of the garments on live models and garment details displayed on wall, (right) detailed study of shweshwe and orange cotton twill headdress and swing tag [Photograph].



Figure 77: exhibition layout (left) detailed study of headress and swing, (right) exhibition layout of the 4 piece outfit telling Grace's story consisting of (image left) a magyar cut Harris tweed coat, (image centre) silk georgette top with digitally printed tapestry design based on a vintage tapestry from the Lohrentz private collection (image right) photographic study of the garments on live model, checked wool wrap skirt, poem, headress and swing tag [Photograph].



Figure 78: Grace story consisting of (left) silk georgette top with digitally printed tapestry design based on a vintage tapestry from the Lohrentz private collection and checked wool wrap skirt cut from one piece of cloth with angled pleat and dart details featuring Japanese webbing tape D-ring belt closure and poem at base of stand, (right) Grace Harris tweed coat detail showing vintage buttons and in-seam front panel pocket [Photograph].



Figure 79: Photographic study of the garments on live models [Photograph].

CONCLUSION

The theoretical research that underpins and frames this project indicates a significant tesarac is under way, ushering in a post mass production environment, in which New Consumers demand original, innovative, and distinctive products. Based on the notion that our making is informed by the stories that shape us, this project has explored the potential of storytelling as a means of establishing an authentic design handwriting (McManus, 2014, p. 114).

Growing up in apartheid South Africa meant some stories had been hidden or silenced through the widespread censorship at the time. The resulting incomplete embroidery on the fabric of my history led me to explore my past, and the stories from the Eastern Cape of South Africa. As a result of this process, I commenced a process of restoring lost sections of the embroidery: undoing, mending, and repairing sections that had been incorrectly stitched. This was at times a painful and emotional experience. It was through this research that I discovered the lost story of Bessie. This story captured my imagination and heart because my genesis in South Africa had very similar roots. Like Bessie, I had grown up alongside the Xhosa peoples. It was when I understood that my “creative and artistic perspective” is informed, intertwined, and connected to my cultural stories that I discovered the Xhosa *ntsomi* (Thuynsma, 1987, p. 81-82).

Using this unique form of storytelling, I developed a new working method in the fashion design process that engaged the characteristics and techniques of the *ntsomi* (Figures 14 and 17). Through the application or performance of this bespoke storytelling approach, I was able to apply the concept of the expansible form to the design process.

It was in and through the application of this custom-made storytelling technique that my practice changed. My prior process mirrored a linear production-like industrialised method that consisted of two distinct phases (Figure 80).

The first phase focussed on conceptual development. Current trends informed concepts which then directed the design ideation process. Design ideas developed by means of an internal dialogue between the concept and the designer. This phase culminated in final working drawings, also called technical drawings or specifications. These detailed diagrammatic drawings show the front and back view of a garment and serve as a plan. They illustrate all the design details and structure, and communicate information with regard to silhouette, scale and proportions. These visual instructions informed the pattern development and construction processes within the second technical development phase. The resulting final prototypes were reproduced to meet the specifications and criteria of the technical drawing.

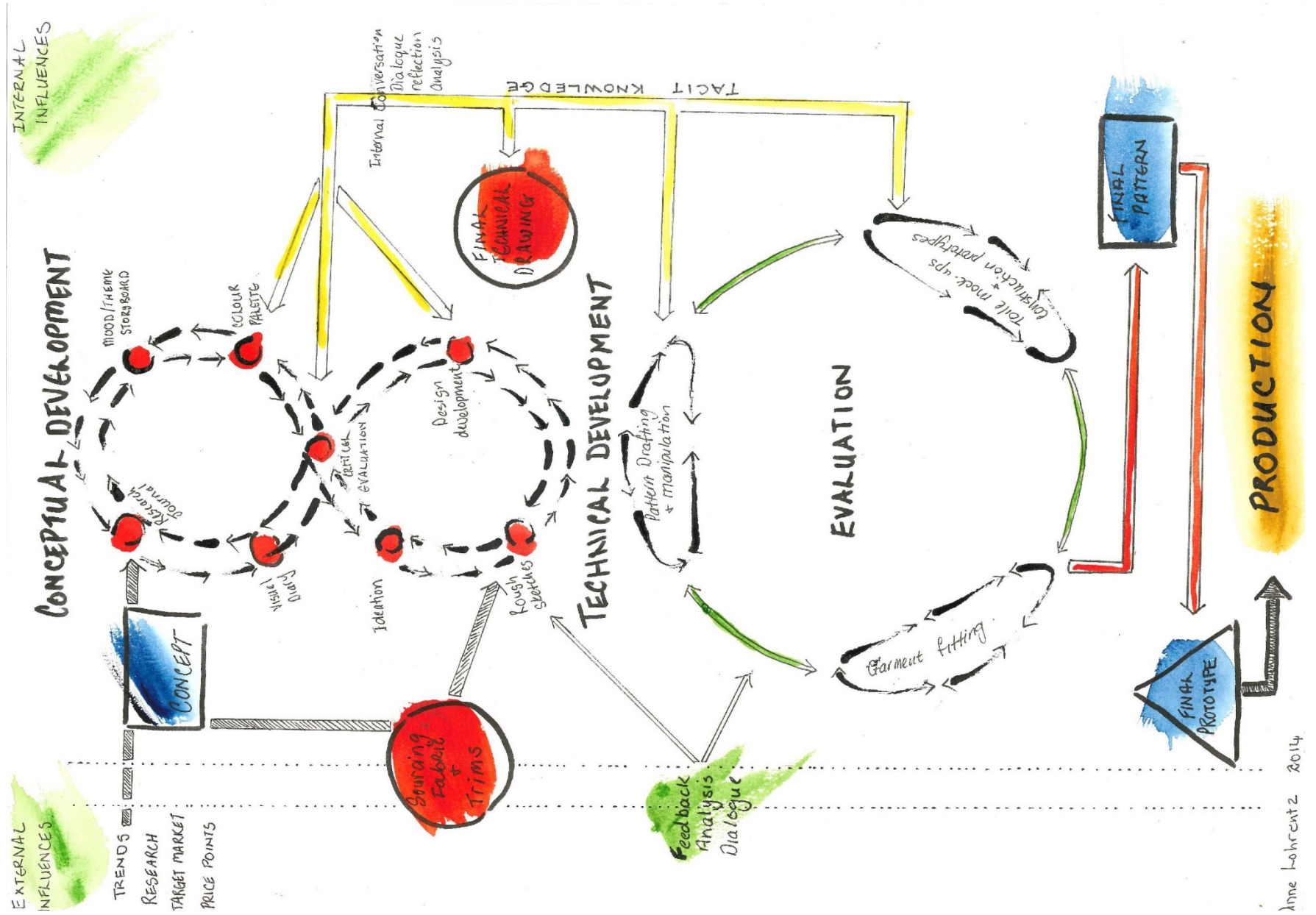


Figure 80: Lohrentz, A. (2014). Diagram showing my prior process; a linear production-like industrialised method that consisted of two distinct phases [Pen and ink].

By comparison the conceptual (design) and technical (make) elements within the new working method become integrated (Figure 81). The designer and maker become co-creators. This was facilitated by the expansive form traversing through the seven expansions in a malleable state.

In the application of this new approach I discovered that my focus shifted from production orientated techniques of simply reproducing the technical drawing towards a crafted workmanship. This resulted in a heightened awareness of the dialogue between all the elements in the process. It was a deeply intuitive approach that demanded a sensitivity and alertness to the nuances of each unique component. It also required reliance on my extensive tacit knowledge to develop and negotiate the final outcome.

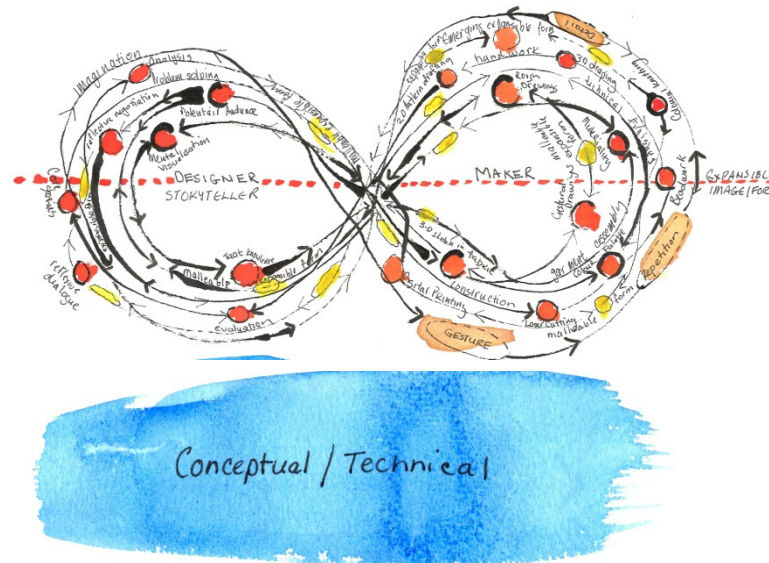


Figure 81: Lohrentz, A. (2014). Diagram showing my new working method; the conceptual (design) and technical (make) elements within the new working method become integrated [Pen and ink].

This bespoke storytelling approach facilitated the retelling of five stories from my heritage. The relational encounter between the variable core stories, storyteller, imagination, and audience caused the expansible form to continually change through each developmental expansion. Yet, by honouring and valuing each individual story, while weaving and interconnecting them, a complex negotiation was achieved. Thereby, the project's capsule collection has employed the techniques of gesture, detail, and repetition to embroider a negotiated narrative, with an autobiographical link, in and through each garment. Accordingly, a new story of interconnected threads emerged in and through the creative performance; and this story was told through the garments.

It was in the emergence of an interrelated story that I established my designDNA. The stories of these five women, from diverse walks of life, have all in some way woven their influence into the fabric of my design thinking. Their life threads talk about where I come from; their life stories have become part of my warp and weft. The resulting weave echoes my designDNA. As the storyteller/designer, it was through the crafting of these stories that my authentic designer handwriting emerged. I have come to see my distinct designDNA is anchored in the cultural landscape of all the peoples of the Eastern Cape of South Africa. "I am because you are" (as cited in Coetzee & Roux, 1998, p. 356).

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GLOSSARY

Craftsmanship	The quality of design and make (hand and machine work) evident within a product.
Creativity	The process of producing something that is in some way original and innovative.
DesignDNA	The unique warp and weft threads that encode our personal designer handwriting and inform how we function as authentic designers.
Ntsomi	Traditional oral Xhosa storytelling (Scheub, 1970, p. 119). Pronunciation of ntsomi: nn-saw-mi.
ShweShwe	South African patterned discharge printed cotton fabric. Pronounced: sh-wesh-where.
Tesarac	A period of significant social and cultural change (as cited in Lewis & Bridger, 2000, p. 2).
Workmanship	The degree of technical skill and expertise with which a product is made.
Xhosa	A group of people who live in south eastern South Africa. Pronunciation of Xhosa: 'click'-orsa, without pausing between the two syllables. The 'click' is neither hard nor soft and is produced by snapping the tongue against the teeth. The 'h' is silent (Crampton, 2004, p. 322).

APPENDIX ONE

BESSIE

A Castaway

Offered up on the broken hull of *Uqwembe*,
to the shores of a wild coast.
The icy autumn waters choosing for her a new homeland,
as hot as her clan's cloth was cold.

From the jewel of the empire,
with merchants she carried.
To suckle at the breast,
of rich red mother-land.

Loss and disgorgement met a regal race.
The new daughter, the pale princess

And an education of sorts was hers,
with book and pen surrendered to word and myth.
Yet ever the tug of a life that never was,
by the silver brush, and shipwreck scars.

Wrapped in sandy skins, and broken beads,
The washed-up whisper of coming seeds.

Bessie

Written by Anne and John Lohrentz



Figure 82: poem (left) about Bessie written by Lohrentz, A., & Lohrentz, J. (2014). *A Castaway*, (right) Lohrentz, A. (2013) *Bessie swing tag* [Pen and ink illustration].



Figure 83: photographic study (left) of 4 piece outfit depicting Bessie's story on live model consisting of a blue suede pig skin jacket engineered to the shape of the skin with Shweshwe lining, a white gusset cut linen shirt with mandarin collar and colonial knot and tassel details, a pleated wool trouser, headdress and springbok skin bag, (right) linen top worn with pleated trouser and dyed springbok skin bag on live model [Photograph].



Figure 84: photographic study (left) of the jacket on live model showing how the cut has been engineered to the shape of pig skin, (top centre) angled back seam detail on jacket, (bottom centre) pinking detail on under collar of jacket, (top right) pig skin jacket front with shweshwe lining worn with linen top featuring colonial knot detail, (bottom right) silk binding on edge of shweshwe lining [Photograph].



Figure 85: photographic study (left) of the Bessie white linen shirt on live model featuring colonial knot design and cuff feature with beaded tassel, (top centre) mandarin collar and roulette loop button detail at centre front, (bottom centre) flat-fell shoulder seam detail, (top right) colonial knot detail and mother-of-pearl buttons, (bottom right) internal side seam finish which consists of mitred corner detailing and bound seam edging [Photograph].



Figure 86: photographic study of the sleeve details on Bessie white linen shirt which includes a roulette loop feature, flat-fell shoulder seam detail, bound sleeve edge and cotton embroidery thread tassel with orange seed beads and mother-of -pearl button finish [Photograph].



Figure 87: Bessie pant detail (left) checked wool trouser pleat detail with waist belt loop feature and Japanese cotton webbing tape belt, (right top) internal pant finish consisting of silk bound seam edgings, (bottom right) hidden side seam pocket detail [Photograph].

APPENDIX TWO

JEANIE

A Pioneer

There is a song that the hills of Scotland play,
Detached and isolated they sit,
and the winds wail their overture,

But hills turn to cliffs,
and wind meets wave,
and cliffs turn to oceans,
and oceans to cliffs again,

From the croft she knew.
Over the blustery moors and empty hills she went.
To a new home,
no less remote and no less barren.

Woodall, Africa.
Carried by adventure's song she went,
But received by the valley,
to a new melody her voice was lent.

Jeanie

Written by Anne and John Lohrentz

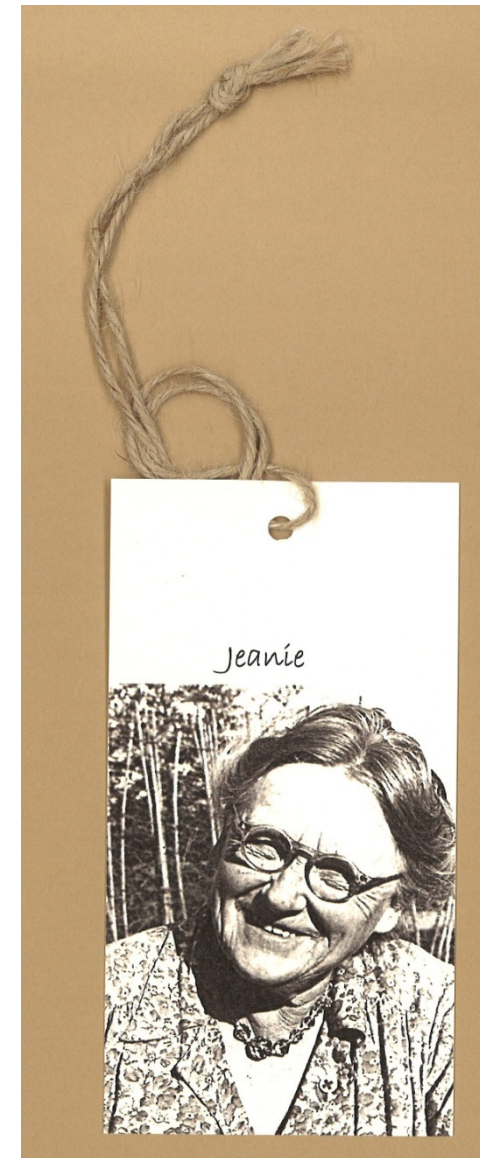


Figure 88: poem (left) about Jeanie written by Lohrentz, A., & Lohrentz, J. (2014). *A Pioneer*, (right) Robertson, J. (1962). *Jeanie swing tag* [Photograph].



Figure 89: photographic study of the garments on live model depicting Jeanie's story (left) 5 piece outfit consists of a rectangular cut linen, silk and cotton floating panelled jacket with laser cut zigzag back detail, colonial knot hand worked design on both sleeves and hanging trinkets worn with a digitally printed silk georgette top of designers pen and ink drawing and brown wool wide leg trouser worn with shweshwe headdress, (top centre) front view of jacket with attached cotton viscose neck tie, (bottom centre) back view of jacket with laser cut zig-zag detail, (top right) side view of jacket, (bottom right) linen vest with drawn thread hem detail and springbok skin bag [Photograph].



Figure 90: Jeanie jacket details (left) colonial knot handwork design on left sleeves inspired by an antique shawl belonging to Jeanie, (top right) detailed study of colonial knot handwork design on right sleeves inspired by traditional Xhosa beaded skirt, (bottom right) detailed study of laser cut leather detail on the back of Jeanie jacket [Photograph].



Figure 91: Jeanie jacket details, (top left) jacket pocket detail including cotton tape feature with black embroidery running stitch, hand stitched bar tack and cotton tape with silver trinket, (bottom left) cotton tape feature on jacket with black embroidery stitch detail and mitred corner finish, (centre) hanging silver, bone and vintage buttons trinkets on cotton tape, (right) internal finishes on Jeanie jacket including burnt orange silk bound seam edging, shweshwe binding on sleeve lining and hand worked French tack [Photograph].



Figure 92: photographic study (left) of the garments on live model depicting Jeanie's story consisting of digitally printed silk georgette top of designers pen and ink drawing illustrating the story of the blocks of citrus orchards in the Valley worn with brown wool trouser, (top right) internal finishes on top including bound neckline with eliminated shoulder seam and French underarm seam, (bottom right) hand embroidered running stitch finish on hem [Photograph].



Figure 93: Jeanie trouser; internal finishing details on trouser featuring silk cotton bound seams [Photograph].



Figure 94: Jeanie trouser details (left) brown embroidery thread top stitching on trouser pocket mouth (top right) shaped trouser waistband with keyhole buttonholes and bone buttons worn with laser cut leather belt (bottom right) detailed study of laser cut leather belt [inspired by Xhosa beadwork [Photograph].



Figure 95: study of internal finishes on Jeanie linen vest featuring a drawn thread hem finish and wide flat felled centre back seam [Photograph].

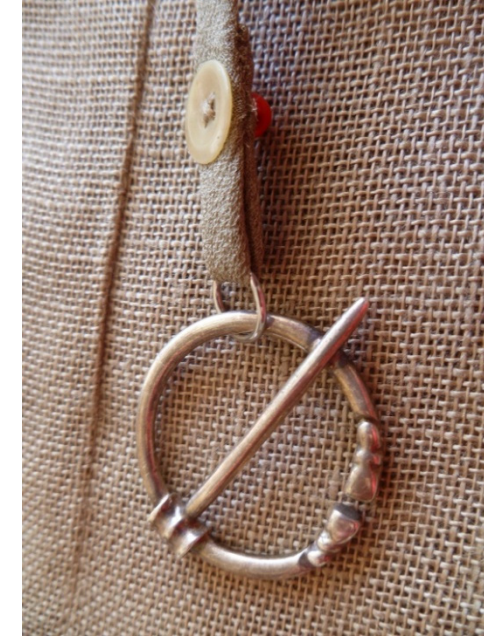


Figure 96: Jeanie vest details (top left) back closure on linen vest featuring a silk bound neck with tie finish and a colonial knot detail at the base of the neck slit, (bottom left) silk bound armhole finish and flat felled shoulder seam, (top centre) beaded neck tie featuring hanging wooden, clay and seed beads, (bottom centre) flat felled shoulder seam with embroidery thread running stitch finish, (top right) silver Celtic trinket hanging from neck tie with vintage button and seed bead finish (bottom right) drawn thread hem finish [Photograph].

APPENDIX THREE

THANDIWE

A Red Blanket

Oh cry, cry my beloved country.
Cry for the exit wound of colonization.

Red earth bleed, bleed the sweat of this ancient people.
Bleed for the life-giving tillage of your fertile valleys.

Cattle boast, boast your wealth
Boast how much more than a shilling you bring.

And people, people be clothed! Clothed in the knowledge of all you are.
Clothed in red blanket, mystery, and myth.

For in these clustered huts on the rolling hills of the Transkei.
The scars of colonization are the eclectic harmonies of a song not yet sung.
Laced collars chorus with beaded body-work
Long skirts dance with heavy head-dresses
And pipes smoke with the open fires of night.

Untouched now touched.

Thandiwe

Written by Anne and John Lohrentz

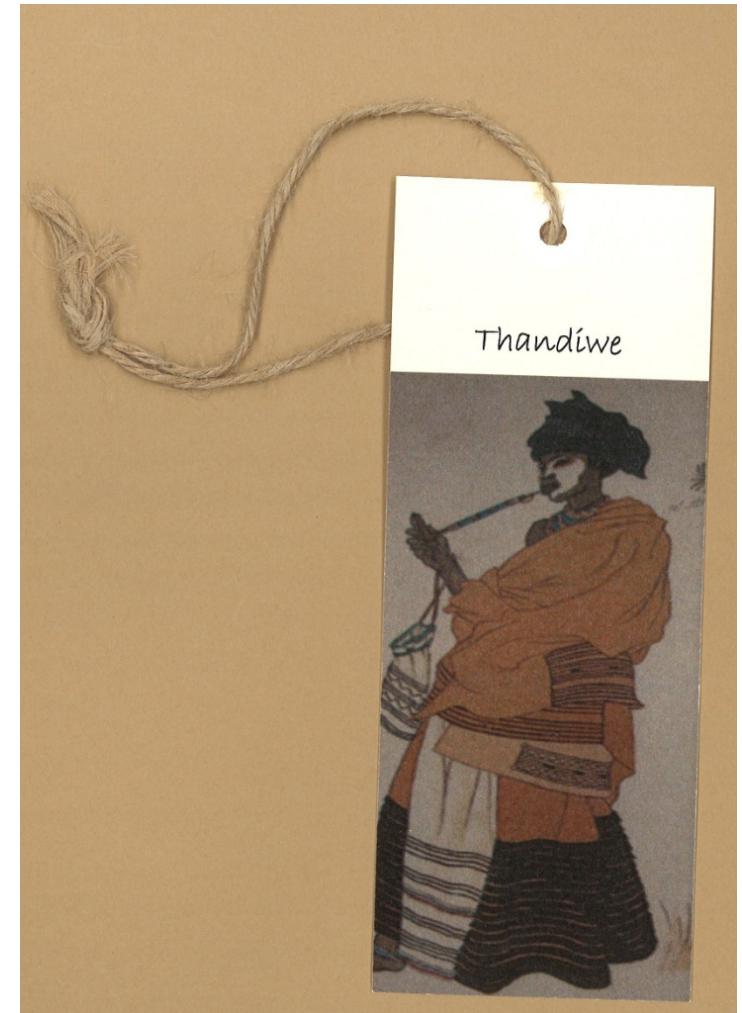


Figure 97: poem (left) about Thandiwe written by Lohrentz, A., & Lohrentz, J. (2014). *A Red Blanket*, (right) *Thandiwe swing tag*: Tyrell, B. (1940's) Scott private collection, Melbourne [Watercolour print].



Figure 98: photographic study of the 5 piece outfit depicting Thandiwe's story on a live model worn with a shweshwe headdress. The outfit consists of an over dyed wool blanket jacket, a barrel cut linen top with orange beaded neck detail, a linen panelled wrap skirt and an indigo blue wrap linen skirt with a digital printed panel and colonial knot detail [Photograph].



Figure 99: photographic study (left) of the over-dyed wool blanket jacket on live model depicting Thandiwe's story featuring pick stitched seams and raw edge cuff, (top right) pick stitch detail on jacket seams, (bottom right) internal finish on sleeve edge of jacket featuring black cotton tape with orange embroidery thread running stitch and raw edge [Photograph].



Figure 100: photographic study (left) of linen blend barrel cut top and brown shweshwe headdress on live model depicting Thandiwe's story, (top right) photographic study of orange seed bead design on linen blend barrel cut top inspired by Xhosa beaded neckpiece, (centre bottom) back view of top featuring keyhole opening with leather tie closure and hanging bone trinket detail (right) back detail featuring hanging bone trinkets on leather tie [Photograph].



Figure 101: Photographic study (left) of barrel cut beaded top, orange linen panelled wrap skirt worn with indigo blue wrap linen skirt with a digital printed silk georgette panel and colonial knot detail and a brown shweshwe headdress depicting Thandiwe's story on live model (top right) skirt details on orange linen wrap skirt consisting of flat-felled panel seams and mitred internal corners on faced hem edge with embroidered running stitch finish, (bottom right) D-ring tie closure on linen skirt with embroidery top stitching detail [Photograph].



Figure 102: photographic study on live model (left) depicting Thandiwe's story consisting of barrel cut beaded top worn with indigo blue wrap linen skirt with digital print silk georgette panel and colonial knot detail, wool blanket jacket and brown shweshwe headdress, (right) details of indigo blue wrap linen skirt featuring digital printed silk georgette panel inspired by a traditional Xhosa beaded skirt with embroidery thread running stitch finish on hem [Photograph].

APPENDIX FOUR

GRACE

A Maker

Can you hear the sound?
The breath of the fabric,
as it is thrown up and over the table.
Inhale, sigh, and the soft catch of friction.

Can you hear the scissors?
Snapping at fibers' end,
biting silver between soft relenting hills.

And do you hear the hum of the master at work?
Her hands were the inspired talent of a life in threads.
Harris tweed and tapestries of wool and silk.

A dance of skill.
The make and make do.
Traditional and inspiringly revolutionary
She was a true alchemist.

Closing my eyes, I see her now.
She was the master of mannequins,
the thrain of threads,
an author in the cloth.

Grace

Written by Anne and John Lohrentz

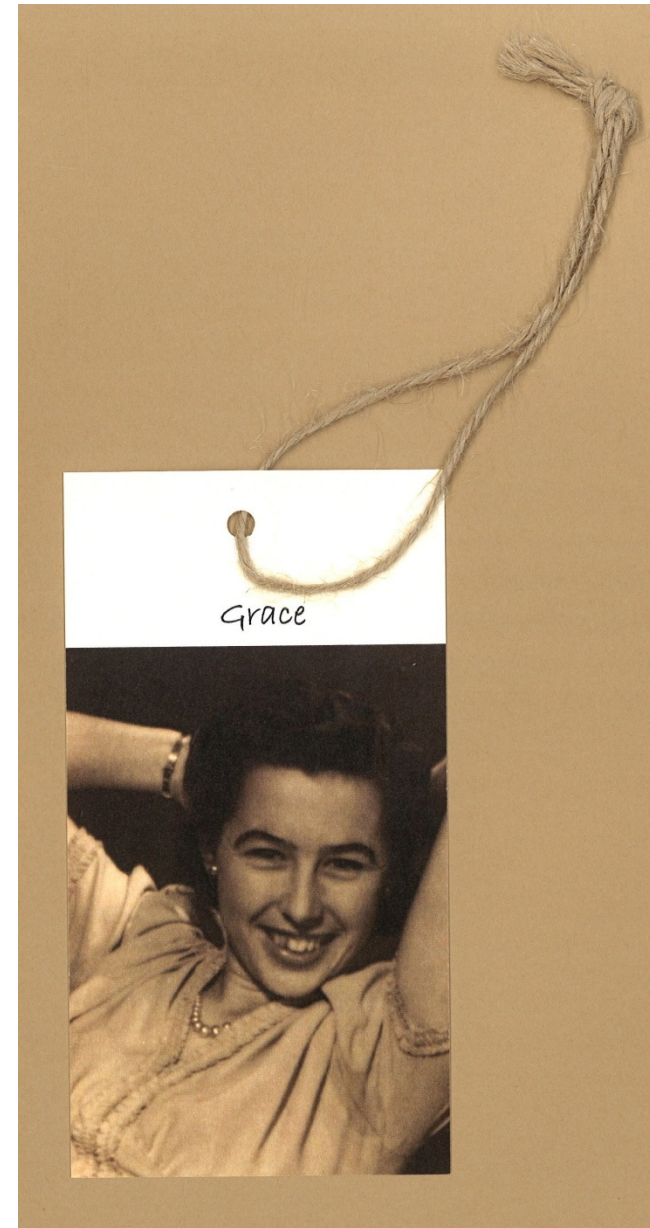


Figure 103: Poem (left) about Grace written by Lohrentz, A. & Lohrentz, J. (2014). *A Maker*, (right) *Grace swing tag* (1940). [Photograph].



Figure 104: photographic study of the 4 piece outfit depicting Grace's story on live model consisting of a magyar cut Harris tweed coat featuring colonial knot detail and vintage Celtic buttons worn with digitally printed silk georgette top and checked wool wrap skirt cut from one piece of cloth by eliminating side seams and engineering darts [Photograph].



Figure 105: photographic study (left) of magyar cut Harris tweed coat featuring set-in gusset and a front panel with in-seam pockets, pick stitch seam finish detail and vintage Celtic silver buttons, (top right) photographic study of Harris tweed coat worn with digitally printed top and wool wrap skirt showing the cotton lining and shweshwe bias cut piping running along edge of facing on the coat, (bottom right) coat centre front closure featuring keyhole button hole, vintage silver button and pick stick finish [Photograph].



Figure 106: photographic study of magyar cut Harris tweed coat featuring colonial knot detail on lower panel around the pocket mouth [Photograph].



Figure 107: photographic study depicting Grace's story on live model (left) consisting of a headdress worn with the digitally printed top based on a vintage tapestry rug from the Lohrentz private collection and checked wool wrap skirt with angled pleat detail and cotton Japanese webbing tape D-ring belt feature, (top right) pleat detail and Japanese webbing tape belt feature on Grace skirt, (bottom right) interior of skirt featuring button closure [Photograph].

APPENDIX FIVE

LENA

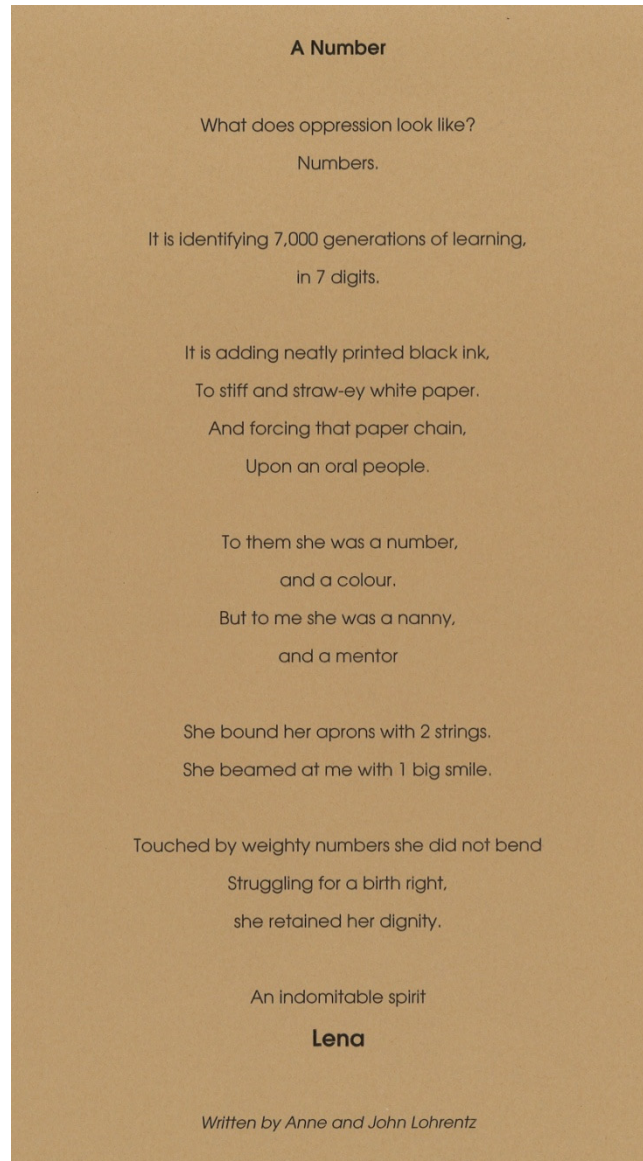


Figure 108: poem (left) about Lena written by Lohrentz, A., & Lohrentz, J. (2014). *A Number*, (right) *Lena swing tag* (1970) [Photograph].



Figure 109: photographic study of outfit depicting Lena's story on live model (left) consisting of shweshwe headdress, twisted linen wrap shrug with colonial knot detail on wide sleeve hem layered over digitally printed silk georgette barrel cut top and worn with springbok skin bag, (right) photographic study of outfit depicting Lena's story on live model consisting of shweshwe headdress, digitally printed designers pen and ink drawing on silk georgette barrel cut top, shweshwe wrap skirt worn over slim cut shweshwe trouser [Photograph].



Figure 110: Lena wrap details (left) photographic study of the back view of twisted linen wrap shrug featuring drawn thread centre back seam, (top centre) photographic study of the back view of twisted linen wrap shrug, (bottom centre) centre back drawn thread seam detail, (top right) internal flat felled shoulder seam finish, (bottom right) colonial knot detail on sleeve hem [Photograph].



Figure 111: photographic study of Lena outfit on live model (left) consisting of designers pen and ink drawing digitally printed on silk georgette barrel cut top with a plain silk bound neck, armhole and back, (top right) back view of barrel cut top features a hand embroidered geometric design on wide centre back seam with hanging bone and wooden trinkets on tie closure, (bottom right) detailed view of wooden beads and antique button finish on back tie [Photograph].

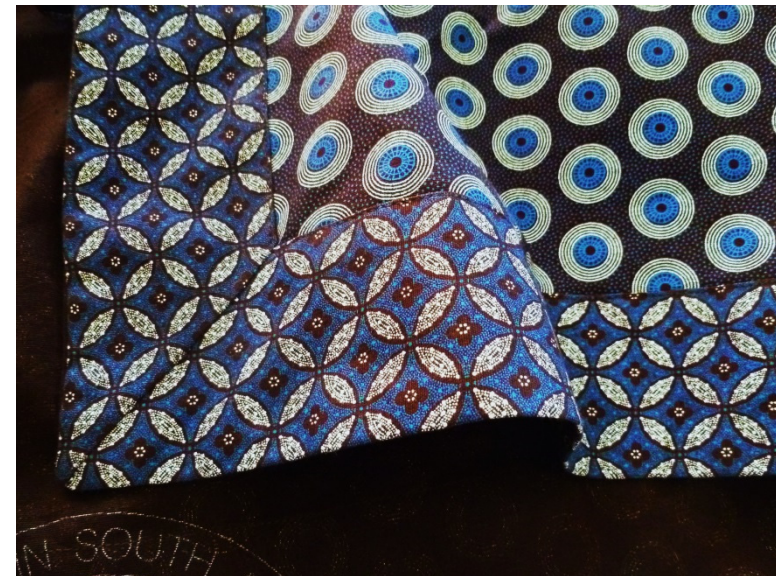


Figure 112: Lena skirt and trouser details (left) interior detail of shweshwe trouser consisting of a contrast shweshwe design faced hem and blue silk bound seam edgings, (top right) shweshwe skirt buckle closure with brown embroidery thread top stitch detail, (bottom right) contrast shweshwe design features a mitred facing edging on skirt [Photograph].

APPENDIX SIX

SPRINGBOK SKIN BAG

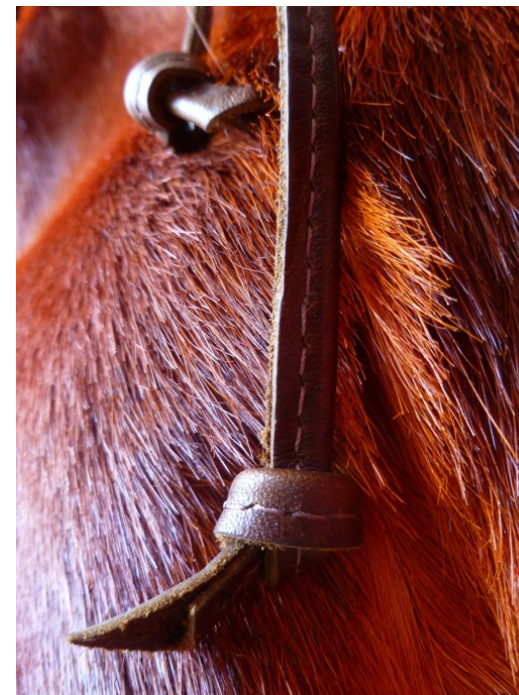


Figure 113: photographic study (left) of dyed springbok skin bag worn by live model wearing Thandiwe outfit, (right) distressed leather finishes on bag [Photograph].

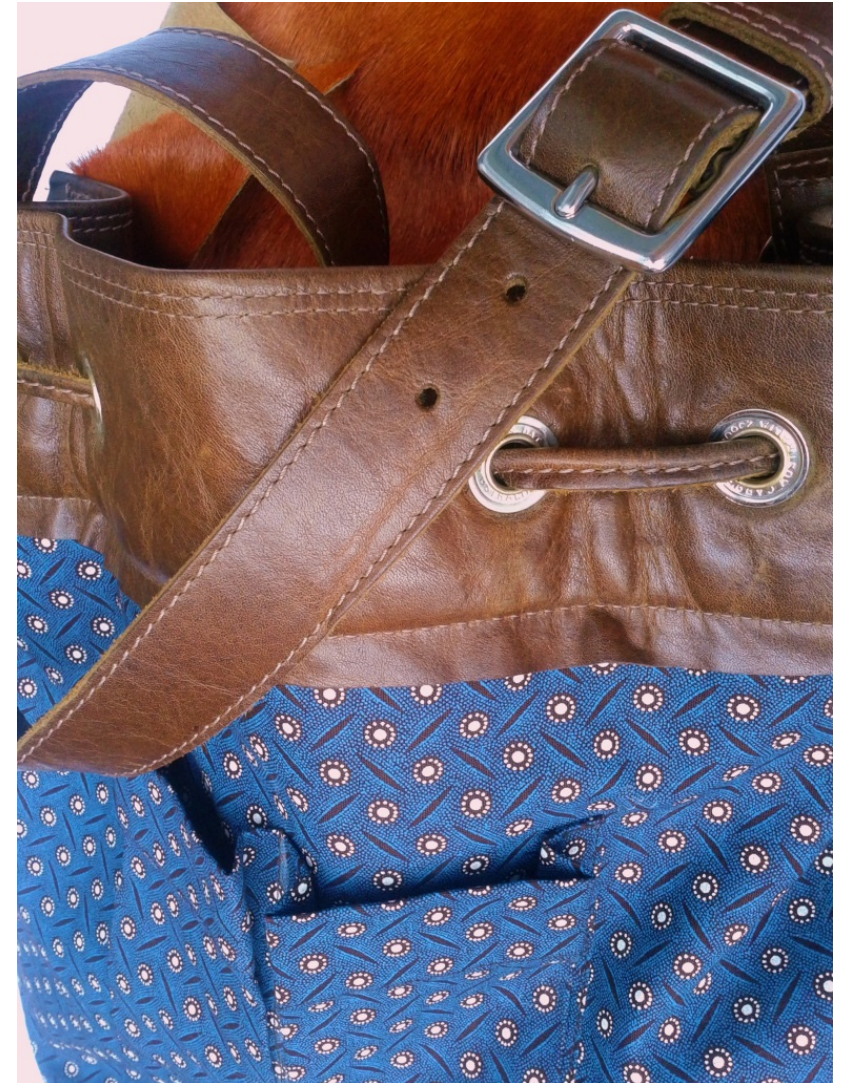


Figure 114: photographic study (left) of dyed springbok skin bag worn by live model, (right) interior detail of bag consisting of shweshwe lining with pocket detail and distressed leather trims [Photograph].

APPENDIX SEVEN

DVD