

**A SEMIOTIC INVESTIGATION OF THE GRAPHIC IMAGERY BY PIONEER
TATTOO ARTISTS IN KWAZULU-NATAL WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO
THE RAMESAR BROTHERS**

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the
Degree of Master of Applied Arts in Graphic Design in
the Faculty of Arts and Design at the
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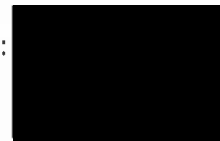
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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the graphic imagery of tattoo artists in KwaZulu-Natal with special reference to the Ramesar brothers. Various visual communication practices and theories are drawn upon to explain the imagery created by them. The literature review chapters of this study cover a brief history of primarily Western tattooing practices, as well as a discussion of the meaning of tattoos from a visual semiotics perspective. The fieldwork component of the study involved conducting and analysing a series of qualitative in-depth interviews with interviewees who were either tattooed by, or are family members of, the Ramesar brothers. The purpose of the interviews was to explore the personal experiences and motivations that contributed to the work of these tattoo artists. The study contributes to visual studies in South Africa in the sense that the empirical data confirm the pioneer status of the Ramesar brothers as graphic artists.

DECLARATION

This dissertation is the result of my own independent work and investigation, except where otherwise stated. Where it is appropriate, other sources are acknowledged by giving explicit references – a bibliography is included subsequently. This dissertation is being submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Applied Arts in Graphic Design. This work has not been previously accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any other degree.

Signed: _____

A black rectangular box redacting the signature.

Date: 19 July 2019

'I think every man should have a tattoo
so he may be identified'¹

Harry Ramesar

(Hennig 1981)

¹ The author is aware the quotation may be interpreted as an example of sexist language but decided to include this quotation of Harry Ramesar's words verbatim as the quotation summarised his attitude to his clients and the population in general.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction to the field of study

This study contributes to the field of Graphic Design by documenting the graphic imagery of KwaZulu-Natal's tattoo pioneers. Visual culture in South Africa in general is made up of a collection of 'broad topics', including the film industry, advertisements, music, magazines, fashion design and graphic design amongst others, which form the foundation of this visual culture. Mirzoeff (2002: 5) comments that, 'Visual culture is concerned with visual events in which the user seeks information, meaning or pleasure in an interface with visual technology'. This formula he suggests, 'bears re-examination, given the rapid pace of change' (Mirzoeff 2002: 6). In a study of visual culture in South Africa, van Eeden and du Preez point out that visual culture was a broader discipline of art history and that there was a 'transgression' from the traditional confines of art history in their topics and methodologies (van Eeden and du Preez 2005: 1). This new interdisciplinary field has had a meteoric rise since the nineteen sixties, where art historians worldwide had to adapt their teaching programs to the changing nature of art production and have increasingly had to accommodate the wider domain of visual culture (van Eeden and du Preez 2005: 1). Tattooing is one element which forms part of these 'broad topics' mentioned above - a very visual form of visual communication. There are many aspects to tattooing as a whole however this study focuses on and discusses the graphic communication component of tattoos, with special reference to the works of the Ramesar brothers. This field has been poorly studied, as there is little documentation of tattoo artists, especially in a South African setting. This encourages the need for further academic investigation.

The Ramesar brothers were both early visual practitioners and designers and against this backdrop, my aim was to research the body of work that they produced as tattoo artists, and the visual and historical meanings associated with that work. As a tattoo enthusiast and graphic designer, I would like to uncover and share with the wider public the history of KwaZulu-Natal's tattoo past. Tattooing has become extremely popular in contemporary South African society, and tattoo parlors can be found on most high streets and shopping malls. People have become familiar with international tattoo artists who apply their trade today, as

well as the history of tattoo pioneers of the past. The study will seek to answer questions such as who were our South African tattoo pioneers, and who were the artists that helped establish the tattoo industry in South Africa?

In this study, tattooing as a form of visual communication is explored and documented through in-depth interviews. These interviews were conducted with both people who have been tattooed by the Ramear brothers as well as family, friends and acquaintances. The Ramesar brothers are historically interesting and nobody has documented them academically before, which in a sense is like collecting new data. The literature review is comprised of various theories that relate to this study as well as semiotic perspectives of tattoos as a form of graphic communication. With the industry of tattooing becoming increasingly popular in today's society, it is relevant to have a historical account of its origins, document where the industry started, and its progression to where it is today. This is primarily a qualitative study with ethnographic methods, and it is told in the narrative/story telling format, which compliments South Africa's rich story telling tradition (Scheub 2010). The research study will be beneficial to tattoo artists, apprentices, tattoo enthusiasts, designers and any individual that is interested in the rich history of KwaZulu-Natal.

1.2 Aims and objectives

The aim of this study is to research the body of work that these early practitioners produced as tattoo artists and the graphic communication and historical meanings associated with that work. DeMello (1995: 74) writes that:

The last twenty to thirty years have seen considerable resurgence in the popularity of tattooing and body piercing in the west, more specifically North America. A process which has involved not only a remarkable growth in the numbers involved, but also their spread to an ever wider clientele (DeMello 1995: 74).

This resurgence can be seen in South Africa as most of South Africa's trends and social platforms are aligned with the west. The objectives of this study are to:

- (a) Conduct a scholarly analysis and documentation of KwaZulu-Natal's early tattoo artists.
- (b) Interview family members, past clients and individuals that knew these tattoo pioneers in order to explore and document their life, career and the tattoos that they produced. As both of these tattoo pioneers are now deceased, and there is no documented literature available, the interviews mentioned above will be the key to unlocking important information relevant to this study.
- (c) Explore and analyse the visual communication of the tattoos that the Ramesar brothers produced.

The objectives mentioned above will reveal whether the Ramesar brothers were in fact tattoo pioneers, as proposed in the title of this study, and what role they played not only the tattoo industry but in visual communication as a whole. Graphic communication practices based on Twyford's (1981) information and ideas conveyed through pictures and signs will be discussed and translated into information and their meanings explained.

The main five critical questions which were formulated at the outset of the study, and which guided the research as it progressed, are listed below. The first two questions are regarded as more important than the remaining three, which are of a more peripheral nature:

- (a) Who were these tattoo pioneers and on what basis can they be regarded as pioneers?
- (b) What graphic imagery was produced by the Ramesar brothers, and what is graphic communication associated with this imagery.
- (c) What was it like to be a tattoo artist, in KwaZulu Natal in the early twentieth century?
- (d) How was tattooing perceived then, compared to today?
- (e) What legacies have these tattoo pioneers left in the South African tattoo industry today?

1.3 Study Design and methods

This study uses ethnographic research methods to collect data on-KwaZulu-Natal's tattoo pioneers, focusing on the body of work that these tattoo artists produced, and the visual and historical meanings associated with that work. Both deductive and inductive methods were

used in this study. In-depth interviews utilised a deductive approach with a set of interview questions, whilst the inductive process aided the uncovering of additional information during my interviews, which would reveal themselves during data analysis (Burney 2008a). The Ramesar brothers were of Indian origin therefore etic perspectives are observed in terms of their culture, as it is different to my own (Powers and Knapp 2010). However, I feel emic perspectives could also apply, as I am a tattoo collector myself and having tattoos could aid in the interviewees feeling more comfortable in the interview process. Powers and Knapp (2010: 54) define these two perspectives as follows:

The term emic relates to the perspectives that are shared and understood by members of a particular culture, the 'insiders', in contrast to the perspectives of the culture that non-member observers, the 'outsiders', may have which are called etic perspectives (Powers and Knapp 2010: 54).

The primary data collected for this study involved information from interviews with consenting family members, friends and past clientele who have knowledge of the Ramesar brothers and their creative practice. This study relies on an oral history form interviews which highlights the function of memory. Barnier (2008) remarks that 'very often our memories of the past are of experiences or events we shared with others' (Barnier, 2008: 177). These 'experiences' will be key in unlocking the primary data of this study. Further to this, Kanbur (2018) comments that:

Throughout human history narratives have had crucial function to construct a society with meanings culturally binding its members and to sustain them for generations in society. Epic stories, proverbs, historical tales are such narratives which, in particular, form patterns for the 'shared conceptual framework' of members of a culture. Thus narratives, in a broadest sense, circulate within a society through individual memories of its members and serve to communicate and create meanings by operating like language (Kanbur 2018 :1).

In the years after completing my Bachelor of Technology Degree in 2009, my interest in this topic has grown and I have located individuals that have been tattooed by these tattoo

pioneers. The in depth interviews were 'unstructured' to allow the interview to be more free-flowing and formless, with the tone of the interview being more like a conversation than an interview (May 2001). Secondary sources used are academic journals and any other academically accepted resources available, for example: newspaper articles and community magazines. Potential individual participants were approached and invited to take part in the study on a voluntary basis, following a purposive sampling approach which is defined as the method of 'randomly selecting units without replacement from the particular section of the population believed to yield samples that will give the best estimate of the population parameter of interest' (Guarte and Barrios 2006: 278).

1.4 Overview of the remaining chapters

Chapter two describes tattoos and their classification in the form of a brief history of Western tattooing in general, and popular tattoo meaning and mythology. This chapter gives the reader an introduction to the tattoos of this genre in terms of context by reviewing existing tattoo data, which also examines the fluidity of the boundaries between the history, meaning and mythology of popular tattoos. These examples have the intended purpose of giving visual examples of tattoos and allowing the viewer to see these images in their original capacity as well as from a historical point of view.

Chapter three discusses the various semiotic perspectives of tattoos as a form of graphic communication, and comments on: relevant theories and the various communicative functions associated with this study.

Chapter four focuses on the data collection and analysis and discusses background information regarding the Ramesar brothers.

Chapter five discusses the methodology of the in-depth interviews, analyses the data collected in the study, and summarises the finding as per the insight given in these in-depth interviews.

The final chapter provides an overview of the study as a whole by synthesizing the data that was collected in the previous chapters. The contribution of this data is highlighted and recommendations are made for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

TATTOOS AND THEIR CLASSIFICATION

2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the history of tattooing, which gives a contextual foundation to this study. This foundation gives the reader an overview of the history of tattoos globally as background information. The history of tattoos depicted in this chapter is not written with the focus on Southern Africa, nor globally but rather with a focus on Western tattoo history and visual trends. Coupled with the history of tattoos, there is a focus on both the practical and visual aspect of tattoos. What were the tools of the trade, and what inks were used? As this is a visual study, this chapter uncovers the typical interior design of the tattoo premises as well as tattoo designs and stencils. The traditional tattoos depicted in this study are both visually eye catching and have rich meaning and mythologies that are associated with them. This chapter also discusses seven of the most popular tattoo categories.

2.2 History of Tattoos

Kuwahara (2003: 5) notes that:

tattooing is embedded in the historical and cultural contexts of each society. It locates oneself in the society and forms the relationship accordingly. In ancient cultures, 'the skin was often regarded as the border between the human body and the exterior world. The human body was intern protected in fragile places with permanent skin markings' with these customs going back far into history when scientists discovered ancient tattoo artefacts such as: 'a seven thousand year-old mummy discovered in Northern Chile with tattoos on the feet and hands. Further to this, a five thousand year-old mummy named Ötzi was discovered in 1991 on the border between Austria and Italy in the Ötztal Alps'. Ötzi had tattoos on his loins and right ankle that were stitched into the skin with coal dust. Marks on known acupuncture points supported the hypotheses that tattoos were being used as a means of protection (Kuwahara 2003: 5).

According to Schmid (2013: 444):

throughout history, tattoos were used for different purposes and with various meanings. This includes the affiliation to a group, ie: tattoos have been used to include or exclude an individual from a group or even an entire society, identification of a certain person, forced branding of people, or simply a voluntary tattoo marking an important part of an individual's personal history. Early historical reports on tattoos date back to ancient times, including the Old Testament, writings by the Roman emperor Constantine the Great in 313 AD and Pope Hadrian I in 787 AD.

History has revealed that tattoos were not only received voluntarily, leading to the category of tattoo 'branding', which occupies a notable part of tattoo history. 'Branding describes a forced marking of individuals by a ruling authority' (Schmid, 2013:444). An example can be designated to slaves or convicted criminals, who would be 'burnt with a red-hot iron and a black liquid rubbed into the wound', which would result in a scared permanent mark (Schmid, 2013:444).

This practice was even anchored in Roman law and allowed in Europe until quite recent times. Early examples of branding in the Roman Empire can be seen in the first Christians, who were branded in order to identify them as an 'outsider' group of Roman society. In turn, the branding served as an identification sign among early Christians and therefore also became a mark of an 'insider group' (Schmid 2013: 444). 'In Medieval times, branding was not regarded as mutilating practice but rather more as a 'lighter' form of physical punishment' Schmid (2103: 444). In the late Middle Ages, the practice shifted to variations of burning, pinching the skin 'with a cold iron and perforating the skin with needle stitches'. The skin was then rubbed with coal dust. These techniques can be closely associated to tattoo techniques practiced today. Schmid (2103: 444) indicates that the:

purpose of these branding tattoos was actually to recognize what criminal act a person had committed, and besides being a physical punishment, this branding 'marked' a criminal and led to his isolation within society. Voluntary tattoos became increasingly important during the crusades to the eastern parts of the Mediterranean Sea. Crusaders used mostly Christian motifs to ensure that they received a Christian funeral in case they died in a foreign country. It is assumed

that during this time, the meaning of the tattoo changed from a sign displaying an affiliation to a certain group to a personal identification mark (Schmid 2103: 444).

From the seventeen centuries when Western civilizations explored the seas, on return from these journeys, fascinating stories were told of exotic lands, where inhabitants decorated their bodies with tattooed markings. The first living proof of such inhabitants was in 1691, when William Dampier, a sailor, pirate and explorer brought a fully tattooed slave back to England from the Philippines. This islander was paraded around English carnivals and given the name: Giolo, the Famous Painted Prince (see Figure 2.1). Clerk (2008) describes in her sourcebook of vintage tattoos that Giolo drew crowds from far and wide, where the curious gasped with horror (Clerk 2008: 40). He was the world's first human being to be exhibited for entertainment purposes. In the year 1769, renowned explorer Captain James Cook (see Figure 2.2) noted in his journal the markings of the skin by the indigenous tribes of the Marquesas Islands (Kennedy 2006). Four years later, Cook gave the order to bring a Polynesian native called Omai back to Britain from Huaheine, near Tahiti, toward the end of his second great voyage (Clerk 2008: 38).



Figure 2.1 Giolo



Figure 2.2 Captain Cook

The social status experienced by the two men living on British soil were worlds apart. Omai was taught proper social etiquette before being exhibited by Joseph Banks, an adventuring colleague of Cook's. He responded naturally to tutoring and quickly charmed his way into the highest echelons of London society and was even presented to King George III and Queen

Charlotte (Clerk 2008: 40). Omai spent two years in Britain and in 1776 weighed down with expensive gifts went back to his home in Huaheine. He left with Captain Cook, who was setting sail on his third voyage.

In early Western tattoo history, Captain Cook is arguably the most important figure, as it was during his voyages that he and his colleagues made detailed notes of the tattoos they observed. These graphic details and tattoos brought back by the sailors themselves ignited a huge interest back home, which revived the practice after the church ban centuries before. These visual art pieces on the skin paved the way for the interaction of sailors with carnival and circus folk in Europe and America, which resulted in the artistic tradition of tattooing that we know today (Clerk 2008: 38).

Due to the fact that the Ramesar brothers were of Indian decent, it is relevant to include information regarding the history of tattoos in India. The rich cultural heritage of tattooing in India has been maintained for hundreds if not thousands of years, spanning both the length and breadth of the country (Krutak 2009). Renowned tattoo anthropologist, Lars Krutak comments that this tattoo culture spanned from, ' the dense, rain-soaked mountain jungles of Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland in the northeast to the dry deserts of Kutch in Gujarat on the Pakistan border in the far west, tattoos not only served to beautify the human body but to also carry it into the afterlife (Krutak 2009). Krutak (2009) explains further by commenting that:

Although the diversity of tattooing cultures in India is great, the literature on the subject is surprisingly rare outside of obscure university and governmental reports, not to mention early 20th century census pamphlets buried in dusty archives and museum libraries. Aside from these issues of access, the contemporary ethnographic record is relatively weak on the art form itself. This can be attributed to the fact that most of India's tattooed tribes have dwelled in remote hinterlands until recently and have long been suppressed, forgotten, and/or discriminated against for their refusal to discard "primitive" tribal practices like tattooing that seemed uncivilized and unimportant in comparison to more urban, modern, and sophisticated cultural lifestyles in the cities. As one writer put it, "indigenous people are aware that tattoos identity them as tribal, and hence they are seen as inferior (Krutak 2009).

2.3 Circus Attractions

The emergence of the railways in the second half of the nineteenth century in America paved the way for travelling shows, circuses and fairground sideshows. This created opportunities for tattooed individuals who were interested in this line of work. According to Clerk, these tattooed 'freaks' generally enjoyed their day job, as some had grown up in a circus environment, and others joined as runaways or out of work sailors (Clerk 2008: 18). Clerk elaborates by saying that, entertainers spent hours under the needle, covering their bodies with elaborate designs that aimed to cover every inch of their body as well as perfecting their entertaining act. These tattooed performers invented tall tales and sensational stories to attract people to their shows. For example, 'being captured by a hostile tribe' and being tattooed against their will was a popular story amongst performers. James F O'Connell (see Figure 2.3) who was the first tattooed person to be exhibited in America, claimed to have been taken prisoner by natives on the North Pacific island of Pohnpei and subjected to extensive tattooing by a series of beautiful virgins, which culminated in him being made to marry the last one. The crowd marveled at his story, which O'Connell repeated over his 20-year circus career. This reinforced the power of storytelling and visual images in an individual's imagination (Clerk 2008). The concept of storytelling captured the imagination of an audience and helped pave the way for a successful career in the circus industry of the time.



Figure 2.3 James F O'Connell

Many of these performers hoped to become tattoo artists themselves and ended up displaying themselves to the public. Many viewed this as a way to earn a good living and spent those countless hours under the needle to make the grade. The invention of the electronic 'tattoo machine at the end of the nineteenth century' created huge excitement, and as a result, many flocked to artists that owned such equipment in the hope to fast track their show business careers (Clerk 2008: 18). It was not just the performers that came up with elaborate stories to reinvent themselves to attract customers. Tattoo artists too began using this method and the legendary Bert Grimm used to tell vivid stories about tattooing Bonnie and Clyde and other notorious outlaws in the 1930s. Grimm was hailed as the world's greatest tattooist, not due to the honor bestowed by the public, but because he told everyone he was and they believed him (Clerk 2008: 20).

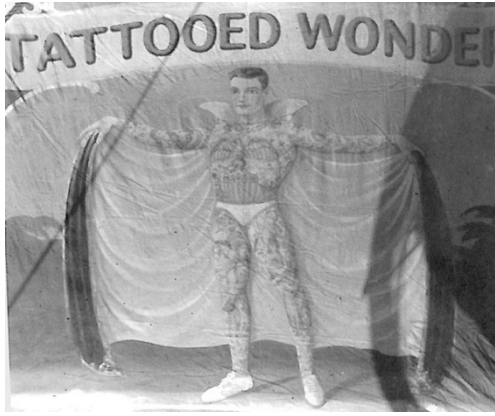


Figure 2.4 Circus tattoo banner



Figure 2.5 Circus sideshow stalls

Figures 2.4 and 2.5 depict a common look and feel of a tattoo banner and the circus sideshow stalls that used to welcome the public. Performers did not just cover their bodies with ink and invent elaborate stories... some added spectacular circus skills to their repertoire. Examples can be seen at beginning of the 1900's, where 'Painless' Jack Tyron (see Figure 2.6) would eat flames, walk on a tight rope, perform magic tricks and balance on one hand (Clerk 2008: 22).



Figure 2.6 'painless' Jack Tyron

Captain Don Leslie, was at the top of the field of tattooed circus performers, touring during the mid 1900's with the King brothers' circus. Captain Don was a fire-eater and sword-swallower and did not just limit his instruments to swords but knives, bayonets and screwdrivers (Clerk 2008: 28).

Cultural Anthropologist Margo DeMello comments that during this period, it was not only men who adorned their bodies with visual tattoos. Tattooed ladies were regarded 'made freaks' rather than 'born freaks' as they too installed in people the same feeling of awe, wonder, and disgust as those born with physical disabilities (DeMello 1995). It was common that a relative, such as a husband or father tattooed these women. An example can be seen in figure 2.7 on Artoria. She amongst others, like Artufullette and Irene Library (figure 2.11), were tattooed in the 1920's. An American lady by the name Nora Hildebrandt (see Figure 2.8) made her professional debut in 1882. The daughter of a German tattoo artist Martin Hildebrandt, Nora was tattooed by her father during the time he had when not tattooing sailors, soldiers and sideshow attractions. She stepped into the public gaze for the first time at Bunnell's Museum, with a different tattoo for every day of the year (Clerk 2008: 46). Not unlike her male counterparts mentioned above, Nora would similarly tell renditions from how she and her father had been captured by Native American tribes and forcibly tattooed, to being tied to a tree and tattooed every day for a year by the orders of Chief Sitting Bull. Tattooed women like Nora would soon earn higher performance wages than their fellow male counterparts (Clerk 2008: 47).



Figure 2.7 Artoria



Figure 2.8 Nora Hildebrandt

Women sideshow attractions that displayed extreme body art became extremely popular not only due to the fact of the rarity of the visual itself, but an added attraction was that men were permitted to 'ogle parts of the female anatomy that were never willingly exposed in polite society' (Clerk 2008). DeMello (1995) suggests that comparatively in contemporary times, women tattoo themselves as a sign of independence rather than getting tattooed to make a living, and that middle-class women are the most popular recipients of tattoos, due to 'notions of personal growth, derived from the language of the 'New Age' and 'Self Help' movements from the 1970s and 1980's (DeMello 1995).

Today, 'Empowerment' with reference to identity formulation, spirituality and overcoming adversity are the key factors used by women when describing their tattoos and why they acquired them. According to DeMello (1995), a second observation by women as to why they get tattooed, was to signify a 'rite of passage in the transition from one stage' of their life to the other. Considering that tattoos are traditionally associated with masculinity, DeMello (1995: 74) suggests that tattooed women are over transcending the conventional notions of femininity and masculinity, regardless of their conscious personal motives. Working class women on the other hand, have had more tattoo experience than their middle class

'sisters'² as they used their bodies to destabilize dominant notions of power through the use of clothing, makeup and hair styles. DeMello (1995: 74) suggests that a working-class woman is less likely to accept the traditional distinction of the female body in western society (quiet and pale), and uses tattoos as visual resistance, asserting that:

Through marking the body with tattoos, then, one can argue that women are working to erase the oppressive marks of a patriarchal society and to replace them with marks of their own choosing, marks which contest patriarchal power (DeMello 1995: 74).

Heavily tattooed women are seen to control and destabilise the power of looking, referred to as the 'male gaze'³ by forcing both male and female to look at their bodies, which in turn keeps them in control (DeMello 1995: 74). Furthermore, DeMello (1995: 74) in addition indicates the claims that the primary motivation given by women for them getting tattooed is to make themselves more beautiful and sexy but as popularity grows, many women still stick to more traditional female tattoos, to avoid the risk of a loss of their femininity. Examples of artwork could be fine-lined designs or flowers (see Figure 2.9) and these tattoos would commonly be found on the hidden spots of the body or areas that were said as being sexy (wrist, ankle, curve of the back or breast). The circus / carnival environment, pitch cards (see Figure 2.10) and promotional flyers that were distributed to the public, depicted tattooed lady attractions in poses that emphasized chastity and femininity, whilst accentuating their tattoos. Even though they had extensive tattoos, they portrayed themselves as 'classy' ladies (DeMello 1995).

² An informal term that can be defined as 'A female friend or associate, especially a female fellow member of a trade union or other organisation' (Oxforddictionaries.com 2018). In the context of this study, the term is representative of women from different class groups.

³ A term that simulates the sexual way of looking that empowers men and objectifies women. The sexual politics of the gaze (Loreck 2016).



Figure 2.9 Example of feminine
Tattoo on the wrist



Figure 2.10 Pitch card of
La Bella Angora, 1910

DeMello (1995) suggests that these tattoo performers of the past can be compared to the tattoo conventions and shows of today as 'both male and female tattooed bodies are on display' (DeMello 1995). The pitch cards and flyers have been replaced with the countless tattoo magazines, reality television shows and social media. Mary Russo, a critical theorist describes the 'the grotesque body'⁴, in the context of making a spectacle of oneself as a uniquely female danger. Compared to a man, who for example exposes himself, for a woman, its unintentional and should be avoided at all costs (Russo 1986). A visual example can be seen in Irene Libarry (see Figure 2.11), who dressed normally, hiding her extensive tattoos when out in the public domain. Her explanation was: 'I just didn't like to make an exhibition of myself on the street' (DeMello 1995). This explanation could also be considered from a financial angle, as people would be viewing her tattoos for free, which would mean she would be potential loss of earnings.

⁴ A concept that was put forward by Russian literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin. Shabot, who explains that 'Grotesque bodies are opposed to the classical bodies represented for instance, during the Renaissance. They are not clean, closed, well defined, clean-cut, beautiful bodies striving for symmetry and order. Rather, the grotesque body is a body that defies clear definitions and borders and that occupies the middle ground between life and death', between subject and object, between one and many (Shabot, 2007:229).



Figure 2.11 Irene Libarry, 1976

The visual characteristics of the exhibition tattoos in the early days can be considered as being 'rudimentary'. The tattoo would consist of a riot of lines, which linked together patterns and images. On the other side of the spectrum, there were body suits, which can be seen on 'Painless' Jack Tyron (figure 2.6), and which were classified as works of art. Vintage tattooing as a craft improved steadily as artists began to take a professional approach to quality, detail and the overall impact of the illustration that they designed both as individual pieces or as elements to complete a design theme. The end to the era of sideshow freaks had dwindled by the 'end of the Second World War' as the public had lost interest (Clerk 2008: 49).

2.4 Tattoo Tools, Inks and Flash

The invention and patent of the electric tattoo machine in 1891 by tattoo artist Samuel O'Reilly revolutionized the tattoo industry. As a result, tattooing became quicker, less painful and surprisingly more popular (Clerk 2008: 44). Tattoo machines were traditionally made in small quantities by makeshift suppliers, or hand built with mechanical parts that were intended for a totally different purpose. Although the basic configuration and mechanics of the tattoo machine stayed the same, tattoo artists made small variations and custom tweaks to their tattoo machines to suit their personal preferences, and these were guarded secrets and steeped in superstitions. In the competitive world of tattooing, artists' respect and admiration for one another were hard won. When a tattoo artist had a well running and efficient tattoo machine, it made the job easier, and created a clear and bright tattoo that

was sought after. As a result, this would create more revenue for the tattoo artist (Hardy 1995: 15).

Pigments used to create tattoos were at a premium, and as recently as the 1960's, tattoo artists brought their colours directly from large multinational pigment manufacturers. Tattoo artists often had to pose as sign painters or fine artists to gain access to these pigments, as the large pigment manufacturers were reluctant to sell their pigments to avoid culpability due to the possible side effects of their product being used on the skin. Selecting pigments, which were safe to use, non-reactive to the skin and that demonstrated the best result were commonly passed down from a predecessor or confidant. The criterion of a good pigment was one that healed bright and was permanent (Hardy 1995: 16). Inks were hand mixed by the tattoo artist and consisted of powdered pigments that were usually suspended in a solution of isopropyl alcohol and distilled water. The wetting agent would disperse once the tattoo had healed, leaving the colour behind as miniature colour particles embedded under the cellular layer of the skin. The only liquid colour pigment used was black and it was commonly a variant of concentrated carbon ink (Hardy 1995). Unlike today's extensive variety of colours and shades of inks, the average tattoo palette until the early 1970's was limited to black, green, red, brown, yellow and occasionally white. Sailor Jerry Collins, born in 1911 in America, one of the most famous tattoo artists of all time and known for his bright colours and modern designs, was the first to introduce a good purple and blue pigment in the 1960's, which were only in the hands of a few artists at the time (Hardy 1995; Clerk 2008).

During the first half of the twentieth century, small spaces were needed for tattoo artists to apply their trade. It was common for tattoo shops to share space and shop fronts with other establishments such as barbershops and game arcades. These establishments were generally in highly visible areas that would attract the ideal clientele; therefore, the perfect locations were near military installations, amusement parks, busy bars, clubs and dance halls (see Figure 2.12 and 2.13). Competition for locations was fierce, and not only did a tattoo artist's portfolio attract customers, their tattoo shop had to match up to their reputation (Hardy 1995: 16). As tattoos were an impulse business, the flashiest shop would set a firm foundation for one to apply your trade and be successful. Advertising space that would attract attention, accompanied with high visibility branding of the exterior of the shop with the use of neon or electronic signage, was common and accompanied with painted

designs of dramatic qualities (see Figure 2.14). Within the display windows it was standard to find large amounts of artwork display sheets (known as flash)⁵ and images of tattooed people.



Figure 2.12 Lyle Tuttle outside his studio



Figure 2.13 Advertisements for Tattoos in New York



Figure 2.14 Cap Coleman outside his tattoo parlour
In Norfolk, Virginia

When inside the tattoo shop, all available space was taken up by tattoo flash, and the designs depicted varied due to the tattoo artists capability and skill. This tattoo flash varied from hand painted works from the resident tattoo artist, flash from other tattoo artists, to photocopied

⁵ The term is the industry standard for tattoo designs that were printed or drawn on paper or cardboard.

images and designs (see Figure 2.16). The layout of the tattoo flash was commonly based on personal preference, as some artists preferred fewer designs in the page whilst others preferred a more 'crowded' approach. One technique used to attract a customer's eye to a specific design was to place a large design in the middle of the flash sheet, which was used as an 'anchor'. As a result, this anchor design would rise above the other design surrounding it on the wall. Another technique was the use of colour to boost the designs visual appearance, even though the result on the skin would differ. The art of placing flash was traditionally passed down from one artist to another during the apprentice tradition (Hardy 1995).

Tattoo flash was not only reserved for tattoo shops. Many travelling tattoo artists that travelled with circuses, carnivals and sailing from port to port also carried a working set of flash. This flash was kept in small bound albums of outdoor watercolour paper that could fit in the tattooists' pocket (see Figure 2.16).



Figure 2.15 Cap Coleman and the tattoo flash in his tattoo parlour



Figure 2.16 An example of a travelling tattooist flash book.

2.5 Stencils

Hardy (1995: 19) explains the procedure of applying the design on the skin:

Each design requires an accompanying stencil to transfer the line image to the skin. Early in the century (twentieth century) these were made by dry pointing celluloid (a highly combustible material), later replaced by acetate. 'Cutting' stencils were an art in itself, and good practice for the artist's hand in creating decisively tattooed outlines. Powdered charcoal was rubbed into the incised lines, and then pressed onto the shaved area coated with Vaseline. A firm, even depth of line in the plastic was necessary to transfer a sharp, clear outline onto the skin, and plastic was necessary to transfer a sharp, clear outline onto the skin, and withstand many printings. By mid-century, dye pencils on rice paper or vellum became the standard method of transferring one-of-a-kind designs to avoid the more laborious method of cutting an acetate stencil. Dye transfer patterns have

the considerable advantage of remaining visible on the skin well into the tattooing process, whereas acetate and powdered charcoal imprint methods are fragile and smear easily. This necessitates the awkward method of tattooing from one corner of the image up (Hardy 1995: 19).

Tattoo artists were heavily dependent on both their flash and tracings. Having no drawing skills meant that the tattoo artists would find it difficult to tattoo the same design, even if they had tattooed it many times before. Tattoo shops as a collective did not vary much, and the tattoo artists that wished to expand the trade were in a minority. With thousands of designs that could be seen on the tattoo shop walls, the tattoo artist had a handful of popular designs. Hardy notes that: 'customers needed the illusion of vast choice before deciding on their panther, heart, or dagger' (Hardy 1995: 20). By the turn of the century, tattoo artists began taking on professional monikers, or what was known in the industry as 'needle name' (Hardy 1995: 20). Examples of these were Doc, Sailor, Professor and these needle names were commonly coupled with elaborate business cards, photos and paintings to create a perception of increased professionalism and enhancing the identity of the tattoo artist. With this increased professional identity, tattoo artists began to supplement this identity with clothing that would meet the professional standard such as white lab coats or barbers' smocks.

Self-promotion and the formation of a distinctive identity are paramount to success in this art. The tattooer's ability to 'draw a tip' (attract a crowd) depended as much on personality, spiel, and presence as on the quality of work on the skin (Hardy 1995: 20).

During the late nineteenth century, tattoo artists in the Western world were making drawings of the designs used in their profession. The origins of these drawings were unknown but the exposure of this folk and popular culture is evident in the print media of the period (Govenar 1995). Over the course of the twentieth century, many of these designs have come to be considered 'traditional'. This folk/ traditional art form was passed down from generation to generation through tattoo apprenticeships. Govenar (1995: 81) notes that 'during the apprenticeship period aspiring artists work with their mentors to learn to draw the traditional

repertory of designs and to acquire the skills to tattoo them on the skin of their clients'. Further to this Govenar (1995: 81) explains that:

Folk tattoos designs are defined by their content, but also through the manner in which they are made. Drawn with a directness of line and form, a folk tattoo represents it's meaning in a concrete image. Ultimately, the content of that image is primary to its understanding and appreciation, regardless of the virtuosity of the drawing itself (Govenar 1995: 81).

Primarily emphasizing the two-dimensional effect of the design on the surface that it was drawn; shading was often used to create a chiaroscuro effect (Govenar 1995). Govenar describes the chiaroscuro effect as

the drawing style... which... may be limited in its modelling of form, but this alone does not necessarily detract from the aesthetic power of the image. Folk tattoos picture the values they designate. Specific designs are often associated with groups of people who share a cultural bond or set of experiences, whether local, ethnic, tribal, religious, or occupational (Govenar 1995: 81).

The visual appearance of these designs was not only reserved to promote the skills of the artist, but to establish frameworks for iconic imagery such as hearts, flowers, daggers and snakes to name a few. The conventionalization of these tattoos became apparent as they were intended for consistent application, and tattoo artists traced the design on reusable acetate stencils to assist in swift execution (Govenar 1995).

2.6 Tattoos, their Meaning and Mythology

Traditional tattoos of the West were not only visually eye catching, but rich in meaning as they represented a time of seafaring, exploration, circus acts and both of the World Wars. Each tattoo can be seen as a little pocket of history, which was worn on the body to tell a story, remember an event or to pay tribute to someone or something. Understanding the visual meanings and associated subject matter of tattoo designs is key to unlocking the true

potential of the tattoo. Below I will define and provide insight into the meaning of some of the most popular subject matter regarding traditional tattoos during the period of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. My study of the Ramesar brothers coincides with this time frame.

2.6.1 Tattoos of the Sea

From the first days of maritime tattooing, sailors flaunted emblems that encompassed the entire experience of being at sea – their vessels and everyday duties, military purpose and patriotism, shore leave, faraway loved ones as well as their enemies, achievements and comradeship, superstitions and religious beliefs, hopes and fears, and their acknowledgement of those who perished beneath the waves (Clerk 2008: 56). One of the most iconic maritime tattoos, rich in graphic attributes, is the sailing ship in full sail. These tattoos commonly depicted a clipper or a fully rigged sailing ship and the placement on the body was usually on the center of the subject's back or chest (see Figure 2.17 and 2.18).

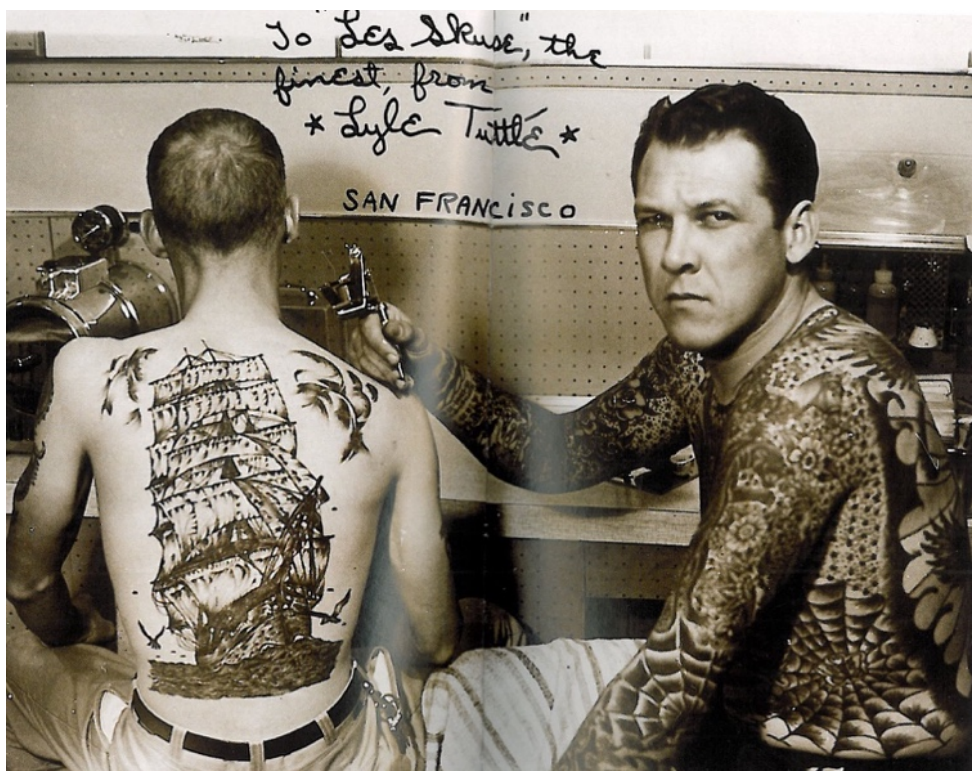


Figure 2.17 Lyle Tuttle tattooing a traditional sailing ship, 1960's

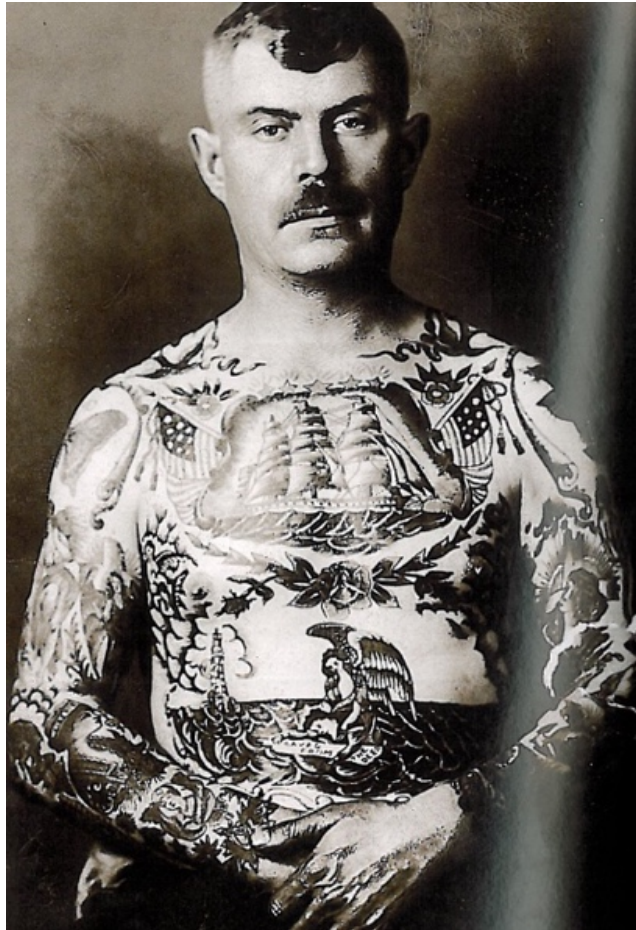


Figure 2.18 Nautical themed tattoos, 1920's

Many maritime tattoo designs would use the ship in their composition, and seafarers would practice certain superstitions and rites of passage to entitle one to qualify for a specific tattoo. For seafarers of the south pacific, completing the journey around the Cape Horn entitled them to a sailing ship tattoo. The waters around Cape Horn were notoriously hazardous, as this is the location where the Atlantic and Pacific oceans collide, creating strong winds and currents. This route was necessary when circumnavigating the globe along the trade routes. Fully rigged sailing ships under full sail represented strength and fluid motion, with her bow splitting the waves with seabirds and clouds in the background. The sailing ship was a metaphor for life, sometimes the sea is calm and smooth and on other days, she is rough with gale force winds... but keep on sailing, gathering experience as you travel through life (van As 2009).

Sailing ship tattoos were not always limited to scenes of serenity and positivity. Visual depictions of a ship sinking or forced onto the rocks or reef were also common. This scene was normally accompanied with the slogan 'Sailor's Grave', a stark reminder of how harsh the

sea could be. Some sailors also viewed it as a talisman for protection and safe passage. The visual characteristics of the sailing ship tattoo was not only limited to the sailing ship itself. The composition was commonly partnered with visual elements such as slogans, anchors, birds, and flowers or framed in rope. A common slogan would read 'Homeward Bound'; this was done partly to show pride in the way of life as well as to ensure a safe passage home. These tattoos generally depicted a serene maritime scene comprising of calm waters, warm sunset with bluebirds or swallows (Clerk 2008). These popular birds were a symbol of good luck to as their presence indicated that the sailors were close to land. Due to their extensive migratory travel, once a sailor completed five thousand miles, he would be entitled to have a bluebird tattooed on his chest, and on completion of then thousand, miles he would add another (Clerk 2008: 61).

Other popular nautical themed tattoos of the time with rich visual characteristics were the nautical stars, commonly tattooed as a tribute to ancient navigational methods and as an appeal for guidance and protection. The anchor tattoo has had its roots in western tattooing for the better part of two centuries. A young sailor would be eligible to get an anchor tattoo after his first crossing of the Atlantic and 'was often a symbol of a highly experienced sailor' (Clerk 2008: 61). The anchor has symbolism that can be traced 'back to the early Christians who would often use the anchor as a hidden symbol for the cross. This was a way to show that one was a Christian to escape persecution from the Romans' (answers.com 2009). 'We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure Hebrews 6:19-20' (bibleref.com). The anchor is a symbol of stability, steadfastness, hope, trust and a strong foundation. Just as in its actual purpose to secure the ship to the bottom of a body of water, keep it in a specific position and provide stability, so too is its mythological meaning. Many seamen would collect tattoos on their travels 'as cheerfully and casually as holidaymakers picking up postcards and souvenirs' (Clerk 2008: 62). There were also those sailors who chose their tattoos more selectively. The famous New York tattoo artist Sam O'Reilly once commented that: 'A sailor without a tattoo is like a ship without grog, not seaworthy' (Clerk 2008: 62).

2.6.2 Babes, Banners, Hearts and the Natural World.

Clerk (2008) remarks that:

By 1939, with the onset of the Second World War, tastes had broadened. Tattooists settling near military bases reported that while clients continued to ask for sailing ships, anchors and patriotic emblems, others elected to go into battle with images that spoke of home – banners displaying the names of girlfriends and wives, surrounded by roses or hearts, or held aloft by fluttering bluebirds (Clerk 2008: 110).

A design with the word 'Mom' was popular, but during this period, there was visual subject matter that surpassed the more traditional designs. Known for their physical attractiveness and cheeky poses, pin-up girls derived their name from people placing their picture on the wall. These pin-up images were cut out of magazines, newspapers and postcards. As their popularity grew, pin up girls began appearing on calendars, greeting cards and even bottle openers. Such became their popularity that they began to be mass-produced (David 2009). During the Second World War, sailors and soldiers began to decorate their lockers and bunk walls with imagery of pin-up girls. There were namely two varieties of female beauties... one being the pin-up girl and the second being the nude. The nude has been around in American tattooing for decades and, exceptionally popular was the naked hula girl. Clerk (2008) explains, that when the hula girls was, 'positioned properly on the bicep, she would swing her hips and jiggle her breasts as the owner moved his arm, often whistling to amuse his friends while she danced to his impromptu tune' Clerk (2008: 119).

Both the pin-up girl and the nude, with their perfectly sculpted figures oozed voluptuousness and seductiveness, and the visual result was not obscene or explicit. Many service men got these tattoos to provide female company when they were far from home, and still hold their appeal when they got back home. The US Government declared war on the nude tattoo by reinstating the edict from 1909, which stated that a young man was barred from enlisting in the Navy if they had a naked lady tattooed anywhere on their body.

The rule stated Indecent or obscene tattooing is cause rejection; the applicant should be given the opportunity to alter the design, in which event he may, if otherwise qualified, be accepted (Clerk 2008: 126).

As a result, Sailors requested that the ladies' 'modesty' be covered with items of clothing (grass skirts, underwear and exotic costumes), flags and fans (see Figure 2.19 and Figure 2.20). Existing tattoos used element such as clothing, flowers and animals to cover the 'problem' areas.



Figure 2.19 Hula girl, tattoo on
The arm of a US sailor, 1940's



Figure 2.20 Cindy Ray in her studio,
1960's

Probably the most famous pin-up girl of this era was Betty Gable, with her million dollar legs, posing in a swimsuit, hands on the hips and looking back over her shoulder. This pin-up became an instant hit and was one of the most widely distributed pin-ups ever. Sailors not only carried imagery of Betty overseas for her beauty but also for a bit of Americana - a constant reminder of home and what they were fighting for. Bettie Page was known as the Queen of pin-ups. She flourished in the 1950's and became a household name with both her name and imagery being mass-produced and viewed throughout the world (van As 2009: 39).

During the First World War, many servicemen sported military symbols, which were to commemorate their military service. This held up the traditions of the 1800's, when a 'field officer in the British army was required his officers to add a regimental crest tattoo

underneath their uniform to improve 'esprit de corps'—and help identify the bodies of the fallen' (Kennedy 2006). Tattoo artists noticed that whilst clients still got their patriotic emblems, for example a unit or platoon insignia, there was an increase in the number of tattoo designs that spoke of home, banners with girlfriends or loved ones' names etched in a heart and occasionally surrounded by roses (Figures 2.21 and 2.22). The word 'mom' was an extremely popular banner inscribed in a heart. Many individuals were of the opinion that the most important tattoo a person could get was showing your devotion to the women that created you: your mother. The heart in history has had many different associations. 'In ancient Egypt, the heart represented truth rather than love. The Greeks believed that all thoughts and feelings began in the heart' (tattoojohnny.com 2009). Hearts are the center of life both literally and figuratively as they are the organs that keep us alive. They have developed into a symbol of life and love, which are two of man's most precious gifts. The heart has furthermore been known to symbolize knowledge, fertility and a future of joy (van As 2009: 33).



Figure 2.21 Heart with banner tattoo, 1970's



Figure 2.22 Heart with 'true Love'
Banner tattoo, 1970's

Hearts tattoos could be represented on their own or accompanied by banners with descriptions. Alternate tattoo visual representations that were popular were a heart with a

dagger piercing through it (Figure 2.23) which generally symbolized mistrust and or betrayal. The broken heart could represent a break-up in ones' relationship or alternatively a couple who are 'apart for an extended period of time, in which case, each would get a half of a broken heart tattooed to symbolize their devotion to each other, in the hopes that one day they will come together and the heart will be one again' (van As 2009: 33) The sacred heart is steeped in religious meaning. This tattoo traditionally depicts the 'heart of Jesus surrounded by the Crown of Thorns that he wore on the cross. The thorn spines digging into the heart represent the pain and suffering Jesus felt while enduring that hardship' (tattoojohnny.com 2009). Stars with hearts were a symbol of happiness and favorable opportunities and heart shaped national flags had an association with the love of one's country. On the opposite end of the spectrum was the black heart, which usually illustrated grief or mourning. This tattoo could be seen tattooed on people that have lost a loved one or loved ones that were close to them (van As 2009: 34).

Like the lotus flower in the east, the rose shares a similar symbolism throughout the world: Love that is pure; romance; beauty; and death. 'The Ancient Greeks believed the rose was originally white in colour and turned red when the goddess of love, Aphrodite, pricked herself on one of the rose thorns, which bled on to the blossoms' (tattoodesigns.dk. 2009). Although in ancient times the rose was considered to be a masculine flower, over the years this stigma has transformed itself into a symbol of femininity and beauty. In the 1940's, during the Second World War, the rose tattoo became extremely popular amongst sailors who would get them on honor of loved ones that they left behind when they were away at sea (van As 2009: 34).



Figure 2.23 Rose tattoo with dagger and snake, 1970's







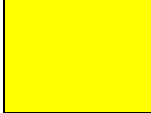


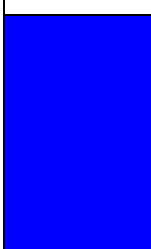

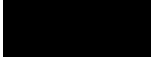



Figure 2.24 Rose tattoo, 1970's

Roses are seen to represent both inner and outer beauty (see Figure 2.24). Some people believe that the rose tattoo with thorns visible means that outer beauty is not a priority for that person. For others, there is a meaning of 'everlasting beauty with the symbolism of you can look but you cannot touch' (tattoodesigns.dk. 2009). When the rose is without thorns, it is a symbol of being in love. If one adds thorns to this design, there can now be an interpretation of being in love but acknowledging that with love comes sacrifices and risks... forget about those and you could get pricked. On the other hand, a black rose traditionally

represents death, and grief and is shown as a tribute to a loved one. Having a rose tattoo placed in a private place on ones' body (see Figure 2.24) honors the tradition of the rose being a symbol of secrecy. Alternatively, it can be worn proudly in a visible area on the body for everybody to see (van As 2009: 35).

Over the years, colours have been associated with different emotional qualities. The rose fascinated the Victorians, it was the flower that epitomized the romance of the era and these colours are 'generally taken into consideration when choosing a rose tattoo' (van As 2009: 35). Below is a table representing the colour with its corresponding meanings as viewed in western tattoo culture:

Table 2.1 Colour Table (van As 2009: 35).

Tattoo color		Meaning
	Red	'True love, especially a single rose'.
	Coral	'Desire'.
	Pink	'Elegance, grace and gentleness'.
	Orange	'Enthusiasm, excitement and fascination'.
	Yellow	'Jealousy (historically), friendship, gladness, joy and devotion'.
	Light Peach	'Modesty and friendship'.
	White	'Purity, innocence, spiritual love, youth and secrecy'.
	Blue	'Fascination, fantasy, impossibility (this is mainly because the blue rose does not really exist. Blue roses are white or lavender roses that have been dyed)'.
	Purple	'Enchantment and love at first sight'.
	Black	'Death and darkness'.
	Red & white combined	'Mercy, unity and justice'.
	Red & yellow combined	'Congratulations'
	Yellow & orange combined	'Passionate thoughts'.

Floral designs were a crucial element in traditional tattooing. They were extremely versatile visually and could be utilized both on their own, or in a composition consisting of multiple elements. An example as previously stated, would be the hula pin-up girl with an adornment of Hawaiian blossoms or a memorial tattoo with a 'respectable' flower and banner with someone's name. Clerk (2008a: 214) explains that:

Flowers in general, acted as a symbol of nature and the life cycle, although individual flowers held meanings of their own. After the First World War, the poppy became widely known as a tribute to servicemen who died in battle. The rose – by far and away the most popular flower tattoo – was an unmistakable declaration of love and romance (Clerk 2008: 214).

2.6.3 The Animal Kingdom.

An extremely popular design subject matter in this category would be the serpent with fearsome fangs and poisonous venom. As Clark (2008a: 211) explains:

Some cultures regarded the snake as a symbol of nature or of rebirth and eternal life, but this was hardly the case in Europe and America during the war years. Here the snake stood for something sneaky, nasty, ill-tempered, frightening and, sometimes sexual (Clark 2008a: 211).

The snake could stand on its own, for example the popular cobra with its dramatic flattened hood, or appear in a composition, coiled around a dagger, sword or skull. Either way, the snake had a threatening presence. On the other hand, a snake wrapped around a pin-up girl became a phallic symbol. With the ban of nude tattoos in the Navy during the Second World War, the snake became a tattoo artist's ally in the cover up. 'The addition of a snake, curling itself around the 'offensive' body parts, produced an especially racy tattoo' (Clerk 2008).

The insect world was by and large not greatly represented in the tattooing of this period but an extremely popular tattoo, especially amongst females, was the butterfly. An attraction was the butterflies' display of pattern and colour combinations. Some people associated the

butterfly with personal transformation, balance and elegance. There was a movement called the 'Butterfly Club' and to be associated with this club meant that a lady had to have a tattoo of a butterfly across her bikini line. The visual presence of the big cats (see Figure 2.25) had been popular subject matter in any tattoo studio, both in the past and still today.

Bold and brilliant, sleek and fast, the public demand for tattoos celebrating these magnificent creatures never wavered, and the tattoo artists worked hard in their determination to capture the strength and deadly beauty of the tiger, the regal dignity and bravery of the lion, and the stealth and intricate markings of the leopard (Clerk 2008: 206).

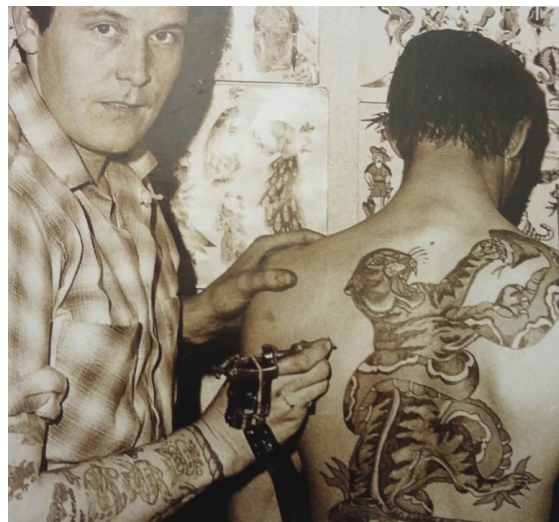


Figure 2.25 Tattoo artist, Ron Ackers tattooing a tiger and snake, 1950's

Man's companion in battle, transport, hunting, sport and a symbol of friendship, loyalty trust and mutual respect is the horse. The representation of the horse in tattoos has a visual impact of free-spirited beauty, muscle bound power and great speed. Clerk explains the methodology behind a popular tattoo design, which has reference to the horse: 'One particular design – Pharaoh's Horses – had become a classic by the 1920's, keeping old-school tattooers busy for hours on end as they inked three large horses' heads onto the backs and chests of customers, and onto each other' (Clerk 2008: 198)..

The dramatic illustration was based on a famous painting by British artist John Fredrick Herring Sr, completed in 1848. Herring, using archaic spelling, named his work Pharoah's Chariot Horses, and versions of it were attempted by subsequent generations of painters. An

early rendition reportedly exists, dating back to the 1700s, but without a signature. Herring's masterpiece was the blueprint for tattoo artists working in the early 1900s, although many adapted it to suit their personal styles and differing pictorial frames, and some reversed the direction of the horses' heads (see Figure 2.26 and 2.27). Originally, they faced west. The horses, as depicted by Herring and a legion of tattooers, were majestic white Arabian stallions with windswept manes, charging with all their might towards a disaster that was completely beyond their control, an incontrovertible demonstration of the power of the almighty. In the finest tattoo versions, the horses looked wonderfully individual yet collectively engaged, fully attuned to each other and the commands of the unseen charioteer (Clerk 2008: 198).



Figure 2.26 A Pharaoh's Horses back piece



Figure 2.27 A Pharaoh's Horses back piece

2.6.4 Religious

Tattoos with religious subject matter appealed to both the rebellious and God-fearing circles of society. While criminals, outlaws, gangs and bikers chose tattoos that clearly displayed their disregard for God-fearing society, others put their faith in religion or fate and they received tattoos to depict that.

Crosses, crucifixes, angels, doves, praying hands, rosary beads, sacred hearts, the star of David, the Rock of Ages and the lotus flower were staples of old-school flash. Soldiers and sailors going to war derived reassurance from religious markings, which they also hoped would persuade their gods to look after them. Circus sideshow exhibits were especially keen on holy tattoos, believing that these would be less likely to upset the public. The idea was that punters would therefore be more inclined to part with hard cash for the signed pictorial pitch cards that promoted the attractions (Clerk 2008: 166).

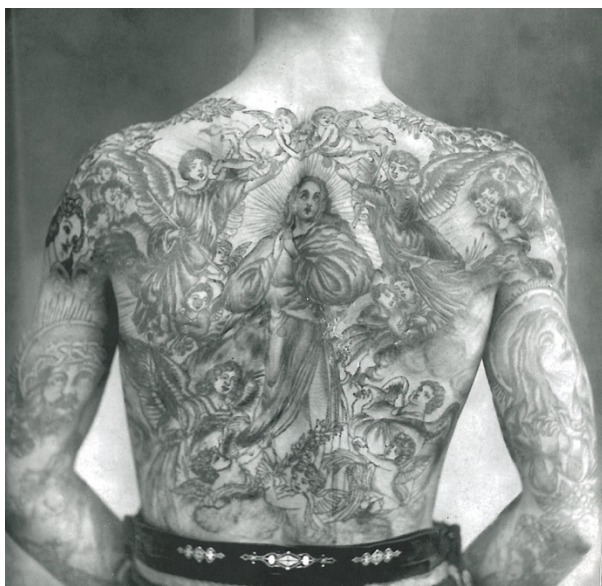


Figure 2.28 A back piece⁶ of Madonna and Angels, 1915



Figure 2.29 A chest piece of Christ's Crucifixion and angels, 1960's

⁶ A back piece and or a chest piece is a term that describes a tattoo or a composition of tattoos that span a large area of the body.

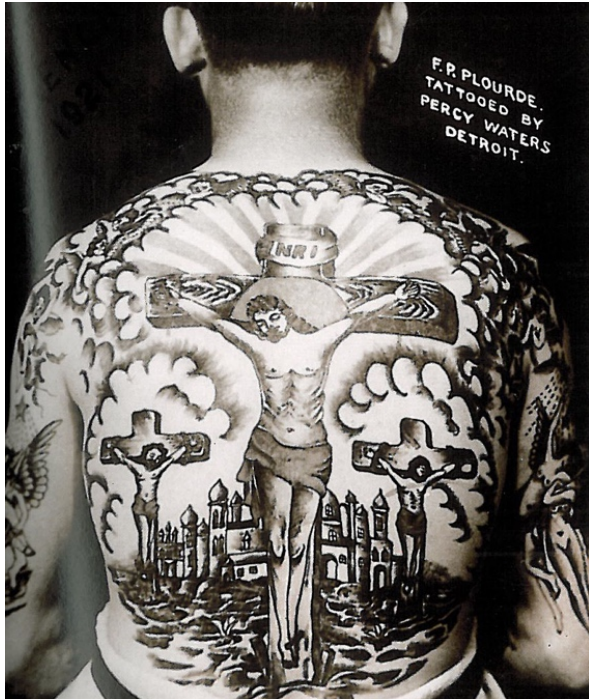


Figure 2.30 A back piece of Christ's crucifixion, 1920's



Figure 2.31 Emma de Burgh with her Famous *Last Supper* back piece, 1890's

Many religious compositions comprised of a large visual center piece, with smaller elements arranged around it (Figures 2.28 to 2.31). A popular choice was an adaptation of Leonardo da Vinci's *The Last Supper* and the Crucifixion (see Figure 2.30). An example of the *Last Supper* can be seen on the back of Emma de Burge around the 1890's (see Figure 2.31). Typically, subject matter of the crucifixion consisted of the head and shoulders of Christ, with the preferred position being big and bold on the center of ones back. This design was common in most tattoo artists flash collection and the general visual subject matter and inspiration was drawn from Guido Reni's seventeenth-century painting, *The Head of Christ Crowned with Thorns* (Clerk 2008: 177). Both these biblical subject matters tested the skill and patience of tattoo artists throughout this period.

2.6.5 Lady Luck and Her Superstitions

Clerk comments that 'these images were popular among people who preferred to trust in chance and destiny rather than God and the church, or perhaps felt that a little extra protection against bad fortune wouldn't go amiss, especially if they were soldiers or sailors

setting off into unknown dangers' (Clerk 2008: 178). This genre of designs takes inspiration and reference from visual elements that have become popular for their superstitious values. Visual elements such as the four-leaf clover, the horseshoe, rabbit's foot and number seven became extremely popular tattoo designs. They could stand on their own or be combined with wording in a ribbon to enhance the designs appeal. Popular combinations utilized the word 'Luck', 'Good Luck' or 'Lady Luck' to personalize the design.

'Lady Luck' could for example be represented with a pin-up girl, holding a winning hand of four aces or rolling the winning pair of dice. These elements could also be utilized individually. According to Clerk (2008: 178) 'These tattoos represented the naturally optimistic qualities of the gambler, the perpetual search for good luck, rather than the contrary, cynical warnings of that other great vintage classic, Man's Ruin'.

2.6.6 Prisons and Gangs

The concept of prison gangs was becoming well established by the 1950's. Clerk (2008: 152) states:

While no one bore any ill-will towards the soldiers, sailors and circus folk who paraded their tattoos with such chutzpah during the years around the First and Second World Wars, there existed a huge distaste for civilians bearing body-markings. Such people were to be avoided at all costs: they were immediately identified, rightly or wrongly, as jailbirds, gangsters or misfits Clerk (2008: 152).

In prison, hygiene was far from perfect, and as a result tattooing carried a high risk of infection. The tattoo equipment was unsophisticated with the most common tool being a makeshift needle, which was placed in a hollow tube. Pigment came from the ink of a pen or any known substance that once heated, could produce a permanent dye, which was commonly dark blue or black (Clerk 2008: 155). Designs were not detailed and often appeared child-like and clumsily detailed. Graphic methodology of prison tattoos was no exception when compared to other visual elements of the time. As well as their visual meanings, some had coded messages that criminals would understand and were worn by the criminal as a status symbol and a declaration of that status. Just getting a tattoo in prison gave the

perception that an individual was tough and able to handle pain and danger. Although there was a diverse amount of prison tattoo designs, a few visual elements became popular. Common tattoos that reflected the 'daily grind' of prison life could have the visual representation of a prison wall or a clock with no hands, which was usually tattooed on the upper arm (Clerk 2008b: 156). Prison bars with the sun shining through or a bird outside these bars or prison walls breaking outwards symbolized the prospect of freedom. Chains, locks, hourglasses, spiders and cobwebs signified the passing of time while in prison and an image of a tombstone with a number inscribed, represented the length of the wearers sentence. Some designs took on a more philosophical attitude, for example using imagery of the theatre mask with its comedy and tragedy visual elements to symbolize and be a reminder of the heavy price to pay for the good times that were had on the outside (Clerk 2008: 156).

Similarly, as sailors and soldiers got tattoos that represented the loved ones they left at home, so too did prisoners. Subject matter was slightly different and typically consisted of a female face, sometimes crying, which represented the mother or loved one that was loyally waiting on the outside. Probably the most iconic prison tattoo, that is still current today, which has been seen on prisoners and has played a part on the cinema screen and print media, is the teardrop tattoo (see Figure 2.32). These could represent the prison term with the symbolism of the sadness of being in jail or the more severe accreditation of the prisoner having committed murder. In addition to the teardrop, imagery of a knife or dagger sometimes dripping in blood and penetrating a skull represented the symbolism of murder. These graphic designs often were a warning to individuals that the person was fearless and willing to kill. On the other end of the spectrum were tattoo that took on a funny visual appeal and consisted mainly of cartoon subject matter. According to Staff, the five dots on the area between the thumb and the forefinger (see Figure 2.33) represent time spent in prison, with the four dots on the outside signifying the prison walls, with the fifth dot in the middle representing the prisoner (Staff 2014).

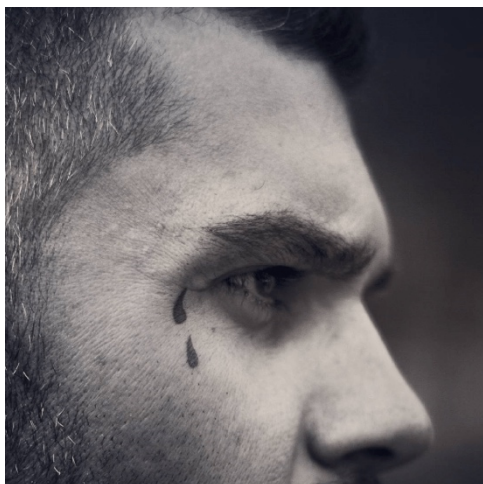


Figure 2.32 Teardrop tattoo



Figure 2.33 Five dot tattoo

2.6.7 Gangs and Bikers

Prison gangs were well established by the 1950's. Inmates aligned themselves with gangs inside prison for various reasons, with the most common factor being for protection, especially if you were a newcomer. These gangs were generally grouped according to racial belonging and members would get the gang insignia tattooed and most of the gangs had affiliations with criminal organisations in the outside world. An example was the Hells Angels that formed in 1948 in Southern California. Although they always insisted that they were not a gang but a motorcycle club, the angels captured the imagination and personified the fears of the American public at large throughout the 1950s and beyond with their freewheeling lifestyle and fearsome reputation (Clerk 2008: 162). The club logo, 'The Death's Head' which consisted of a skull in an aviator's hat with wings, was only allowed to be worn or tattooed if one was a member. Popular visual imagery consisted of skull, wings, flames, weapons and wheels. These tattoos were often bold and descriptive and gave the impression of the wearer's bravery and willingness to take risks and live on the edge. Clerk describes the visual imagery in more depth,

The wheel, or the complete motorcycle, with wings was the classic biker's tattoo, since it encompassed the twin themes of power and speed. Such designs frequently incorporated other images including the eagle, symbolising independence and freedom, the American Flag, worn patriotically, and bright orange or red flames. In biker artwork, the flames stood for passion and danger,

loaded with the threat of something uncontrollable or devastating. Also common were double lightning bolts; the allusion to the German SS was intended to be aggressive (if not sympathetic to the Nazis). Many tattoos were accompanied by phrases such as 'Ride Free', 'Live to Ride' and 'Live Fast, Die Young', which came into parlance via the 1949 Humphrey Bogart movie, *Knock On Any Door*. Some of the great soldier and sailor slogans found their way on to the bodies of bikers, primarily those that upheld solidarity in the face of peril. The Death or Glory tattoo, featuring the face of a ferocious tiger, although it often involved a skull. Death Before Dishonor typically appeared on a scroll or banners, with an eagle and/or a dagger included in the design (Clerk 2008: 165).

The skull is classic symbol of iconic imagery associated with gangs and bikers from the very beginning and is still a firm favorite today. Clerk gives insight, as to the visual communication of the skull:

More shockingly than any other symbol in the tattooer's repertoire, skulls, with their cavernous eye sockets and grinning teeth, represented the certainty of death, almost mocking the viewer. They served as a constant reminder that life is short and should be lived to the limit, and they emphasized the fearlessness of the rider. Cocking even more of a look at the grim reaper, some biker's tattoos, with dark humor, portrayed the skull wearing horns or a top hat. The flaming skull was another popular design (Clerk 2008: 165).

Like pirates with their chilling Jolly Roger flag, bikers seized upon the image of the skull as something frightening and certainly anti-social. Perhaps it was no coincidence that the death's-head skull, beloved by motorcycle gangs, bore a striking resemblance to the pirates' emblem, distinguishable only by the position of the crossed bones. However, some sources say that bikers believed the death's-head skull to have protective properties' (Clerk 2008: 165).

The methodologies and meanings described above are just an introduction to the rich world of tattooing, and coupling these facets with the design and visual appearance of the tattoos within the context of this period completes the circle.

2.7 Classification of Tattoos

A more accurate classification and description of tattoos was established in 1953 (Ferguson-Rayport, Griffith and Straus 1955). This classification and description can be seen in the table below.

Table 2.2 Classification and description of tattoos (Post 1968).

Tattoo category	Tattoo type	Tattoo description
1. Identification Tattoos	1.1 Emblems	Various branches of service, anchors
	1.2 Personal Data	Initials or name, social security number.
	1.3 Diary	Specific events in life, with or without dates.
2. Love Tattoos	2.1 Idealized Love	Head of a women in flower or half-moon, a woman draped in a flag.
	2.2 'Mother'	Heart, flower, etc., inscribed with 'Mother'
	2.3 Sentimental	Girl's name, hearts, flowers, hands clasped.
	2.4 Pornographic	Nudes: with or without snakes, daggers, peacocks, scarves, bathing suits, and those which present an obscene view to the patient and a more acceptable pose when inverted for the viewer.
3. Bombastic and Pseudo Heroic Tattoos		Skull and crossbones; dagger with 'Death before Dishonor'; dagger through the skin; 'Man's Ruin' as a caption for a woman in a wine glass; dragon, panther, tiger
4. Inveighing Fate		Card with '13'; horse shoe with 'Good Luck'; 'Good Luck, Hard Luck'; Friday the 13 th a spade (playing card figure)

5. Religious and Commemorative		Cross: 'In Memory of...'; Inscription about Jesus, etc.
6. Private Symbols		Of significance limited to wearer
7. Miscellaneous		Animals and birds: horse's head, pig, rooster, squirrel, bat, bluebird, butterfly. Flowers: roses.

Six points gathered from many unscientific lay type reports suggest the following when dealing with tattoos and their classification on an individual as per the journal titled: '*The Relationship of Tattoos to Personality Disorders*', published by Post (1968) in 1968:

- (a) One person in ten has a tattoo.
- (b) Three of five times as many men as women have tattoos.
- (c) The basic motivation is exhibitionism.
- (d) Their frequency rises in periods of crises, large-scale moments, the 'Holiday Spirit'.
- (e) Their frequency rises when the person is drinking
- (f) One third of tattooist's work involves requests to erase, cover, or clean-up existing tattoos

(Post 1968: 519)

2.8 Conclusion

I have mentioned that this study is concerned with the graphic imagery of tattoos. It was therefore necessary in this chapter to discuss the elements that helped aid the development of this visual communication. The foundation of this chapter shows that there are five main pillars:

- (a) History, i.e. a history is required to give context to this study and provide a scope to the area of tattooing that is focused on, which in this case is the Historical emergence of Western & European Tattooing;

(b) Tattoo elements, or understanding the tools and procedures used during this time period gives the reader a perspective of past and present-day tattooing;

(c) Visual elements, as tattoos are rich in visual representations, rich in subject matter or purely graphic images on the skin. These visual elements were not only reserved for the tattoos themselves but the tattoo establishments created their own unique visual appeal and character;

(d) Tattoo classification where the tattoo classification of 1953 gives an indication of tattoos and where they fit within broad categories. Are these classifications correct? Do they correctly apply to the South African tattoo industry during the same period in time? The in-depth interview findings in chapter five of this study attempt to uncover this information.

(e) Tattoo meaning, this chapter scratches the surface on the meanings and mythologies of Western tattoos. Unlocking information that turns a simple two-dimensional marking on the skin into graphic imagery that tells a story;

In the following chapter, I will present a more in-depth account of the construction of meaning, graphic communication and associated theories.

CHAPTER THREE

A SEMIOTIC PERSPECTIVE OF TATTOOS AS A FORM OF GRAPHIC COMMUNICATION

3.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with three main areas: (a) selected social theories such as deviance theory, anthropology and visual anthropology which are broadly relevant to the study of tattoos, (b) pictorial communication theories including the various visual communication frameworks relevant to the study of tattoos and (c) a semiotic perspective of tattoos. It is important to note that points (a) and (b) are meant as background information, setting up a visual framework which is anchored, with point (c) being the main theoretical perspective of the study.

3.2 Social theories relevant to the study of tattoos

As described in the introduction of this chapter, below are the selected theories relevant to this study.

3.2.1 Deviance Theory

Deviance is defined as departing from usual or accepted standard (English 2013). Kosut (2006b) comments that up 'until the last two decades of the twentieth century, academics recognized tattooing as a semiotic representation of pathology and deviancy' (Kosut 2006b: 73). Tattoos have commonly been 'associated with criminality, mental illness, deviant subculture groups' or strange and dangerous foreign and savage others (Kosut 2006b: 73). Definitions of deviance have evolved over time as definitions of mental illness evolved. Madness has been redefined 'over the course of centuries' (Foucault 1973). Foucault (1973) indicates that 'during the Renaissance, mental illness was regarded as a culturally integrated or normalized social problem' (Foucault 1973). There was no division or contrast between concepts of madness and reason. 'However, by the nineteenth century, scientists theorized madness as an individualistic moral failure and condemned the insane to asylums' (Foucault 1973). During the twentieth century, treating mental illness shifted from the asylum-era approach of the nineteenth century, where emphasis was placed on (a) observation, (b) recovery and (c) therapeutic remedy. This led to the opinion that mental illness could be treated (Foucault 1973).

Tattooing has been rooted in the deviance category for centuries. 'In the late nineteenth century'; European criminologists held the theory that deviant behavior was the result of biological factors' (Foucault 1973). Their influence was attributed to the popular and scientific beliefs throughout the twentieth century (Gell 1993; Kosut 2006b). Corradi (1997) summed it up well, by comparing tattooing to the tango. 'Like the tango, which migrated from the brothels of Buenos Aires to the Tony cabarets of Paris in the early twentieth century, tattooing has undergone many voyages' (Corradi 1997). As the stigma of tattoos has changed, there too has been an identity shift with more middle-aged clientele getting tattoos (O'Brien 2000). It is interesting to note how deviance has evolved over the years to include many more facets and categories. 'In the United States throughout most of the twentieth century, tattoo culture was attributed to a few structural circumstances: firstly, tattoos were believed to have originated from within so-called primitive or uncivilized non-western cultures. Colonialism played a huge part in the modern history of tattooing in the west' (Corradi 1997). Secondly that these non-western cultures were 'associated with the eccentric world of carnivals' and sideshows and 'dodgy' urban neighborhoods that catered to servicemen looking for illicit fun (Kosut 2006b: 80). Examples of this can be seen in the writings of Cesare Lombroso (1915), who linked tattooing to degenerate behavior. According to him, 'tattooed criminals could be comparable to tattooed savages because they shared a lesser sensitivity to pain compared to civilized people within the general population' (Gell 1993; Caplan 2000: 156-73).

During the twentieth century, the tone was not much different to that of the time period of this study. The view of tattooing as a sign of deviant behavior was heightened in *'Tattoo: Secrets of a Strange Art as Practiced Among the Natives of the United States'* (Parry 1933). Parry suggested that, 'American people were drawn to tattoos due to dysfunction and sexual deviation' (Parry 1933). He made the 'relationship between tattooing and homosexuality blatantly apparent' (Parry 1933). He argued that 'criminals and soldiers who had tattooed pictures of the most lubricious inspiration... [were]...homosexuals who deny their perversion by insisting, often with blatant obscenity, upon their normality' (Parry 1933: 26). The statement regarding the sexual preference of soldiers could be argued to be ill represented and contradictory as during the eighteenth century, Kennedy (2006) comments that 'a field officer in the British army required his officers to add a regimental crest tattoo underneath their uniforms to improve 'esprit de corps'—and to help identify the bodies' (Kennedy 2006: 1). During the Second World War tattoos surged in popularity, with sailors

getting tattoos of patriotic themes in every port that they stopped (Kennedy 2006). This is an important fact to consider in this study, as Durban harbor was a strategic and very important key point for the allies during the Second World War. How did this affect the tattoo industry in Durban during the time? Were Durban's tattoo pioneers involved? Recent research has suggested a shift in the academic interpretation of tattooing, reflecting the 'current popularization and institutional elevations of tattoo culture. Most noteworthy, is that these studies based on ethnographic research, document changes in tattoo status and the demographics' (Kosut 2006b: 82).

The study of deviance has evolved from multiple facets that branch off the mostly negative deviance. There have been arguments based on what is known as positive and negative deviance (Irwin 2003). Scholars in favor of negative deviance supported the idea that 'deviants are norm breakers treated as inferior to conventional individuals' (Irwin 2001). Advocates of positive deviance Dodge (1985) and Ben-Yehuda (1990) 'have argued that norm breaking is not inherently negative and have looked at positive deviants as those who exceed social norms' (Heckert 1989). According to Post (1968), categorized tattoo types, referring strictly to ornamental varieties show a 'presence of a tattoo or tattoos, can serve to indicate the presence of a personality disorder' (Post 1968). This could then lead to or be characterised by behavior, 'which deviates from contemporary social norms' (Post 1968). The benefit of such a classification of tattoos was thought to establish a 'correlation between the presence of a tattoo and social deviancy. This would be most beneficial in that it could be a readily discernible mark of predisposition toward such conduct' (Post 1968). Taking into consideration Lombroso's feeling that, 'the presence of a tattoo regardless of how simple, is a sign of atavism' (Lombroso and Ferrero 1915). Lombroso and Ferrero elaborate, saying that:

the presence of the tattoo indicates that there was, or is, a personality disorder which manifested itself in the tattoo, and which could again appear in socially deviant behavior (Post 1968: 516).

3.2.2 Anthropology

Anthropology represents a 'culture or a segment of society to an audience of different cultural backgrounds' (Banks and Morphy 1999). An understanding of the distinctions across

cultures is an integral facet for the overall objectives of anthropology (Banks and Morphy 1999). More recent developments have seen increased sensitivity of the variety of human representative systems. These would include the body, art, 'material culture and the expression of social and cultural platforms' (Banks and Morphy 1999).

3.2.3 Visual Anthropology

Visual Anthropology has become an established sub-discipline of sociocultural anthropology. The interdisciplinary nature of anthropology means that there is a constant tension between centripetal and centrifugal forces. With all the sub disciplines associated, this could threaten the logical and consistency of the center (Banks and Morphy 1999). Visual Anthropology is a relatively new branch of the main body, broad in topics, which are of importance and meaning as it lies between the interface of anthropology and its audience, from the gathering of the information, the presentation of this information and the production of the information. If stripped down to the bone, visual anthropology has a dual focus: 'the use of visual material in anthropological research, and the study of visual systems and visual culture' (Banks and Morphy 1999). Therefore, it can be argued that Visual Anthropology can incorporate the whole 'package' when it comes to anthropology as a whole, from the recording of the data, the analysis of that data, to the distribution/ dispersion of the research results.

A strength of visual anthropology is its ability to analyse visual systems, determine their properties and the conditions of their interpretation. The results or findings are then related to the social and political platforms of which they form part. In the case of this study, I will analyse the tattoo industry from the beginning of the twentieth century during the period that Durban tattoo pioneers applied their trade. A second aim is to analyse visual information to spread anthropological knowledge. Again, with regards to my intended research, tattooing has a rich visual component not just in the tattoos themselves on ones' skin but also in the designs and visual meaning. The anthropological knowledge can be shared with both tattoo artists in South Africa and tattoo artists throughout the world. With the increase in tattoo popularity, the anthropological knowledge can also be useful for social and cultural groups that share tattoo interests.

A post-modern 'critique of anthropology has been that mythology has been based on the double illusion of the neutral observer and the observable social phenomenon' (Banks and Morphy 1999). During this time, neither of these factors positively aided in the practice and the social standings of tattooing. Throughout the years, tattoos have commonly been associated with 'criminality, mental illness, and deviant subculture groups' (Kuwahara 2003). Kuwahara (2003) comments in relation to tattooing and identity that:

Tattooing is embedded in the historical and cultural contexts of each society. It locates oneself in the society and forms the relationships accordingly. The choice of being tattooed or not is to make a statement of who you are and whom you are living with and for (Kuwahara 2003).

Caplan (2000) notes that 'the tattoo occupies a kind of boundary status on the skin, and this is paralleled by its cultural use as a marker of difference, an index of inclusion and exclusion'. Kuwahara, makes two valid points:

(a) 'The body has been theorized and objectified in many strands of Western thought: philosophy, psychology, physiology, biology, feminist theory, sociology, and anthropology, but it is not necessarily the case that everybody starts objectifying his/her body in these particular ways' (Kuwahara 2003).

(b) 'Through self-objectification and the objectification of other's body, people recognize the similarity and difference of their own body in comparison with the others. If their body is similar within the collective, it emphasizes the sense of belonging and solidarity. At the same time, they differentiate themselves from people of the different collective. If the body is different from the others within the collective, people establish personal identity. Collective and personal identities are established by this inclusion and exclusion on the basis of similarity and difference. The body, both its appearance and practice, plays a significant role in establishing identities' (Kuwahara 2003: 22).

With the introduction of new social platforms and technological advances, visual anthropologists have examined the reception of visual media, beginning with television and the more recent social media platforms such as the internet, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. These visual tools were not available during the period discussed in this study; therefore the 'neutral' observer mentioned above documented most observations.

3.3 Pictorial communication theories relevant to the study of tattoos

As described in the introduction of this chapter, below are the selected communication theories relevant to this study.

3.3.1 Graphic Communication

Twyford (1981), whose book titled: *Graphic Communication*, which contains information and ideas conveyed through pictures and signs, comments that graphic communication may be seen as the use of pictures which clearly and unambiguously transmit and translate information in certain contexts. He elaborates, saying that the study of graphic communication uses pictorial images that characterizes a special acting and thinking in man, which then enables an individual to change his or her world by using representations or models of reality, rather than by acting directly on the world itself (Twyford 1981).

Twyford (1981: 6) suggests six questions that might aid in the consideration of graphic communication:

1. How does 'anything' represent 'something'?
2. What sort of information may be represented, and how is it portrayed?
3. How do we perceive pictures?
4. What are the social and cultural needs and implications of picture making?
5. Are there any factors of human development, which relate to drawing skills and ideas?
6. What sort of drawing is being taught and why?

The above-mentioned questions can be asked when deciphering the graphic communication of tattoos. When looking at a picture, or in the case of this study, a tattoo, one can make the following observations:

- (a) The Direct representation in the picture. People may react immediately to the direct representation of its subject. An example can be the visual of a drawn hand that we imagine to have seen a hand instead of a drawn hand.
- (b) Our association with images. People may react to a picture due to the association of the meaning that we have learnt. Being aware of this allows the picture to aid in the understanding of what the picture is communicating. For example, hand pointing, usually gives the viewer an indication of direction.
- (c) Special knowledge about pictures. It may not always be instantly obvious what the picture is trying to communicate. Sometimes a specialised understanding is required to fully understand its meaning.
- (d) The imagery in pictures. Twyford (1981: 15) suggests that for one to begin to understand drawing, it is important to be aware of how we react to pictures and recognising our natural reactions to a picture, which is basically our perception of the marks made. Twyford (1981: 15) takes it a step further by saying:

'We may also realise the power of a picture's imagery and symbolism, by identifying the artist's intention in what is being communicated. Furthermore, we need to exercise our own aesthetic judgement about what we see. Whenever we look at drawings we need to consider the form of a picture, that is 'how it is made', as well as the meaning of a picture, that is, 'why is it drawn'. To achieve a fuller understanding of a picture it should also be studied within its historical and cultural context, and the value people place on it should be note.'

- (e) The reaction to the information being communicated by pictures. When viewing a picture, being aware of how to act upon the information conveyed by that picture may help in one's understanding of the picture. The information contained in the picture will usually set the context of the picture.

When looking at, and or using a picture, it is important to understand the picture as they are, as they are generally related with *objects*, *actions* or *ideas* or a combination of the three. Twyford (1981: 22) gives the following example:

Pictures of *objects* may be used to recognize, explain, relate, record or explore particular facets of what an object is. Pictures which describe the notion of *action* may explore movement, sequence, incidents or cause and effect. Similarly, pictures may be representational or arbitrary, which means they may explore *ideas* concerning basic concepts, images, signs, graphical symbols of mathematical notions, as well as encompassing aesthetic significances (Twyford 1981: 22).

The key to achieving graphic communication that works is the balance of the skill and artistry in the production of the images that clearly convey their intended information. As with the study of language, drawing can be seen as an expression of 'visual language' (Twyford 1981).

Twyford (1981) breaks graphic communication down into three broad themes when analyzing the information of pictures, their context and form, that is, in the way they are drawn. They are:

- (a) The Natural World
- (b). Man-made Objects
- (c) Symbols

3.3.1 (a) The Natural World

Illustrations and or drawing are an effective way of exploring the nature and character of people, their work, their feelings towards their circumstances, and photographs are often considered to represent reality (Twyford 1981: 22). Animals, birds, plants and other living things fall into this category. Studying the way the natural world moves, animal behavior, gestures and an understanding of anatomy is important when drawing life (Twyford 1981: 22). An example can be seen below when applying the above principles to tattoo imagery in the period investigated in this study. This example is titled 'Brooklyn' (see Figure 3.1) and was painted by the tattoo artist Joe Lieber in the 1940's. One can see the strong visual representation to the natural world with reference to both the animal and plant subject matter. Even though the artist has used his creative license in the visual design of the snake,

there is a strong association to the anatomy and behavioral characteristics of the living subject matter. A complex design is simplified to line work with a limited colour pallet but still retains its strong subject matter and depth of field. These designs were generally painted (in this example ink and watercolour on paper) and used to attract customers. A tracing of the artwork was made and used as a tattoo stencil.



Figure 3.1 'Brooklyn' by Joe Lieber, 1940's

3.3.1 (b) Man Made Objects

Twyford (1981) says that we construct models of the natural world as well as models of our world, adding that:

These models, or templates, may be expressed through language, theories, ways to ordering and calculating, but also by pictorial and diagrammatic conversions. We can manipulate our representations or models of reality rather than always acting directly on the world itself; this offers great economy and powers of organization. We can form templates which represent what we see and do, and use these models to extend our knowledge into new possibilities for action (Twyford 1981: 48).

When breaking this category down, there are many forms of drawing and picture making which describe and or communicate information related to the objects we use and make. Drawing communication can be broken down into the following points.

- (a) Drawing is both a flexible and creative tool that one can use to model and represent the things we encounter of which to instruct.
 - (b) Clarifying predictions of how ideas may turn out.
 - (c) When drawing is used in a design atmosphere, it is either 'private' thoughts or ideas of the designer or the 'public' expression of a proposal in action.
- (Twyford 1981: 48).

Twyford (1981: 49) elaborates by indicating that:

Drawing is a useful method of communicating general principles for a proposed project. However, its style and form reflect certain values and notions. This is essentially because a designer's drawing is a highly selective and personal version of what might exist. The gap between fantasy and reality can be enormous (Twyford 1981: 49).

He concedes that the gap between fantasy and reality can be enormous and occasionally when one draws, as a model of reality the result may not be entirely reliable. Drawing categories in this theme can comprise of technical drawing plans, production drawings, maintenance drawings, promotional artwork and illustrations. Throughout the various stages of the drawing, decisions are made that will influence the final form of the finished picture. Twyford (1981) indicates that these processes may be intuitively arrived at or consciously thought through so that the final technique that is chosen will achieve the best results of form and message. This relates to, for example, technical drawings for mechanical objects or carefully measured line drawing for illustrations.

The tattoo design example for this category is a design by the tattoo artist Sailor Jerry (see Figure 3.2).



Figure 3.2 Sailing ship by Sailor Jerry

The design depicts a sailing ship under full sail, navigating through rough seas and makes use of two drawing elements that fall under this category.

- (a) The design has an illustrative look and feel that was used in majority of tattoo design the twentieth century. The same technique is followed as in the 'Man made objects' category where the design is simplified to line work with a limited colour pallet.
- (b) Technical drawing influences can be seen as the design adheres to the correct proportions of a real sailing ship of its kind and follow the same specification with regards to the sails overall visual makeup.

The combination of these two elements results in a design that is pleasing to the eye and depicts the adventurous perception of sailing.

3.3.1 (c) Symbols

Graphic design plays an important role in this category with the formation of two-dimensional images, which have practical and symbolic significance. Twyford (1981: 75) indicates that elements of fantasy and magic are important in graphic design and explains that:

Graphically designed pictures communicate information about *actions*, *images* and *symbols*. This information may be read from a picture or within the picture. How we respond to these pictures is a complex issue; our reactions may be

learned within our culture, as much as derived from our perception of the images (Twyford 1981: 75).

One can ask, why do certain marks mean something? And how can one thing represent another? Twyford (1981) argues the symbols may work by analogy or association, and they should be considered within the cultural context in which they are used and understood. For example, wavy lines are often used to represent the concept of water visually, resulting in people associating wavy lines with water.

An example below is another artwork from Sailor Jerry and depicts a design of the nautical star (see Figure 3.3).



Figure 3.3 Nautical Star by Sailor Jerry

Above is a symbol of travel that sailors have relied upon for centuries which is associated with Polaris, the North Star⁷. When sailors took to the sea, navigation was a vital component of seafaring and the realization that Polaris's location remained fixed and indicated north helped ships keep track of their direction (Stone 2012).

⁷ 'Polaris, or the North Star, sits almost directly above the North Pole; therefore, it is a reliable gauge of North if you find yourself lost on a clear night without a compass' (Cain 2015).

3.3.2 Pictorial Communication

When one forms or creates a design, special awareness needs to be placed on the interaction between the form of the design and its meaning. This principle is key when transmitting the correct information within a given context. Twyford (1981) says that the decisions artists make about drawing techniques and effects, generally relate to their understanding of the subject that they are drawing. This is essential for tattoo artists to bear in mind when they create their designs. As the final design is destined for the skin, the design ultimately needs to be created using a technique that is compatible with the needle that is used to create the tattoo.

By analyzing the three examples above, one can see that these somewhat complex subject matters have been simplified to basic line work, yet have a detailed perception, which is achieved by the careful balance of colour and line. The use of colour allows for a supporting role with the line work of the design. With the regard to colour, Twyford (1981: 111) believes that;

Colour plays an important role in our perceptions of what we see. It is the property of light and has a direct effect on our senses and, at times, on our emotions. Observation of colour and colour relationships is an important experience in picture making. Colours are strongly influenced by other colours, by area and shade. Colours are not usually seen alone, but in relationship with other colours. The resulting contrasts are an important part of colour appreciation (Twyford 1981: 111).

According to Peters and Coombes (1977), an image or in the case of my study, a design, consists of three different ways of looking at an image, which can be seen in the table below.

Table 3.1 The three aspects of the picture (Peters and Coombes 1977: 4).

The picture as an object =	The picture in its material qualities: the substance of which it is made; its size, extent, shape; the picture as perceived by the senses.
----------------------------	--

The picture as representation =	The content of the picture, that which we can imagine with the aid of a picture, i.e. the depicted object.
The picture as a form =	The way in which the depicted object appears in the picture, i.e. the way in which the maker sees the object, or the way in which the object presents itself to the viewer.

Pictorial communication, according to Peters and Coombes (1997) takes two forms, which are set out in the table below.

Table 3.2 Two forms of pictorial communication (Peters and Coombes 1977: 33).




Pictorial Communication	
a) Contact of the viewer with the depicted object (which offers him a particular view)	b) Contact of the viewer with the maker's attitude towards the depicted object.

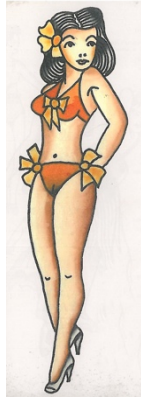

In this study option two will apply to most of tattoo pictorial communication as the artist created most of the tattoo designs during this period. People's interest was captured by designs that appeared in tattoo studios, on the skin of individuals and subject matter with mythological meanings.

3.3.3 Communicative Functions of Images

Peters and Coombes (1977) take the communication model from Jakobson (1960) and adapt it to the analysis of visual images / pictorial communication to derive a theoretical framework which consists of six distinct communicative functions that an image can perform. The table below lists them and provides an example for each (Jakobson 1960).

Table 3.3 The Six Distinct Communicative Functions (Peters and Coombes 1977).

Communicative Functions of Images		
Function	Description	Tattoo Example
1. Referential	<p>1.1. The basic function and most essential element of an image, which depicts and represents.</p> <p>1.2. Subject matter that provides visual representation of an object.</p> <p>1.3. Or objects that do not exist in reality but are created by imagination.</p>	 <p>Source:Tuttle (2008).</p>
2. Expressive	<p>2.1. A personal viewpoint, option, judgment, appreciation, feelings, wish or desire of the communicator.</p>	 <p>Source:Grimshaw (2008).</p>
3. Poetic	<p>3.1. The viewer concentrates attention and interest on the form of the image.</p> <p>3.2. Content of image is interesting and striking.</p>	 <p>Source: Danzl (2008).</p>

4. Conative	<p>4.1. All aspects of the image message that inclines the receiver to be more receptive to the message.</p> <p>4.2. The subject matter appeals to the needs or aspirations of the receiver.</p>	 <p>Source: (Grimm 2008)</p>
5. Phatic	<p>5.1. More apparent in verbal communication and social function.</p> <p>5.2) Content that immediately attracts and holds the attention of the viewer.</p> <p>5.3) The technical encoding of the communication process is essential to the formation of the message.</p>	 <p>Source: (Tuttle 2008)</p>
6. Metalinguistic	<p>6.1. More apparent in verbal communication.</p>	N/A

Communications professor, Paul Martin Lester indicates that in the field of *Perceptual Theories of Visual Communication*, two approaches may be considered.

- (a) The Cognitive Approach (dealt with in section 3.4.7 below).
- (b) The Semiotic Approach (dealt with in section 3.5.3 of this study).

Both of these approaches can be considered as being content-driven or perceptual theories. Lester (2000: 48) asserts that:

Although recognizing that vision cannot happen without light illuminating, structuring, and sometimes creating perceptions, these two approaches stress that humans are unique in the animal kingdom because they assign complex meaning to the objects that they see (Lester 2000: 48).

3.3.4 The Cognitive Approach

Lester (2000: 55) defines this approach as follows;

The cognitive theory of visual communication states that the human mind is an infinitely complex living organism that science may never fully understand. But meaningful connections between what people see and how they use those images arise when mental processing is viewed as a human rather than a mechanical process (Lester 2000: 55).

Lester identifies nine key mental activities that can affect visual perception which are described in the table below (Lester 2000: 52).

Table 3.4 Mental activities of the cognitive approach (Lester 200: 52-55).

Mental Activities of the Cognitive Approach	
Cognitive	Description
1. Memory	1.1. The link to all images we have ever seen. 1.2. Most important mental activity involved in accurate visual perception. 1.3. People use pictures as memory aids.
2. Projection	2.1. The way people make sense of objects/ images.
3. Expectation	3.1. The preconceived expectations of a scene. 3.2. What people expect to see in a specific image/ composition.
4. Selectivity	4.1. Most visual perception is an unconscious, automatic act by which large numbers of images enter and leave the mind without being processed. 4.2. The mind only focuses only on significant details within a scene.

5. Habituation	<p>5.1. To protect itself from everyday habitual activities, the mind tends to ignore visual stimuli selectivity.</p> <p>5.2) Over stimulation, particularly if a culture is much different from oneself, can result in the phenomenon called culture shock⁸.</p>
6. Salience	6.1. A stimulus will be noticed more if it has meaning to an individual.
7. Culture	<p>7.1. The manifestation of the way people act, talk, dress, behave socially and practice their religious beliefs and cultural influences have a tremendous impact on visual perception.</p> <p>7.2. Being aware of the signs of a particular culture will allow comprehension of some of the underlying reasons for their use.</p> <p>7.3. Culture spans ethnicity, economic situation, work, gender, age, sexual orientation and many other aspects of life.</p> <p>7.4. Determines the importance of signs that effect people who live in that culture.</p>
8. Words	<p>8.1. Although we see with our eyes for the most part, our conscious thoughts are framed in words.</p> <p>8.2. Words, like memory skills and culture, profoundly affect our understanding and subsequent long-term recall of a direct and mediated image.</p> <p>8.3. Strongest forms of communication are when words and images are combined in equal proportions.</p>

According to the cognitive approach, a viewer does not simply witness a light-structured object as in the ecological approach, but 'actively arrives at a conclusion about the perception through mental operations' (Lester 2000: 52).

3.3.5 Pictorial Communication Functions of Tattoos

Post (1968) indicates that there are three very broad categories into which all tattoos can be placed:

⁸ A term coined by anthropologist Kalervo Oberg, culture shock is defined as: 'A state of anxiety and frustration resulting from the immersion in a culture distinctly different from one's own' (Shock 2016).

- (a) Mnemonic devices
- (b) Erotic or decoration
- (c) Those with philosophical significance

The table below represents the classification and description of tattoos as discussed in chapter two with the communitive & graphic communication theme(s) for each classification, which were discussed earlier in this chapter.

Table 3.5 Classification and description of tattoos with the communitive and graphic communication theme (Ferguson-Rayport, Griffith and Straus 1955; Peters and Coombes 1977; Twyford 1981).

Tattoo category	Tattoo type	Tattoo description	Communitive Function	Graphic Communication Theme
1. Identification Tattoos	1.1. Emblems	Various branches of service, anchors	Referential	Symbols
	1.2. Personal Data	Initials or name, social security number.	Referential	Symbols
	1.3. Diary	Specific events in life, with or without dates.	Referential	The Natural World / Symbols
2. Love Tattoos	2.1. Idealized Love	Head of a women in flower or half-moon, a woman draped in a flag.	Referential / Expressive / Poetic	The Natural World / Symbols
	2.2. 'Mother'	Heart, flower, etc., inscribed with 'Mother'	Referential / Expressive / Poetic	Symbols
	2.3. Sentimental	Girl's name, hearts, flowers, hands clasped.	Referential / Expressive / Poetic	Symbols
	2.4. Pornographic	Nudes: with or without snakes, daggers, peacocks, scarves, bathing suits, and those which present an obscene view to the patient and a more	Referential / Expressive / Poetic / Conative	The Natural World / Symbols

		acceptable pose when inverted for the viewer.		
3. Bombastic and Pseudo Heroic Tattoos		Skull and crossbones; dagger with 'Death before Dishonor'; dagger through the skin; 'Man's Ruin' as a caption for a woman in a wine glass; dragon, panther, tiger	Referential / Expressive / Poetic	The Natural World / Man Made Objects/ Symbols
4. Inveighing Fate		Card with '13'; horse shoe with 'Good Luck'; 'Good Luck, Hard Luck'; Friday the 13 th a spade (playing card figure)	Referential / Expressive	Symbols
5. Religious and Commemorative		Cross: 'In Memory of...'; Inscription about Jesus, etc.	Referential / Expressive / Poetic	Symbols
6. Private Symbols		Of significance limited to wearer	Referential / Expressive	Symbols
7. Miscellaneous		Animals and birds: horse's head, pig, rooster, squirrel, bat, bluebird, butterfly. Flowers: roses.	Referential / Expressive / Poetic	The Natural world / Symbols

Coupled with the tattoo classification table above are the questions of what is the significance of a tattoo? What is the significance of the person obtaining one? Why did he or she get the tattoo? And, what does the tattoo mean to them? There appears to be three schools of thought on the subject, which attempt to classify the motivation of the act of being tattooed. Post (1968) describes these as:

- (a) The symbolism of the act.
 - (b) The exhibitionist element.
 - (c) The masochistic element.
- (Post 1968).

Early research in the nineteen sixties, which looked into the visual representation of tattoos that was conducted by the police department in Chicago, USA, noted a '27 year old, white male suspect that was under arrest for burglary and grand larceny (theft of personal property having a value above a legally specified amount.)' (Post 1968: 519) He had the words 'LOVE and HATE tattooed across his fingers of both hands, between the first and second joints' (Post 1968: 519). There was also the phrase 'LETS FUCK' tattooed between the second joints and the knuckles (see Figure 3.4). This phrase could only be read by interlocking the fingers. When asked why he chose the tattoo, he could give no reason and stated that he did not know (Post 1968: 519). These tattoos according to Dr. John Briggs, who at the time had conducted considerable work with tattoos, indicated that the bearer is a homosexual (Briggs 1958). Similarly, the words 'TRUE LOVE' (see Figure 3.5) tattooed across the fingers. This conclusion made by Dr Briggs in 1958 regarding sexuality is in stark contrast to the meaning of these finger tattoos today.

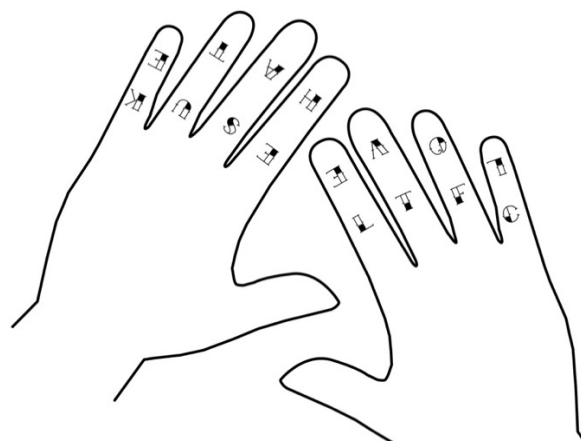


Figure 3.4 When the fingers are interlocked, the letters between the second joint and knuckles are ment to be read.

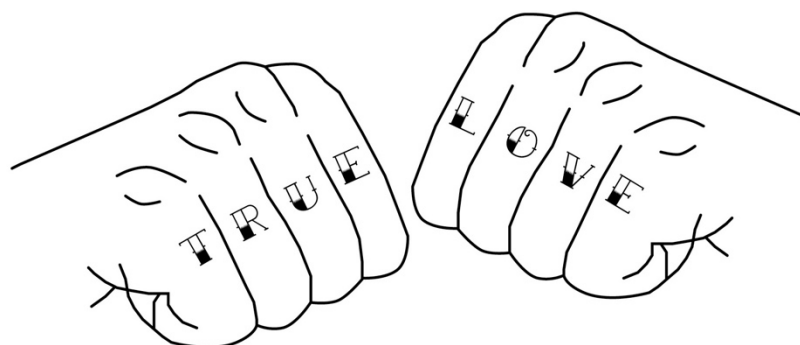


Figure 3.5 True love knuckle tattoo

The Naval Research Laboratory located in New London, Connecticut in 1959 conducted extensive research that 'indicated that tattoos might have definite psychological implications. The Navy was doubtlessly motivated by a desire to exclude psychological misfits from the highly selective submarine school volunteers to attitude and psychological testing' (Youniss 1959: 9). As a result, only exceptionally well-adjusted men could be trained. Based on a study conducted on 648 men, Lieutenant Youniss made some significant findings, listed below:

- (a) Subjects with multiple tattoos gave test indications of greater personal maladjustment than do subjects without tattoos or with only one tattoo.
- (b) The mean PIB (General Intelligence) of the one tattoo group did not differ significantly from that of the non-tattooed group.
- (c) The admission of a desire for future tattoos was found to be a significant variable in comparing the level of personal adjustment within both the tattooed and non-tattooed groups.
- (d) Within both groups it is found that subjects desiring future tattoos obtain scores higher in the direction of personal maladjustment and conflict than subjects who disclaim a desire to obtain tattoos.
- (e) Men possessing two or more tattoos have unresolved sexual and aggressive conflicts.

(Youniss 1959).

This report conducted by Lieutenant Youniss was footnoted by The Navy Department of Medical Research and it was noted that further research was needed in the relatively unexplored area. In stark contrast to the research conducted in the early to mid-twentieth century, the American Navy, under the new rules effective on the 30th April 2016, states:

There will be no limit to the size or number of tattoos sailors can have below the elbow and the knee. Previous rules restricted the sizes of tattoos on arms and legs. And for the first time, sailors can have a neck tattoo, although it cannot be longer than an inch in any direction (Mele 2016).

Rubin (2014) describes that:

The army have the toughest tattoo policy of all the branches of service. These rules ban tattoos on the head, neck, face, wrists, hands and fingers. Soldiers are allowed a maximum of four visible tattoos below the elbow or knee, but they must be smaller than the wearer's hand (Rubin 2014).

Deviance has prompted some lively debates. In the 1980's and 1990's researches began arguing for the introduction of a category of positive deviance (Irwin 2003). 'Strong theoretical statements suggested the deviance can only be conceptualized as a negative response to norm breaking' (Best and Luckenbill 1982; Sagarin 1985; Goode 1991). Elements that were considered as negative deviance in the past could be considered positive in today's society. The argument between advocates of the two deviant categories have wrestled with the idea that negative deviants are norm breakers whilst the advocates for positive deviance supported the idea 'that norm breaking is not inherently negative and have looked at positive deviants as those who 'exceed social norms' (Dodge 1985; Huryn 1986; Heckert 1989; Hughes and Coakley 1991; Heckert 1997, 1998)

3.4 A semiotic perspective of tattoos

Professor of Cognitive Semiotics Göran Sonesson (2008: 68) comments that all semioticians are:

Committed to the view that any explanation of an act of interpretation should account not only for the content but also for the expression involved in the process, as well as for the general connection (which is not necessarily a convention) joining expression to content (Sonesson 2008: 68).

Thus, tattoos should not only be viewed as mere markings on the skin, but should be looked at, whilst keeping Sonesson's (2008) perspective in mind. Section 3.5 deals with the elements of semiotics that are explored in this study.

3.4.1 Semiotic studies in general

Harrison (2003: 47) defines semiotics as the 'study of signs and for a sign to exist, there must be meaning or content (*the signified*) manifested through some form of expression or representation (*the sign*)' (Harrison 2003: 47). Added to this, Harrison (2003) explains that 'signs exist within semiotic systems and encompass the entire range of human practices' (Harrison 2003: 47). Lester (2000: 49) defines semiotics as the study or science of signs as is vital because signs filter through every message therefore signs can simply be defined as something that stands for something else. Almost any object, image or action and physical representations will have some meaning to someone somewhere. 'Any physical representation is a meaning beyond the object itself. As a result, 'for something to be a sign, the viewer must understand the meaning (Lester 2000: 49). Therefore a signs meaning must be learnt' (Lester 2000: 49). Below are the outlines of the three types of signs that fall under the Semiotic approach.

- (a) Chandler explains that, 'semioticians believe all people see the world through signs'.

Although things may exist independently of signs we know them only through the mediation of signs. We see only what our sign systems allow us to see... Semiotician argue that signs are related to the signifieds by social conventions in our use of various media that they seem 'natural,' and it can be difficult for us to realize the conventional nature of such relationships (Harrison 2003: 48).

Harrison suggests that: 'in addition to successful professional communicators use of intuition to imagine the audience and draw on their internal representation of the audience as a guide to writing, this internal representation will include a highly sensitized understanding of the sign conventions in a communicator's particular language semiotic system' (Harrison 2003: 48).

- (b) 'The meaning of signs is created by people and does not exist separately from them and the life of their social/cultural community. Signs have different meanings in different social and cultural contexts. Harrison (2003) elaborates by using the example of

language when pointing out the meanings that can range from very different 'languages' to the subtle and nuanced. For example, the spoken English in the U.S versus English spoken in India' (Harrison 2003: 48).

- (c) 'Semiotics systems provide people with a variety of resources for making meaning'(Harrison 2003: 48). The communicator makes the choice to use a specific sign. This gives the communicator the power to use signs in unconventional ways and therefore, affect and even alter meanings (Harrison 2003: 48). Lemke (1990) explains that, these are the contexts of 'what might have been' ... In the same sentence, what other words could have been used? At what point in the game, what other plays might have been made? For the same detail in the painting, what other colours could have been used? (Lemke 1990: 188)

3.4.2 Visual Social Semiotics

Visual social semiotics originated in the 1990's, making it a 'relatively new field of study, which can be defined as, the description of semiotic resources, what can be said and done with images (and other visual means of communication) and how the things people say and do with images can be interpreted' (Harrison 2003: 48). Harrison (2003: 48) uses the image below (see Figure 3.6) as an example of how visual semiotics can be used as a tool to analyse an image.



Figure 3.6 Supreme court of the U.S

Figure 3.6 depicts an image of the Supreme Court of the U.S, which is photographed in an ant's-eye perspective, which places the Supreme Court building at a high vertical angle from the viewer. This point of view glorifies the court by 'emphasizing the grandeur of its architecture and its classical elegance, which compels the viewer to look up at the building (Harrison 2003: 48). This makes a statement of the power of the court. (Harrison 2003: 48). Taking the image from different viewpoints could alter the visual semiotics of the image. If the photographer had taken the photograph from a bird's-eye viewpoint by making the Supreme Court building smaller and allowing the visual context with its surroundings to be displayed, it could give the visual impression 'of the people, by the people, and for the people' (Harrison 2003: 49). A third example could be a photograph taken on the steps of the building, which would give the viewpoint of horizontally towards the interior. Utilizing this perspective 'would imply equality between citizens and the judicial system' (Harrison 2003: 49).

The above principles of visual semiotics can also be used when analyzing tattoos or images on the skin, which have their own individual compositions and viewpoints.

Table 3.5 Example of a sign comparison in a Semiotic system

Sign	Message
Green Traffic Light	Go / proceed through traffic light. (Harrison 2003: 47)
Tattoo	Tattoo meaning.




These principles can vary from location to location as many communities are different and the signs used may differ. Harrison (2003: 48) gives an example that 'the colour red indicates mourning for people in Ivory Coast, whereas, in contrast, it represents procreation and life for people in India' (Harrison 2003: 48).

3.4.3 Visual Semiotics

There are three important principles that social semioticians apply when analysing a semiotic system such as imagery and language. Visual Semiotics can be broken down into three sign

types a) Iconic; b) Indexical and c) Symbolic. Below is a table that gives a description of each sign type and a tattoo related example for each.

Table 3.6 Three Signs of the Semiotic Approach (Lester 2000).

Sign Type	Description	Example
1. Iconic	<p>1.1. Closely resemble the things they represent</p> <p>1.2. Simple Drawings.</p>	 <p>Source: (Grimm 2008).</p>
2. Indexical	<p>2.1. Logical, common sense connection to the thing or idea to the thing they represent rather than direct resemblance to the object.</p> <p>2.2. Mostly learnt from everyday experiences.</p>	 <p>Source: (Title unknown)</p>
3. Symbolic	<p>3.1. Most abstract of the three types, with a logical or representative connection between the symbol and the things they represent.</p> <p>3.2. Most signs in this category need to be taught.</p> <p>3.3. Social and cultural considerations influence the signs greatly.</p> <p>3.4. Symbols have deeper roots in the culture of particular groups, with their meaning</p>	 <p>Source: (Tuttle 2008).</p>

	being passed down from one generation to the next. 3.5. This sign type usually evokes a stronger emotional response from viewers.	
--	--	--

Harrison (2003) gives an example of a green traffic light by commenting that 'the green light in a traffic signal is a sign meaning 'go' within the semiotic system of traffic control; words are signs in the semiotic system of language; gestures are signs within the semiotic system of nonverbal communication; and so on because semiotic systems encompass the entire range of human practices' (Harrison 2003: 47). As with the example of a traffic light, this observation could also be applied to the semiotics of tattoos. Below is a comparison of the two

3.4.4 Johansen's semiotic pyramid model

This diagrammatic model which Johansen (1993) refers to as the *semiotic pyramid* (Figure 3.7), graphically represents the relationship between the different 'elements of the semiosis' and establishes that the diagram has two purposes (Johansen 1993):

- (a) It is a heuristic device which should enable us to recognize the multiple relationships of each element' and;
- (b) 'it should further inquiry into the nature of the signifying process by calling attention to interrelations between meaning, production, and interpretation, and, of course, by provoking objections (Johansen 1993).

Problems in the interpretation of signs can be specified by the points below regarding the two relations of the semiosis according to Johansen (1993).

1. Considering the relation between *sign* and *object*:
Questions concern:
 - (a) How the sign applies to an object (icon, index, symbol).
 - (b) The identification of the object.

- (c) The mode of being of the object.
 - (d) The relation between the object as it is represented in the sign and the object as it is otherwise known.
 - (e) The attribution of qualities to the object by the sign.
2. Considering the relationship between *sign* and *interpretant*:
- Questions concern:
- (a) The identification of the sign system to which the sign belongs.
 - (b) The comprehension of the sign.
 - (c) How the sign signifies the interpretation (theme, proposition, argument).
 - (d) The problem of the indeterminacy of the sign with regard to its translation into an Interpreting sign.
3. Considering the relation between sign and utterer:
- Questions concern:
- (a) The identification of the addresser.
 - (b) The mode of the utterance (kind of speech act).
 - (c) The relation between the actual utterance and its textual and situational context (e.g., its institutional context).
 - (d) The identity or non-identity between addresser and utterer.
 - (e) The purpose of the utterance.
4. Considering the relation between sign and interpreter:
- Questions concern:
- (a) The identification of the addressee / target audience.

The semiotic pyramid is made up of a collection of axes, the solid line on the semiotic pyramid represents the semiosis seen from the utterers point of view and the dotted line represents the interpreter's point of view (Johansen 1993: 245). In dialogue, the sign (token) for example will be expressed by the utterer, the interpreter will have to identify the sign (token) and connect the object. If the understanding between the utter and the interpreter is perfect, they both will identify the sign (token) as the same. Thus making the immediate object or

'idea' sufficiently similar (Johansen 1993: 245). Among the possibilities. Johansen (1993) notes:

given by the immediate interpretant, the interpreter would choose the one intended by the utterer, and each would choose the one intended by the utterer, and each would understand and recognize their respective roles within the semiosis, accepting each other as persons (Johansen 1993: 245).

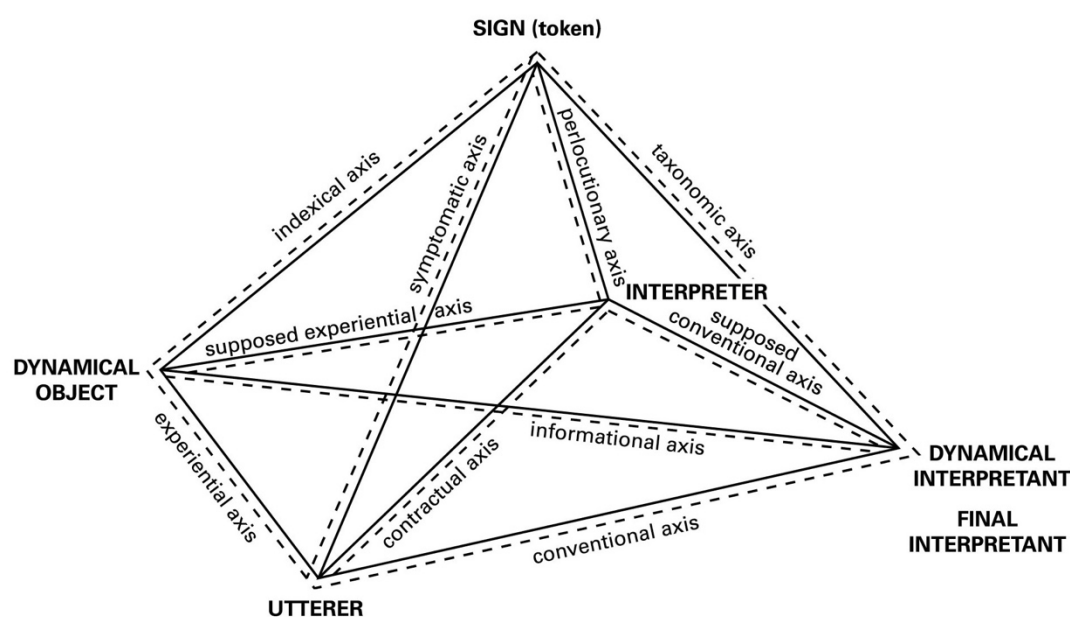


Figure 3.7 Johansen's semiotic pyramid model.

The semiotic pyramid has ten axes that are connected to each other, thus forming ten triangular planes. For the purpose of this study, reference will be made to the Communication Plane (Deely 1990: 78), marked in green (Figure 3.8) which is delimited by: a) the symptomatic; b) the perlocutionary, and c) the contractual axes. Below is a brief explanation of each axis:

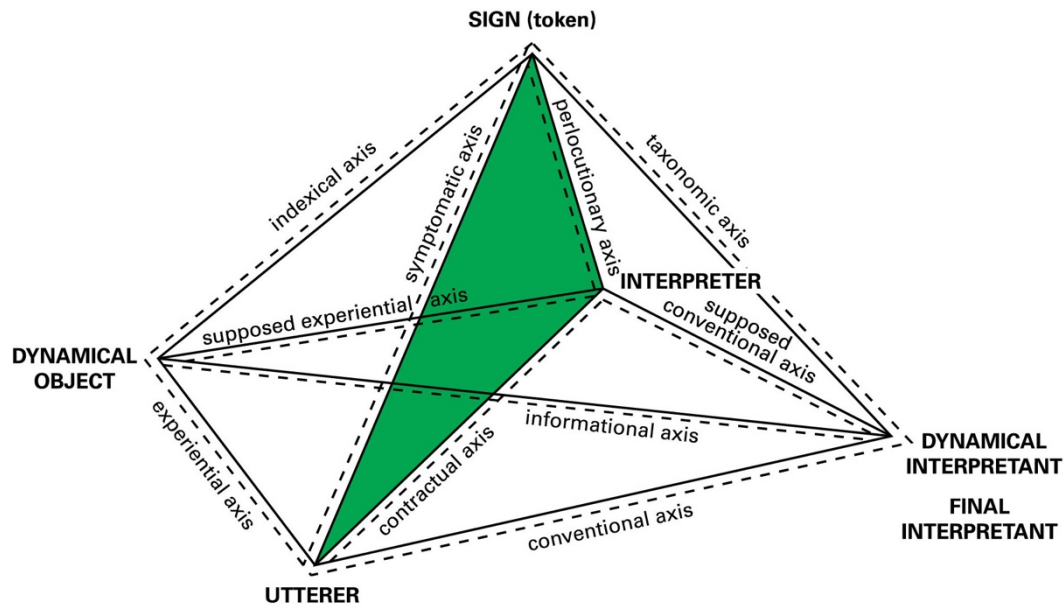


Figure 3.8 Communication plane of the semiotic pyramid.

(a) Symptomatic Axis

This is the axis between the sign and the addresser.

(b) Perlocutionary Axis

Johansen (1993: 252) says that:

A sign is necessarily directed to somebody. Consequently, the identification of the addressee is important. Is the addressee humanity, some well-defined community, some individual existent person, etc? In identifying the addressee as he is represented in the sign we have no clues other than the qualities explicitly attributed to him in the sign and what has to be presupposed about him to make the sign meaningful. There is, however, a difference between the receiver of the sign as a represented element within the sign, the addressee, and the actual receiver, the interpreter (Johansen 1993: 252).

The action, which is a signifying process that binds the relationship between the sign and the addressee/interpreter... 'just as the sign refers back to its utterer, as a symptom points to its cause, so the sign in its capacity of symbolic action refers to its addressee and attempts to exert a perlocutionary force' (Johansen 1993: 252).

(c) Contractual axes

This axis links the utterer and the interpreter. Johansen (1993: 254) describes communication with someone as some kind of contractual relationship, which is 'often represented in the sign itself as an explicitly stated, specific relation between addresser and addressee but, in fact, it is presupposed between the parties actually taking part in the dialogue' (Johansen 1993: 254). Adding to this, Johansen (1993: 254) explains that this axis is important for the analysis of meaning as to 'interpret a given utterance, the utterance must be framed within a wider communicative context of social interaction' (Johansen 1993: 254).

3.4.5 Examples utilising Johansen's semiotic pyramid model

Incorporating the principles discussed above, the first example to illustrate the communication plane with reference to a tattoo can be seen in (Figure 3.9) below. It is important to frame Johansen's semiotic pyramid with a visual example, an actual tattoo on the skin. This permanent marking will be utilised to describe the communication plane of the semiotic pyramid. In the first example, the *sign* (token) will be represented by the 'five dot' prison tattoo. The utterer will be represented by the prisoner (individual with the tattoo) and the *interpreter* will be represented by individual who views the tattoo.

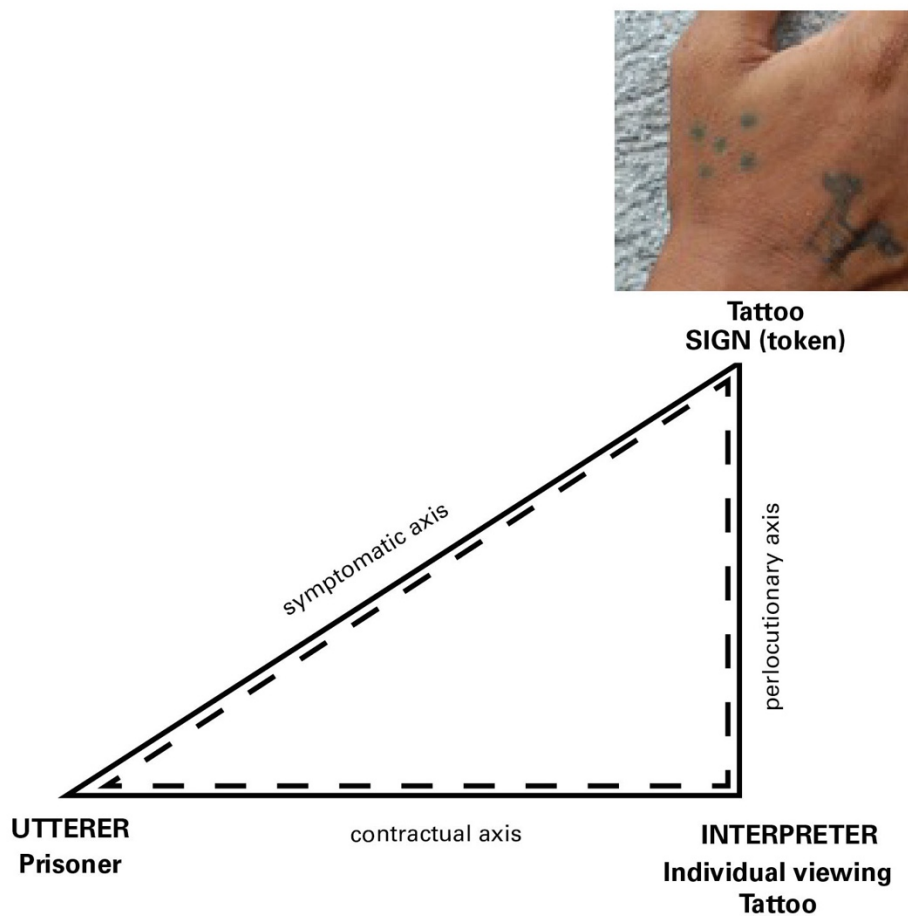


Figure 3.9 Semiotic pyramid model for example 1.

The Sign exists within the semiotic system. The first tattoo example in Figure 3.9, depicts the 'five dot' tattoo which has a meaning within the semiotic system of prisoners and or deviant behavior, which is discussed earlier in this study (2.6.6 Prisons and Gangs). The Five dots arranged in a quincunx geometric pattern on the area between the thumb and the forefinger represent time spent in prison, with the four dots on the outside signifying the prison walls, with the fifth dot in the middle representing the prisoner (Staff 2014). The utterer would normally receive this tattoo whilst in incarceration and or once released as a sign or representation of being confined within four walls. This tattoo will be marked on a deviant individual, with the tattoo being located on a prominent area of the body, which is difficult to hide. The utterer therefore wants the public to see this tattoo and be aware of his or her deviant past or current lifestyle. The Interpreter viewing the tattoo (sign) will relate to the utterer as someone who is deviant, has been deviant at one point in their lives or has a deviant personality.

The second example will fall within the religious genre. The *sign* (token) will be represented by the 'Christ's crucifixion' tattoo. The individual to which this tattoo belongs, will be represented by the *utterer* and the *interpreter* will be represented by individual who views the tattoo.

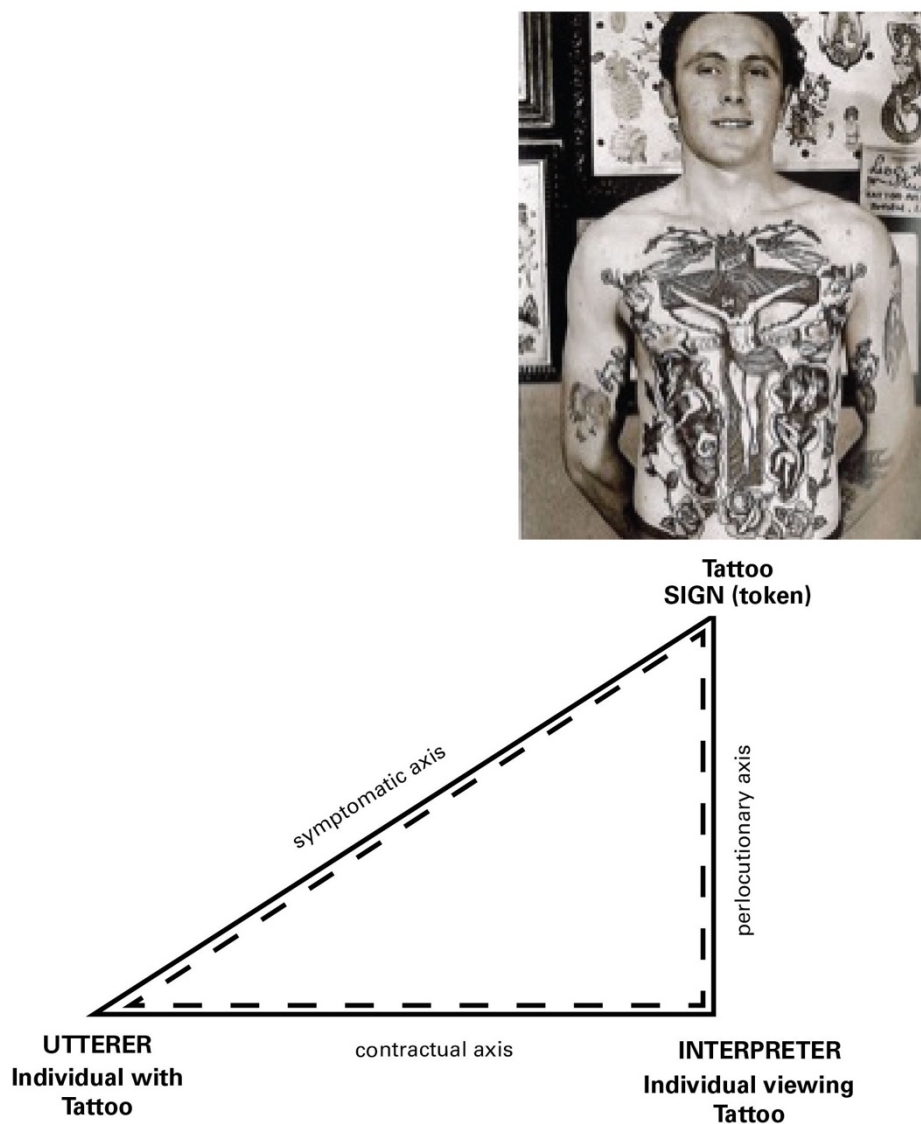


Figure 3.10 Semiotic pyramid model for example 2.

The second tattoo example in Figure 3.10 above, depicts the religious tattoo composition which has a meaning within the semiotic system of religion and elements associated with religion, which is discussed earlier in this study (2.6.2 Babes, Banners, Hearts and the Natural World and 2.6.4 Religious). This example is more complex than example one but its overall

composition falls in the religious category. The tattoo itself (the *sign*) has a main focal point of the crucifixion of Christ, which is the centerpiece in the middle of the chest. As Clerk (2008: 166) notes, 'soldiers and sailors going to war derived reassurance from religious markings, which they also hoped would persuade the gods to look after them'. The crucifixion of Christ is flanked all around by angels that 'signify the relationship between heaven and earth. Traditionally, angels are viewed as intermediaries or messengers between divine beings (the gods of your understanding) and humankind' (Venefica 2018). The angel tattoo therefore also has meaning of memorial and guardianship and is often called 'upon to protect and guide our souls and or our loved ones into the higher realms of life' (Venefica 2018). At the foot of Christ's crucifixion, there is a collection of three roses. As discussed in section 2.6.2 of this study, the rose tattoo became extremely popular amongst sailors who would get them on honor of loved ones that they left behind when they were away at sea (van As 2009: 34). This genre of tattoos could play the part of a double-edged sword as tattoos with religious subject matter appealed to both the rebellious and God-faring circles of society, with Camacho (2014: 28) commenting that some Latino street gangs would often use religious symbols in their tattoo design. The *utterer* could therefore be a person with maritime or military background, is a religious individual or forms part of a deviant organization. The *interpreter* would then engage with the *utterer*, utilising the communication plane of the semiotic system to understand the multiple relationships of each element.

3.6 Conclusion

The combination of theories and visual communicative principles discussed in this chapter will aid in unlocking the visual communication of the tattoos discussed in this study. Sonesson (2008: 69) comments that: 'Given a semiotic framework, different types of interpretation can be explained in terms of different systems of meaning, which may be parallel, inclusive, or overlapping' (Sonesson 2008: 69). The selected social theories such as deviance theory, anthropology and visual anthropology which are broadly relevant to the study of tattoos gives the reader an insight into the roll tattoos played in society in the twentieth century. The pictorial communication theories discussed in this chapter, help unlock the characteristics associated to visual communication and their visual meaning.

As stated in the introduction of this chapter, the semiotic perspective of tattoos is the main theoretical perspective of this study. Viewing a tattoo not only as ink on the skin but as a semiotic signature on the skin, lends to the formation of a unique visual characteristic and communication.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This study utilised ethnographic research methods to collect data on the Ramesar brothers and the body of work that they produced as tattoo artists. This included the visual and historical meanings associated with their work. Considering that these tattoo pioneers were of Indian origin living in South Africa/Kwa-Zulu Natal. Etic perspectives were to be observed in terms of their culture, as it is different to mine. However, I feel emic perspectives could also apply as I am a tattoo collector myself and having tattoos would aid in the interviewees feeling more comfortable in the interview process (Guarte and Barrios 2006; Powers and Knapp 2010). As previously stated, 'The term emic relates to the perspectives that are shared and understood by members of a particular culture, the 'insiders', in contrast to the perspectives of the culture that non-member observers, the 'outsiders', may have which are called etic perspectives' (Powers and Knapp 2010: 52).

4.2 Methods and procedures

Primary data was conducted from in-depth interviews with consenting family members, friends and past clientele who have a knowledge of the Ramesar brothers and their creative practice. This research study is qualitative and was been conducted at a location preferred by the interviewee. The in-depth interviews were conducted in an 'unstructured' format to allow the interview to be more free-flowing and formless, with the tone of the interview being more like a conversation than an interview (Karen 2001). The interviews consisted of three main elements:

- (a) The interviewees were asked a series of provisional questions in a location of their choice which allowed for a more relaxed atmosphere. The provisional questions provided the foundation for the in-depth interviews but allowed for the addition of questions that would aid in the flow of the interview. The aim of the interviews was to allow the interviewee to feel comfortable and speak openly. The In-depth interviews followed the recommendations proposed in the tip sheet created by Healey-Etten and

Sharp, where they recommended conducting interviews that are semi structured, with mostly open-ended questions. This would allow for the 'interviewees to express deep feelings and give rich detail about specific experiences' (Healey-Etten and Sharp 2010). A list of the provisional questions can be seen in Appendix A.

- (b) If any of the interviewees had tattoos, they were photographed and documented. Due to the research question this study, the 'Graphic Imagery' of the tattoos done by any of the Ramesar brothers was essential. According to Liebenberg, Didkowsky and Ungar (2012) 'When using images in qualitative research aimed at generating theory couched in participants' knowledge, the process of generating or constructing images initiates a reflective process enhancing participant narrative' (Liebenberg, Didkowsky and Ungar 2012). Liebenberg, Didkowsky and Ungar (2012: 60) explains that:

...marginalised individuals or communities are able to construct visual representations of how they personally experience and understand their lives. However, the subjectivity of viewing necessitates and promotes a dialogical process around the image (Liebenberg, Didkowsky and Ungar 2012: 60).

This amplifies the visual nature of a tattoo and creates the visual representation of tattoos that have instituted discussion throughout tattoo history. In the context of this study, the 'marginalised individuals or communities' represent the tattoo community, which is described in more detail by Schmid (2013) in the journal entitled: *Tattoos – An historical essay*.

- (c) Documenting any visual elements that the interviewee might have in their possession that could aid in the data collection of this study. Due to the fact that both the Ramesar brothers, the key individuals in this study, are deceased, any credible documentation would be collected and documented. This data will be collected mainly from the field and it is crucial that this data is accurate to secure the credibility of its use. Meddings (2002) emphasises that:

...data collection is an exercise that requires a substantiation investment in infrastructure and human personal resources. There is a requirement incumbent

upon people who enlist others to collect data that they provide backup for those individuals who are collecting and furnishing data and competent analyses of the data that have been provided, with appropriate follow-up in terms of programmes or interventions (Meddings 2002).

4.3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria in this Study

Inclusion Criteria

Participants have to:

- (a) Be 18 years or older.
- (b) Be able to participate in an interview conducted in English. Only a low level of English proficiency will be required.
- (c) Have knowledge of the Ramesar brothers and their creative practice.
- (d) Accept that these are research interviews.

Exclusion Criteria

Participants that:

- (a) Are under the age of 18 years.
- (b) Are not able to participate in an interview conducted in English.
- (c) Have no knowledge of the Ramesar brothers and their creative practice.
- (d) Do not accept that these are research interviews.

4.4 Ethical Considerations

Hattingh (2005: 128) comments that; 'in addition to technical and scientific considerations, research projects making use of the interview as a tool for collecting data are likely to be affected by ethical considerations'. Due to the fact that in-depth interviews play an important part of this study, ethical issues may arise from the interaction with people (Hattingh 2005). Participants were notified of the researcher's purpose in the area and those that agreed to voluntarily participate were given informed consent and model release forms (Appendix A). Consent of a guardian will not be required as the study is delimited to participants above the age of 18. The ethical inclusion and exclusion criteria for participants were as follows:

Inclusion Criteria

Participants have to:

- (a) Be 18 years or older.
- (b) Be able to participate in an interview conducted in English. Only a low level of English proficiency will be required.
- (c) Have knowledge of the Ramesar brothers and their creative practice.
- (d) Accept that these are research interviews.

Exclusion Criteria

Participants that:

- (a) Are under the age 18 years.
- (b) Are not able to participate in an interview conducted in English.
- (c) Have no knowledge of the Ramesar brothers and their creative practice.
- (d) Do not accept that these are research interviews.

Added to the Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria, the following ethical considerations were observed.

- (a) The participant has the right to privacy, including the right to refuse to participate in the research.
- (b) The participant has the right to anonymity and confidentiality.
- (c) The participant has the right for their well-being or reputation not to be harmed in any manner.
- (d) The participant has the right to full disclosure about the research.

If a low level of English proficiency was required during the research interviews, the questions would have been rephrased in simpler terms if the participant did not understand. When documenting and analyzing my in-depth interview data. Two sets of provisional interview questions were approved by the ethics committee.

- (a) Interview questions for 'A tattooed client'
- (b) Interview questions for 'Family and friends'

4.5 Research Methods

The research of this study is based on qualitative in-depth interviews, making use of four broad research methods. These four methods are summarised below.

(a) Deductive Approach

This approach will be followed when asking the approved provisional interview questions. Burney (2008) describes this approach as: 'Deductive reasoning works from a more general to a more specific. Sometimes this is informally called a 'top-down' approach. Conclusion follows logically from premises (available facts)' (Burney 2008b: 4).

(b) Inductive Approach

Once my in-depth interviews are completed, this approach will unlock details that result from the answers given to the interview questions. This approach is described by Burney (2008) as the 'moving from specific observations to broader generalizations and theories' (Burney 2008b: 5).

(c) Photographic Documentation

The main focus of this study is the visual representation of graphic imagery therefore it is essential that all tattoos, and or visual elements are documented.

(d) Triangulation

Maggs-Rapport (2000: 222) notes that 'Triangulation promotes the validity of data findings by allowing the researcher to explore a phenomenon more fully whilst facilitating a variety of methods to encourage comprehensive understanding and explanation' (Maggs-Rapport 2000: 222). Data triangulation was used in this study as described by (Denzin and Lincoln 1994) as various sourced data was utilised. This will in turn improve the likelihood that the data collected will be accepted (see Figure 4.13). Maggs-Rapport (2000: 222) states that 'Triangulation promotes the validity of data findings by allowing the researcher to explore a phenomenon more fully whilst

facilitating a variety of methods to encourage comprehensive understanding and explanation' (Maggs-Rapport 2000: 222). As long as the research question is clearly defined, triangulation will work successfully.

In-depth interviews have been utilised as the foundation of data collection for this study, (Fontana and Frey 2000) describes the in-depth individual (IDI) 'interview as one of the most powerful tools for gaining an understanding of human being and exploring topics in depth'. In addition to this, 'IDI interviews, ranging from the structured and controlled to the unstructured and fluid, can elicit rich information about personal experiences and perspectives' (Carter *et al.* 2014: 545).

Below is an illustrated Figure of the triangulation configuration utilized in this study.

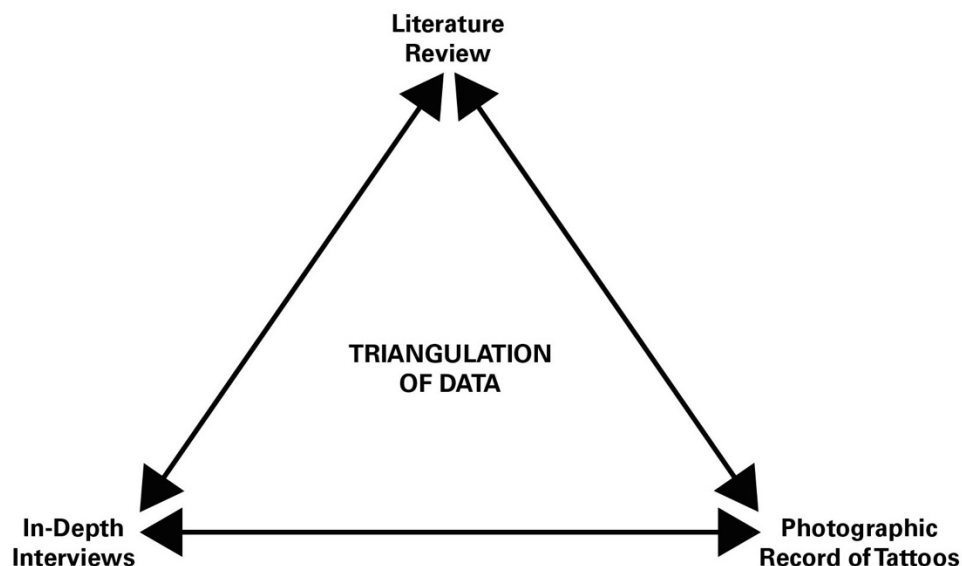


Figure 4.1 Triangulation of data diagram.

4.6 Fieldwork

This study comprised of six interviews: Six in-depth interviews (labeled: persint) conducted by myself and one interview in the form of a newspaper article / archival interview (labeled: archint). Two of the interviewees took part in two separate interviews. The interviews took place at a venue of the interviewee's choice, an environment that made the interviewee most comfortable was encouraged. In some cases, the interview had to be conducted at their place of work.

Table 4.1 In-Depth interview participants in alphabetical order.

DATE	NAME of PARTICIPANT	LOCATION
4 March 2017	Haripersad, R. (Joe)	Interviewees' Home, Morningside, Durban
19 May 2017	Naidoo, K	Interviewees' Work, Pinetown, Durban
23 June 2017	Parbhunath, K	Interviewees' Work, Pinetown, Durban
10 August 2017	Ramesar, A.	Interviewees' Work, Brickfield, Durban
13 February 1998	Premder, D	Archive Material

4.7 Transcripts

All the in-depth interviews were recorded utilising both a dictaphone and video camera. Hattingh (2005) notes that:

'although the information is interesting the process of listening and re-listening can become a laborious task. Transcripts should be 'messy' features of natural conversations and the transcriber must avoid the tendency to 'tidy up' the data. Transcripts of recorded talk are rich in detail that cannot be found elsewhere. It is very difficult for the researcher working with field notes only to record such detail. The tape recording and the transcript allow both the analyst and reader to return to the exact point in the interview, either to develop the analysis or the review it in detail. Transcripts allow interaction to be reviewed, based on precise mechanisms used by the participants, for example question and answer' (Hattingh 2005: 137).

Once the transcripts have been completed, the researcher sits with a large amount of raw data. Ryan and Bernard outline the following steps below when analysing text and which tasks need to be taken (Ryan and Bernard 2003: 85).

- (a) Discovering codes and themes.
- (b) Deciding which themes are important within the topic under investigation.

(c) Building hierarchies of themes of codebooks.

(d) Linking themes into theoretical order.

(Ryan and Bernard 2003: 85).

4.8 Codes and Themes

Bradley, Curry and Devers (2007) note that once the 'data have been reviewed and there is a general understanding of the scope and contexts of the key experiences under study, coding provides the analyst with a formal system to organize the data, uncovering and documenting additional links within and between concepts and experiences described in the data' (Bradley, Curry and Devers 2007: 1761). Below is the list of the codes utilised in this study.

Tattoo Quality

Tattoo Collection (Harry)

Tattoo Meaning, Literal or Figurative or Both

Personal Tattoo Meaning

Social Meaning

Tattoo Designs

Amateur Tattoos

X-rated Tattoos

Ink Colours

Permanent Makeup

Tattoo Cover-ups

Tattoo Removal

Public Perception (Harry)

Tattoo Pioneer

Popular Tattoos

Deviance

Public Opinion of Tattoos

Public Opinion of Tattoos Today

Traditions

Tattoo Premises

Stencils

Hygiene
 Clientele
 Competition
 Respected Profession
 Current Tattoo Industry
 South African Society

'Themes are general propositions that emerge from diverse and detail-rich experiences of participants and provide recurrent and unifying ideas regarding the subject of inquiry' (Bradley, Curry and Devers 2007: 1766). The themes below evolved from the codes, which tagged the data from the in-depth interviews, linking concepts to each other.

Visual Communication
 Visual Culture
 Locations
 Procedures
 Clientele
 Tattoo Industry
 South African Society

Linking the themes with their relevant codes is depicted in the table below.

Table 4.2 Themes and codes.

Theme	Codes
Visual Communication	Tattoo Quality Tattoo Collection (Harry) Tattoo Meaning, Literal or Figurative or Both Personal Tattoo Meaning Social Meaning Tattoo Designs Amateur Tattoos

	X-rated Tattoos Ink Colours Permanent Makeup Tattoo Cover-ups Tattoo Removal
Visual Culture	Public Perception (Harry) Tattoo Pioneer Popular Tattoos Deviance Public Opinion of Tattoos Public Opinion of Tattoos Today Traditions
Locations	Tattoo Premises
Procedures	Stencils Hygiene
Clientele	Clientele
Tattoo Industry	Competition Respected Profession Current Tattoo Industry
South African Society	South African Society

Figure 4.2 gives a basic overview of how the information from the transcripts is processed in the following chapter of this study.

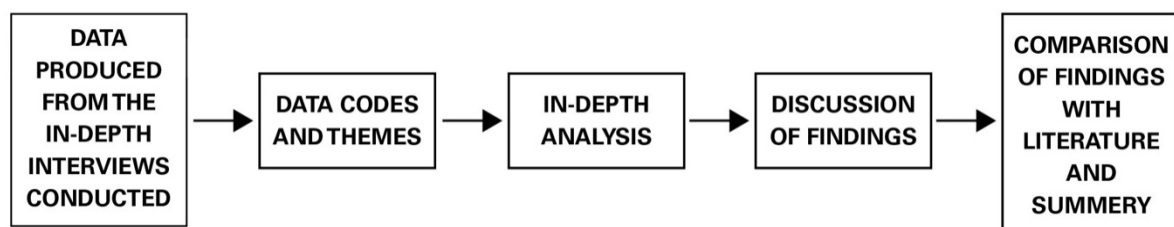


Figure 4.2 Basic overview of the processing of raw data generated by in-depth interviews.

4.9 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed an in-depth account of the procedure that was followed while doing fieldwork and the analysis of data. It was important to give the reader of this study some insight into the background of the Ramesar brothers, not only on the grounds that they were relatively unknown to the general public at large but in addition to show just how popular they were in the tattooing circles of the time.

CHAPTER FIVE

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we will learn more about the Ramesar brothers from information gathered from various newspaper articles as well as data collected from an in-depth interview which I had conducted with Harry Ramesar for my B Tech Degree.

5.2 Background information about the Ramesar brothers

The Ramesar brothers may not have been well known to the vast majority of South Africans. In fact most people would maybe not even recognise the surname. However, if you had a professional tattoo or knew someone who did throughout most of the twentieth century, there was a one out of two chance that it was done by one of the Ramesar brothers (Hennig 1981). The only other competition was a tattoo artist in Cape Town (Magic Needle Caters For All Tastes 1956).

The two brothers in question were Beharie and Harry Ramesar (Figure 5.1). Their father arrived on Durban shores in around 1895 from India and settled in Pietermaritzburg. The Ramesar brothers had four sisters and seven brothers (van As 2009).

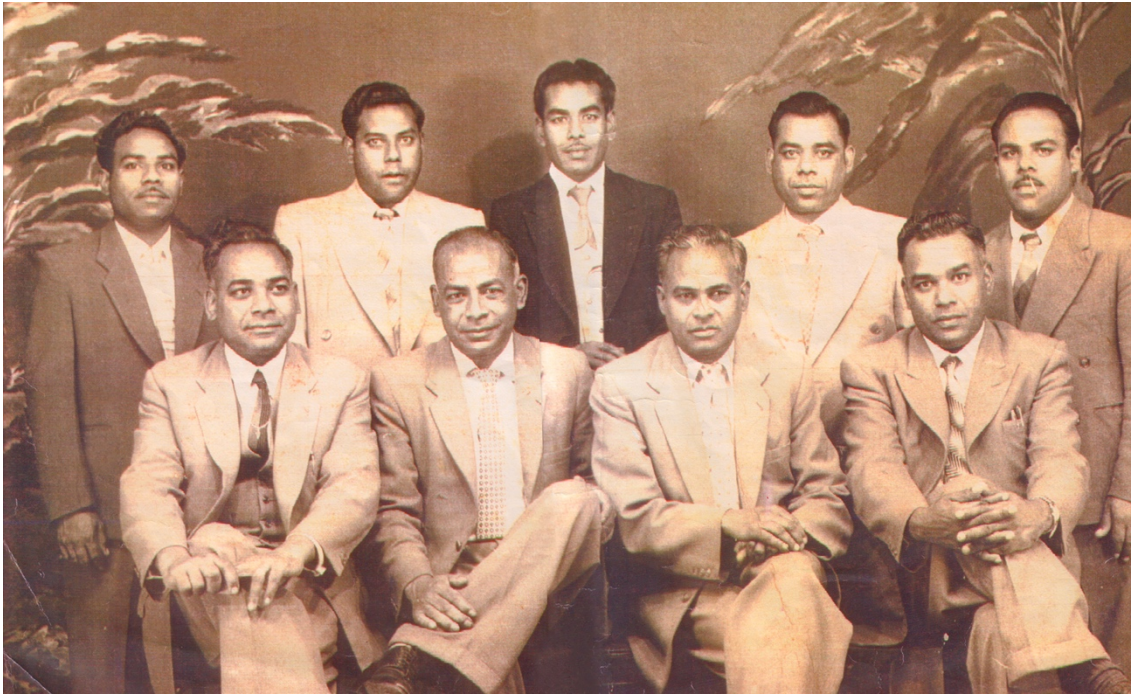


Figure 5.1 The Ramesar brothers. Harry is first left on the bottom row and Beharie is the third on the bottom row.

5.2.1 The Tattoo Beginnings

Beharie, the oldest Ramesar brother, learnt the tattoo trade from a German travelling circus that performed in Pietermaritzburg. Harry remarks in a newspaper article, published in the Natal Mercury in 1956 that: 'he learnt the work from his brother who in turn was taught by a German circus star' (Magic Needle Caters For All Tastes 1956). A touring circus that toured Pietermaritzburg in the 1920's was Pagel's Mammoth Circus (Figure 5.2), which camped on a vacant lot, directly opposite the Norfolk Hotel in Upper Street (Dixon-Smith 2005).

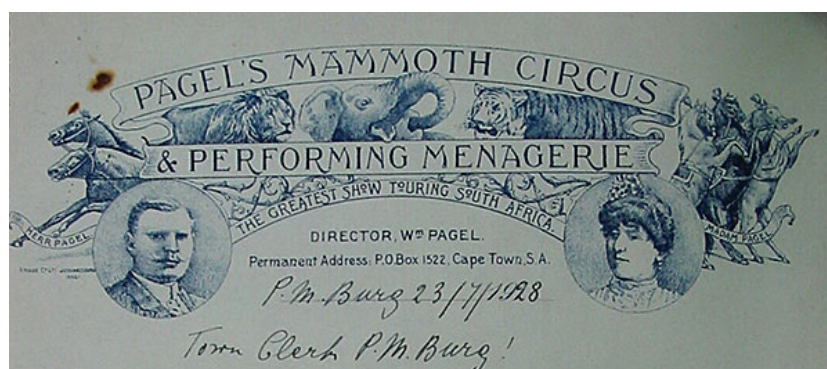


Figure 5.2 A letterhead from Pagel's Circus dating from 23 July 1928.

Dixon-Smith writes in detail below, that the circus comprised of:

All Star Performers from the Principal Circuses of Europe and America... and Natalians of every race, colour and creed flocked to pay their admittance of 2, 3 or 4 shillings (children to matinees at one and two pence).

Herr William Pagel was one of the greatest showmen of his day, and knew what the public wanted. He was German by birth (born in 1878) and after an early career at sea settled in Australia where he worked in a restaurant as dishwasher and bouncer. Extremely well-built (about 6 foot tall and between 280-300 lbs, with enormous forearms), he soon joined a circus as strongman and eventually made enough capital to buy his own tent, holding 200 people. In February 1905 he sailed for Natal, and began touring South African centers. He developed his own animal training capabilities, particularly with lions, and carried the scars to prove it. Pagel was also famous for his tug o' war acts with four horses or alternatively with two elephants.

He was renowned for carrying no stick or whip when in the ring, relying, as he himself said, on 'no more formidable instruments than patience, kindness and love, to gain a high degree of ascendancy over the minds of the most savage of the beasts of prey. Many people imagine that when an animal is taught to perform a feat, it is coerced into doing something foreign to its instincts and nature. This is not so. Animals possess aptitudes just as human beings, and they vary almost as greatly. The trainer observes some peculiar aptitude in an animal and guides and develops it carefully, encouraging him by every imaginable means until he is able to perform what is for that species of animal an unusual feat (Dixon-Smith 2005).

Beharie passed the trade onto Harry, who was in standard one at school at the time. Harry explains that he: 'helped my brother trace patterns of national flags, pretty women and strong men as customers requested. Most of them were soldiers from the Indian Malay camp that came to Pietermaritzburg during World War II' (Pillay 2001). With the tattoo knowledge that he gained under the guidance of his brother, Harry relocated to Durban after marrying

Soonphathre and opened a small shop. His business card can be seen in figure 5.3 (Pillay 2001).



Figure 5.3 Harry's business card.

5.2.2 Tattoo Premises

Harry established his tattoo studio in 1930 and occupied the same premises throughout his career: 125 Lakhani Chambers, 2 Saville Street. This was a predominantly Indian and African area of Durban, comprising mainly of tailors, businessmen, herbalists and salons (Pillay 2001). Naidoo (1983: 9) described the interior of Harry's tattoo studio as follows:

The walls of his small room are crammed with charts showing hundreds of patterns from which his clients select the design they want transferred permanently onto their skins. One corner of the room has a few chairs and serves as a waiting room on busy days. The only other furniture is a table with four small bottles of ink, a few cloths and a small electrical tattooing machine (Naidoo 1983: 9).

5.2.3 Tattoo History as told by Harry

Harry traces the history of tattooing back to the days when it was customary for Hindustani women to tattoo their arms soon after marriage. 'When raiders attacked villages in India they

would take women away after killing the men. But they left the women who had tattoos because they knew they were married' (Naidoo 1983: 9).

The above-mentioned explanation could only speculate that Harry was referring to the tattoo history of India and not to tattoo history in its entirety.

5.2.4 The Tattoo Process

The procedure of getting a professional tattoo has not changed considerably throughout the years since the invention of the electric tattoo machine by Charlie Wagner in 1981 (Clerk 2008). In a newspaper article printed in the Natal Mercury in March 1956, Harry explains the tattoo process:

First, I have to shave my client's arm, then trace on it with indelible pencil one of my designs. Next, the electric needle – moving 1,000 times a minute – traces over the design I ink. There is no longer danger of blood poisoning because an antiseptic is added to the ink. Next comes the colouring. Certain colours – yellow and purple – are not used because they fade; but red, blue, green, brown and black are permanent (Magic Needle Caters For All Tastes 1956).

5.2.5 Tattoo Removal

'While various treatments, including surgical excision, dermabrasion, and chemical destruction have historically been applied, over the past 2 decades, lasers have revolutionized the way tattoos are treated and have become the gold standard of treatment' (Naga and Alster 2017). Harry utilized the chemical destruction method and made use of a tattoo removal outfit called Lily's Lime. The instruction pamphlet can be seen below (Figure 5.4).

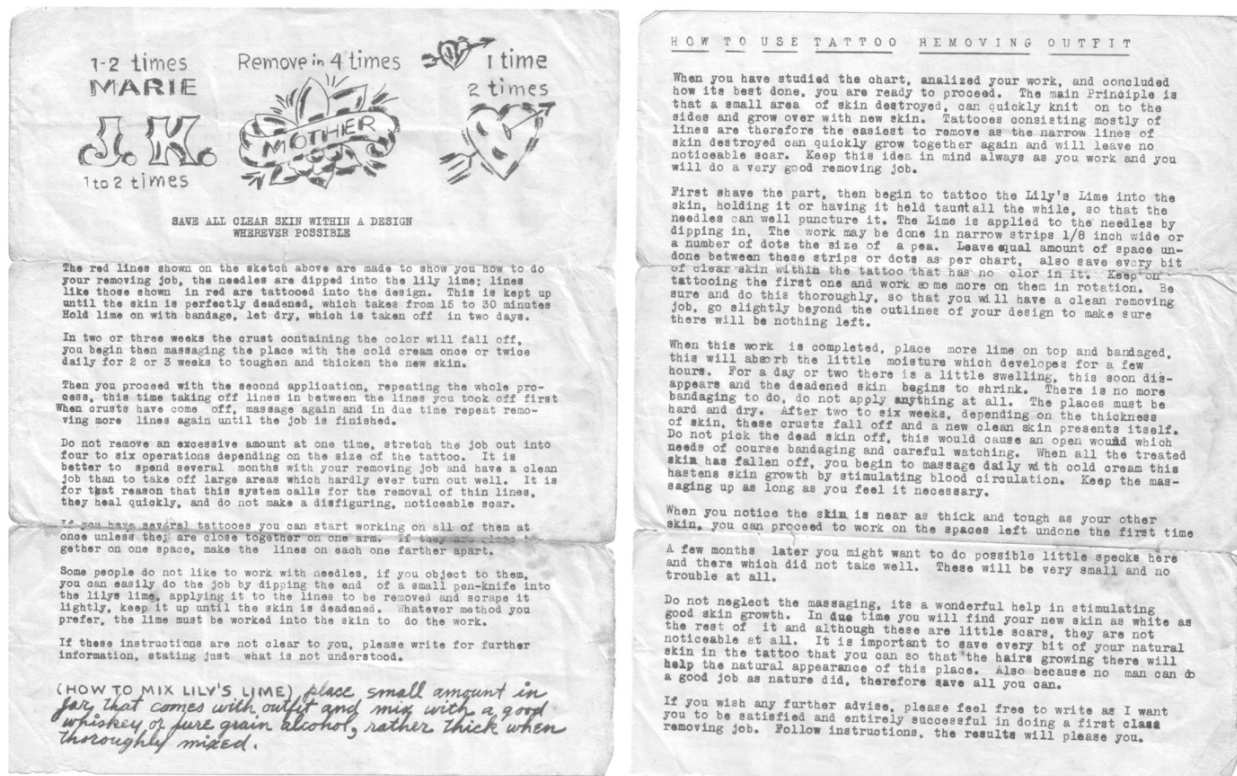


Figure 5.4 An instruction leaflet for Lily's Lime.

On the top of the left page, one can see visual representations of tattoos and the amount of 'sessions' it would take to remove them from the skin. According to the instruction leaflet, the process was as follows:

- (a) Dipping the needle in Lily's Lime and then tattooing it into the existing tattoo design.
- (b) Keep this up until the skin is perfectly deadened.
- (c) Hold lime on the design with a bandage and let the tattoo dry and take off in two days.
- (d) In two or three weeks, the crust⁹ containing the colour will fall off.
- (e) Begin massaging the tattoo with cold cream once or twice daily for two or three weeks to toughen and thicken the new skin.

⁹ The word crust refers to a scab in today's terminology.

The process will be repeated until the desired result is achieved. Hennig remarks that Harry: 'gets lots of home jobs coming in for alterations and removals. The former is often easier. The latter he does with a dissolving chemical, a process that can be lengthy and doesn't always work' (Hennig 1981). Harry stated in 1956 that 'I always warn clients to take care over a choice of design, because it is a long and costly business to remove it, the minimum charge being six guineas' (Magic Needle Caters For All Tastes 1956, para. 10).

5.2.6 Popular Designs

According to Naidoo, Harry states that 'By far the most sought-after designs are eagles. Eagles make people feel bold and brave. It shows that they are one of the boys' (Naidoo 1983). In an interview conducted by Doreen Premder in 1998, Harry remarked that: 'men took a fancy to Eagles, Panthers, Dragons, and barbwire while women chose roses, butterflies and something more feminine – the simple ones' (Premder 1998). Cosmetic tattoos were also performed by Harry, where 'most of my European women clients came for beauty spots ... some women had black eyebrows tattooed and even red lips' (Magic Needle Caters For All Tastes 1956). A tattoo titled 'Rock of Ages' took Harry six hours to complete (Premder 1998). It can be seen in Figure 5.5

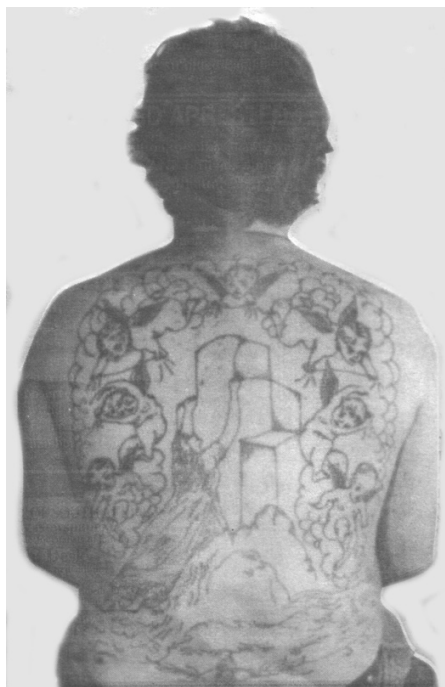


Figure 5.5 'Rock of Ages' back piece tattoo.

5.2.7 Tattoo Experience

It could be speculated that one of the most frequently asked questions that a tattoo artist receives is about the pain factor. Although pain thresholds vary from individual to individual, Harry remarked that: 'It is completely painless, people have fallen asleep while I was tattooing them. They feel the pain only when I start, but the longer it takes the easier it becomes' (Naidoo 1983). One of his clients sat for two periods of ten hours each for an intricate design. Another has been returning regularly for the past twenty-five years – his body is now completely covered with ink-marks (Naidoo 1983).

5.2.8 Tattoos and Race

South Africa was up until the dawn of democracy in 1994, a segregated population that lived under oppression from forces of colonialism and apartheid¹⁰. In the midst of apartheid in 1956, Harry stated that two-thirds of his clientele were Europeans and on average he tattooed eight men a day and ten women a month and added that he also had non-European clients, with many Indian women went to him for religious marks. With regard to African clients, Harry referred to them as 'natives'¹¹ in the article and notes the Paramount chiefs' son as a prominent client (Magic Needle Caters For All Tastes 1956).

5.2.9 Clientele

Some images of Harry working in his studio can be seen in figures (5.6 to 5.9). Harry remarks that in the early days most of his customers were sailors. A reason for this could be due to the fact that, a) South Africa was once part of the British empire and b) Durban was a very important strategic port for the allies during the world wars. According to Naidoo:

Time was the important thing in those days. The sailors were only allowed off the ship for a few hours, so we had to tattoo them in a very short time. Nowadays

¹⁰ 'Translated from the Afrikaans meaning 'apartness', apartheid was the ideology supported by the National Party (NP) government and was introduced in South Africa in 1948. Apartheid called for the separate development of the different racial groups in South Africa' (South African History Online 2016).

¹¹ This newspaper article was written in 1956, therefore it is presumed that the term 'natives' was an accepted phrase utilised in society at the time.

more and more ordinary people including many respected professional people are tattooing their bodies (Naidoo 1983).

Pillay refers to Harry building up a clientele that ranged from navy officers, soldiers, women interested in permanent lip colour and the notorious Hell's Angels Bikers from the early 1960's (Pillay 2001). Hennig remarks that Harry's clientele included seamen, many of whom regarded the tattoo as a mark of their trade and ex-convicts, keen to change the shape of a tell-tale tattoo (Hennig 1981). Then there are the women who change their tastes. Like the one who swapped 'For Hells Angels Only' imprinted around their midriff for a cover-up trellis of roses (Hennig 1981).



Figure 5.6 Harry tattooing a client's back, 1981.



Figure 5.7 A photograph of Harry tattooing Jerry Barnett's back, an inscription on the back reads: 'I'm rough and I'm tough and I come from the Bluff', 1981.



Figure 5.8 Harry leaving his mark on the back of a man who he has been tattooing for twenty-five years. The man has 223 tattoos, 1983.



Figure 5.9 Harry tattooing the forearm of Mr D. H Nel from Durban. Looking on from left to right is Mr Hennessy, of Springs and Mr G.J. Barkworth, of England. 1956

5.2.10 Tattoo Royalty

In my research, I came across three individuals that fall into the category of royalty. The first being the then Prince of Wales that Harry met in Beharie's tattoo studio in Pietermaritzburg in 1925 (Pillay 2001). The second revealed itself in the interview that I conducted with Harry in 2009, when he revealed that his brother Beharie had tattooed a small flower on the upper arm of the British Princess Margaret, when the royal family toured South Africa in 1925 (van As 2009). Harry told me that his brother tattooed princess Margaret when the royal family came to visit South Africa. Harry applied the stencil and his brother did the tattoo. I then asked him what tattoo it was and he said it was a flower on her upper arm. He could not remember if his brother charged princess Margaret but Harry did say he did get a five rand tip (van As 2009).

The third and most esteemed customer as stated by Harry in a 2001, Newspaper article was King Cyprian BhekuZulu, the Zulu monarch. In the article Pillay quotes Harry as saying that:

He casually walked in but I knew he was somebody because of his three bodyguards. He asked me to do three heart tattoos on his arm – one with his father's name, the second with his name and the third he left vacant (Pillay 2001, para. 9).

With regards to the age of tattoo clients, Harry remarked in a newspaper article published in 1956, that his

...youngest client was a Rhodesian boy of seven, brought in by his mother to have a lion's head tattooed on his arm. This was his birthday present. His oldest client was a man of 84, who approached him for the third time to have this third wife's name tattooed over the names of his two deceased wives. (Magic Needle Caters For All Tastes 1956).

5.2.11 A Clients Experience

Hennig documents the tattoo procedure in a newspaper article in June 1981, where she describes the tattoo experience of Pranesh Maharaj:

Its Monday morning in Harry's little workshop. A young man comes in. Pranesh Maharaj, 19, is an apprentice fitter and turner. All his friends have tattoos he says but his father made him wait until he finished school to have his done. Today's the big day. He looks over the hundreds of transfers pasted on yellowed posters on the walls. From among the roses, swords, undressed ladies, cupids, sinking ships, hearts, birds, tigers, mermaids, he chooses an Atlas-type muscle man. Harry scrapes the hair from Pranesh's right forearm with a razor blade. He wipes the skin with water then holds the indelible ink transfer in place for several minutes. His is the beginning of the sequence he has followed so often for so many years. Then he begins his human embroidery, tracing the outline with his spiked drill.

After a while Pranesh sinks slightly and asks for water. I can understand why. To get the feel. I asked Harry to write my name on my upper arm – without the ink. The pain was so intense, I stopped him after the 'W'. no wonder some psychologists say tattoos can indicate a masochistic streak! 'This only happens about once in 200 people. It's nerves.' says Harry as he waits for the recovery. 'Usually after a couple of minutes, they don't feel any more pain. 'It's a case of mind over matter. He's thinking about it too much. 'A half hour and a few more sips of water later, the picture is complete. 'In about two hours' time. Rub all the blood off with a wet rag,' says Harry as he gives a final wipe to the rising red bubbles. 'This time tomorrow spread on a thin layer of Vicks. Do that twice a day till the scabs fall off. 'Don't pick them or you'll spoil it. Don't rub it for two or three months and you'll have nice thin lines. You can wash it whenever you like – water does not harm. Exit one satisfied customer. (Hennig 1981)

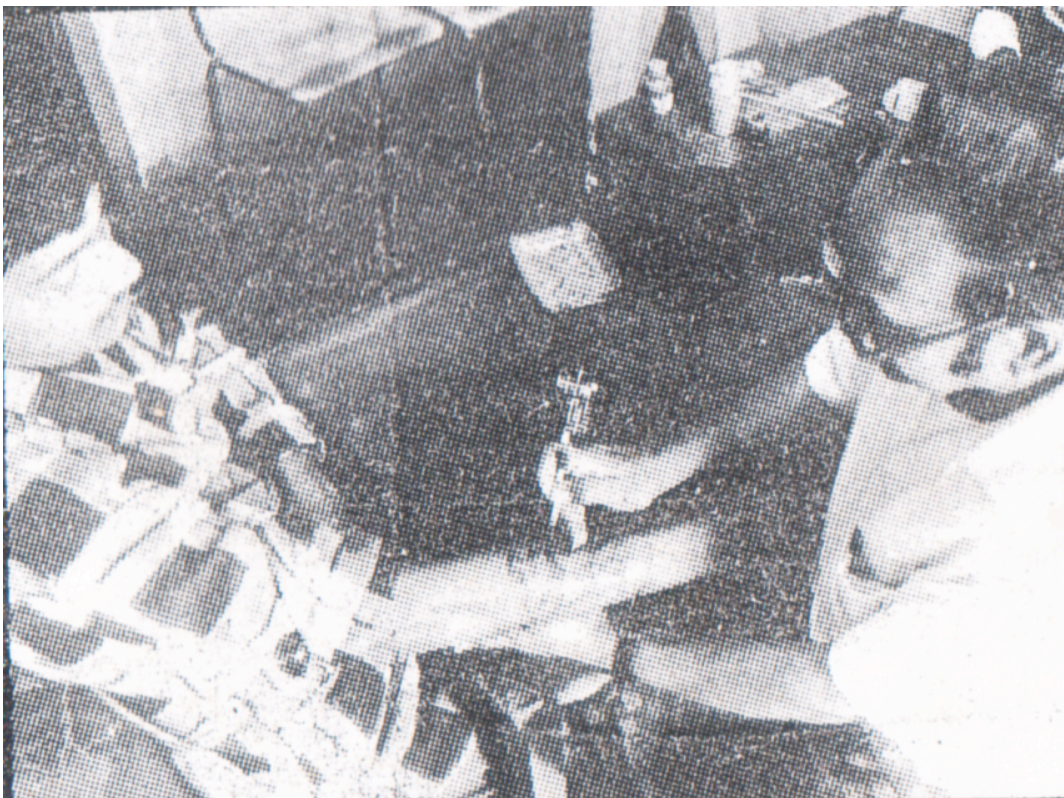


Figure 5.10 Harry tattooing the forearm of Pranesh Maharaj, 1981.

5.2.12 Tattoo Career

Due to the fact that tattoos are permanent, Harry remarked that because people selected their tattoos so carefully, it is possible to read a man's character from his tattoos (Naidoo 1983). This could be due to the fact that people tattooed designs (a) on their bodies that they liked or (b) subject matter associated to groups they were affiliated too. Harry, therefore could pick up these character traits as a professional tattoo artist. Throughout most of his career, Harry was not allowed to advertise his art, therefore he relied on word-of-mouth, and as a result, clients filtered in from all over the country (Hennig 1981). A large portion of Harry's tattoo career took place during Apartheid and South African history online comments that newspapers catered mainly: 'for white, upper-income city dwellers although most South Africans are neither white, well-paid; nor city dwellers (Online). In addition, the conversation regarding tattoos was not as mainstream and accepted as we observe today. Harry refused to tattoo people's faces 'on principle' although he had been asked to do this many times. He also refused to tattoo young girls (Naidoo 1983). Pillay asked Harry in a 2001 newspaper article, when was he expected to retire? Harry, eighty-four years of age at the time replied:

It's going to be a while before I close up and retire. I love my job – meeting people and socialising with all sorts keeps me alive. 'The tattoo business is my life and until the day my legs give up I will continue coming to my shop and serving my customers' (Pillay 2001).

Harry established his tattoo shop in 1930, in Durban and completed his last tattoo at the age of eighty-nine. Images of Harry in his older years can be seen in figures (5.11 and 5.12). I asked Harry what was his last tattoo that he ever did and he replied that it was flowers. With a smile on his face he said: 'When you get old, you can't be one hundred percent right. With flowers, you can go a bit crooked' (van As 2009). This works out to a professional tattoo artist career of an estimated seventy-four years. A truly remarkable achievement.

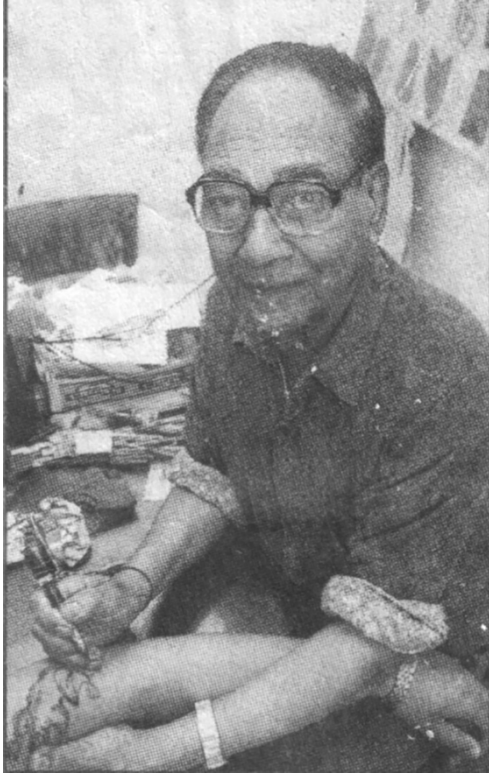


Figure 5.11 Harry tattooing at the age of eighty-four, 2001



Figure 5.12 Harry at the age of ninety-four, 2009

5.3 Conclusion

The reader is given a glimpse of the tattoo industry when the Ramesar brothers worked in the trade, from their tattoo beginnings and elements of visual communication to clientele and tattooed royalty. In-depth interviews were discussed as the primary source of data collection for this study and the inclusion and exclusion criteria, as well as the ethical considerations were explored. The four main research methods were summarized and discussed and the studies themes and codes introduced. This information provides a foundation to aid and facilitate an understanding of the analysis of data in the following chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

FINDINGS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter makes use of selected quotes from the data gathered during the interviews. The data is coded utilising selected themes, and included within those themes are codes that are relevant to that particular theme. These theme and code families are discussed by making use of selected quotes. This summarised data is then discussed and compared with information from the literature review chapters.

6.2 Analysis of the textual data

This chapter places selected quotes from the coded information into groups within the following themes: A) Visual Communication, B) Visual Culture, C) Locations, D) Procedures, E) Clientele, F) Tattoo Industry, G) South African Society.

A. VISUAL COMMUNICATION

A1. Tattoo Quality

A1.1. Findings

Within the broad spectrum of visual communication, the issue of quality always seems to be a question most people ask. Especially if one is paying for a service... in this case a permanent form of visual communication. The question on tattoo quality received a very positive response from all the interviewees, such as ' *Aye, he was the master of the master man. (PERSINT 3)*¹² and ' *at that time, it was the bomb you mean. Its like, when you went anywhere, everyone was like hey, did you go to Harry. Shit, how did you manage to get a gap. People knew*'. (PERSINT 2) One response gave a more detailed account, making reference to an industry that played a principle role in spreading the art of tattoos throughout the late nineteenth and twentieth century, ' *we used to see some guys from the Navy with lovely tattoos and we asked them where they got them and they said in Saville street*'.

¹² (PERSINT) refers to 'Personal Interview'.

He was well well known. It was like if he trust him, even if you, he gave you a bad tattoo, or if you didn't see a good job from him, the moment you said Harry, Saville Street, it was ok cool, cool'. (PERSINT 1)

A1.2. Selected Quotes

- Aye, he was the master of the master man. (PERSINT 3)
- at that time, it was the bomb you mean. Its like, when you went anywhere, everyone was like hey, did you go to Harry. Shit, how did you manage to get a gap. People knew. (PERSINT 2)
- And he was a master ha. Aye, his tattoos, you cant get them done today man. Today they got these new things you know. (PERSINT 3)

A1.3. Discussion

It is clear by the remarks from the interviewees that the work that Harry produced was definitely of a good quality and respected by his clientele.

A2. Tattoo Collection (Harry)

A2.1. Findings

When one walks into a tattoo studio today, one can see one of two distinct styles. a) the more tradition style which consists of walls covered with tattoo designs available or b) a more custom studio where one sees more interior design being used to create an impression that this studio caters for more custom work that is tailored and designed especially for the individual. Harry's studio fell into category a) with the words '*he had a large collection man*' (PERSINT 3), one interviewee taking it further by stating that Harry even had designs '*in the draw*' (PERSINT 2).

A2.2. Selected Quotes

- Aye, he had a large collection man. All the designs were done by him man. He was supposed to be like an artist man, he supposed to be a painter. You know what I mean. His art you know was too good man. (PERSINT 3)
- Harry had a lot of designs, in the draws, on the walls everything. He had a lot. We walked around and then he took it from the draw and showed us. (PERSINT 1)

- Lots, all on the walls, in the draw. Hey man, he had a lot. (PERSINT 2)
- you know see my dad had big wall sheets you now with individual size with the price next to it and all that kind of thing. He had all his walls, it was like wallpaper you know what im saying. Just you he had a row of chairs on the side of the wall, just above your head it went up there right to the ceiling. So you could choose what you wanted. You know the price range and the designs. (PERSINT 6)

A2.3 Discussion

An interesting point to note from the remarks of the interviewees, gives the resemblance of the typical tattoo collection that was depicted in the United States, with a visual reference to figure 2.15 of this study. Thus creating a graphic communication link to South African & Western tattoo industries.

A3. Tattoo meaning, literal or figurative or both

A3.1. Findings

When asking this question, I simplified it a bit in order to give the interviewee a simpler explanation as to match the relaxed atmosphere of the in-depth interview. Alternative explanations to the word 'literal' were explained as *simple*, *straight forward* and figurative *symbolic*. All the interviewees said that tattoo meaning could have both a literal or figurative meaning, depending on who is viewing the tattoo ' Depending on who's taking you for' (PERSINT 2)

A3.2. Selected Quotes

- Ya, it could because (both) you know some people just do it for fun, you know what I mean. And some people do it for a meaning like you know. (PERSINT 3)
- I think it's both because each person has his own symbol of a tattoo you see. Everyone got a different take of it. (PERSINT 1)
- It has both. Depending on who's taking you for. Some people just like it. People like us that time, the dragon was fear and stuff like that. (PERSINT 2)

A3.3 Discussion

It is apparent from the responses that the visual characteristics of a tattoo is not the only deciding factor when deciphering the meaning of a tattoo. Dialog is thus needed as 'meaning' can be influenced by each individual's personal experiences and beliefs.

A4. Social meaning

A4.1. Findings

The interviewees had a mixed reaction to this topic. One interviewee answered that tattoos do in fact have a social meaning, referring to '*bikers*' (**PERSINT 1**) that might have a special meaning for their tattoos. Another interviewee remarked that '*maybe now. Back in the day, no, no social meaning*' (**PERSINT 2**), implying that during the period that he got his tattoos, there was no social meaning. The classification that tattoos were '*antisocial*' (**PERSINT 6**) and categorised a person as a certain 'class' (**PERSINT 6**) in society were also discussed.

A4.2. Selected Quotes

- Ya, some of them used it as social meaning. Like the bikes have a special, maybe like a special sign or something. Ya, you can have it as a meaning too. (**PERSINT 1**)
- Not really. Now, maybe now. Back in the day, no. no social meaning. Back in the day there was no social meaning because if you look at the tattoos especially among the older people they had their names, their wife's names, it wasn't social, it was meant something for people to put them on. Now you get social meaning, now you get the trend. (**PERSINT 2**).
- Look as some people say, its antisocial, you know what im saying? I know then if you had a tattoo was class. You know they can, um guys that are like... corner boys¹³. You know guys that hang around, are people that put tattoos but times have changed. You see if you were walking in the mall now, you'll see all the ladies now on their necks, their shoulders, upper arms, some on their calves. (**PERSINT 6**).

A4.3. Discussion

¹³ a disreputable man or youth who spends his time loitering on the street. (English 2013)

Throughout twentieth century, tattoos have always been characterised based on their social standing in society. Clerk (2008a: 152) sums it up by commenting that:

While no one bore any ill-will towards the soldiers, sailors and circus folk who paraded their tattoos with such chutzpah during the years around the First and Second World Wars, there existed a huge distaste for civilians bearing body-markings. Such people were to be avoided at all costs: they were immediately identified, rightly or wrongly, as jailbirds, gangsters or misfits (Clerk 2008a: 152).

This explanation rings true with some of the interviewees and the fact that some people got tattoos due to the trends of the time and applying tattoos such as names, was what generations, of family members did cannot be excluded.

A5. Tattoo Designs

A5.1. Findings

This question takes one back to the finding of Harry's tattoo collection, with a conclusion painting a picture of a tattoo shop that resembled the description and images noted in the literature review topic 'Tattoos, inks and flash'. '*Stuck onto the wall*' (PERSINT 3), 'on the walls, pics everywhere' (PERSINT 2) describe tattoo design that covered the walls and one would 'look there, you choose there' (PERSINT 3) the tattoo design that you liked and Harry would then tattoo it. Even if you had your own design, Harry would normally have a design that you would choose.

A5.2. Selected Quotes

- Stuck onto the wall, you know. Different shapes, different sizes you know what I mean. Now you look there, you choose there and then he does it for you. (PERSINT 3)
- He had them in the draw, so if anybody wants it, he just take them out and show them. He had pictures on the wall so you can choose what you want. (PERSINT 1)
- It wasn't what you came up with, someone could draw the stencil damn(slang) good but generally Harry had stencils that you could choose from. (PERSINT 2)
- On the walls, pics everywhere, the books he had and all his stencils everywhere. (PERSINT 2)

A5.3. Discussion

As described in the A5.1, A visual link can be connected with the findings in 'Tattoo Collection' (A2) of this section. We learn that Harry had an extensive collection of tattoo designs and that even if you came with your own design, Harry would have a design that you would like.

A6. Amateur Tattoos

A6.1. Findings

The interviewees were familiar with the process of creating amateur tattoos, with the only distinct differences amongst them being the inks / pigments that were used. The common element was the needle. (PERSINT 1) remarked that he never used to tattoo himself but that his '*friends*' used to tattoo. The results on this amateur procedure did not always achieve the desired results and as a result the individual when to see Harry to have it '*fixed up*' (PERSINT 6)

A6.2. Selected Quotes

- So, we used to use our own tattoos, aaa, buy India ink and take a needle and tattoo ourselves. Not ourselves but our friends tattoo us. (PERSINT 1)
- We started tattooing using a match stick, a needle and cotton. You wrapped that around the needle and you take normal black barrel ink and you do it by hand. (PERSINT 2)
- He (Harry) used to get some tattoos where like to fix up you know to... guys used to take needles, a whole bunch of thin needles and bundle them to a little rod and they used to crush a battery, you know the center part of a penlight battery, crush the powder and they used to do it like what they do in the jails. And they do all the funny kind of designs and that and sometimes it used to turn out very ugly and now they needed it fixed up and they used to come up to him. (PERSINT 6)

A6.3. Discussion

Like in most trades, you find amateur forms of that trade. This would be even more evident when that trade is not a commonly practiced. This is evident in the case of the tattoo industry in Durban. Harry was the only professional tattoo artist in Durban, who utilised the correct machinery and inks of the day. People used to make their own tattoo equipment in an

attempt to create a professional outcome. This attempt resulted in Harry trying to 'fix up' or improve existing tattoos.

A7. X-Rated Tattoos

A7.1. Findings

In the literature review section 'Babes, Banners, Hearts and the Natural World', one can see the popularity of tattoos that were a bit more risqué. An interviewee had a tattoo that fell into this category and when I asked him about it, he replied Harry where he kept all his '*special*' tattoos (PERSINT 5). (PERSINT 6) gave a description of a tattoo that Harry one did that once fell into this category.

A7.2. Selected Quotes

- I remember once he did this print of a rabbit and the dog was chasing the rabbit and the guy wanted, because he made me get out and I remember I went to the yacht mall where this guy, I think he wanted this thing by his backside the rabbit out here and the dog chasing the rabbit into his bum. Or some of the women wanted a tattoo on their breast and that kind of thing. (PERSINT 6)
- I asked Harry where is all the '*special*' tattoos you know like what I mean. Anything rare or something like that you know. Then he opened his drawer and took out this.¹⁴ (PERSINT 5)

A7.3. Discussion

The tattoos in this category were not displayed openly in his tattoo studio. If someone was looking for a tattoo that was more adult in subject matter, Harry had a special place in his draw where one could view them. This bares testament to Harry's professionalism and respecting the accepted social standards of the time.

A8. Ink Colours

A8.1. Findings

¹⁴ Referring to his 'lady looking into a mirror' tattoo, described later in this chapter.

There was not a large colour palette available during this time, as there was no dedicated tattoo supplier or merchant that catered specifically to the tattoo industry. The colour palettes consisted of '*Black, red, green and yellow*' (PERSINT 1, 2, 6). In the archival interview, Harry based his colour selection on his skin colour rather than the design itself (ARCHINT).

A8.2. Selected Quotes

- He only used red and black. That's the only two colours I know of that he used. (PERSINT 1)
- Limited. He had the green, the black, the red and yellow. He did have blue depending on skin but basically it was just green (standard black/green). (PERSINT 2)
- I know he had red, he had green, I remember yellow. Because red was for the lipstick, I know. (PERSINT 6)
- I work very successfully with blacks and reds because these colours are ideal for Indians who have dark skin. Other colours look good on fair skin (mainly whites) but it must be remembered that colours cannot last forever. They start fading after five years. (ARCHINT).

A8.3. Discussion

If one walks into a tattoo studio today, you can find hundreds of different colour pigments. This is in stark contrast to the options available to Harry during the time. We learn that Harry not only chose the tattoo pigment due to colours depicted on the tattoo design but also made consideration for the natural skin colour of his client and what colour would suit that skin best.

A9. Permanent Makeup

A9.1. Findings

(PERSINT 6) remarked that a lot of caucasian women came '*to have red put on their lips*' for '*everlasting lipstick*' or some women requested a beauty spot. It was also revealed that '*certain casters followed particular traditions*' (ARCHINT) when it came to makeup, and as a result, reverted to permanent makeup as a solution.

A9.2. Selected Quotes

- Well a lot of whites used to come there and females to have red put on their lips. For everlasting lipstick. (PERSINT 6)
- Permanent makeup and I know and some of them wanted a beauty spot, somewhere out there a beauty spot. Just a beauty spot. (PERSINT 6)
- In the old days certain casters followed particular traditions. Women of Maharaj clan were forbidden the use of lipstick because it was believed then fat of pigs was used in the manufacture of lipstick. But lipstick was always in fashion and they had theirs in the only way possible – permanently tattooed red. It was painful but they endured it. (ARCHINT)

A9.3. Discussion

In this study, we learn that the practice of permanent makeup not only played the role in enhancing the beauty of the female form but also aided in religious constraints which made the conventional application of makeup difficult. Permanent makeup is still practiced by some tattoo artists today but this practice has been shifted more to the beauty salon industry in recent times.

A10. Tattoo Cover-ups

A10.1. Findings

Covering up an existing tattoo with something new is not only a procedure that is practiced today, but is something Harry used to perform throughout his career as well. In fact, interviewee (PERSINT 1) had a '*little heart*' and a '*small bird*' covered up with a larger design on his forearm. The procedure is also outlined and an interesting example given to explain what would warrant a cover-up. We learn that Harry was '*quite good*' (PERSINT 6) at performing cover-ups.

A10.2. Selected Quotes

- He did a cover, there was a little heart in here and there was a small bird¹⁵. It was looking very untidy. (PERSINT 1)

¹⁵ It was the eagle on (PERSINT 1) forearm that was used for the cover up.

- a guy came on where he had to like cover something. You know like you want to change, say you had something like this and you wanted to change it into something else, then he'd never use the tracing thing, he took his pen and he did, aaah his pencil and I think you got to dip it in water and he used to so it catches on your arm. Ya, so he used to now draw what he needed to out there and he just did that. (PERSINT 6)
- you find a guy that comes in today, he takes maybe a heart, writes his girlfriend's name there and a couple of months down the line they've split and that reminds him of her and don't know if she broke is heart and then he comes to my dad to change that to something else. And he was quite good at that. (PERSINT 6)

A10.3. Discussion

We learn that Harry was good at covering up existing tattoos. As stated in the finding, this is a practice that is still performed today and being a good tattoo artist is not only measure by how well you can tattoo but how well you can cover up an existing tattoo to make it in effect disappear.

A11. Tattoo Removal

A11.1. Findings

One may think that the procedure of tattoo removal is a relatively new practice with the recent advances in laser technology. Harry offered a service to remove tattoos but it was a '*long process*' and the chemicals used were '*expensive*' (ARCHINT)¹⁶. An example is given by (PERSINT 6), giving an indication of a possible scenario which would warrant the removal of a tattoo.

A11.2. Selected Quotes

- It's a long process, taking time as well as money because the chemicals are expensive. You need three hours at a time and it must be repeated on a few occasions to be successful. (ARCHINT).
- because I watched him remove tattoos, you see that's how I know. Especially the guys that had them on the wrists. You know they maybe had a couple beers and put it on

¹⁶ (ARCHINT) refers to 'Archive Interview'.

and then they realize they got it on the wrong spot, when they go for an interview, ya and you know it's there. You know at one stage, people classed you if you had tattoos like as being a bad person that type of thing. (PERSINT 6)

A11.3. Discussion

In 4.2.5 of this study, we are introduced to the product Harry used to perform his tattoo removal (Figure 4.4). This is in stark contrast to the procedures performed today. This procedure gave the tattoo wearer the opportunity to remove an unwanted tattoo as described by one of the interviewees. Which could 'class' you as a bad person in society.

B. VISUAL CULTURE

B1. Public Opinion (Harry)

B1.1. Findings

Reputation is key to any person that provides a service, even more important when the service has a permanent result. All of the interviewees had extremely positive responses to the topic, which words such as 'wonderful' (PERSINT 3), 'greatest' (PERSINT 2), 'popular' (PERSINT 6) and 'respected' (PERSINT 6) being used to describe the public's perception of Harry. This can be witnessed by the selected quotes below.

B1.2. Selected Quotes

- The whole Durban knew him man. Anybody that's got a tattoo on his hand, you know those days... the way you done it... Harry. (PERSINT 3)
- Aye when he was tattooing, when you go there for a tattoo, you got to hold the queue man. Believe me, ya, you got to hold the queue (PERSINT 3)
- Aye, a wonderful man... Harry. (PERSINT 1)
- Well, everyone thought he was the greatest bru. Everyone thought the man was the best because obviously there was no one else but the thing was he was so well known that everyone knew where you were going to. He was well well known. (PERSINT 6)
- If I walked with him in town, he had friends everywhere. You know people knew him, he was quite popular with people. (PERSINT 6)
- He was respected. Guys respected him. But my dad was a gentleman you know. (PERSINT 6)

- Whether he knew you or never knew all of that, he had a smile, he always greeted. (PERSINT 6)

B1.3. Discussion

It would appear from the remarks given by the interviewees, that the public viewed Harry in a positive light. The selected quote above bears testament to this and gives one an insight of how he was as a person.

B2. Tattoo Pioneer

B2.1. Findings

With the word 'pioneer' appearing in the title of this study, it is important to test this phrase in the in-depth interviews to gain personal insight from people that knew him personally or we clients. One answer sums up topic... *'He was the master of masters'* (PERSINT 5). The fact that he was 'the only guy doing it' (PERSINT 1) gives one the impression that he was a tattoo pioneer.

B2.2. Selected Quotes

- He was a master of the masters. (PERSINT 5)
- Yes he must be a pioneer cos he was the only guy doing it in those days. No one else did tattoos in Durban besides Harry. (PERSINT 1)
- Ya, yes, he was. We didn't know anyone else except him. (PERSINT 2)
- I would think so. (PERSINT 6)

B2.3. Discussion

Harry was indeed a pioneer in the eyes of the interviewees, not purely because he was the only tattoo artist in Durban but because he was described as a 'master of the masters' (PERSINT 5).

B3. Popular Tattoos

B3.1. Findings

As this is a visual study exploring the graphic imagery of the Ramesar brothers, it is important to gain insight into the most popular tattoos of the time. This can be cross referenced with the tattoo explanations and visuals referenced in the literature review to see if there is a link

to the popular tattoo subject matter that was being practiced abroad. The selected quote below indicates that there was in fact a link to the visual subject matter depicted in the literature review.

B3.2. Selected Quotes

- a skeleton, the head, head of a skeleton. And on the top, it was written... not too sure man. 'as you are, I was once and as I am, you shall be' or something like that. Ya man, you know, top tattoo man, people... most of the people used to have that, you know. **(PERSINT 3)**
- a python and the python got the tongue sticking out at him and he's holding that thing like that (**PERSINT 3** gestures holding snake at arm's length away). You know, that was a very good tattoo of his, popular. **(PERSINT 3)**
- There were the things like the naked lady, the five cards you know. All of them were in fashion, you ask them and said Harry Harry Harry. We also wanted something and you see the other guy had the dragons, the crawling leopards. Those were the in things of the day. The snake, the sword, aaah, the knives, the guns... those were the i things back in the day. **(PERSINT 2)**
- Men took fancy to Eagles, Panthers, Dragons and barbwire while women chose roses, butterflies and something more feminine – the simple ones. **(ARCHINT)**.

B3.3. Discussion

It is interesting to note that the popular tattoos of Harry's era are still popular today. Clerk (2008a: 240) remarks that:

Today's tattoo culture, a thoroughly mainstream affair, has now reclaimed the vintage designs of yesteryear and brought them into the whole new world of body modification, corporate advertising and merchandising, and television (Clerk 2008a: 240).

B4. Deviance

B4.1. Findings

Deviance has had a constant tone in this study. (PERSINT 1) gives a personal account of the role that deviance played, whilst we hear about the infamous '*Hells Angels*' (PERSINT 2) that used to frequent Harry's tattoo shop. Harry was also the 'go to guy' for the police, if there was a 'crime being committed' (PERSINT 3).

B4.2. Selected Quotes

- You know there was crime being committed an'all¹⁷ but the police used to come to him, you know to get information like you know. (PERSINT 3)
- When we were young, we used to smoke drugs and whatever, we used to sit at home because I wasn't working for two years. (PERSINT 1)
- Especially when you were sitting there and a Hells Angel guys walked in. Because they also used to come to Harry. Hells Angels guys were some of the meanest guys around at that time. So, you know they asked the dragons, the knives. (PERSINT 2)
- My dad used to tell some of these youngsters that is coming for tattoos, look the younger generation, they wanted a saint put on their wrist, he used to tell them no. (PERSINT 6)
- normally the guys that smoke dagga¹⁸. That was a symbol to identify. (PERSINT 6)

B4.3. Discussion

Unfortunately, deviance will represent a facet in the tattoo movement as a whole, as depicted throughout the history of tattooing. Camacho (2014: 5) writes that:

Tattooing has long drawn the interest of criminologists. Cesare Lombroso, the father of the 'Criminal Man' theory and the first man credited with looking at biology as a cause of crime and deviance, derived the inspiration for his theory of crime from his earlier observations of tattoos while in the military (Camacho 2014: 5).

¹⁷ An' all – like the English 'et cetera, et cetera' (Singh 2007)

¹⁸ Meaning of Dagga: a local name for marijuana (Dictionary.com)

Harry had to contend with these influences in two areas. (1) being a tattoo artist that tattooed people who took part in deviant behaviors' and (2) being the 'go to guy' for law enforcement to gain information on deviant behavior.

B5. Publics Opinion of Tattoos

B5.1. Findings

(PERSINT 6) notes that '*nobody spoke about it*' but it was '*like a craze*' but the common narrative was that the publics opinion was on the negative side of the spectrum, with remarks such as '*people look down on you*' (PERSINT 1) and that tattoos symbolised something bad, like '*you a jail bird*' (PERSINT 1). An interviewee explained that having tattoos 'back in the day' always symbolised 'gangsterism or evil' (PERSINT 2).

B5.2. Selected Quotes

- Aaaa, nobody spoke about it, nobody talked about it but it was like a craze. Like someone see your tattoo, aye you want to go do something different you know a thing like that. (PERSINT 3)
- Those days when you have tattoos now people look down on you. If you going for a wedding, if going for a funeral, you got to wear a long sleeve shirt. (PERSINT 1)
- in the Indian culture, you have tattoos now like somebody bad. You know like you a jail bird or you know. Mostly when they go to jail and they have tattoos and all those things. (PERSINT 1)
- Back in the day, you were like it symbolizes like more of gangsterism or evil. Always the outcasts, the prisoners back in the day. (PERSINT 2)

B5.3 Discussion

The comments regarding this topic support the historical narrative of the public's view of tattoos as a whole throughout history. The narratives of deviance play a key role in this discussion.

B6. Publics Opinion of Tattoos Today

B6.1. Findings

It is always interesting to compare the 'then' and the 'know' aspect of tattoos, especially when you are dealing with an industry that was not accepted by the vast majority of western society at its inception. Today it is explained that the tattoo industry 'changed tenfold' (PERSINT 2) and that tattoos are regarded more as an 'art' (PERSINT 2).

B6.2. Selected Quotes

- Aye, well today, hey I don't even know if there is any tattoo artist still around like you know. Ya, I'm sure there must be a few tattoo artists still around but the thing is, because all the tattoos that I see now, even the one that you got¹⁹, you know, it's not what Harry had. It's nowhere near Harry. (PERSINT 3).
- Its changed, its changed tenfold. Now it's, people accept it more, its art, people appreciate it. (PERSINT 2).
- Now its art. (PERSINT 2).

B6.3. Discussion

It is interesting to note that all the interviewees have witnessed the tattoo industry of the 'past', when Harry was a tattoo artist and the tattoo industry today. This gives the interviewees an advantage when comparing the two. The comments from the interviewees indicate that there is a shift in the mindset of the public and that tattoos are now being accepted as an art form.

B7. Traditions

B7.1. Findings

South Africa is a multicultural society that has a colourful history. It is interesting to discover that certain communities and religions would utilise tattoos in various acts of visual communication. In the Indian community, women had an 'ohm' (PERSINT 4) sign tattooed once they got married. (PERSINT 3) gives an historical account of these traditions, which are depicted in the selected quotes below.

B7.2. Selected Quotes

¹⁹ (PERSINT 3) is referring to my tattoo portraits.

- the Indian community, it was when a Hindu woman married for some reason of the other. They used to put an ohm sign you know. Most of them used to put an ohm sign. (PERSINT 4)
- my great gran, grannies, grandfathers when they came from India here, you know they had dots, some of them had tattoo like, you know small and they used to tell us, no why they put that, recognize them from different class and all that kind of thing. I don't know how far that is true, you know. (PERSINT 1)
- You see the Muslim has the star and the moon as a Muslim symbol so the Hindu's I think they had this ohm as a Hindu symbol. And some of them had the swastika. In fact, the swastika is not from Germany, it was from India. And some of them, either the swastika or the ohm sign. (PERSINT 6)
- the married ladies took it on the upper arm you know so its concealed because then they never used a blouse that had this short sleeves, it was always like a three quarter. So too conceal it. (PERSINT 6)

B7.3. Discussion

Whilst the traditions of tattoo design and subject matter has been kept alive over the years as described in the popular designs (A5 and B3), traditions in South African society have also been preserved over time.

C. LOCATIONS

C1. Tattoo Premises

C1.1. Findings

We get an insight into the location of Harry's tattoo shop, which was a '*multistoried building with offices to serve the Indian community*' (ARCHINT) which was called Lakhani Chambers in Saville Street. There was not much detail in the form of interior design as his shop consisted of '*a small little room, just a table he had there and his designs all over and that was it*' (PERSINT 2). Customers would sit on '*broken chair, buckets, you sat anywhere and you can also wait in the passages*' (PERSINT 2).

C1.2. Selected Quotes

- Aye, that was in Saville Street you know. Saville Street. (PERSINT 3)

- You had to go to his flats there in Saville Street, it was called Saville Street (**PERSINT 1**)
- Everyone say Harry from Saville Street. (**PERSINT 1**)
- Fuck, it was shocking. It was a small little room, just a table he had there and his designs all over and that was it. And whoever came in, broken chair, buckets, you sat anywhere and you can also wait in the passages. (**PERSINT 2**)
- It was not like a bright place, like now you see tattoo shops. (**PERSINT 1**)
- first floor of Lakhani Chambers (**PERSINT 6**)
- I opened my business in Lakhani Chambers in Saville street – at the time it was virtually the only large multistoried building with offices to serve the Indian community. (**ARCHINT**)

C1.3. Discussion

The reader of this study will get a detailed glimpse of Harry's tattoo studio, which is great subject matter for one's imagination. Once again visual representations in figures 2.14 and 2.15 of this study create a link between the images depicted and the descriptions of the interviewees.

D. PROCEEDURES

D1. Stencils

D1.1. Findings

It is interesting to note that the procedure regarding tattoo stencils has not changed much throughout the years. The design was traced on a stencil using a 'special pencil' (**PERSINT 1**), which would leave a marking on the stencil. This tracing was then applied to the skin with a little water and *'held there with a cloth and the after a couple minutes you pull it off and you got the transfer'* (**PERSINT 6**). Today's procedure follows the same principle but instead of using a pencil to create the transfer for the skin, a carbon sheet is placed under the design, which is then traced, leaving a carbon transfer on the reverse. This is then applied to the skin with special transfer cream.

D1.2. Selected Quotes

- trace on a stencil. He mark it with a special pencil. He marks it, and he put it here (shows area on his skin), he put a little water and he leave it a little while and he just peel it off slowly and the drawing be on the dissing.²⁰ (PERSINT 1)
- Stencils in the drawer, ya he had them in book formats, he had it everywhere. (PERSINT 2)
- Stencil. He'd use a stencil and put it there, draw on it and apply it to your skin and you pull it out and you tattoo. (PERSINT 2)
- It was a traced stencil like you'll see it there. It's like aaah, it was like a tissue. (PERSINT 6)
- Like a tracing paper, where you put water and you can put this trace over there and hold it down there with a cloth and after a couple minutes you pull it off and you got the transfer. (PERSINT 6)

D1.3. Discussion

With the tracing procedures of past and present following similar ideology, and with all the advances in modern technology, it is refreshing to see that these key steps are still being followed as they were in the past.

D2. Hygiene

D2.1. Findings

In today's standards, hygiene plays an important role in the tattoo industry. Equipment, workstations are sterilized to avoid cross contamination and tattoo needles are sterilized and only used once. Due to the nature of the tattoo (bleeding), there is a risk of infection, therefore an establishment that practices strict hygiene quality standards is essential. This is in stark contrast to the hygiene standards practiced in the time when Harry worked as there was only '*methyated spirits*' and '*each time he would dip it in thee and that was it*' (PERSINT 2). The health department did '*hassle*' (PERSINT 6) Harry to comply with the laws as they became more stringent. New practices that were introduced would include the following two examples: '*if you use ink from that kind of bottle, you can't re-use it on somebody else*'

²⁰ The slang meaning of 'dissing' in this context represents the leaving of the tattoo design on the skin.

(PERSINT 6) and the practice of using a *'damp rag to do the wiping off before you continue'* (PERSINT 6) was replaced with tissue paper.

D2.2. Selected Quotes

- well back then, all they had was methylated spirits. Each time he would dip it in there and that was it. So that was the only hygiene they had, there was no changing of the needles. It was the same needles. (PERSINT 2)
- he used to have a little hassles from the city health department. You know they came out with all these laws about um, hygiene. You know in a sense that, if you used ink from that kind of bottle, you can't re-use it on somebody else. Then he had a small container where he used to, you know, transfer from a bigger container. For that use and then. (PERSINT 6)
- No, they applied the new laws. About your... because he still used a rag you know when you get blood, it was out sometimes the tattoo and he used a damp rag to do the wiping off before you continue with it and then they wanted tissue paper. Then he had these rolls. (PERSINT 6)

D2.3. Discussion

The advances in Hygienic practices is a welcomed progression in the tattoo industry as a whole. By the nature of the tattoo and the possible health risks associated, it is important to adhere one hundred percent to approved hygiene requirements.

E. CLIENTELLE

E1. Findings

The topic of clientele is discussed in 4.2.9 of this chapter but it is interesting to note the responses from the in-depth interviews. We get an insight into the magnitude of Harry's clientele with the remark *'aye, must be about a million-people man'* (PERSINT 3) used to describe the amount of people tattooed by Harry. (PERSINT 1) described going to see Harry, where they use to *'sit, talk about stories, going around the world'* (PERSINT 1). These stories from around the world could be from clientele that came from abroad as Harry had *'a lot of foreigners that used to come out'* (PERSINT 6). People from both ends of the social spectrum

used to frequent his tattoo shop, with *'Doctors and lawyers as well as politicians and of course, the thugs who became notorious gangsters in the 50's and 60's'* (ARCHINT).

E1.2. Selected Quotes

- Aye, he tattooed a lot, aye, I think he tattooed about, aye, must be about a million-people man. (PERSINT 3)
- When we used to go there, we used to site, talk about his stories, going around the world. (PERSINT 1)
- They were ex-prisoners, from Wentworth you know. Fucked up okes²¹ bru²² and they always used to be there. (PERSINT 2)
- Aye, look I know a lot of name that used to come those days, you know during the apartheid era and a lot, I know of a lot of foreigners that used to come out. People that did come previously or maybe they could have been sailors but I know like on certain days, he used to phone home to tell us he's going to be late and he needs to finish these particular jobs and he use to take a taxi home very late. You know early hours of the morning, just doing some... mainly the foreigners, you know the ones that were down... your people came especially for tattoos some times and went back home. (PERSINT 6)
- I have been around a long time, just over half a century, and it is difficult to remember all those who patronised me. A great many came to me while in their teens and must have subsequently achieved importance in their professions. Doctors and lawyers as well politicians and of course, the thugs who became notorious gangsters in the 50's and 60's. (ARCHINT)
- One man I will always remember because he was accompanied by bodyguards. That man was King Cyprian of the Zulus. (ARCHINT)
- Aye but a lot of navy guys took tattoos from Harry. People from overseas came to him from the ships, used to come to him. (PERSINT 1)

²¹ South African slang. an informal word for man. (Dictionary 2012)

²² South African slang. another word for brother. (Dictionary 2012)

E1.3. Discussion

By the descriptions provided by the interviewees, it is clear that Harry had an extensive clientele base, consisting of people from all walks of life, social standings and occupations. Harry was a man who didn't discriminate between class and creed and had a passion for his profession.

F. TATTOO INDUSTRY

F1. Competition

F1.1. Findings

To be categorised as a pioneer, one needs to take into account the competition that practiced the same trade. The answer is pretty simple with regards to this study as 'no one else did tattoos in Durban besides Harry' (**PERSINT 1**). All of the interviewees responded that Harry had no competition, with (**PERSINT 3**) remarking with confidence that 'nobody could ever come near him'.

F1.2. Selected Quotes

- No way, no way... nobody, nobody. Nobody could ever come near him. Harry, nobody could ever come to him. (**PERSINT 3**)
- No one else did tattoos in Durban besides Harry, except one guy in Cape Town. **PERSINT 1**)
- No, nothing. There were okes doing it but no one go to them. If you had to choose between him and Harry, Harry was the one. (**PERSINT 1**)
- No, no competition. (**PERSINT 6**)

F1.3. Discussion

The interviewees in this study make it clear that Harry had no competition in Durban, with the only other professional tattoo artist residing in Cape Town.

F2. Respected Profession

F2.1. Findings

The answers that were received from the interviewees regarding the 'publics opinion of tattoos' mentioned above were not all together positive. One could assume that a similar

answer could be ascertained with the respect of the tattoo profession. Surprisingly *'nobody had no objection'* (PERSINT 3) and that *'it was respected'* (PERSINT 6).

F2.2. Selected Quotes

- that was his livelihood man. Nobody had no objection with that. (PERSINT 3)
- I think it was respected. I think it was respected. (PERSINT 6)

F2.3. Discussion

One could argue that the profession of being a tattoo artist was relatively unknown in the context of South African choices of employment. Hence the public could be influenced by social opinions regarding tattoos and various associated trends, both locally and internationally.

F3. Current Tattoo Industry

F3.1. Findings

Two main themes were discussed when describing the tattoo industry of today, a) was price as *'it costs too much man'* (PERSINT 1) and b) the choice which one has as *'back in the day, you had no choice, whatever was open to you could do. Now you can imagine it, the guy can stencil it'* (PERSINT 2).

F3.2. Selected Quotes

- Aye, I think the tattoo industry today but it is too expensive man, for us. It's a good industry, you making money but for us it costs too much man. The pricing. (PERSINT 1)
- Very very advanced compared to back then. Like it is now you can actually... now you got choices. Basically, back in the day, you had no choice, whatever was open to you could do. Now you can imagine it, the guy can stencil it, it's done you know. (PERSINT 2)
- I'd tell you if my dad was in his prime now, he would be making mega bucks²³. You know because everybody seems to be getting into tattoos now. (PERSINT 6)

²³ Bucks (South African, informal) a rand. (Dictionary 2012)

F3.3. Discussion

Two 'increases' are discussed in this topic. The increase in price of tattoos, and the increase in the amount of tattoo designs available. The tattoo industry today is a lucrative industry if an artist builds up a reputation for good quality work and practiced strict hygiene standards. With this said, the artist will therefore charge a premium for their services. As tattoos are permanents and most people have the desire for good quality tattoos, they will pay accordingly.

G. SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIETY

G1. Competition

G1.1. Findings

South Africa may be a country of diverse customs, religion and languages, but it has also had a checkered history of oppression and segregation, especially during the apartheid era. It is however refreshing to note that during the apartheid years and post-apartheid, that Harry *'always had whites, Indians, coloured and blacks and none of them ever came to blows or stupidity of coloured skin'* (PERSINT 2) and that *'everybody know him you know'* (PERSINT 2).

G1.2. Selected Quotes

- because you see the problem was, like I said, in those days, back in 1994 or 1993 before apartheid was officially but going back before then, he always had whites, Indians, coloured and blacks and none of them ever came to blows or stupidity of coloured skin. It was just sit, follow your turn and carry on. Everyone know him you know. (PERSINT 2).

G1.3. Discussion

South Africa's past has been marred by the inequality, racial discrimination and problems between the different race groups that make up South Africa's population. It is however great to note that Harry had a good relationship with all people and that people from all races tolerated each other when they came to his tattoo studio.

5.3 In-Depth Interviews

In this section, I will introduce each in-depth interview that I conducted and document the graphic imagery of the interviewees tattoos.

6.3.1 (PERSINT 3 and 5)

'Aye, he was a master of the masters' (PERSINT 3). These are the words used to describe Harry Ramesar. We first met in 2009 when I was busy conducting research for my Baccalaureus Technologiae study. I was on the hunt for information on a tattoo legend named 'Harry' and a source told me to go to the spice market in Warwick Junction in Durban central and find the infamous spice man.

It took us two trips around the market to find our man. His stall was actually the first one we walked passed. Who is this man you ask? Well, his name is Joe and he is said to have the best spices in the world. Dressed in a snappy leather waistcoat.
(van As 2009)

I returned to the very same spice market to inquire if Joe would like to partake in this study but he had since relocated to his home, which was not too far away. A gentleman in the store opposite gave me a home address and I proceeded to that location. I arrived and parked on the road outside his house and made my way to the garden gate where I was greeted. He remembered me from our first meeting eight years back and I proposed that we set up a date and time to conduct an interview in the location of his choice. A few weeks later I returned to his house and setup our meeting in his garden.

I normally operate a spice shop at the Victoria Street Spice Market and from a ten-year-old boy I've been working there all my life and now this year, January I entered my 75th birthday and I decided to call it off because my wife passed away and I'm doing the same spice business at home. I'm not pushing it, I'm just servicing, you know like special customers. (PERSINT 3)

I asked him what his relationship with Harry was and replied that they were very good friends and that they first met when Joe was fifteen or sixteen years old. Joe unfortunately never met Harry's older brother Beharie, this could maybe have been due to the age gap between them. 'No, I never met his brother. I know his whole family, his wife, his sons, you know but I haven't met his brother you know' **(PERSINT 3)**. I asked him if he was happy with his tattoos when he got them, he replied: 'Oh, very happy. (Joe chuckles) very happy' **(PERSINT 5)**. I then asked him what were peoples reaction to his tattoos, he replied with a chuckle.

Aye, well... everybody liked it like you know what I mean. And a, only now I regret why I got it. **(PERSINT 5)**

The answer he gave was interesting, therefore I asked him if he regretted all of his tattoos or only certain ones. He replied: 'Well, all of them like to quite honest with you. I regret why I got it' **(PERSINT 5)** This is a truly fascinating man and a very well-respected man in his community. After our interview, I was led to his spice room at the back of his house to sample some of his famous spice blends. In total, this interviewee had five tattoos done by Harry Ramesar in the early nineteen sixties. He got his first tattoo at the age of 18 and at the time of our in-depth interview, he was seventy-five years old. These tattoos are depicted below (Figures. 6.1 to 6.5).



Figure 6.1 Swallow on left hand, 1960's



Figure 6.2 Ship on left hand, 1960's



Figure 6.3 Swallow on left hand, 1960's



Figure 6.4 Lady looking in a mirror on let wrist, 1960's



Figure 6.5 Man's Ruin on left forearm, 1960's

Table 6.1 Tattoo breakdown of interviewee (PERSINT 3 and 5).

Tattoo	Question and Communicative Element	Answer
Swallow	Reason for acquiring & or symbolic meaning:	No no no. (implying that there was no reason).
	Tattoo Classification	Miscellaneous
	Graphic Communication Theme	The Natural World / symbols
	Communicative Function	Referential / Poetic
	Semiotic Sign Type	Indexical
Sailing Ship	Reason for acquiring & or symbolic meaning:	Naa man, I just put it there you know. It was in... what you call, it was very famous this ship in those days like you know. Most of the people used to have this.
	Tattoo Classification	Identification 1.1 Emblems
	Graphic Communication Theme	Man-made Objects
	Communicative Function	Poetic
	Semiotic Sign Type	Iconic
Snake Head	Reason for acquiring & or symbolic meaning:	Aye, I just put that dam thing there.
	Tattoo Classification	Miscellaneous
	Graphic Communication Theme	The Natural World
	Communicative Function	Referential
	Semiotic Sign Type	Symbolic
Lady looking in the mirror	Reason for acquiring & or symbolic meaning:	Here I got the women looking at her face in the mirror. (chuckles), this I must show it to you when we finished the program. This was not on the wall, Harry did this and a very few people got this.
	Tattoo Classification	Pornographic
	Graphic Communication Theme	Symbols
	Communicative Function	Expressive
	Semiotic Sign Type	Symbolic
Man's Ruin	Reason for acquiring & or symbolic meaning:	Dream of a snake, that's a problem. Then you got the women, you got the cards, you got the knife, you got the dice, you got the wine, you got the race course and you got the marijuana.

		Anyone that does all that... it ruining his body.
	Tattoo Classification	Bombastic and Pseudo Heroic Tattoos
	Graphic Communication Theme	Man-made Objects / The Natural World/ Symbols
	Communicative Function	Referential / Expressive/ Poetic / Phatic
	Semiotic Sign Type	Iconic / Indexical / Symbolic

In the image below (Figure. 6.6) is a breakdown of the Man's ruin tattoo, using numbers to represent the various elements that form the tattoos composition.



Figure 6.6 Man's Ruin tattoo diagram.

The 'Lady looking in the mirror' tattoo presented an acceptable pose or scene when observed by the viewer but once inverted, created an obscener view once the tattoo was inverted or rotated 180 degrees. When the interviewee indicated that: 'this I must show it to you when we finished the program' (**PERSINT 5**), implied that this tattoo design was not found on the wall, where most of the other tattoos could be found but rather a special design that Harry did. 'This was not on the wall, Harry did this and a very few people got this' (**PERSINT 5**)

In the visual diagram below I have represented both of the viewing options. Visual A is the standard view that a viewer would see and visual B represents the view of the tattoo if inverted or turned 180 degrees. Visual B is the view that the tattooed individual would see.

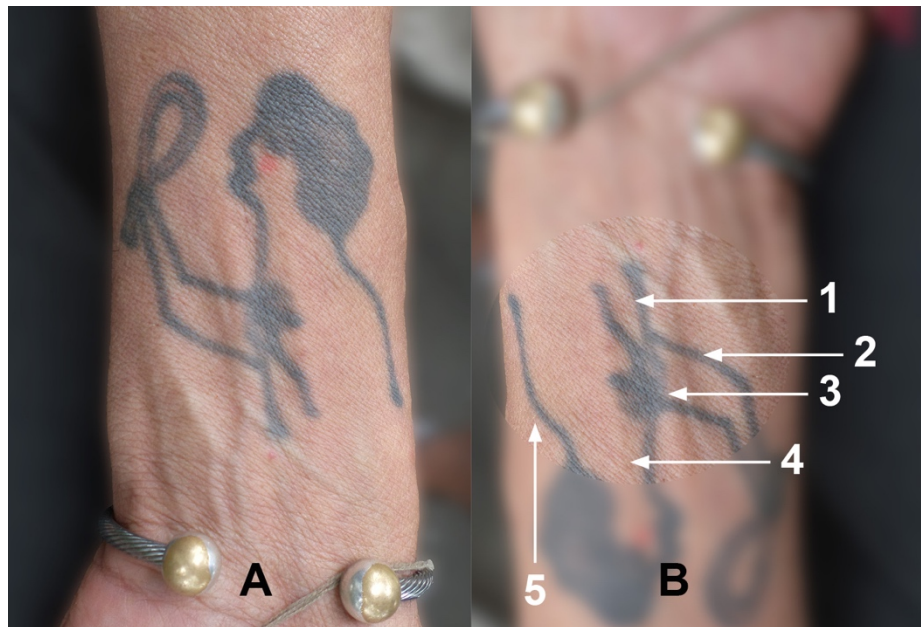


Figure 6.7 Two views of the 'lady looking in the mirror' tattoo.

For the purpose of this visual explanation, I have isolated the area of importance and blurred the surrounding to make the result easier to see. Herewith is the number key:

1. Arm and hand.
2. Inner thigh.
3. A females' genital area.
4. Outer thigh
5. Buttocks

As a result, we are exposed to two vastly different visual scenes. 1) of an acceptable pose that is quiet innocent when looked at and 2), an obscener, yet creative form of visual communication that was most defiantly frowned upon during the time it was tattooed. Not an obvious conclusion if looked at inverted or rotated but an instant visual connection if explained or shown.

Communication Plane of the semiotic pyramid example.

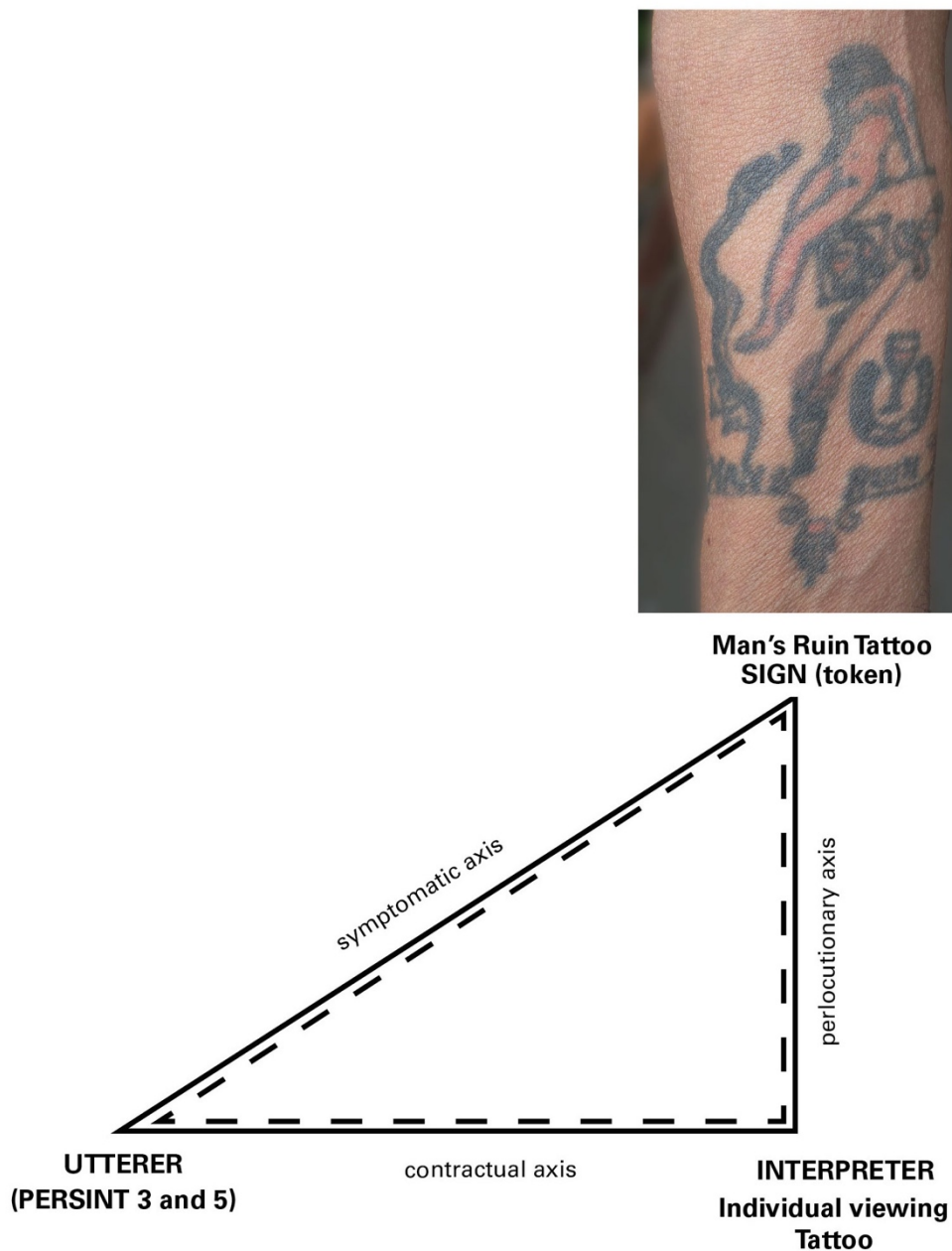


Figure 6.8 Semiotic pyramid model example of 'Mans' Ruin' tattoo.

Figure 6.8 is an example, where the *sign* (token) is represented by the interviewees 'Man's Ruin' tattoo. The interviewee, to whom this tattoo belongs, will be represented by the *utterer* and the *interpreter* will be represented by the individual who views the tattoo mentioned above. This tattoo is made up of eight individual elements which viewed together form the tattoos overall composition. The *utterer* could therefore be a person who partakes in the activities the individual icons represent and the *interpreter* could either be a similar individual

to the utterer, who partakes in the same activities or once engaging with the *utterer*, will be able to make the semiotic relationship between the icon and the actual act that that icon represents. The communication plane of the semiotic system is utilised understand the multiple relationships of each element.

6.3.2 (PERSINT 1)

Just as the previous interviewee, I knew interviewee (PERSINT 1) before I began research for this study. Being in the advertising and design industry in Durban, I utilise various printing services and this interviewee is employed in a printing company as a digital assistant. We first started talking when he complimented me on my portrait tattoos and inquired where I got them done and who the tattoo artist was. I told him these were portraits of family members of mine and he replied that he too wanted to get family portraits and began showing me where on his body he wanted them done and that he wanted to cover some of his existing tattoos. He proceeded to show me some of his tattoos and I immediately recognised their style and age. I asked him who did them and his answer was like music to my ears. 'Harry gave these tattoos'. I jokingly said to him he could not cover up those tattoos as I was in the process of getting my study proposal approved and that I would love to interview him and document his tattoos.

Interviewee (PERSINT 1) is the impiety of a 'salt of the earth character' ²⁴ who would go out of his way to help you. I set up an interview time when it was convenient for him and the location of the interview was his company's boardroom. It was the same case as per the interviewee (PERSINT 3), when I asked him if he knew Harry's brother Beharie, he replied that he only knew Harry. 'No, no, I only know Harry' (PERSINT 1). The interviewee first heard about Harry due to the fact that his friends were in the South African Navy. *'Remember in those days the Indian guys, a lot of them used to go to the navy. Every second person was in the navy, you know the South African navy. So, they used to go for tattoos there. So, I went to go with my friends there to go get a tattoo'* (PERSINT 1). I asked him to describe his first encounter with Harry:

²⁴ Salt of the earth can be defined as: 'Basic, fundamental goodness; the phrase can be used to describe any simple, good person' (Dictionary.com 2005).

It was not like a bright place, like now you see tattoo shops. It was just like a you go sit on the chair and he comes there with his machine, he asks you and you talk. He was a very good talker but. He used to talk nonstop. He would take you around the world, with his talking. Tell you every town that he went to. I don't know whether it was lie or if it was true but he says he visited the whole world. I dunno wherever its true just because to us to, ahhh, stop the pain, you know by talking to us or what. But he used to talk, he was a good talker but. Aye, a wonderful man... Harry (**PERSINT 1**).

During the interview, I cast my mind back to when we first met, when he wanted to cover up his tattoos. I then asked Him if he was happy with his tattoos when he had them. He replied:

Aye, I was happy. Nothing was, but as I'm growing older, you see like but know when you look at the other tattoos that this young guys are doing now, the new guys, it's much more disting²⁵ than those days. Aye, I wish I can meet up with all the old people with Harry's tattoos (**PERSINT 1**).

Interviewee (**PERSINT 1**) had three tattoos done by Harry Ramesar. All of his tattoos we done in the same year in nineteen eighty-six when the interviewee was eighteen years old. His tattoos are depicted below (Figures. 6.9 to 6.11).

²⁵ Slang term, meaning fancy, detailed in this context.



Figure 6.9 Eagle on left forearm, 1986



Figure 6.10 Flying eagle on right fist, 1986



Figure 6.11 Swallow with the inscription 'True Love' on left arm.

Table 6.2 Tattoo breakdown of interviewee (PERSINT 1).

Tattoo	Question and Communicative Element	Answer
Eagle on forearm	Reason for acquiring & or symbolic meaning:	This one here is because of a cover up (it used to be a heart and a bird).
	Tattoo Classification	Miscellaneous
	Graphic Communication Theme	The Natural World
	Communicative Function	Poetic
	Semiotic Sign Type	Iconic / Indexical
Flying eagle on fist	Reason for acquiring & or symbolic meaning:	this one here was because my friend and I, he's from the navy, he put one there and put his name and I put one and put my name there
	Tattoo Classification	Private Symbols
	Graphic Communication Theme	The Natural World
	Communicative Function	Referential / Expressive

	Semiotic Sign Type	Iconic / Indexical
Swallow with banner	Reason for acquiring & or symbolic meaning:	They had mom and dad in there, so I put 'true love' on it, but it's not so grand you see now because its fading off. I just put it for... you know when you young you think of girls and everything now.
	Tattoo Classification	Miscellaneous
	Graphic Communication Theme	The Natural World
	Communicative Function	Referential / Expressive / Poetic / Conative / Phatic
	Semiotic Sign Type	Iconic / Indexical

Communication Plane of the semiotic pyramid example.

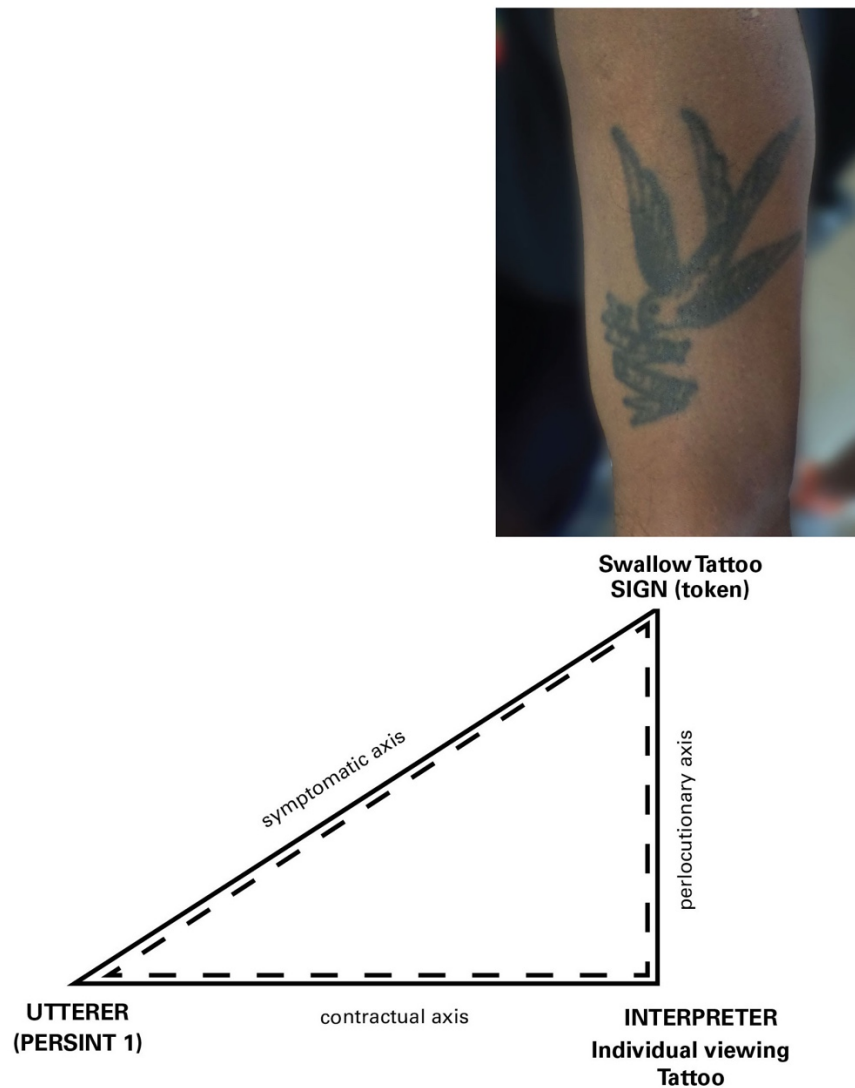


Figure 6.12 Semiotic pyramid model example for the swallow tattoo.

Figure 6.12 is an example, where the *sign* (token) is represented by the interviewees 'Swallow' tattoo which appears on the forearm. The interviewee, to whom this tattoo belongs, will be represented by the *utterer* and the *interpreter* will be represented by individual who views the tattoo mentioned above. This tattoo as described in the literature review (2.6.1) has a strong history in maritime subject matter as a 'symbol of good luck as their presence indicated that the sailors were close to land' (Clerk 2008: 61). The *utterer* remarked that he decided on the design as he was young and when you are 'young, you thing of girls and everything' (**PERSINT 1**). The presence of the swallow and the banner with the words 'true love' would give the *interpreter* the visual communication that the swallow, a symbol of good luck is flying with a banner with the words that represent the feeling that

most people hold dear. Utilising the communication plane of the semiotic system, the understanding and visual communication of the *SIGN* will be established and explored.

6.3.3 (PERSINT 2)

Interviewee (PERSINT 2) was younger than the previous two interviewees mentioned above. This fact would give insight into the visual aspect of the tattoos and if the style and form had changed throughout the years. As this was the first time that I had met this interviewee, I asked him what his relationship with Harry was as I had two sets of approved interview questions. One for a personal friend or family member and the other a tattoo client. He replied that he was a client but they had become friendly.

Look the amount of times we had to visit him, we became friendly, because it wasn't like you could just pick up the phone and make an appointment with him you know. So, we would go in groups of five or six people. seven, eight people. Basically, we would go on a Saturday, Saturday morning. So, you had to get a bus into town, get up to him with the seven to eight people to make appointments. So, we would sit there and watch because we had nothing else to do. We would talk to him and get to know each other. Then you would book, probably do three of us this Saturday, three of us next Saturday and three the following Saturday. So, we would go for a period of over a year and half with him. But just follow your turn because he was the only one we knew that could tattoo us (PERSINT 2).

This interviewee was very confident during our interview and he seemed very relaxed and spoke confidently as he recollected stories and memories of his times with Harry. I asked him to describe his very first encounter with Harry:

He actually told me I couldn't get a tattoo, we went in, we were highly hung over²⁶ so he refused to tattoo us cos according to him your blood thins so he

²⁶ Suffering after a night of alcoholism.

can't. We didn't know that, we thought you know what to get pissed²⁷ on the Friday night then get there and get it done. We walked in after booking this whole thing, we ready to go in, the first person, you could just smell the alcohol on him. You been drinking? (Harry) No, no. How much you all drink? (Harry) we were pissed. Especially the tattoo he had to do, when the blood would run, it would wipe off the stencil (PERSINT 2).

I asked him if he had a specific tattoo in mind when he went to see Harry for his first tattoo. He replied that he had the idea of a dragon. 'I had an idea that I wanted a dragon, I just did not know what until he gets to you, and then he gives you, he had stencils of maybe twenty thirty dragons and you choose the best one that suits you' (PERSINT 2). He described to me that he was born in Chatsworth, a suburb on the outskirts of Durban and that he had an 'ideal tattooed life'. 'Since a youngster, getting into trouble, getting out of trouble you know. Normal, just basically normal back in the day. Nothing special about us but the thing was like, a lot of stereotyping going around you know what I mean. That's how tattoos came about, one guy was doing it, all of a sudden you wanted to do it' (PERSINT 2).

As this interviewee was considerably younger than the previous two gentlemen that I interviewed, I was quietly confident that the question regarding any interesting stories about Harry, would yield a positive result. Both of the previous interviewees found it difficult to think of anything off the cuff as their tattoo experiences were quiet a number of years prior to our interview. This interviewee did not disappoint, he told a story that could have been taken out of a cinema script.

Look, not really interesting, aaah, how can I say this... if you, look, with us it was, to be in town on a Saturday, we had the vacate by about four five o'clock. The last bus comes in and there was a little bit of a turf war going on in town, who you were, what you was. And, once we got personally involved in a turf with some guy over there.

²⁷ A slang term for being drunk.

Victoria street, we got involved in turf and those guys were local guys, they from, they stayed in town. We didn't know that. And then there was like, there were five of us and three of them. And there was an argument and a fist fight broke out. It was quite cool but what we didn't know was they were locals. So, the one guy runs up and the next thing we know there are twenty okes²⁸ so we turn around and run. We didn't know where we were running to. We chased and we ended up in Saville street, you know by Harry. So, we double up the stairs and we got up to the stairs, we like hey Harry. What happened (Harry), the oke just came on and he was like quits you guys and goes back. They allowed us to go. Even when we came back down, we knew, we would probably back away so, after all, once we came down. They backed away completely (PERSINT 2).

As tattoos during the time were not as mainstream as they are today, I asked about Harry's customer service and his personality while he was tattooing. The reply that I received was that he was very inviting and as long as you didn't get in the way of tattooing, he was fine with it. You were allowed to drink before but not while you were there (PERSINT 2). With regards to Harry's personality while he was tattooing:

Oh, he accommodates you, great respect, always speaking always asking how you feeling you know. Lots of stories, he knew a lot. I think I spent personally about just tattooing six – eight hours under the needle with him and probably another, shit, probably about forty fifty hours being there with him. Always had a different story here, I never hear like some similar but always a different story of when he were a lightie²⁹, and then him growing up and stuff like that. Always had good stories (PERSINT 2).

I asked, if the clocks could turn back, would he get your same tattoos again and he replied:

²⁸ A slang term for guys (males).

²⁹ South African slang, refers to a young person (Smarties 2005)

Ya, ya, by the time I did it was right. Look, as you grow up, things change. You grow up and everything, you grow up right but it brings back a shit load of memories, sometimes you say hey, you sit and hey I did that on that day, you did this because of these tattoos at that time. It brings back a lot of memories, that I've actually forgotten and that I've pushed to the back of my head because how can I say you not proud of the past that you... all the shit that you did back in the day you know. Also, if you look at it clearly, it got me away from the shit that I went through. I really understand why I won't do it again. why I tell a guy, if you telling a guy don't put your finger on the stove you'll get burnt, if he hasn't experienced it before, he's curiously want to get burnt. But we've got burnt so we've know what it feels like not to go do that shit. With a heartbeat id take these tattoos back again, probably more **(PERSINT 2)**.

(PERSINT 2) had three tattoos done by Harry Ramesar (Figures. 6.13 to 6.15). They were competed three years apart and are depicted below. These tattoos we completed in the years between nineteen ninety-three and nineteen ninety-five, which was towards the end of Harry's tattoo career as **(PERSINT 2)** describes with the phrase: 'he was fucking shaky as hell' **(PERSINT 2)**.



Figure 6.13 A panaromic view of the dragon tattoo on the right arm, 1993.



Figure 6.14 A Grim reaper on the left arm.



Figure 6.15 A snake and knife on the left shoulder, 1995.

Table 6.3 Tattoo breakdown of interviewee (PERSINT 1).

Tattoo	Question and Communicative Element	Answer
Dragon	Reason for acquiring & or symbolic meaning:	Ya, mini gang related, whatever. This tattoo came out, considering he was seventy when he did it. (happy with the result). There was a bit of red here you see. It was darker (on the eye) and then the mouth, tongue. He did two colours, red and black
	Tattoo Classification	Bombastic and Pseudo Heroic
	Graphic Communication Theme	The Natural World
	Communicative Function	Referential \ Poetic / Phatic
	Semiotic Sign Type	Iconic / Symbolic
Grim Reaper	Reason for acquiring & or symbolic meaning:	I damaged it. I put it in water too early. But this was not his stencil, it was drawn by a friend of mine. Ya, and he stenciled it. And then we got pissed drunk at night and damaged it in the pool.
	Tattoo Classification	Private Symbols
	Graphic Communication Theme	Symbols
	Communicative Function	Referential / Expressive / Poetic / Phatic
	Semiotic Sign Type	Iconic / Symbolic
Snake with Dagger	Reason for acquiring & or symbolic meaning:	And this one here, this is a snake with a knife, a snake around it. And this was his last one he did for us. He was, fuck... he was fucking shaky as hell. I chose cos my girlfriend at the time got me this as a birthday present. A tattoo... and I just saw the snake, the knife and fuck that, it looks lekker ³⁰ . Just because it's that, I took it. There was no symbolic about this shit.
	Tattoo Classification	Bombastic and Pseudo Heroic
	Graphic Communication Theme	The Natural World / Man Made Objects

³⁰ South African slang for pleasing or enjoyable. (Dictionary.com 2005a)

	Communicative Function	Referential / Poetic / Phatic
	Semiotic Sign Type	Iconic / Indexical / Symbolic

Communication Plane of the semiotic pyramid example.

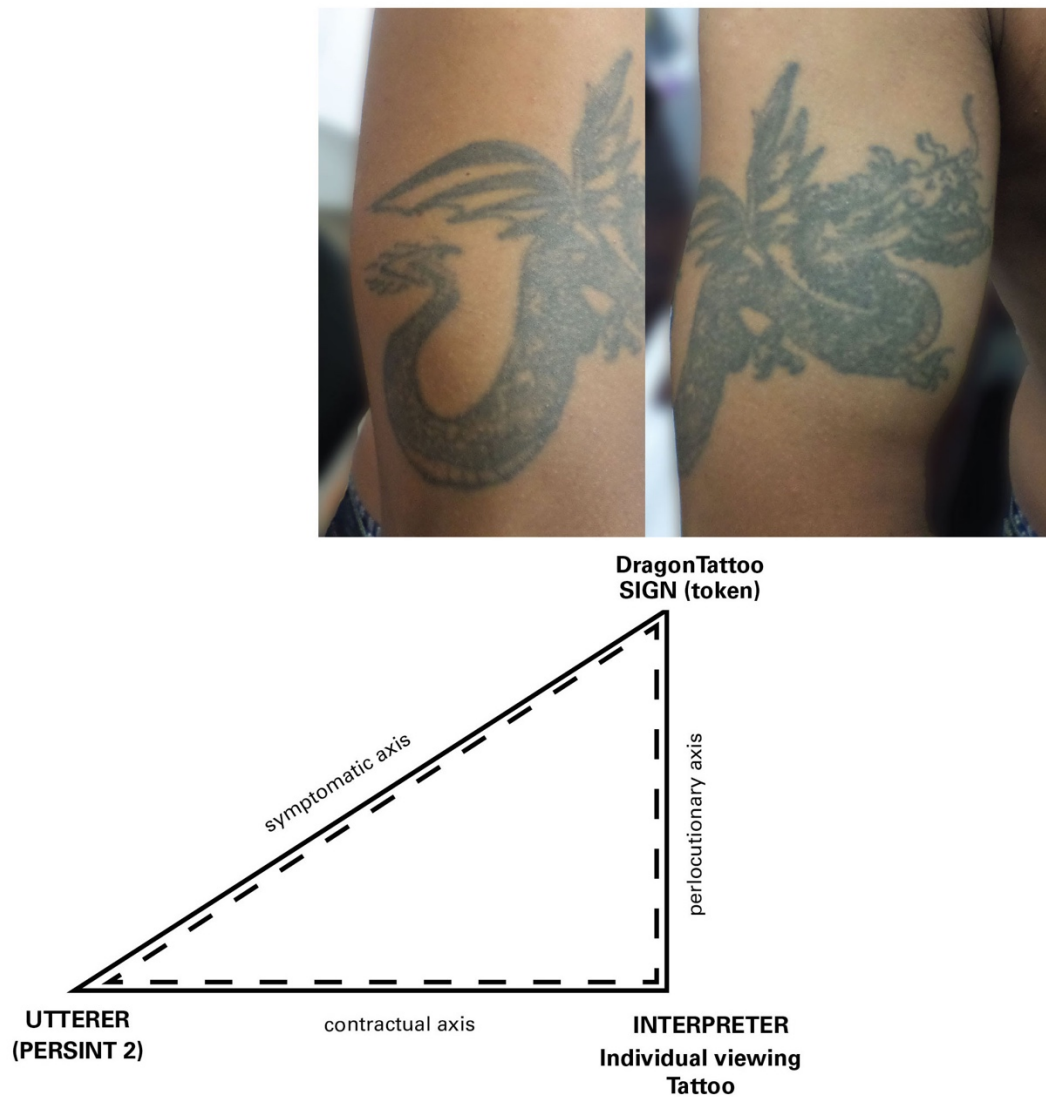


Figure 6.16 Semiotic pyramid model example for the dragon tattoo.

Figure 6.16 is an example, where the *sign* (token) is represented by the interviewees 'Dragon' tattoo. The interviewee, to whom this tattoo belongs, will be represented by the *utterer* and the *interpreter* will be represented by individual who views the tattoo mentioned above. Clerk (2008) remarks that the dragon had 'pretty bad press in western countries' (Clerk 2008: 218) and described the mythology of the dragon as follows:

'In the Far East, however, where it loomed large in folklore and legend, the dragon represented a sweep of life-enhancing qualities and concepts, many of them connected to nature. The dragon stood for the four elements of fire, water, air and earth and for the four points of the compass. It was gracefully portrayed by tattoo artists and widely recognized as a symbol of good fortune, bringing strength, sagacity and goodwill.'

'In Europe and America, the dragon was widely regarded as the bogeyman of the monster world: big, bad and ugly, a supremely malevolent being with wings and a red-eyed glare, breathing fire and putrid fumes over all it surveyed. Traditionally, it posted the ultimate challenge: the most heroic human feat imaginable was to slay a dragon.' (Clerk 2008: 221)

The *utterer* Explained that this tattoo was 'mini gang related' (PERSINT 2) which relates to a deviant interpretation to the explanation given by Clerk (2008) above. The interpreter could either 1) interpret a similar view to the utterer, or 2) view the tattoo in a more positive light as 'a symbol of good fortune, bringing strength, sagacity and goodwill (Clerk 2008: 218). The semiotic relationship, utilising the communication plane can be discussed to understand the visual meaning of the element.

6.3.4 (PERSINT 4 and 6)

I first became aware this interviewee, whilst I was interviewing (PERSINT 3 & 5), when he remarked that he knew Harry's son very well.

You know he's doing panel beating you know, all this kind of thing at home like you know. And ah... aye we are very good friends, we go a very long long ways man (PERSINT 3). I used to go there... you know to get a few things done on my car or whatever it is like you know, he used to call his son Anil, Anil, come here... you see that brother there... you don't let him go until he sit and have lunch with us. Aye honestly man. Aye, you know they were two good people man (PERSINT 3).

On completion of my interview with **(PERSINT 3 & 5)**, I asked him if he would be willing to introduce me to Harry's son. I thought it would be best if I was accompanied by somebody known to him. I was extremely excited to have the opportunity to interview a living relative of Harry. The fact that I had since been personally introduced and had the opportunity to briefly engage in conversation with him, gave me the confidence that our interview would shed light on information regarding this study and potentially unlock the family perspective of Harry. A couple of weeks went by and I arranged the interview at his place of work, the very same place that we met. When I arrived, Mr Ramesar was sitting at a table in the garage with a collection of printed pages arranged in front of him. Whilst I was setting up my equipment, I scanned the pages that were visible, which consisted of photostatted newspaper clippings which related to Harry.

I started off the interview by informing Mr Ramesar that I had in fact interviewed Harry in 2009 and asked him when Harry passed away. He replied that Harry had passed away in 2011 and that he was ninety-six years old. Mr Ramesar asked me if Harry had ever told me that Nelson Mandela was his neighbor, I replied that I had not, so he told it to me.

In Lacarney Chambers upstairs, the ANC had offices there, Nelson Mandela was his buddy. There was an invitation out here, where Nelson Mandela invited my mom and dad to lunch. As soon as he got released from prison and he landed in Durban, it was during that week. The first week that he was in Durban. He took them all out for lunch, they went to, I think it was the revolving restaurant. I think it was there. I know they had lunch together and the invitation is lying somewhere in the workshop. All these boys saw it as well **(PERSINT 4)**.

I asked **(PERSINT 4)** if he had any old tracing that his father used to use as I knew from my previous interviews that my interviewees had explained that Harry had lots of tracing and designs. Anil's answer did not disappoint:

Ya, a whole stack. There's lots of it. Boxes, suitcases full of his tracings. There was some sketches there but I see it was signed by somebody else. Your etchings, aaa,

with pencil... my dad was famous for that. You know like he, when he was doing nothing, he had his book **(PERSINT 4)**.

One element that I had not covered yet in my interviews, was a family members account of Harry. I then asked Mr Ramesar to tell me a little bit about his dad.

Look, my dad loved flowers. He loved... you see in Maritzburg they used to have a... up until recently, they had the azalea festival. And a, I think it is in the month of June, it's like a festival in Maritzburg that type of thing. And then, those days they used to have, um, processions, you know like how the university used to have those processions in West street and I know my ma told me this and many other people that my dad used to do, they used to take a double decker bus and he converted the one into an elephant with Azaleas. You know for the floats. And he was top at those kinds of things. And he loved flowers and roses, where this building stands now he had a rose garden down there. He loved grafting roses. Getting different colours, different varieties and things like that and planting them **(PERSINT 4)**.

Look here as a dad, I really enjoyed my father and you know I really miss him because he was more a friend then a father. You know what I'm saying. If we had anything to discuss, that's how we were brought up, you know my mum was my friend, my dad was my friend that type of thing. You know what I mean. You got a problem, you go and discuss it, you don't run away from it. And aa, I enjoyed my dad **(PERSINT 4)**.

He was just a cool dad you know what I mean. He loved his family **(PERSINT 4)**.

Mr Ramesar explained that he had spent a lot of time at his father's shop and that he used to go in mainly on a Saturday to help clean up as this was his busiest day. An interesting fact that I did not know was that Harry also owned a tailor shop. The tailor shop was situated in the same building as his tattoo shop. He employed staff to run it for him. This made sense as

Harry always looked well dressed, which could be viewed as a subliminal visual communication tool to help portray the quality of his tattoos.

He always safari suit or before safari suits came out, he always wore a suit and tie. Always. He likes his dressing though. This is how they dressed. This is the normal, two piece, three piece, that's how they normally dressed (PERSINT 4).

In our conversations, I told Mr Ramesar that there was not much visual material available, especially images and or photographs that depicted the tattoo industry of the time. With special reference to Harry and his brother Beharie. Anil then made reference on his fathers' 'pride and joy' tattoo.

But I remember the one that he really had pride in, we used to always watch, there was an Indian guy from Bailey Avenue, he had a, it was an eagle, a snake and a dragon that were entangled in a fight. And this guy had it and it took him many hours and he always had that on his work table. He had a glass and it was underneath there and it's probably in one of the suitcases there, in the boxes. But that was his pride and joy tattoo type of thing (PERSINT 4).

Towards the end of our interview, I explained that I would love to document any visual material that he might have, especially due to the fact that this is a visual communication study. His reply left me with the visual image in my head that depicted just how much Harry was loved and respected by his family.

You know what's a funny thing, after my dad passed on, all his plants that he had in the front there, the rose trees and that... all died (PERSINT 6).

I think it must have been about at the beginning of this year, the last two trees, rose trees, because you can you can ask my boys this, and one of his rose trees there, you can come any part of the year and if it wasn't his tree it was the other, in full bloom. It doesn't just bloom seasonal. It was like all the time. And he had azalea, he had a azalea plant there, that also died (PERSINT 6).

Mr Ramesar only had one tattoo, an eagle and he said he was 'quiet happy with the result' (PERSINT 6). I asked him if Harry had specifically designed for him and he replied that it was one of his existing tracings. As eagle subject matter was popular during the time, I asked Anil if the tracing was a popular design. He replied that it was average and that he had seen the tracing in one of Harry's bags that he still had at home. His tattoo is depicted below (Figure. 6.16).



Figure 6.16 Eagle tattoo on the right arm.

Table 6.4 Tattoo breakdown of interviewee (PERSINT 4 and 6).

Tattoo	Question and Communicative Element	Answer
Eagle	Reason for acquiring & or symbolic meaning:	I had one ambition to go to America. This was my thing. An Eagle represented America. I wanted to be a mechanic because you find a good couple of my uncles were mechanics and besides spending time at my dads' shop, during the long holidays, my vacations I spent in Maritzburg. And a being there I learnt quite a bit about mechanics and I thought after

		finishing school id go to America. Because could not get an apprenticeship, if you didn't know that as an auto electrical mechanic. In my days, it was different. You could either work in a clothing factory or a shoe factory.
	Tattoo Classification	Miscellaneous
	Graphic Communication Theme	The Natural World
	Communicative Function	Referential\ Poetic
	Semiotic Sign Type	Iconic / Symbolic

Communication Plane of the semiotic pyramid example.

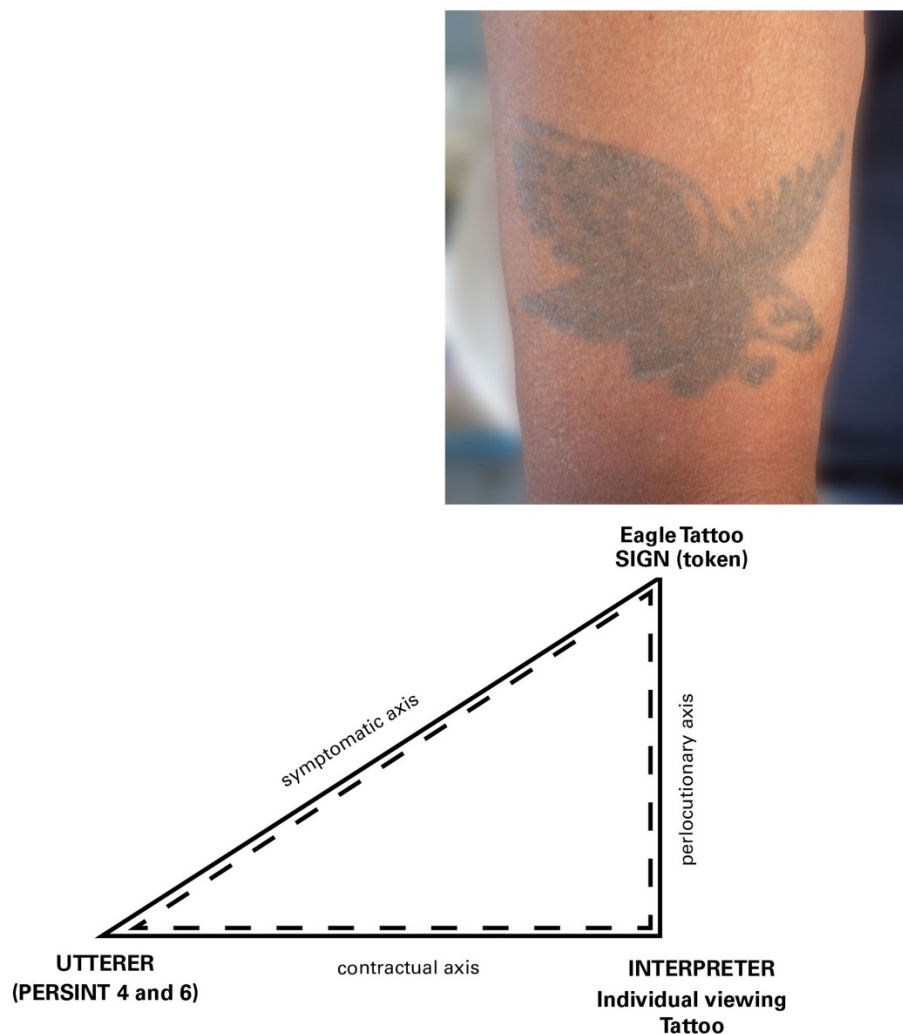


Figure 6.17 Semiotic pyramid model example for the eagle tattoo.

Figure 6.18 is an example, where the *sign* (token) is represented by the interviewees 'Eagle' tattoo. The interviewee, to whom this tattoo belongs, will be represented by the *utterer* and the *interpreter* will be represented by individual who views the tattoo mentioned above. The eagle tattoo is steeped in tattoo culture as Clerk (2008) remarks that:

The eagle was chosen to be America's national emblem in 1782. Soaring and swooping, king of the skies, this was the most magnificent of birds. It stood for supremacy, freedom, independence and long life, spreading wings that would sweep the country forward, into the future, with confidence. Soldiers and sailors setting off to serve the US in the First and Second World Wars frequently asked for eagle tattoos. Patriots followed suit, and post-war, the motorcycle gangs of the 1950s and after adopted the eagle as a symbol expressing not only national pride but also speed and dominance, maybe even ruthlessness, in the wide open spaces of America (Clerk 2008: 184).

The *utterer* explained that the above-mentioned symbol was a symbol of him wanting to go to America and apply for an apprenticeship (**PERSINT 4 and 6**). The explanation given by Clerk (2008) gives a similar impression to what people outside the US, related the eagle's visual communication too. The *interpreter* could view this visual subject matter in three broad categories 1) interpret a similar view to the utterer, viewing the eagle as a symbol of America, 2) view the tattoo in its historical symbolism as a symbol 'or supremacy, freedom, independence and long life, (Clerk 2008: 184) or 3) viewing it a symbol of rebellion and dominance. The semiotic relationship, utilising the communication plane can be discussed to understand the visual meaning of the element.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

7.1 Summary of the preceding chapters

This study set out to investigate the graphic imagery of pioneer tattoo artists in KwaZulu-Natal with special reference to the Ramesar brothers, based on the following aims and objectives: (a) Conduct a scholarly analysis and documentation of KwaZulu-Natal's early tattoo artists. (b) Interview family members, past clients and individuals that knew these tattoo pioneers in order to explore and document their life, career and the tattoos that they produced. As both of these tattoo pioneers are now deceased, and there is no documented literature available, the interviews mentioned above will provide the key to unlocking important information relevant to this study. (c) Explore and analyse the visual communication of the tattoos that the Ramesar brothers produced.

The visual appearance of tattoos displays a rich compilation of graphic communication which evokes different reactions from the individuals that view them. A brief history of Western tattooing in general and popular tattoo meaning and mythology gives the reader a visual journey of the subject matter were discussed in this study and places these elements into context. The examples have the intended purpose of presenting visual representations of tattoos and allowing the viewer to see these images in their original capacity as well as from a historical point of view. Schmid (2013: 444) indicates that:

...throughout history, tattoos were used for different purposes and with various meanings. This includes the affiliation to a group, i.e. tattoos have been used to include or exclude an individual from a group or even an entire society, identification of a certain person, forced branding of people, or simply a voluntary tattoo marking an important part of an individual's personal history (Schmid 2013: 444).

The dissertation has two parts: (1) The literature review provides a comprehensive understanding of the semiotic perspective of tattoos as a form of graphic communication from which to examine the graphic imagery of pioneer tattoo artists in KwaZulu-Natal. The following three groups were discussed:

(a) Social Theories

This study focused on three main theories. Namely: deviance theory, anthropology and visual anthropology. Each has firm roots in tattooing and these theories were explored.

(b) Pictorial Communication

As tattoos are rich in visual representations, it was important to examine the various elements of a graphic image and unpack how we use this visual language as a form of expression and interpretation.

(c) A Semiotic perspective of Tattoos

As explained in 3.4.1 of this study, Harrison (2003) defines semiotics as the 'study of signs'. Tattoos are permanent signs etched on the skin, which represent some form of expression and or representation. These expressions and or representations can follow traditional tattoo mythology or be unique to each individual.

(2) The fieldwork component of the study, which dealt with conducting in-depth interviews. Due to the fact that no academic research has been conducted on the Ramesar brothers and their tattoo careers, the in-depth interviews had an important role to play in this study. These in-depth interviews collected rich empirical evidence which formed the backbone to this study. A study which is relevant not only for the reason that tattoos have become so popular in today's society but more importantly to document the very beginning of this popular form of visual communication. In addition to the function of memory, utilised in the in-depth interviews discussed in the introduction of this study, one cannot neglect the empirical data gathered by the newspaper article interviews. Whilst they both are considered as interviews, the articles provided rich empirical data from Harry Ramesar himself and were recorded when he still worked as a tattoo artist.

7.2 Main points to emerge from the study

Firstly, is important to describe 'what was actually done' in this study:

- (a) A contribution has been made towards our understanding of visual culture in South Africa today and the graphic communication aspects of what this study focused on. Mitchell (2006) defines visual culture as: 'the study of the social construction of the visual field, and the visual construction of the social field' and observed that 'pictures want equal rights with language, not to be turned into language' (Hoffman *et al.* 2011: 399). It is important to have an academic account of the visual culture of tattoos in KwaZulu Natal and South Africa as a whole as this data can be used as a 'yard stick' to track where the visual culture of tattooing began to where it is today.
- (b) If we as academics do not conduct this type of research now, by actually identifying a particular case, going and interviewing and collection imperial data about the topic, we have nothing really on which to build with regards to South Africa's visual culture and its history. Tattoo history throughout the world is well documented, with international tattoo artists being celebrated for their contribution to tattoo history. This study reveals that South African has had its own tattoo pioneers, who have been relatively unknown until now.

This study presents evidence that Western trends have had an impact on the graphic imagery of pioneer tattoo artists in KwaZulu-Natal, and that there are definite links between the international and South African tattoo graphic communication. Hoffman et al (2011: 394) remarks that:

The oppressive effects of colonialism, post colonialism, conflict, and globalization that are part of African history and its current reality may be more transparent in acts of language, literacy, and visual representation in sub-Saharan Africa than they are in more economically developed contexts (Hoffman et al 2011: 394).

One can see the link of Western tattoo imagery on the tattoo examples of the interviewees in this study. They all have strong Western influences, which can be recognised in popular tattoo designs of the time. This impact could have been aided by the fact that South Africa was a British colony and Durban a important key point for the allies the Second World War.

The contribution of this study therefore lies in three areas:

- (1) This research studies the Ramesar brothers in a unique setting, particular people at a particular time, which consists of complex elements. It comprises (a) Information in the in-depth interviews shows how all these competing parts form a complex whole. For example, most of Harry's tattoos were of Western tattoo influence but there were also other categories. For example, tattooing a member of the Zulu royal family (Pillay 2001) and many clients of Indian decent. (b) These can not be seen as Western therefore not all the clients were the same, thus creating complex facets of different elements. The Ramesar brothers body of work involved tattooing different people of both sexes, from different cultures and different backgrounds. This study shows just how complex these relationships are in terms of race, culture and class. This was beautifully summed up when (PERSINT 2) remarked in G1.2 of this study, that:

he had whites, Indians, coloured and blacks and none of them ever came to blows or stupidity of coloured skin. It was just sit, follow your turn and carry on. Everyone know him you know (PERSINT 2).

This comment speaks volumes of Harry's personality and respect for people of different race and the respect he received from the public/clientele during a time of racial inequality in South Africa.

- (2) Documenting the semiotic perspective of tattoos as a form of graphic communication. The outcome of the fieldwork in the form of in-depth interviews which contains ample information as to why the Ramesar brothers are pioneers tattoo artists in KwaZulu Natal. The similarities drawn through the literature review support this argument.
- (3) Conducting in-depth interviews with clients, family members and friends provides valuable, detailed and period specific insight into the various interlinking factors that help influence the career of the Ramesar brothers. These brothers had a unique way of working and the graphic communication aspect of their work forms an important part

of Southern African visual culture. A visual culture that lives on the people they tattooed. Still to this day, I see people visiting my friends tattoo studio in Durban that have tattoos they received from Harry. I even notice tattoos on people (who fit the age period) in the street and when I enquire who tattooed them, they mostly reply Harry.

7.3 Implications for graphic design practice

Possible implication could result in: (a) case studies and the curriculum of graphic design courses and (b) aiding practicing graphic designers use the detailed information gathered in this study as inspiration for their own creative practices. This study will advance the research completed with regards to visual studies in Southern Africa and pave the way for more research in this genre of graphic communication studies and its history.

7.4 Suggestions for future research

This study deals with particular persons, in a particular setting, in a particular context at a particular time. This is where this study is located and the procedures followed allowed for the collection of new information, with the aim to discover if these individuals were in fact pioneers. The Ramesar brothers were relatively unknown to the public, unless you had a tattoo, or knew of someone who had a tattoo or wanted to get one. With this said, there is a need for similar studies in South African society in general. Not only historical accounts but also in the contemporary field, with studies reflecting today's society as South Africa is going through so much change and those changes will be reflected on the tattoos people have on their bodies today and going forward. The Ramesar brothers tattoo careers for the most part spanned a time when South African society was controlled and segregated, therefore a study comparing the graphic imagery of tattoos before the first democratic election of 1994 and contemporary South Africa would be interesting in terms of visual representation.

A direction for further research would be to compile a more extensive collection of graphic imagery of the works of the Ramesar brothers. Kosut (2006a: 1036) remarks that:

...although there was a short-lived tattoo fad among members of the European and American leisure classes over a century ago contemporary American tattoo craze has eclipsed it in size and scope. The community of new tattooees transcends age, class, and ethnic boundaries, and includes a heterogeneous

population of teenagers and young adults, women, African Americans, Latin Americans, urbanites, sub-urbanites, white-collar professionals, and the college-educated (Kosut 2006a: 1036).

Although this remark refers to European and American leisure classes, the same parallels can be drawn from the careers of the Ramesar brothers. Another direction would be to compile a historical account of the Ramesar brothers. With the popularity of tattooing today, one would find it interesting to have a historical account of the tattoo industry in South Africa. Most countries have a:

- (a) Rich documented history of tattoos.
- (b) Reference of the tattoo artists that helped forge that tattoo industry.

It is interesting to draw a comparison between the rudimentary beginnings of the tattoo industry in Durban and how it has shaped the tattoo industry today. Without these rudimentary beginnings, we might not have the tattoo culture we currently have in Durban. Did up and coming tattoo artists go visit Harry while he was still tattooing? Was he accommodating towards them? And was he willing to share his knowledge for the future generations? New research could look at how the brothers work influenced these future tattoo artists in Durban and in South Africa as a whole and pave the way for a culture that readily accepts tattoos as part of its collective identity. An identity that allows tattoos to form part of each individuals' personality, which in turn strays away from just being a rudimentary marking on the skin, to whatever he or she wants it to represent. What would also be of interest is the linking of international tattoo artists with specific South African tattoo artists as there are many similar tattoo representations that have emerged such as tattoo designs, interior design and methods and procedures.

The term pioneers is used in the beginning of the study, before the data was collected. After the collection of empirical data, it is now clear that the Ramesar brothers were tattoo pioneers in the forms of (a) their contribution to visual culture, (b) to our understanding of visual culture (c) being the first tattoo artists to tattoo commercially in KwaZulu Natal. All the interviewees that participated in this study confirmed that the Ramesar brothers were

pioneers, with (PERSINT 5) describing Harry as: 'the master of the masters', which gives an indication that Harry was on a league of his own. The dictionary defines a pioneer as: one who is first or among the earliest in any field of inquiry, enterprise, or progress (Dictionary 2012). If one is to use this definition as the only test to confirm if the Ramesar brothers were pioneers, then this study provides key empirical data to support this definition. The Ramesar brothers took the term 'pioneer' even further by casting the foundation of the tattoo industry not only in KwaZulu Natal but in South African as a whole, which paved the way for the vibrant tattoo industry we have in South Africa today. If you wanted to get a professional tattoo, the name that was identified was the Ramesar brothers.

APPENDIX A

PROVISIONAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

PROVISIONAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS – A tattooed client.

Main Questions

1. Please tell me a little about yourself.
2. How did you get to hear about Harry?
3. When did you decide to go get a tattoo?
4. Did you go to Harry with a specific tattoo in mind?
5. Do you think tattoos have a literal (simple, straightforward) meaning or a figurative (symbolic) meaning or both?
6. Do you think when tattoos are looked at they can have a personal meaning?
7. Do you think tattoos have a social meaning?
8. If yes, do you have a tattoo that shows this?
9. Tell me about your first encounter with Harry.
10. Please describe the premises he worked out of.
11. Why did you choose your specific tattoos?
12. What was the general public's opinion of tattoos during the time you got yours?
13. What was the general public's opinion of Harry?
14. Were you happy with your tattoos when you had them?
15. Do you think Harry a pioneer of tattooing in Durban?
16. Do you know any interesting stories about Harry?
17. What do you think about the tattoo industry today?
18. What do you think the public's opinion is of the tattoo industry today?
19. Any general comments?

Auxiliary Questions

1. Did Harry have a large or small collection of tattoo designs? (tattoo flash)
2. Did he trace a stencil or draw directly onto your skin?
3. Did he have any competition that you know of?
4. If you were to turn the clock back, would you get tattoos again?

PROVISIONAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS – Family, friends (if they do not have tattoos).

Main Questions

1. Please tell me a little about yourself.
2. What was your relationship with Harry * (and his brother if they knew about him)?
3. Please tell me a about Harry? * (and his brother if they knew about him).
4. Do you know how he got into the tattoo trade?
5. Was Harry the same person in his personal and professional life
6. Do you have any interesting stories to tell about Harry.
7. Please tell me about Harry's brother*, if you knew about him?
8. What was your opinion of his work as a tattoo artist?
9. When you look at a tattoo, do you think they can have literal (simple, straightforward) meaning or a figurative (symbolic) meaning or both?
10. Do you think when tattoos are looked at they can have a personal meaning?
11. If yes, do you know of a tattoo that shows this?
12. Do you think when tattoos are looked at they can have a social meaning?
13. If yes, do you know of a tattoo that shows this?
14. What do you think was the general public's opinion of the tattoo industry during the time he was working?
15. How do you compare tattooing today to the past?
16. Was being a tattoo artist a respected profession during the time Harry worked?
17. If you knew about Harry's brother*, was being a tattoo artist a respected profession during the time he worked,
18. Do you know of any famous people tattooed by Harry?
19. If you knew about Harry's brother*, do you know any famous people that he tattooed?
20. Any general comments.

*(and his brother if they knew about him) Harry's brother was much older than him and this will apply to interviewees that knew or had knowledge of him.

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT FORM



CONSENT

Statement of Agreement to Participate in the Research Study:

- I hereby confirm that I have been informed by the researcher, Rory van As, about the nature, conduct, benefits and risks of this study - Research Ethics Clearance Number: _____.
- I have also received, read and understood the above written information (Participant Letter of Information) regarding the study.
- I am aware that the results of the study, including personal details regarding my sex, age, date of birth, initials and diagnosis will be anonymously processed into a study report.
- In view of the requirements of research, I agree that the data collected during this study can be processed in a computerised system by the researcher.
- I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent and participation in the study.
- I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and (of my own free will) declare myself prepared to participate in the study.
- I understand that significant new findings developed during the course of this research which may relate to my participation will be made available to me.

Full Name of Participant

Date

Time

Signature

I, Rory van As herewith confirm that the above participant has been fully informed about the nature, conduct and risks of the above study.

Full Name of Researcher

Date

Signature

Full Name of Witness (If applicable)

Date

Signature

Full Name of Legal Guardian (If applicable)

Date

Signature

APPENDIX C

MODEL RELEASE FORM

**An Investigation into the
Graphic Imagery of Pioneer Tattoo Artists in KwaZulu Natal
with Special Reference to the Ramesar Brothers.**

Email: rory@lemonad.co.za

031 701 9810/082 200 9600

PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEOGRAPHY CONSENT/MODEL RELEASE FORM

I do hereby grant permission to Rory van As to take and use: photographs, digital images and/or video of me in educational materials related to his Master of Technology Graphic Design as follows:

- In printed publications or materials.
- In electronic publications or presentations.
- On the Durban University of Technology website (www.dut.ac.za).

I agree that my image may be revealed in descriptive text or commentary in connection with the above-mentioned study. I authorize the use of these images indefinitely without compensation to me. All negatives, positives, prints, digital reproductions and videotape shall be the property of Rory van As.

Name

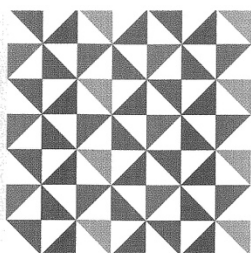
Signature

Date

Signed at (location)

APPENDIX D

ETHICS CLEARANCE LETTER



Institutional Research Ethics Committee
Research and Postgraduate Support Directorate
2nd Floor, Berwyn Court
Gate 1, Steve Biko Campus
Durban University of Technology
P O Box 1334, Durban, South Africa, 4001
Tel: 031 373 2375
Email: lavishad@dut.ac.za
http://www.dut.ac.za/research/institutional_research_ethics
www.dut.ac.za

18 November 2016

IREC Reference Number: **REC 118/16**

Mr R van As
15 Haversham
Clifton Hill Estate
51 Acutts Drive
Hillcrest

Dear Mr van As

An Investigation into the Graphic Imagery of Pioneer Tattoo Artists in KwaZulu Natal with Special Reference to the Ramesar Brothers

I am pleased to inform you that Full Approval has been granted to your proposal REC 118/16.

The Proposal has been allocated the following Ethical Clearance number **IREC 124/16**. Please use this number in all communication with this office.

Approval has been granted for a period of two years, before the expiry of which you are required to apply for safety monitoring and annual recertification. Please use the Safety Monitoring and Annual Recertification Report form which can be found in the Standard Operating Procedures [SOP's] of the IREC. This form must be submitted to the IREC at least 3 months before the ethics approval for the study expires.

Any adverse events [serious or minor] which occur in connection with this study and/or which may alter its ethical consideration must be reported to the IREC according to the IREC SOP's.

Please note that any deviations from the approved proposal require the approval of the IREC as outlined in the IREC SOP's.

Yours Sincerely



Professor J K Adam
Chairperson: IREC



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