



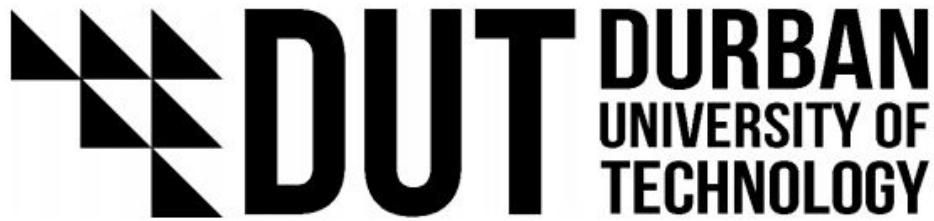
Analysing Instagram pages of South African fashion models with vitiligo using multimodal communication for a practice-based study

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements,
for the degree of
Master of Applied Arts: Fashion,
in the Faculty of Arts and Design at
Durban University of Technology

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July 2022

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Submitted in complete fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Applied Arts: Fashion in the Department of Fashion and Textiles, Faculty of Arts and Design at Durban University of Technology, Durban South Africa.

***SUBMISSION APPROVED FOR EXAMINATION**

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DECLARATION

The study of this dissertation presents originality as the author declares that 'Analysing Instagram pages of South African fashion models with vitiligo using multimodal communication for a practice-based study' is her own work. All sources of information, images, and quoted texts used in the study are recognised, acknowledged and referenced according to the DUT Harvard Referencing style. This dissertation is being submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Applied Arts: Fashion. This study has not been submitted to any other educational institution. The research produced was carried out in the Department of Fashion and Textiles, Faculty of Arts and Design, Durban University of Technology, South Africa, under the supervision of **Dr Khaya Mchunu** and **Dr Maleshoane Rapeane-Mathonsi**.

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ABSTRACT

An increase in fashion models with vitiligo are observed from the sharing of representations of themselves and the skin condition on multimodal forms of communication on social media platforms, notably Instagram. The study is located in fashion and focuses on vitiligo that has been widely discussed in the medical field. Vitiligo is a skin condition where the deterioration of melanocyte cells lead to white patches that present in various areas of the body (Vallerand *et.al* 2019: 1371). The significance of this study is to understand the representations led by fashion models with vitiligo and to join them by using my profession as a fashion designer with vitiligo to shift the beauty narrative through inclusivity and raising awareness about the skin condition.

The study is framed by a multimodal discourse analysis and specifically a four-step analytical process of modal transfer (Kress 2000 and 2010). This frame is used to focus on how fashion models with vitiligo use multimodal communication in the form of photographs, captions, and hashtags to communicate themselves, as people with vitiligo through their public Instagram pages. This form of communication is argued to be their practice of challenging and expanding accepted notions of beauty. An analysis is followed by a practical component framed by Sullivan's (2010) and Skains (2018: 86) creative practice as research.

The study results show how the models have represented themselves and their skin condition. Some posts touch on themes that seek to shift the narrative and expand notions of beauty. They share perspectives on inclusivity and diversity, self-love, self-affirmation, body-positivity, perceptions of the gaze, and what should not be regarded as fashion trends. Optimism expressed by such themes resulted as psychological healing and promotes good mental health towards the incurable skin condition.

I designed a body of fashion artefacts for this practice-based study as my contribution to using fashion as communication to shed light on vitiligo and body positivity. A new Instagram page has been created to display the practical collection through my own use of multimodal communication. This process has resulted in 6 fashion artefacts that use hashtags as titles to speak about vitiligo. The fashion artefact collection celebrates inclusivity and diversity, depicts the types of formation which vitiligo presents in, and concludes by perceiving all as beauties, expressed in both in practice and theory.

Key words: vitiligo, multimodal discourse analysis, creative practice as research, fashion, plural beauty, communication, semiotics

PREFACE

I, Emilia Sarupdeo, have had vitiligo since the age of six. As a child, I played and witnessed the beauty of dolls, presented as perfection, and what I perceived never made me question myself. There were moments where I felt insecure in revealing clothing such as my school's physical education uniform, a short and T-shirt. Children sometimes questioned me about how I got hurt or what happened to me. In those days, I was not familiar with the medical term to address my skin condition. However, I was lucky in the sense that children at that age were curious, and I was never treated as an outcast. As I grew older my vitiligo changed and evolved to different areas of my body that could not all be hidden by clothes. In public, I have encountered the experience of the gaze. Prior to becoming a fashion designer, I joined etiquette and deportment classes through a modelling agency. These classes gave me confidence in public speaking. The modelling agency was also welcoming in the sense that I was surrounded by female models of different races, body sizes and sometimes health conditions as well. I thereafter experienced a year of modelling through the same agency where I gained good posture, learnt different walks, and got involved in charity events. Although I was not cast in any fashion show by designers of that time, I gained some knowledge of the roles people have in the fashion industry. Most importantly, the experience boosted my confidence, a time when I was surprisingly already confident in my skin. I then pursued a career in fashion design because of my passion for creativity and gained the opportunity to express my own journey through the work I do. As I speak of fashion models in this study, I do so with an understanding of the journeys they themselves explain on their Instagram pages. I also view them on a similar level to myself, as individuals who share experiences of having vitiligo.

Having vitiligo forces an individual to accept and love themselves, not just once but constantly throughout the transformation of the skin. Loved ones who support your appearance and changes in health condition are important too. Acknowledging that there is no cure for vitiligo should not be a discouraging factor. Day by day, my spirituality and faith in God only grew stronger. As we live in challenging times, an improvement of mental health is often what is needed to prevent the spread of vitiligo, and of course also works for various other health conditions.

Today, I join fashion models as a fashion designer. This Masters dissertation is a research project that aims to speak about vitiligo using my own experiences and those of the fashion models in the selected case studies. The research on vitiligo is seen from creative and fashion design perspectives contrary to how it has been discussed in other studies.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

Acronym	Stands for
MDA	Multimodal Discourse Analysis
MDD	Major Depressive Disorder
iOS	iPhone Operating System
ANTM	America's Next Top Model
3D	3-Dimensional
2D	2-Dimensional
IG	Instagram
IDM	Interactive Digital Material
AW21	Autumn Winter 2021
KKW	Kim Kardashian West
TED	Technology, Entertainment, and Design
VRF	Vitiligo Research Foundation
CNN	Cable News Network

CHAPTER ONE: OVERVIEW OF STUDY

1.1 Introduction to the context of research and motivation for this study

This study uses multimodal discourse analysis (MDA) to examine how the skin condition of vitiligo is publicly communicated using the social media platform Instagram. The analysis of multimodal communication of vitiligo is twofold. First, I analyse vitiligo's communication by fashion models with the skin condition to determine how I, as the fashion designer, should proceed to represent myself with vitiligo and shed light on the skin condition itself. Second, I use my profession as a fashion designer by creating fashion artefacts to raise awareness about the condition through my own capsule collection to inform this practice-based study. Multimodal communication on a public social media platform such as Instagram is an effective tool which helps to shed light and raise awareness with more creativity and less insensitivity and is a way to understand social issues and the relatable perceptions of individuals to enhance our knowledge through shared information. The research identifies key areas as per the title "Analysing Instagram pages of South African fashion models with vitiligo using multimodal communication for a practice-based study."

1.1.1 Background of vitiligo

Vitiligo (Vit -ih – LIE – go) is a long-term diagnosis, a type of skin disease which causes melanocyte cells to depigment the skin resulting in the development of white patches that appear in different areas of the body (Vallerand *et al.* 2019: 1371). Melanocytes are present in the epidermis of the skin (the outer layer of the three layers namely epidermis, dermis, and hypodermis) and are the cells that produce melanin, skin pigmentation (Parsad 2009: 1). The epidermis serves as a barrier to protect the skin from infections and environmental pathogens. Melanocytes are also present in other tissues such as the eye, inner ear, and mucosal membranes and are therefore areas which can also be affected by vitiligo (Parsad 2009: 2; Boorn *et al.* 2009: 2224). Vitiligo is not contagious, but rather passed on genetically or caused by biochemical, neurological, viral, and autoimmune mechanisms. Studies show that an estimated 0.5% to 2% of individuals in the world have vitiligo (Saeedinezhad *et al.* 2016: 356). According to Raboobee (2018), if there are 1% of individuals with vitiligo in Western Europe, it can be assumed that 1% of individuals have vitiligo in South Africa. Vitiligo exists equally amongst all genders with no racial predisposition and in many individuals below the age of 20. This skin condition can, however, appear at any age (Raboobee 2018). As outlined in the

preface of this dissertation, in my case vitiligo appeared when I was about six years of age, and as I grew older the white patches became more visible in exposed areas of my body.

In a population-based cohort study on vitiligo in Canada, doctors and researchers also assessed the mental health of patients whereas most medical research studies focus only on the visual appearance of the skin (Vallerand *et al.* 2019: 1371-1378). Having vitiligo has been shown to have psychological and mental health effects such as depression and low self-esteem. As specified by the bleak statistics about the psychological harm this skin disease can cause in some people, self-acceptance becomes a matter of choice and determination. Therefore, acknowledging the fact that vitiligo can cause health effects, I eventually chose to accept my skin. The phrasing used in this study will be individuals 'with' vitiligo rather than 'living with' vitiligo. I argue that the phrase 'living with vitiligo' implies being unfortunate.

According to Henning *et al.* (2020: 1), stress is a precipitating factor that can cause the white patches to spread. Affected individuals are more at risk for major depressive disorders (MDD) when this autoimmune disease (vitiligo) consumes their mental health (Vallerand *et al.* 2019: 1371-1378). Other health-related issues include skin trauma caused by excessive exposure to sunlight which creates oxidative stress to melanocytes, severe psychological effects such as anxiety, and social stigma (Saeedinezhad *et al.* 2016: 357). According to Saeedinezhad *et al.* (2016: 357), it is likely that many individuals with vitiligo who have been through challenging times in their lives may have experienced these related factors. However, additional factors and health-related issues may not affect every individual who has this skin condition.

Vitiligo is well explained in various studies, mainly health sciences (Parsad 2009; Boorn *et al.* 2009; Saeedinezhad *et al.* 2016; Vallerand *et al.* 2019; Henning *et al.* 2020). However, there seems to be a lack of knowledge outside the medical fraternity, which is probably due to the silence or lack of knowledge about what vitiligo is. As explained earlier, vitiligo is known to cause psychological effects and may determine the way people interact with individuals diagnosed with it (Henning *et al.* 2020: 1). In addition, individuals with this skin condition naturally obtain silence because of negative social challenges since vitiligo appears visually and, in some instances, quite outstandingly. As a researcher and creative, I am interested in the available literature and activities that shine a positive light on individuals with vitiligo who seek to inspire others. I am specifically interested in individuals who are developing a positive voice in the fashion industry, such as South African fashion models.

The title specifies that the models in this study are based and currently active in South Africa. They are thus considered South African, whether by birth or not. These models, selected from

Instagram, began their modelling journeys and have been recognised over a period of the last 10 years. Instagram as a social media platform that allows its users, which can include models, artists, and designers, to express themselves, to promote creation, to gain popularity through likes and followers, and to enhance sales through online marketing. In analysing how fashion models speak about themselves and vitiligo on Instagram, I join in the conversation to shed light about the condition through my profession as a fashion designer by creating fashion artefacts as the practical outcome of this study.

1.1.2 Perceptions of ideal beauty standards and the representation of vitiligo in the fashion and modelling industry

In the evolution of the fashion modelling industry, at least from a western perspective, ethical implications of ideal beauty standards fluctuate (The evolution of the fashion model 2017: para. 1 line 3; Soley-Beltran 2006). Famous fashion supermodels across the decades have highlighted the definitions of beauty that characterised their eras, for example Linda Evangelista and Naomi Campbell (Barker 2015). Historically, since the 19th century, a slim body figure became an obsession that enhanced societal pressures for individuals to conform (Volonte 2019: 252). To be a fashion model you had to embody physical perfection. According to Howard (2018: para. 6 line 2), an ‘ideal body’ was encouraged on the runway to exaggerate ‘thin culture.’ Thin culture was also exaggerated through extreme imagery photoshopping in publications (Howard 2018: para. 6 line 2). Models may often have felt alienated from their images due to this conformity to specific beauty standards, social perfection, and etiquette¹. Cindy Crawford states, “It’s hard to work in the catwalk... you are surrounded by the forty most beautiful women in the world, you see all your imperfections and none of theirs” (Soley-Beltran 2006: 37).

Modelling as an occupation was enhanced soon after the introduction of photography in the 1940s (The evolution of the fashion model 2017: para. 3 line 2; Entwistle and Wissinger 2012: 116). The 1950s was labelled the decade for ‘big name’ models such as Marilyn Monroe who became famous with her film debut, after her experience as a pin-up² model in the 1940s (The evolution of the fashion model 2017: para. 4 line 2; Nobles 2014: 25). Monroe is an American singer, actress and model, well-known for her voluptuous ‘hourglass’ figure. Much as the

¹Tews, Stafford and Michel (2018: 2) generally defines etiquette as “the customary code of polite behaviour in society or among members of a particular profession or group.”

² Pin-up models such as Monroe was favored for their figures and photogenic appeal, meaning that pin-up models mainly featured in advertisements and magazines, whilst high fashion models known for their visual appeal were also seen on runways. According to Wikipedia (2021), pin-up models were “glamour models, fashion models, or actresses [and could also be male].”

curvaceous hourglass figure was predominant in the 1950s, the 1960s favoured slender-figured, androgynous-looking models (Anon 2020: para. 9 line 2; The evolution of the fashion model 2017: para. 5 line 4). A designer's choice of model during this time was quite particular. According to Barker (2015: 33), models thereafter became well recognised through photography and advertising, and some in the 1980s were known for their cult personalities such as Cindy Crawford.

Social media has become a highly utilised channel for communication and promoting fashion houses (Barker 2015: 9; The evolution of the fashion model 2017). Fashion campaigns and the modelling industry at large have dramatically changed due to technological advancements of the fourth industrial revolution in some parts of the world such as the USA and France. In other parts of the world like Africa, bandwidth have had an impact on digital networks (social media) due to price and quality. For instance, technological advancements may be developed or developing differently around the world. Today, Instagram's phenomenal interaction rate has created a new space for movement, sharing virtual experiences and giving our lives an authentic look and perception (Ting *et al.* 2015: 18). Currently, there has been a surge of models with vitiligo challenging and expanding the notions of beauty through their Instagram accounts, presenting another perspective on how bodies can be represented in fashion. For example, an international model Winnie Harlow (Canada) is a model with vitiligo who gained success after she participated in a modelling competition television series America's Next Top Model (ANTM) by former supermodel, Tyra Banks in 2014 (Anon 2018).

Individuals who have vitiligo and are sharing their stories, are visible in the fashion industry and are inspiring others by being models and communicating the idea that what makes you different makes you beautiful (Valentine 2019; Ellise 2019; Ebrahim 2019; Mabula 2017; Yong 2017; Banan 2018; and Nemasetoni 2019). This is a form of communication which promotes body positivity. Body positivity is a concept and movement that guides people into becoming resilient by equally accepting and appreciating their and other bodies equally (Webb, Wood-Barcalow and Tylka 2015: 131). It is consequently of interest to understand how South African fashion models with vitiligo use Instagram to communicate, and a multimodal discourse analysis plays an important role in this study to analyse such content. Further information about fashion models with vitiligo and examples of representation are discussed later in the dissertation.

Challenging and adding to the accepted notions of beauty has also been analysed through other perspectives in fashion. For example, to incorporate diversity in advertising campaigns, fashion designers Alexander McQueen and Derek Lam have included models who have physical disabilities and challenges in their fashion shows (Able to be beautiful 1998: para. 1

line 1; Murray 2017: para. 11 line 1). This study also reviews the work created by fashion designers to discover how the body is represented in fashion as a tool for communication. Fashion necessitates a three-dimensional human form and has historically been used to modify, distort, exaggerate, and compress the body (Almond and Swindells 2014: 1). The first introductory style was the corset, an undergarment which set the scene for sculptural fashion (Lauder 2010: 9-33). In addition, volume, structure, dimension, and shape were used to manipulate the bodily figure to create illusions of forms (Almond and Swindells 2014: 3). However, I argue and intend to show that fashion models use their bodies and the appearance of their vitiligo skins to challenge accepted notions of beauty.

1.1.3 Interpreting the concept of beauty

Beauty has various definitions. Individuals have their own perceptions or beliefs of what is beautiful and what is not. For example, the selected models discussed in this study all appear to have their own form of expressing beauty and what beauty means to them. Beauty is not a universal concept but is differently defined in different parts of the world.

Ibanga (2017: 249) distinguishes the concept of beauty in Western philosophy from that in African philosophy. Philosophers Aristotle and Kant's perception of beauty speaks to the western philosophised perspective. "Appropriateness", symmetry, precision, and "proportionality" are terms used to describe Aristotle's view of beauty in "the greatest species" (Aristotle 1801: 315; Ibanga 2017: 251). If the notion of beauty is perceived in the terms of Kant and Aristotle, then the asymmetrical spread of lesions of vitiligo of individuals who have this skin condition would not accord with this definition of beauty. Hence, the practical outcome of this study hopes to shed light by presenting an enhanced definition of beauty. Vitiligo must not be seen as a separate presence when perceiving beauty in any being. The lesions (dermatomal distribution) caused by vitiligo on the skin can form various patterns or two main vitiligo types classified as segmental and non-segmental (Rahman and Hasija 2018: 2)³. Individuals with vitiligo have unique appearances depending on where the white lesions are situated, for example, symmetrically, asymmetrically and precisely in all sorts of shape formulations.

³ Segmental vitiligo is unilateral, known to appear at an early age (Park and Lee 2011: 121). It progresses rapidly till a certain point in time and thereafter may stabilise over a period of years. Non-segmental vitiligo is bilateral; unpredictably appearing at any age with constant progression, possibly passed on through hereditary factors (Park and Lee 2011: 121). A high percentage of Leukotrichia (depigmentation of hair resulting in white hair) appears in some individuals with segmental vitiligo compared to a low percentage in individuals with non-segmental vitiligo. According to Park and Lee (2011: 117), there are an additional two vitiligo classification types called mixed and unclassified. Each type of vitiligo may require different clinical care or treatments.

Decolonial scholars Walter Mignolo and Rolando Vasquez (2013) question why the Western colonial aesthetic of change is predominantly associated with beauty and representation in the field of contemporary arts. Some artworks and creative application through design of garments are conceptualised to evoke colonial and decolonial means of expression or change. For example, the corset becomes one of the early examples of westernised ideas. Mignolo and Vasquez (2013) link Kant's sense of beauty in relation to the becoming of modern aesthetics. Perspectives such as Kant's and Aristotle's definition of beauty can be related to colonial aesthetics. Aesthetics was then believed to colonize aesthetics by deriving the Eurocentric standards of beauty which projected globally. Aesthetic ideally holds colonial power whereas the movement of decolonial aesthesis confronts modern forms of aesthetics to decolonise the sense and response felt by the body.

In addition, the standards of beauty and representation of 'African Aesthetics' shift due to how multiple cultural beliefs, up-bringing and traditional dress are depicted, consequently changing how beauty is perceived amongst local societies. Steve Biko (1946-1977: 45) mentions that we as South Africans live in a pluralistic society with various cultural traits that we have reason to expand upon. Biko's (1946-1977: 104) response to 'black is beautiful' is that you are fine just the way you are and regardless of your skin pigmentation you should accept yourself as the human being that you are. The concept of skin pigmentation is referred to because in a local context the idea of being 'black' has its' connotations where for example, some African people of colour tend to use skin whitening creams because having lighter skin defines your beauty. Hence, the source by Mignolo and Vasquez (2013) provides a different perspective by providing means to decolonize aesthetics to reclaim aesthetics (decolonial aesthesis), beyond the preservation of natural beauty standards.

In the African context, Ibanga (2017) identifies the relationship of beauty as something to be shared, as functional, and as progression into moral awareness. In conjunction, judgement should not lead to disharmony but balance in communities. According to Ibanga (2017), in the African context beauty is associated with feminist qualities and adds that the Afrocentric perspective of beauty as a relational theory is a mutual relationship in strength of togetherness. Although, this study's focus on vitiligo through fashion does not follow a feminist approach like that of Ibanga (2017), her study is helpful by contributing an Afrocentric perspective of being individualistic, participatory, relational, and interconnected. I perceive how the models and myself, the researcher and fashion designer, share a relationship through having the same vitiligo skin condition and thus sharing some of the concepts offered by Ibanga (2017).

Heiss's (2011: 1) analyses Dove's "Campaign for Real Beauty"⁴. This campaign is aimed to raise awareness through media marketing schemes by incorporating inclusivity and diversity to accept differences in women's bodies. The study emphasises the importance of acknowledging discourses contributing to what defines beauty. Dove's campaign additionally aims to expose realistic forms of beauty in comparison to societal perceptions of beauty (Heiss 2011). However, after a thematic analysis regarding key features of the campaign, Heiss (2011) finds that although the idea had potential in advocating freedom for women, and to possibly initiate dialogue amongst women, and overall, it formulated connotations of what "real" beauty is. Although the Dove brand supports the diversity of women for example their cultural background and skin tones, the idea of "locating the bodies of women and disability in definitions of beauty" were ineffective as the adverts usually excluded models with disabled bodies. Simultaneously, the brand's effort in obtaining freedom for women from beauty stereotypes somehow reconstructed traditional meanings of beauty (Heiss 2011). Heiss (2011) concludes by saying there is potential to redefine the notion of beauty, challenging it beyond the campaign's perspective into one that is more holistic and less judgemental. This study retreats from beauty viewed through binary terms that are categorised to indicate what is regarded as beautiful and what is not, such as Kant's notion of "appropriateness", symmetry, precision and "proportionality" (cited in Gadamer 2013).

The definition of beauty has been used to understand perception and to make sense of beauty as a single idea. Breidbach (2003: 39-40) expresses that in order to accurately question beauty, one needs to "establish a more diversified phenomenology." Understanding the definition of beauty itself is quite broad in conjunction with any discipline such as art and fashion. Therefore, the purpose of the study is not to find a definition of beauty. Rather, in this study beauty is accepted and perceived diversely and will consequently be expressed in the plural form of 'beauties.'

Beauty exists in the collaboration of all beauties. Together, the fashion models with vitiligo, individuals with vitiligo, and myself as a fashion designer, with vitiligo present all beauties in our own ways. Beauty can be seen in all people and objects, tangible, and intangible. In addition, the subject of beauty is associated with both the internal and external self. When this variable of beauty functions coherently, an ideal form of beauties can be expressed. However, there are many instances where beauty is admired externally, for example, when individuals have an impulse to modify their looks or bodies through plastic surgery. Such intentions are meant to overcome insecurities or done to feel beautiful and constitutes an inability to perceive a lack towards perceiving one's own internal beauty (Ben-Nun 2016: 9). Nevertheless,

⁴ Dove is a skincare beauty brand.

individuals may believe they are beautiful from within yet desire to change the outer self to appear more attractive. Ben-Nun (2016: 9) gives another example of external beauty from a 19th century Croatian tale where the attractive lead female character unfortunately experiences smallpox, which negatively affects her once beautiful appearance and psychological mental health until she begins to accept herself and starts to view her beauty internally instead of only externally. This results in the character feeling optimistic and self-loved with increased self-esteem. The moral of the tale is applicable to today's society where individuals who discover their self-loving journey aim to reflect their authenticity and resilience through their own life experiences, for example, models with vitiligo.

This study aims to enhance the concept of beauty by acknowledging that we are all human creations presenting different and unique forms of beauty. For example, in the discussion of the selected international fashion models with vitiligo, Instagram pages and posts show positive forms of beauty becoming inclusive by using themselves as a representative to portray messages such as successful vitiligo awareness initiatives. The analysis of South African fashion models also shows positive forms of beauty and how they choose to challenge definitions of beauty through shared values and empowerment to highlight inclusivity. Some local models aim to improve the mental health of individuals with vitiligo. My position in this study is an appreciation of the different beauties which I believe fit the scope of the study, not through binary terms but by what the selected models with vitiligo perceive as beauty.

1.2 Aim, purpose, and significance of the study

The aim of this study was to examine ways in which the subject of vitiligo is represented on Instagram and in the fashion industry by using multimodal communication. Multimodal discourse analysis (Renkema and Schubert 2018: 78; Skains 2018: 89) was applied to analyse the content of the Instagram pages such as posts by South African fashion models with vitiligo in order to investigate how they utilise their Instagram pages and how they speak about vitiligo. This analysis is followed by a creation of fashion artefacts. The practical component is framed by Graeme Sullivan's framework of creative practice as research (Sullivan 2010; and Skains 2018: 86) in my own work as a designer.

To demonstrate the purpose and significance of this study it is important to understand that in contemporary times some fashion models with vitiligo are representing themselves and speaking about vitiligo on Instagram in a way, I argue, that challenges and expands accepted notions of beauty. As a research practitioner and fashion designer also having this skin condition, I developed an interest in the topic of communicating positively about vitiligo. I use a creative practice as a research approach to create fashion artefacts to communicate positive messages about vitiligo. These fashion artefacts are my pragmatic contribution to the

discourse. This study also enhances the idea of inclusivity and diversity so that individuals with this skin condition can develop a greater appreciation of themselves, feel heard and be represented.

The aim of this study is to explore the connections of vitiligo and the representation of the body in fashion to develop fashion artefacts for a capsule collection.

1.4 Research Questions

The study aims to answer the following research questions:

1.4.1 Research Questions

- 1.4.1.1) How have international fashion models with vitiligo communicated about themselves on Instagram, in the last 10 years?
- 1.4.1.2) In what ways have South African models with vitiligo (of the selected sample group) represented themselves through their Instagram pages, between the years 2015-2021?
- 1.4.1.3) How can the subject of vitiligo and body positivity be communicated through fashion artefacts?

1.5 Research Design

This study followed a qualitative research approach and is divided into two components: a multimodal discourse analysis and a practical component. Qualitative is a non-statistical, multimethod-focused research that involves interpreting human behaviours and complex man-made artistic creations (Nieuwenhuis 2007: 84).

Practice-based research is significant in this study as there is a practical component which expands the theory. Various authors such as Candy (2006: 1), Candy (2011: 1), Niedderer and Roworth-Stokes (2007), and Piccini (2002: 2), argue that practice-based research consist of and can be defined as research undertaken to expand on research findings and gain additional knowledge (Candy 2006: 1). This type of research approach involves a creative practitioner addressing issues that relate to them and using their skills and expertise creatively to develop a design concept and build artefacts as an expression of the concept (Candy 2006: 2). Research with a practical component is how I as a fashion designer use my skills and expertise to create fashion artefacts with the intended purposes that I deem significant to the study. Practice-based research serves as a form of creativity aimed at gaining findings and

knowledge and producing new outcomes through a transformation of ideas (Candy 2011). In my perception, practice-based implies having the freedom to express your voice or conceptualise a subject via artwork, sculptures, artefacts, and garment designs to communicate creatively. My creative output is aimed at communicating how vitiligo through fashion challenges and sees the beauty in others regardless of their appearance. By including my collection, which I have named 'Hypomelanosis Beauties', I shed light on the skin condition of vitiligo. Niedderer (2007) argues that practice, being experiential knowledge, can be used to make "tacit knowledge available to research" whilst Piccini (2002: 2) recognises that practice-based research has the potential to open a wider field of research through being publicly available. Tacit knowledge relates to the personal knowledge of skills, intuitive judgements, and perceptions, and this is evoked by "discussions, stories, analogies" and interactions (Dampney, Busch and Richards 2007: 3).

A practice-based approach to this subject is a new exploration to the vitiligo discourse which has been prominent in medical studies (Parsad 2009; Boorn *et al.* 2009; Saeedinezhad *et al.* 2016; Vallerand *et al.* 2019; and Henning *et al.* 2020). This study, framed by a multimodal discourse analysis and creative practice as research, adds to the current literature. I discuss these theoretical frameworks below.

1.6 Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA)

Multimodal discourse analysis is a "paradigm in discourse studies", that involves and investigates looking deeper and beyond language itself (O'Halloran 2011: 1). It highlights a "theory of communication for the age of interactive media" (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2001: para.1 line 1). A multimodal discourse analysis is an approach conceptualised through language by analysing various communicative modes (known as semiotic resources) such as images, music, sound, videos, text colour, symbols and signs, films and more (O'Halloran 2011: 1). Whilst the emphasis is on fashion and fashion models, this study includes analysing image posts, videos, captions and other related information from Instagram pages of the selected South African models with vitiligo. The purpose of analysing these fashion model pages is to establish the links with semiotic meanings communicated through their images, GIFS, videos and captions, in other words, how these collectively speak to the models' expressions of confidence and acceptance of their bodies.

The MDA approach of this study specifically follows the example of Gunther Kress; a process of modal transfer (Kress 2000 and 2010) which can be used to aid the multimodality process of composition in research whilst "tracking the semiotic shifts in chains of semiosis" —

synaesthetic semiosis. Multimodality offers an advantage to the study to translate abstract knowledge or modes of communication into written text (Skains 2018: 89).

The analysis of the study is represented as written text (discourse), whilst analysing collected data content. Multimodality aided this study by incorporating deeper meanings in conjunction with a practical making process. Multimodality also enabled the theoretical benefit of offering a creative way to apply research methods plus findings to analyse multiple modes correlating with the subject of vitiligo and representations of the body in fashion, whilst avoiding insensitivity in relation to the subject.

1.7 Creative Practice as Research

Creative practice as research is usually carried out by practitioners such as artists and designers (Candy 2006: 2). A creative practitioner seeks to search and experiment with new techniques and knowledge of understanding information to enhance originality (Skains 2018: 1). Creating artworks, garments, artefacts for installations or exhibitions, makes research an intriguing journey (Candy 2006: 1). The findings derived from the target population's Instagram pages will provide a clear understanding of how vitiligo is represented on Instagram posts by fashion models and how they expand notions of beauty. Similarly, I expand this knowledge through a creative output which also communicates and shows positive representation of vitiligo.

Graeme Sullivan's framework provides a structure for the flow of multimodal discourse to the practical component for this study (Sullivan 2010 and Skains 2018: 86). Sullivan identifies a framework, namely creative practice as research that consists of a model with four key areas, as shown in *Diagram 1* (see next page):

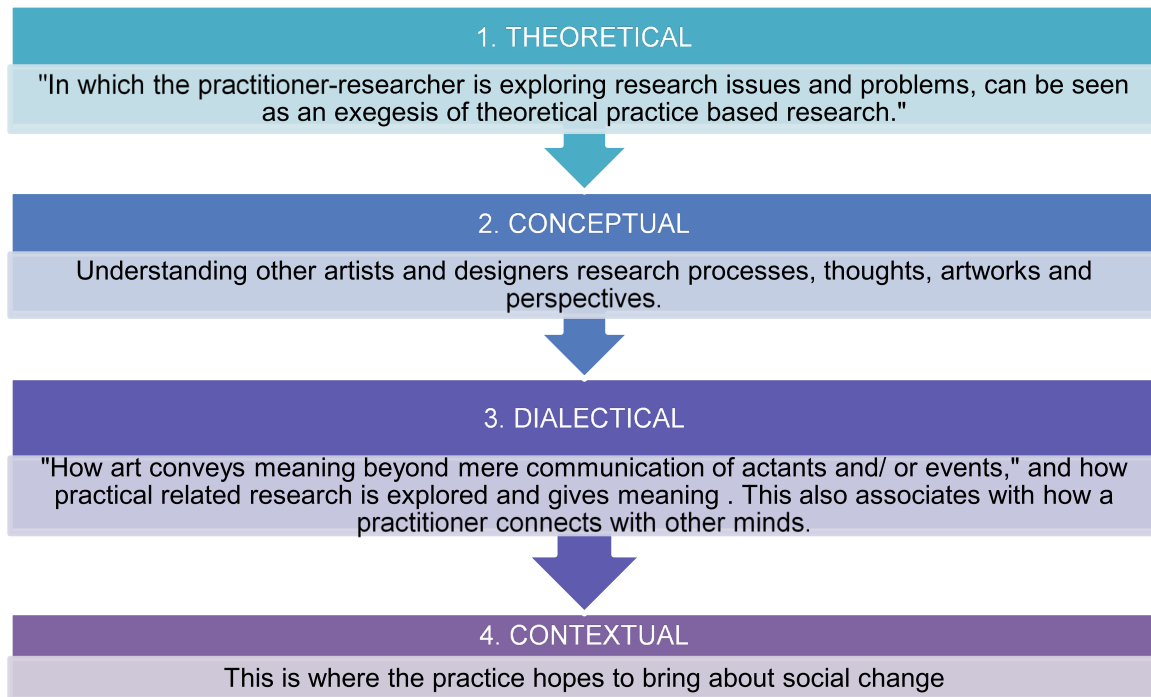


Diagram 1: Sullivan's model

Source: Skains (2018: 86)

Sullivan (2010)

Sullivan's (2010) framework model is used to frame this study in the following way:

1. Theoretical – Understanding the subject of vitiligo and exploring models with vitiligo first internationally and secondly and more specifically in South Africa. Researching designers who have incorporated diverse body representations, interpreted in this study as diverse beauties.
2. Conceptual – Understanding how these representations have been conceptualised in the work of designers, and how models with vitiligo represent themselves through fashion on Instagram, including their personal perspectives, expressions and how they have dealt with vitiligo or promoted the subject.
3. Dialectical – A multimodal discourse analysis which analyses models with vitiligo regarding how they are using their power to subvert, challenge and expand the accepted notions of beauty. In this way, a clarified understanding on how their Instagram pages aim to communicate to other individuals facing the same challenges, and to the public. A detailed

analysis of using such examples, to additionally understand how fashion and their position as fashion models play an important and influential role in the process.

4. Contextual – Features the essence of creative practice in a research approach in this practice-based study, resulting in an output that creatively communicates a positive message about vitiligo through fashion artefacts.

1.8 Target Population and Sampling Method

Asiamah, Mensah and Oteng-Abayie (2017: 1612), define a target population as a refined selection of individuals attaining specific attributes of relevance in comparison to the general population. The target population for this study are individuals with vitiligo, specifically South African fashion models with vitiligo. This study follows purposive non-probability sampling methods, which are based on selecting a population judged or based on the researcher's knowledge of the population and their characteristics or specialities (Etikan, Musa and Alkassim 2016: 2). The sample therefore becomes a subdivision of the entire population (which are fashion models with vitiligo who are active on Instagram, both internationally and locally in South Africa). The chosen international models are Winnie Harlow, Stephen Cone, Ninu Galot and Genesis Castillo. The purpose of looking at these international models with vitiligo is not merely because these representations began external to South Africa; they feature as Part A of answering the first research question for this study. The data collected from the international models' Instagram accounts includes only a few screenshots of their posts, following a brief analysis. Part B of answering the first research question, includes the South African models with vitiligo, and they are: Kgothi 'Iman' Dithebe, Chad Esau, Boitumelo Rametsi, Marian Devos and Moostapha Saidi. These models were selected because they were the most predominant in South Africa whilst showcasing their forms of representation in current times, and this notion is coherently supported by the data collection process.

In this study, the Instagram pages of 5 to 10 posts chosen between the years 2015 to 2021, are also the samples selected from the target population. Although this is an expected selection, it is not important that a post needs to be selected for each year since the models are still expressing themselves on their Instagram pages. The most relevant and strongly represented posts were however chosen to support the focus of the study. Many of the models started posting in 2015, which is to be expected since 2014 was the year in which Winnie Harlow appeared on America's Next Top Model, also screened in South Africa. The fact that SA models began posting on Instagram the year after, may therefore well be linked to Harlow's influence.

Moreover, through practice-based research which becomes experimental in the design process some of which include, sampling of textile designs by handwork and digital methods to experiment with fabric manipulation techniques, a starch test to evaluate the strength level of the fabrics, embellishment experimentation and sample prototypes to assist with the ideation of fashion artefact designs.

1.9 Data Collection and Data Collection Tools

Data collection is the process of gathering and evaluating information according to a chosen systematic method, to generate relevant findings and answers to research questions of a proposed study (Kabir 2016: 202). Primary data for this study includes analysis of the Instagram accounts and pages of five South African models with vitiligo. I focus on their Instagram posts between the years 2015 to 2021.

While the intention was to study their posts, where the models' Instagram pages provided other relevant information, these sources were also analysed as part of their chosen methods of representations and modes of communication. Secondary data for the study was collected from information that already exists, namely journals, books, magazine articles, blogs, other social media (Instagram) posts, and educational videos. Due to the Instagram pages being public, I decided to check their pages on a regular basis from the time that the study commenced.

1.9. 1 Practical Component

This study contains a collection of six fashion artefacts, some of which encompass bodily adornments (outfits) and some of which include photographs, photographic props, and a sculptural hand lampshade, to be virtually exhibited on Instagram. The fashion artefact collection is titled 'Hypomelanosis Beauties'. Chapter Four further elaborates on the meanings associated with this title and how choosing it aligns with the title of the study.

Data collection for the practical component included sourcing images and examples of fashion artefacts created by other designers for the inspiration board. The collected information and design process amalgamates through using multiple modes of communication to present research and the fashion artefacts accordingly. The findings from the multimodal discourse analysis are used to inform the practical component through an understanding of the representation of hypomelanosis beauties, to shed light on vitiligo.

1.10 Reliability and Trustworthiness

Reliability and trustworthiness are important in qualitative research to ensure the credibility and overall quality of a study. Caldwell, Hayes and Long (2010: 502) define trustworthiness as "a mediating construct that is subjectively assessed based on one's individual experiences,

interactions, and perceptions of others, organizations and institutions.” The Instagram pages and posts of the study’s sample proved to be reliable and trustworthy content as there have been various articles, blogs, campaigns, and media content written about them. Multimodality in this sense of understanding and considering various modes of communication also benefits through research and written discourse. The target population themselves have gained popularity as fashion models with vitiligo, as is evident in their consistent posting, number of likes, received comments, and following. By challenging the norms of beauty in my own work as a designer, a creative output is deemed a reliable way in which to successfully represent the phenomena in this study. As observed in the study, fashion and social media successfully communicate through design and other forms of representation. This study’s credibility is evident through the consistency in research according to the purpose of the study, its aim, and research questions.

The practice-based component of this study is not judged on reliability and trustworthiness because it is a creative component (creative practice as research). Noteworthy, however, is that the practical component avoids sensitive areas in graphics and celebrates by the vitiligo lesions of individuals as components of beauty.

1.11 Limitations and Delimitations

This study was limited and delimited by:

Time - Time may be restricted and challenging whilst adhering to deadlines when focusing on both practical and theory. However, I was not restricted to a practice-based study.

A delimitation to the study was that the analysis comprised a small number of fashion models with vitiligo (five from the target population group, specifically from South Africa, and four international models), and thus, the findings cannot be generalised to all fashion models with vitiligo. Also, the practical component for this study was delimited to six fashion artefacts and the intention to shed light with a positive message on vitiligo is only communicated through the designed capsule collection.

1.12 Ethical Considerations

Social media is a rich source of data especially as individuals are given the opportunity to create their own quality of content (Moreno *et al.* 2013: 708-713). This study gathered data available through multimodal forms of media specifically Instagram and excluded elite interviews and questionnaires to safe-guard individuals diagnosed with vitiligo, avoid sensitivities and ensure that the data collected was appropriate.

Conducting qualitative research in online communities raises ethical issues regarding the use and display of personal content. However, this study followed diligent and trustworthy ways to ensure that the research pertaining to the study caused no harm. According to Norval and Henderson (2017: 2), the use of online methods is convenient since one can avoid interviewing or reviewing procedures that may deal with vulnerable populations in relation to sensitive topics. Researchers that conducted observational research of online communities reflect the acceptability to analyse personal publicly shared content without consent (Norval and Henderson 2017: 5). For example, the publicly shared vlogs by YouTube content creators can be regarded as consent to a viewer for observation and commentary purposes. Internet users do not need additional consent towards the authors of YouTube pages that agree to make their content publicly accessible and for sharing (Moreno *et al.* 2013: 708-713). Any persons in the public domain regardless of site passwords and registrations of social media accounts, can exercise control in making their content accessible and available to public perceptions and comments (Norval and Henderson 2017: 6). This means if individuals are not willing to share or disclose any content and sensitive posts to online communities, they can consider making their accounts private (Norval and Henderson 2017: 6). Similarly, in the case of this study all models have their Instagram accounts on public instead of private settings. The content of the models is set to allow public views which therefore allowed me to view, screenshot, and analyse the posts and comments made by followers. In addition, all models are 21 years plus which means that parental consent was not required.

This study did not collect data on individuals who have private Instagram accounts. Section 35 of Instagram's privacy policy states that users should not "expose Instagram or people who use Instagram to harm or legal liability" (L 2020). This study caused no harm or negative impacts on anybody. Rather this study celebrates positive attributes concerning the nature of the inquiry. The purpose of Instagram, namely, to allow users of this application to share content by using what I understand as multimodal communication, was adhered to.

The positive ways that South African models with vitiligo are embracing themselves and sharing this on their Instagram pages, can presumably not be considered 'sensitive' as their content creates a positive impact towards challenging the way beauty should be viewed and developing more inclusive and diverse representations in our communities. In the research process I have been careful to express and demonstrate accuracy, reliability, and trustworthiness free from bias.

1.13 Chapter Overviews

The dissertation consists of five chapters which are outlined below:

1.13.1 Chapter One – Overview of Study

This chapter introduces the context of the research and motivation. It defines vitiligo from the perspective of the medical fraternity, lists perceptions of ideal beauty standards in the modelling industry, and interprets the concept of beauty. An overview of the study, namely its purpose, aims, critical research questions and overall significance are discussed. The chapter also describes the research and design methods that were used. Information is given on the nature of this practice-based study, creative practice as research, relevant data collection tools and methods, multimodal discourse analysis and how it is used to analyse Instagram pages to generate findings, reliability and trustworthiness, and ethical considerations.

1.13.2 Chapter Two – Literature review of theoretical frameworks

Chapter two expands on the theoretical framework of the study. The gathered information consisting of semiotics, multimodal communication, theories, plus examples of other multimodal discourse analysis studies which help to create an understanding and to support arguments that assist in answering the first and second research questions, are discussed.

1.13.3 Chapter Three – A multimodal discourse analysis of South African fashion models with vitiligo and their Instagram pages

Chapter three answers the first and second research questions, namely how fashion models with vitiligo (international and South African) have been represented in fashion in the last 10 years, and in what ways have South African models with vitiligo (of the selected sample group) represented themselves through their Instagram pages between the years 2015-2021. This chapter presents an analysis and evaluation of the findings Timelines in the form of posters and grouped Instagram posts are created and presented to help the reader understand the semiotics of their representations and to uncover possible themes regarding beauty—collectively framed as beauties in this study.

1.13.4 Chapter Four – Practical Component

Chapter Four focuses on the practical component of creative practice as research (Sullivan 2010; Skains 2018: 86), which answers the third research question, namely how the subject of vitiligo and body positivity can be communicated through fashion artefacts. The literature review in this chapter is supported by examples of artefacts created by other designers. The

chapter elaborates on practical inspiration, design direction, materials, and an amalgamation of the reflection stages of my design process.

1.13.5 Chapter Five– Conclusion and Recommendation

The last chapter consolidates all the answers to the research questions and concludes the overall study with future recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the theoretical framework and literature review pertinent to the study. It introduces semiology and semiotics since these play a role in understanding multimodal discourse analysis. I follow with a discussion of multimodal forms of communication, discourse, and analysis as guided by Kress (2000) — the first theoretical framework. I also review previous studies that used MDA to better understand the ways in which MDA is used and applied to this study. Understanding the application of MDA helped with the analysis of the content shared by the models on their Instagram pages. The purpose of the theoretical discussion was to identify how fashion models with vitiligo have been representing themselves within a timeline of the last 10 years.

2.2 Semiology and semiotics

In this study Instagram and its different tools are understood as a way through which models with vitiligo communicate, and therefore a discussion about semiology and how semiotics functions are relevant. This discussion highlights the main perspectives regarding the distinction between semiology and semiotics to understand the ways that signs are identified or how they are identified in the communication process. Understanding semiology and semiotics also assists the multimodal analytical process and enables one to understand how signs appear and where they are observed, in other words, which Instagram posts and what is the significance of the signs observed in relation to the purpose of the study.

Semiology is the study and scientific form of acquiring knowledge about signs and sign-making to develop meanings of object/s (Kükürt 2016: 2168). Semiotics is a broad field of study involving signs, symbols, signification, and the way in which signs are used in verbal and non-verbal forms of communication (Prior 2014). It is the process of identifying how signs and symbols lead to multiple interpretations to convey how meaning is created (Prior 2014). Meaning is created by not only recognising signs and symbols at a visual level but also at a more in-depth interpretation which involves body language, sounds, words, icons, and indexes (Chandler 1994). Body language, sounds, words, icons and indexes are some of the elements used on Instagram by account holders.

The difference between the terms semiology and semiotics, link to the theories derived from Ferdinand de Saussure's (1985) semiology and Charles Sanders Peirce's (1931) semiotics.

According to Prior (2014: 2), one of the first semiotic theorists, Ferdinand de Saussure a Swiss linguist, “redefined linguistic inquiry” and developed the tradition of semiotic theory, semiology. De Saussure (1985; Prior 2014: 2) explains semiology as “a science which studies the role of signs as part of social life.” Similarly, this study analyses the signs that are part of how fashion models use their Instagram pages to talk about vitiligo. De Saussure’s theory articulates the notion of semiotics as a dichotomic structured sign system (see *Figure 1*) (Chandler 2019).

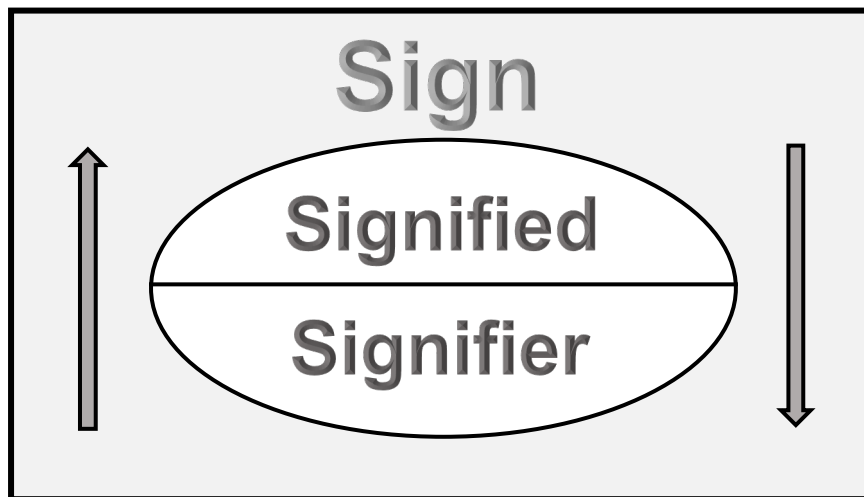


Figure 1: Ferdinand de Saussure’s structured sign system

Source: Chandler (2019: 2)

Chandler (1994) explains the process and signification of a sign system in relation to De Saussure’s semiotic theory by saying that a sign is a combination of two components: the signifier and the signified. These components are the signification system. A sign is the denoted, a basic element which can be seen. For example, in a full colour advertisement for Tom Ford heels that feature the legs of an individual posed on the chest of a masculine body, a literal sign would be viewed as the individual wearing red toenail polish. A signifier is the connoted—the root idea pictured in the mind or in thought. In a Tom Ford advertisement these signs signify that the individual wearing heels and red toenail polish is female, seductively posed on a male’s body. These semiotic indicators associate the brand’s product of heels to portray a luxurious asset of glamour and sex appeal. Chandler (1994) proposes that the signifier is the idea formed by the sign of a specific word, object, image, or situation for example intimacy sensed between two individuals. Thereafter, a concept or theory of a particular idea becomes what is called the signified, indicated by the signifier. Concepts in relation to this study are the themes uncovered through the analytic process of modal transfer. De Saussure’s semiotic theory has been used to identify signs that assist this study in the first step towards multimodal analysis.

Charles Sanders Peirce is a pragmatic American philosopher, scientist and mathematician known for his theory of signs, namely semiotics (Peirce 1931). His theory represents a trichotomic structured process concerning the human mind and focuses on sign typologies such as symbols (Yakin and Totu 2014).

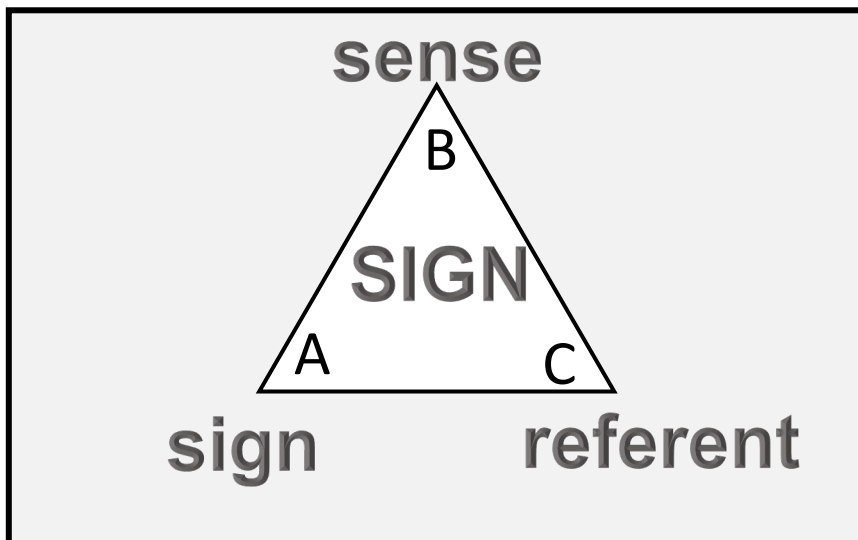


Figure 2: Charles Sanders Peirce structured sign process

Source: Chandler (2019: 2)

In Peircean terms, sign classification involves three components, namely representamen (the sign), object (as a form of referent) and interpretant (the meaning). These three components are interrelated and together become what is called semiosis (Yakin and Totu 2014). Due to this study's use of multimodal discourse analysis, these forms of interlinking and semiosis form part of the analytic process of modal transfer by connecting signs to interpret new meanings. In the analysis, the interconnection of semiotic indicators begins to gain clarity cognitively.

A comparative study led by Yakin and Totu (2014) analyses the differences between De Saussure and Peirce's perspective views based on a study of signs. This source reveals that both theorists similarly originate in western countries yet terminologically differentiate their work regarding the study of signs (Yakin and Totu 2014). Whereas De Saussure's perspective articulates as two-dimensional, Pierce's perspective represents as three-dimensional (Chandler 2019). In practice, both dimensions lead to meaning, concepts and understanding. While Yakin and Totu (2014) speak of the differences in dimension between Saussure and Peirce's perspectives, this study is multi-dimensional in that it incorporates multiple modes and steps offered by multimodal communication, in its analysis. To clarify the purpose of introducing De Saussure and Pierce's sign theories, two and three-dimensional theories clarify

how the sign-system works. It also helps to clarify how the signs in the multimodal discourse analysis process are perceived—free from bias and judgement.

Other theorists like Voloshinov (1973), Barnard (1996) and Barthes (1977) have extended the discourse in the field of semiotics. In this section, I briefly discuss their work to draw useful information relevant to this study. Voloshinov (1973) in Prior (2014: 4), argues that the relationship of social ideologies and signs in everyday life are fundamentally semiotic. This means that besides looking out for signs, we as individuals already come across signs in our daily lives, at times unexpectedly which led to meanings. Voloshinov (1973) (cited in Prior 2014: 4) substantiates this by saying that all ideologies possess deeper meanings when ideological signs become extended definitions in themselves. In the same way that signs appear in our everyday life, Voloshinov's semiotic theory interconnects to some extent with semiotics in fashion discourse. In the context of fashion, signs become visible through fashion advertisements that we see and in our daily lives through the clothes we wear which can reflect as a form of communication.

Therefore, I refer to Barnard's (1996) and Barthes's (1977) study of the sign system, based on principles in communication and in culture regarding the shared meanings of signs engaged in society. To understand communication, the signs in forms of communication need to be deconstructed and understood. People either knowingly or unintentionally express signs through underlying communicative modes within their personal style (giving a sense of individuality), societal level and social interactions. Therefore, the result of fashion communication is evident in how signs are interpreted either positively or negatively. Such as if fashion models with vitiligo were to post a graphic image of their bodies with minimal clothing, this could hypothetically be viewed negatively by some individuals who might express hate speech in the comments section. Inversely, such an act could be applauded and appreciated by others who find that the models are brave and proud in who they are. According to Barnard (1996: 30) messages between senders may be misunderstood. Misunderstood messages result as a negative connotation whereas a positive connotation could refer to the senders sharing their views with each other.

Voloshinov (1973) and Barnard (1996) share valuable insights about the relevance of semiotics in social interactions, fashion communication and signs which appear in our daily lives. This study excludes face-to-face and verbal interviews in its methodological process, hence the importance of semiotics in analysing the Instagram pages of South African fashion models with vitiligo. In this way, signs can be identified through the curation and content of the Instagram pages, to interpret and develop meanings. Alongside this, the practical component

of this study correlates through signs, for example the design principles and elements, a neutral colour palette, white patches and print that relate to the study, as a way to communicate about vitiligo through fashion practice. These instances are viewed as multiple modes through which one communicates, thus multimodal discourse communication is the focus of the next section.

2.3 Multimodal communication discourse and analysis

Multimodal discourse analysis is a paradigm in discourse studies that involves looking deeper and beyond language itself (O'Halloran 2011: 1). It highlights a theory of communication for the age of interactive media (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2001: para.1 line 1).

Since the 1960s and early 1970s the idea of incorporating discourse in research has evolved from other disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, psychology, linguistics, and semiotics (Kamalu and Osisanwo: 170). Etymologically, the term 'discourse' derives from the Latin term 'discursus' which means 'conversation' (McArthur 1996 cited in Drid 2015: 20). Discourse is a broad field of study which relates to language in use (Drid 2015: 20). There are various classifications of discourse studies such as: typological, electronic, critical, multimodal, and more. It is necessary to discuss this matter as this study specifically uses multimodality in the form of multimodal communication and MDA, which belong to the same category of the broader discourse. Kress (2011: 38) asserts that "multimodality names the field in which semiotic work takes place, a domain for enquiry, a description of the space and of the resources that enter into meaning in some way or the other." Kress and van Leeuwen's work involves the development and thinking of semiotic modes of representation, through visual design, visual communication and multimodality in discourse analysis (Tran 2017). In ways that compositional elements interconnect (Tran 2017). This study endorsed the nature of work by Kress and van Leeuwen similarly through the conceptual visual thinking and play on arranging compositional modes or elements to form individual representations into a plural perspective of representation.

Multimodality is a form of communication, namely multimodal communication that refers to the way multiple semiotic modes such as music, sound, images, orality, written text, videos, and sculptures among other examples are used to communicate (Neokleous, Krulatz and Farrelly 2020). According to Prior (2014: 5) studies of non-verbal communication that make use of other semiotic resources such as images and more, are referred to as a "multi-semiotic or multimodal framework, one that considers multiple channels, media, codes, and contexts rather than any single one." Some of these modes of communication aid this study in understanding how communicating on Instagram is enabled using tools such as IG videos, reels, captions (text), and images.

This study is framed by MDA to understand how fashion models with vitiligo use their Instagram pages to communicate about the skin condition, as well as how these modes of communication can be used to create and express deeper meanings. Therefore, it is important to consider empirical work that has previously been framed by MDA. The next section reviews studies that have used multimodal discourse analysis.

2.3.1 Review of previous studies in multimodal discourse analysis (MDA)

Scholars are becoming more aware of MDA. Harvey (2013), Graakjær (2019), Adekunle (2018), Thomas (2017), Highbaugh (2016), and Smith *et al.* (2011) have all framed studies by multimodal discourse analysis in various fields of research such as health, science, sociology, interactive digital environments, linguistics, art, social and masculinity studies. To narrow the spectrum of these fields, this study reviews MDA applications in the digital domain. Studies by Burset, Bosch and Pujola (2016), Smith *et al.* (2011), and Miri (2016) in particular, are considered and reviewed to help understand how the process is applied in different ways and for what purposes. The review of previous studies also enables me to locate my own MDA study accurately within this broad field.

Burset, Bosch and Pujola (2016) analysed “the design of [educational] interactive digital material [IDM] for language learning” to investigate the relationships between text and images with the aim of assessing the interactivity of screen designs (Burset, Bosch and Pujola 2016). The youth of today are engaging through various forms of digital communication and therefore a change to IDM was required to analyse design details of screen design for most effective usability (Burset, Bosch and Pujola 2016). Their used multimodal discourse to motivate learners to use an interactive interface plus interactivity and learning in the digital environment is highlighted. The study identified key elements associated with graphics (e.g., categories of shape, colour, size, resolution, and significance), typographics (style, colour, size, and readability), composition (of location and proportion), and action (including categories such as recognition, visual and sound effects) (Burset, Bosch and Pujola 2016). The findings show that clarity is a fundamental part of educational design since graphics not only affect aesthetic reflections, but also determines overall consistency and functionality (Burset, Bosch and Pujola 2016). According to Burset, Bosch and Pujola (2016) the main idea for an IDM towards language learning is to make use of active methodology such as MDA.

This study has informed me of possible reasons to analyse Instagram pages and posts using an active methodological approach since Instagram is an interactive platform. Ideally, descriptive language through multimodal discourse and communication ensure clarity. Multimodality is used in a fashion context to examine the functionality of communicating through multiple modes as done by the fashion models with vitiligo.

Smith *et al.* (2011) use an interactive digital software application as a meta-semiotic tool to analyse multimodal communication. This practice-led study was conducted to develop interactive software as a tool to use in analysis. One of three uses of the software is having access to audio, visual, somatic, and other data in various formats (Smith *et al.* 2011). The list of uses become the semiotic modes of communication entitled to their interactive digital software. Therefore, MDA is used to analyse the captured video text across the semiotic modes through the motion process of collective thematic structure of developments and stages. Similarly, Instagram is a digital social media platform and the study by Smith *et al.* (2011) gives an indication that it is possible to analyse through the modes semiotically incorporated in captured data. Although this study does not aim to test out Instagram as a platform, it uses the digital platform to conduct a multimodal analysis through the forms of semiotic modes which exists within the curation of the models' Instagram pages as self-representation and self-expression.

Technological advancements have been emerging through language practice. I discuss an example of study that incorporated social media data specifically, Instagram towards their research analysis. Multimodal frameworks followed by Halliday's (1967) "theory of systemic functional linguistics" was used in Jenna Miri's (2016) study, on data collected from the official Instagram accounts of BMW, Starbucks, and Nike. Miri's study also analyses publicly accessible Instagram posts, like this study. The main idea of the study was to use multimodal analysis to identify communication patterns of three corporate identities and marketing posts through Instagram. Four modes were focused on namely: writing, layout, image, and colour. According to Miri in 2016 the Instagram followers of these reputable companies (Nike, Starbucks, and BMW) numbered over 60 million. One can only imagine the effectiveness of their brand advertising and popularity to date through social media. Miri's study is relevant to my study since she analyses Instagram accounts through various modes as I do with the fashion models' pages. Miri (2016) finds that multimodal text through discourse integrates meanings that can be approached with a multimodal analysis. All three studies reviewed in this section were descriptive, interconnected with various forms of information and merging analytic styles of modality. A screenshot of the fashion models' posts would also include various semiotic modes throughout the overall thematic curation of their pages. Multimodally analysing the Instagram posts of fashion models with vitiligo would similarly become descriptive. However, as descriptive as it may be, critical reading and analysis is backed by relevant scholarly literature.

Figure 3 shows screenshots taken from an iOS device, displayed from Miri's (2016) study, of the process taken to post images, videos, text, captions, and hashtags⁵ (including the editing features available) using the Instagram application.

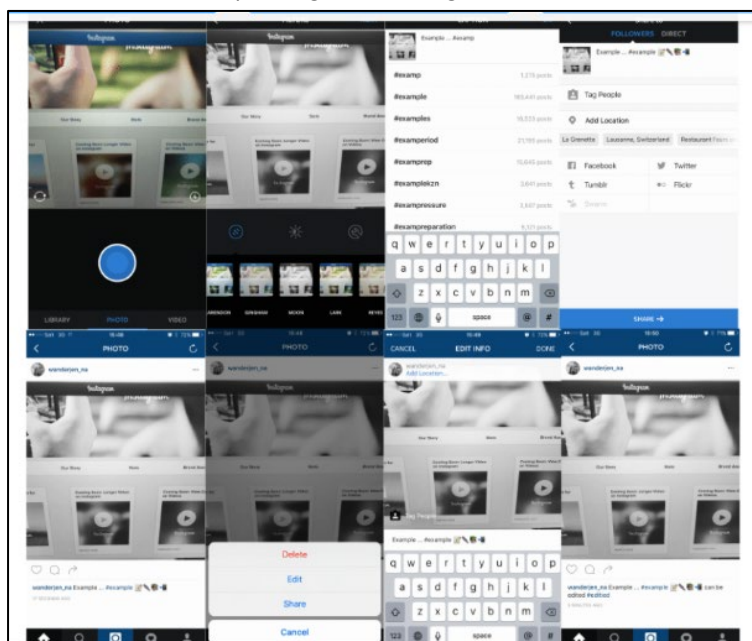


Figure 3: Process of posting on Instagram

Source: Miri (2016)

The findings were divided into two categories, language-level analysis, and multimodal analysis. Language-level analysis included in-depth findings of each corporate identity, for example Nike's corpus reflected standardised form in communication, while Starbucks's corpus varied in style and uniqueness, and BMW showcased consistency in their thematic "car lov[ing]" nature (Miri 2016). Her multimodal analysis included images, captions, comments and hash-tagged posts that were analysed. The reason for dividing the method of analysis is because of her focus on the patterns of language and online communication. In comparison to her study, this study integrates the multimodal approach in its entirety through applying a process of modal transfer, coherently joining pieces of information together through discourse. Overall, Miri's study is qualitative and comparative to shed light on the Instagram accounts used for analysis and to understand different language patterns communicated through relevant media.

Likewise, social media specifically Instagram pages, images and other semiotic modes are considered an important part of the multimodal discourse and analytic process in this study. Multimodality can also be useful to researchers in other disciplines where there is a lack of scholarly literature and a need to develop new or build on meanings. In this study, multimodal

⁵ A hashtag is a form of metadata using text of keywords that are prefaced with a symbol of a # which is often accompanied by media-sharing. The purpose of using hashtags is to express a post through keywords and to allow finding posts and information regarding similar themes or keywords, easily.

discourse analysis and modes of communication are used in the context of fashion studies by analysing the Instagram pages of South African models with vitiligo.

2.3.2 Application of MDA in this study

A discussion and application of the analytical process used in this study helped to identify and evaluate how the selected fashion models represent themselves through their own Instagram pages. The process of modal transfer, basically a shift in meaning across multiple modes, is related to representation and communication. The relationship is due to the grouping of signs observed through representations that can create new meanings which thereafter become additional information that can be communicated. It is made up of transformation (Kress 2010), transduction (Kress 2000; Skains 2018), chains of semiosis (Kress 2000) and the transmodal moment (Newfield 2014) which are explained below. These four steps are best suited for multimodal studies due to “cross-modal mobility” which can be used across a range of various disciplines (Newfield 2014). It is simply a less restricting four-step analytical process mainly conceptualised by Kress (2000 and 2010) which this study follows:

Step 1: Transformation

Transformation highlights sign-making and requires the re-ordering of elements involved in the content of the same mode (Kress 2010: 124-130). Kress (2010: 124-130) refers to a mode as a type of channel, and Newfield (2014: 3) defines mode as an “available representational resource.” The data collected for this study can be considered as the “representational resource.” These are the selected Instagram page elements and posts which in this step would have to be re-ordered according to specific modes or categories to highlight the sign-making process. The process assists in the first step to identify and understand the signs available in the Instagram posts.

Step 2: Transduction

Transduction is a process of semiosis referred to as the ‘synaesthetic process’, an activity performed by the brain through various interpretations resulting in meaning-making. Kress’s ‘synaesthetic process’ becomes relevant in the analysis of different bodies in fashion (international and South African models with vitiligo), as it allows for accomplishing representation and interpretations fluidly, expressing perspectives clearly linguistically (Skains 2018: 89).

Step 3: Chains of Semiosis

The third step is an interlinking process of materialising a shift in mode, semiotic signs, and meaning making. In addition, a modal transfer approach is ideal for tracking semiotic shifts in reference to the chains of semiosis (Newfield 2014), which means that from the content or data being analysed, further meaning can be created, intertwined, and connected in relation to various key features and themes that become significant to the topic of this study. This relates to how fashion models with vitiligo are challenging and expanding accepted notions of beauty.

Step 4: Transmodal Moment

The transmodal moment is the final step which develops into an examination process of translating the chains of semiosis (Newfield 2014: 1). This study analyses Instagram posts by using a modal transfer process. However, it is important to understand why or how Instagram is positioned within multimodality including the modes found within this social media platform, for the analysis process to work successfully.

2.3.3 Positioning Instagram within MDA

Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger are the founders of developing the Instagram application since 2010 by changing its focus to become more competitive within the social media digital environment (Leaver, Highfield and Abidin 2020). The success of the application was due to its communication allowed through comments, photo sharing, filters, and square frames, which was absent in its initial app design, and inspired by the polaroid camera (Leaver, Highfield and Abidin 2020). Instagram rapidly gained popularity, and by April 2012, it had 100 million users. Five years later, Instagram had more than 1 billion active users. In January 2018, Instagram was acquired by Facebook for \$1 billion US dollars (Leaver, Highfield and Abidin 2020). Unlike Facebook, which is a centrally controlled platform, Instagram is largely based on user generated content. This allows for a more personal experience for users, as well as providing a greater range of opportunities for social networking and engagement. Additionally, Instagram's visual approach makes it particularly easy and engaging for users to share multimodal content. This has contributed to its continued popularity.

Instagram is currently known as a global, social media network application (Amaral 2015); a platform created to allow individuals to curate their own Instagram page/s to suit their styles, and to share and post content inclusive of images, stories, hashtags, comments, likes, videos, and other interactive features. I understand these types of social media-related features and sharing of material to be semiotic modes of communication (Kress and van Leeuwen 2001). Instagram is therefore a multimodal social media platform. People use the application for personal creation of content, business marketing strategies, influencing other individuals,

collaborations, to spread awareness through personal pages or campaigns, and for several other uses. This includes connecting and interacting with other individuals and to keep updated on their desired brands worldwide.

While narrowing the focus of positioning Instagram within MDA and multimodal communication, I now show how bodies are expressed on Instagram specifically in the fashion industry, and some of the signs seen through semiotic modes that are currently available. *Figure 4* showcases the #AW21 fashion designs from the Belgian-Argentine brand Sadaels's Instagram page.



Figure 4: Sadaels Instagram bio

Source: Sadaels (2021)

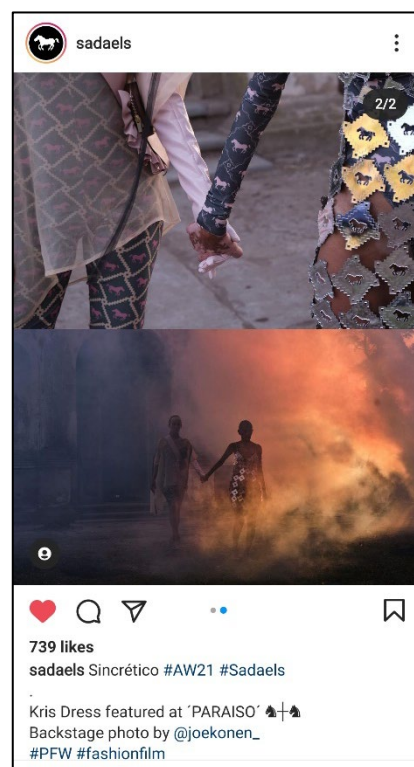
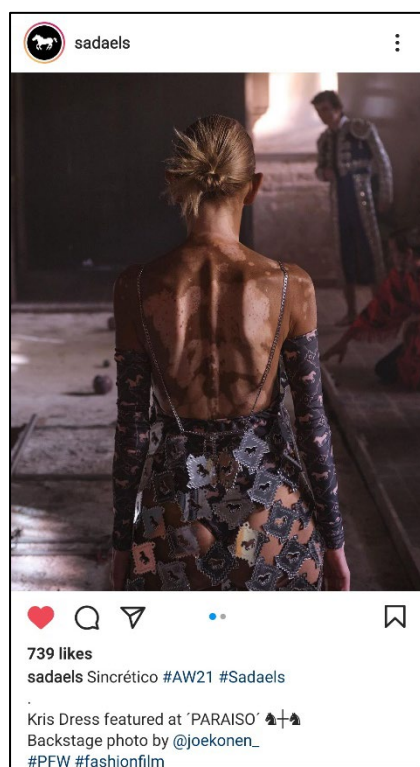


Figure 5: Sadaels Instagram post

Source: Sadaels (2021)

Unlike the other fashion-related examples mentioned in this study, this specific image post is relevant and closer to the context of vitiligo and fashion. *Figure 4* shows what an Instagram bio feature looks like—the purpose of the feature being that it allows users to share succinct

information, either personal or a brand description, links to websites, hashtags, emojis⁶, tags⁷ to other pages, and additional important details. Hashtags, as a form of text and semiotic mode, relates to the multimodal communication aspect of this study: a hashtag is one way of identifying how models with vitiligo use their Instagram pages or posts to represent and talk both about themselves and the skin condition.

This inspired me to incorporate and use multimodal communication theories. The @sign_with_an_Instagram_username is a way that the Instagram community would refer to, tag or respond to individual comments or to mention someone to give credit for their work, voice or opinion. This information can be seen by all users regardless of private or public account settings. Sadaels's (2021) Instagram bio as seen in *Figure 4*, communicates their fashion label, location, a website link and most importantly how they express their label to be, "for strong beings brave enough to show their vulnerable side." This description links with *Figure 4* of Sadaels image post which refers to their fashion film featuring a model with vitiligo confidently wearing a piece their "Sincretico" clothing collection. My analysis of this photograph is that it shows Sadael associating models with vitiligo as strong and brave beings. Signs used in these ways form chains of semiosis to understand or create meanings. In addition, Sadaels's clothing designs use a combination of conventional and unconventional materials with a creative layering technique that matches their brand aesthetic impeccably.

Fashion brand advertising in recent times has been incorporating different types of bodies, an example being the one illustrated and discussed above. Sadael as a fashion brand emerges as inclusive by involving a vitiligo model to promote their product and this is witnessed across social media. In recent years, as already mentioned, there has been an increase in fashion models with vitiligo that represent themselves on Instagram in ways, which I argue, challenges accepted notions of beauty. I am interested in how these models with the vitiligo skin condition have transcended to express, represent, and create awareness concerning their vulnerable side?

⁶ Emojis are symbols that are visually presented on social media platforms which allow for sharing through message and captions for Instagram posts. An example of emojis, consists of animals, plants, foods and faces that depict moods such as elated, happy, shocked, or sad.

⁷ Tags on Instagram are related to mentioning other individuals within posts, to feature them or a form of giving credit to them.

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the theories and MDA framework of the study. Semiotics, multimodal communication and the positioning of Instagram within an MDA study were discussed in the chapter. The theories highlighted in this section of the dissertation, guides the study to avoid any sensitive issues, alienation, and misinterpretations of individuals with vitiligo through research. The literature review featured examples of other theorists and studies regarding sign, communication, fashion, and multimodality and therefore assist in understanding how the study will proceed to analyse the fashion models with vitiligo and their Instagram pages. Understanding MDA at a deeper level is important in answering the first and second research questions in the following chapter. The questions are: (1) How have international fashion models with vitiligo communicated about themselves on Instagram, in the last 10 years? and: (2) In what ways have South African models with vitiligo (of the selected sample group) represented themselves through their Instagram pages, between the years 2015-2021?

CHAPTER THREE

MULTIMODAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF FASHION MODELS WITH VITILIGO AND THEIR INSTAGRAM PAGES

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I conduct a multimodal discourse analysis of fashion models with vitiligo. The purpose of the analysis is to respond to the first and second research questions of the study of how international and South African models with vitiligo have been represented in fashion over the last 10 years and in what ways South African models with vitiligo (of the selected sample group) are seen to represent themselves through their Instagram pages, between the years 2015–2021.

The chapter is divided into Part A and Part B. Part A focuses on the international context in which the Instagram pages of Winnie Harlow, Stephen Cone, Ninu Galot and Genesis Castillo are analysed. Part B considers local context through an analysis of the Instagram pages of Boitumelo Rametsi, Chad Esau, Marian Devos, Moostapha Saidi and Kgothatso Iman Dithebe (the South African fashion models with vitiligo),

Analysing the above individuals is significant as Instagram has become a popular networking platform for individuals to express themselves visually. These models have showcased resilient forms of representation in recent times. Vitiligo is generally ignored or conversations about it are minimal. Yet, I argue that more people need to be made aware of it. Apart from this reality, there is also a lack of research outside the medical field—a point I have made earlier. Signs observed through our daily lives and social interactive actions serve as a fundamental form of communication, namely multimodal communication. In this way, the study adds to the current literature regarding vitiligo through the perspective of fashion and multimodal communication.

PART A

Multimodal discourse analysis of Instagram pages: International fashion models with vitiligo

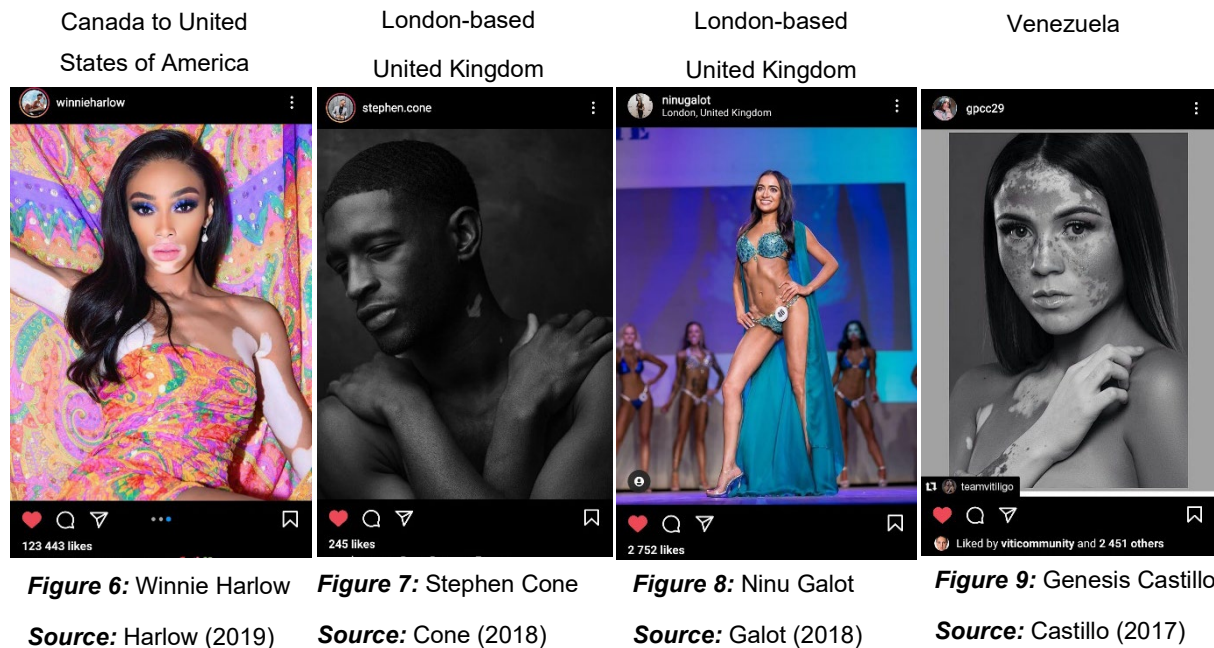
3.2 International fashion models with vitiligo and their Instagram pages

Before focusing on the South African context, I start by analysing the international models with vitiligo whose careers began in the last 10 years.

It is important to note that in this part of the chapter I adopt an analytical descriptive writing style. This is informed by Geertz's (1973: 1-7) idea of "thick description" which is essentially associated with semiotics. According to Geertz (1973: 1-7) interconnecting descriptions can be complex; however, the data becomes one's own proposition before it is examined. Thick descriptions are cognitive and ideational, and this is where the concept of semiotics is adapted and occurs (Geertz 1973: 1-7), resulting in interconnected sign and meaning making. Geertz (1973: 1-7) explains that a good interpretation which diverts in one's direction of perspective is quite smart. I believe the shifts in perspective is noticeably evident in the case of fashion models with vitiligo using their career which possibly include photoshoot images surrounding various other concepts, to express their own representations, on their Instagram pages.

3.3 International fashion models with vitiligo

Figures 6, 7, 8 and 9 (see next page) are screenshots taken from the Instagram pages of Winnie Harlow, Stephen Cone, Ninu Galot and Genesis Castillo. I found an adequate amount of information and articles on these fashion models hence my focus on them. However, it should be noted that there are other fashion models with vitiligo who could also fit within the scope of the study. This study pays its respect and support to all individuals in the same way. The importance of including the international models with vitiligo is because understanding their representations are significant to answer the first research question.



3.3.1 Winnie Harlow

“My story is painted on my body” - Chantelle Brown-Young (TEDxTeen 2014)

Jamaican-Canadian fashion model Chantelle Brown-Young, known as Winnie Harlow (seen in *Figure 6*), has walked runways in London and New York Fashion Week for fashion brands like Tommy Hilfiger, Ralph and Russo, and Kenzo, to name a few. In 2014 Harlow became the first Jamaican-Canadian model with vitiligo to gain widespread visibility after her participation in *America’s Next Top Model* (ANTM).⁸

She has also walked *Victoria’s Secret* fashion shows, becoming the only Victoria’s Secret Angel with vitiligo to walk the runway in 2018 (Lauriello 2021).⁹ Harlow has been nominated for and won a few fashion, beauty, and media awards. She was awarded the title of Breakthrough Model of the Year at the 2018 Daily Front Row Fashion Media Awards (Day 2018). While these are the highlights of her career, Harlow was often bullied in her childhood.

⁸ *America’s Next Top Model* is a U.S reality television show that commenced in 2003 and was established by former supermodel, Tyra Banks. The show is a modelling competition that renews after each season in form of a cycle. It features a diverse group of aspiring fashion model contestants, who are housed together for an entire season. An episode is showcased each week and structured by assigning models to creative modelling challenges where a winner is selected. One aspiring model gets eliminated from the competition at the end of each episode. This becomes a reoccurring sequence with different challenges until there is a single winner gaining the title of America’s next “top model.” In Harlow’s participation of the twenty-first cycle of ANTM, she was placed sixth.

⁹ *Victoria’s Secret* is a renowned American lingerie clothing and beauty brand, known for the quality of their marketing, products and the highlight of their year-end fashion shows which involve the best supermodels, some of these supermodels are brand ambassadors and therefore get called ‘Angels’ (Victoria’s Secret 2020: 1; Opelka and Boan 2019: para. 2-4 line 5-1).

This involved being name-called by derogatory terms such as “cow” and “moo” (Brown and Starling 2018: 439), with reference to the vitiligo lesions on her skin supposedly resembling the skin of a cow.

Entwistle and Wissinger (2012), refer to models in their book *Fashioning Models*, as ‘cultural ephemera’, meaning short-lived, which is basically how a modelling career plays out. Brands of the capitalist fashion industry particularly strive to use and engage with models who attain a public persona as the ‘in’ thing, to generate money and help attract visibility and attention to the brand as a marketing scheme. For example, Hardy (2018) claims that the inclusion of Harlow was a highlight and helped the Victoria’s Secret brand to gain more attention. Whether a model with vitiligo attracts attention for any brand, good intentions of brand inclusivity and diversity can be perceived as a trend, especially in the fashion world. Trend in the fashion industry is a term used to describe a popular look, clothing that is new, a hype; come-and-go sensation that fades over time (Russo 2015; Saravanan and Venkatasamy 2015). Russo (2015), however, stresses that the appearance of Winnie Harlow or any model or individual with vitiligo should not be regarded as a trend. According to Russo (2015); two publications printed statements to the effect that Harlow’s skin condition had become the latest fashion accessory. Shunning this damaging perspective, Russo (2015) argues that Harlow is a person not an item which phases in and out of a fashion cycle. I, as the researcher, am *at idem* with Russo, and take an affirmative position in this study. The discussions are limited to the inclusion of vitiligo in the fashion context. Fashion models with vitiligo are becoming more evident and no individual with a health condition should be labelled a trend. For Harlow, (see in *Figures 10 and 11* for Winnie’s actual response) walking *Victoria’s Secret* was an achievement that felt surreal, a dream come true, an achieved goal and a show which she had admired since childhood (Hardy 2018). According to Hardy (2018), Harlow expressed feeling honoured because of the brand’s inclusion of a model with vitiligo, thereby significantly normalising the industry and in return acquiring a boost of confidence beyond words.

Fashion models with vitiligo are not ashamed to represent who they are in the work that they do. Their achievements should not be seen as a trend because of their skin condition—something they are already aware of. This study and the fashion artefacts have not been the result of a latest fashion trend. Rather, as a researcher and designer, I argue that representation matters and because it matters, I use vitiligo which these models and myself have as a way to promote a broad idea of representation.



Figure 10: Winnie walks Victoria Secret fashion show runway (Instagram post 1)

Source: Harlow (2018)



Figure 11: Winnie walks Victoria's Secret fashion show runway (Instagram post 2)

Source: Harlow (2018)

Seen in Figure 10 of Harlow's (2018) Instagram post regarding her experience at the Victoria's Secret fashion show, she expressed:

I pray for a greater evolution everyday of inclusivity. I've never experienced something so beautiful, walking this show was an insane experience knowing little girls dreaming of Victoria's Secret watched and saw themselves represented by me, but we still have work to do in our society for full acceptance and representation! We can't risk taking one step forward and two steps back. Let's support each other, empower each other, and let the world know #representationmatters.

In Figure 11 (Harlow 2018), she continues to say, "This is a movement. Another step for representation. Another step for diversity." She does not fail to mention, in these momentous highlights of her career, that representation matters. Her Instagram posts can be understood as motivating support for other individuals with vitiligo while at the same time promoting the idea of more inclusivity and diversity.

See *Figures 12 and 13*, example posts of how she spreads positivity, also regarding herself as an educator for future generations and sharing words of upliftment:



Figure 12: Winnie Harlow Instagram post 3

Source: Harlow (2019)

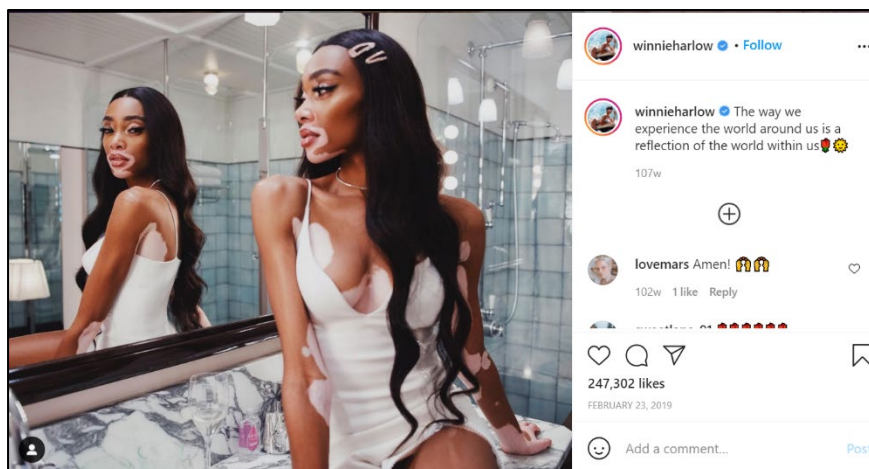


Figure 13: Winnie Harlow Instagram post 4

Source: Harlow (2019)

Figure 12 of Winnie Harlow's Instagram post displays an image of a young girl holding a doll with vitiligo. While the young girl is not Harlow at a young age, Harlow captions the importance of knowledge for youth who are the future. In her words, "[m]e... a young girl who at the age of 12 was brought into the school office by a guidance counsellor and told to research 'vitiligo'". She adds, "I remember googling then and finding close to nothing on this simple skin disorder." She emphasises the lack of information and how information about the skin condition is increasing today, highlighting the significance of knowledge and how it helped to bring understanding and acceptance in her formation of self-identity. Today there are multiple ways of educating people, creating awareness, and sharing knowledge. For example, the doll used

in *Figure 12* is an artefact created to raise awareness about vitiligo as young children cannot be expected to grasp scientific-medical concepts. Harlow adds, “[c]an you imagine someone could look at me and see my skin first? That’s like looking at a man and first seeing BLACK”, “I am also an educator.” An educator through her own form of representation, Winnie’s resilience and her influence as a model with vitiligo as well as her activities on Instagram, have empowered many individuals and emerging models with vitiligo internationally and in South Africa. This study adds to the current literature about the skin condition, and the practice in the form of fashion artefacts sheds further light on it.

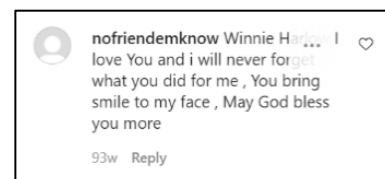
Figures 14 and 15 includes comments which Harlow received in other posts:



Figure 14 (seen on left): Winnie Harlow Instagram post (5) regarding image and comment.

Figure 15 (seen below on right): Harlow’s received Instagram comment regarding her posts (6)

Source: Harlow (2020)



Harlow regards herself not as a vitiligo sufferer, but as a model with vitiligo who is succeeding (Magadla 2018). It is best not to regard any individual as a sufferer of this autoimmune disease or to create judgement based on the visibility of the vitiligo lesions they have. In *Figure 14* @tarenlatta comments, “*I lost my biggest modelling contract because hydrochloric acid was thrown on my face bleaching my lips. No modelling agency would hire me after the assault! And I’m always glad to see models with multi pigmentations make it! You rise! You are our voice!*”. This speaks volumes and shows how Instagram has been and can be used as a platform for representation. Another comment by @nofriendemknow reads (*Figure 15*), “*Winnie Harlow, I love You and I will never forget what you did for me, You bring smile to my face, May God Bless you more.*” The reaction by some of Harlow’s followers via Instagram likes and comments indicates positive responses to her practice.

3.3.1.1 Evolution of the skin

Vitiligo lesions are known to spread with clear visibility on the skin as white patches. Individuals with vitiligo are all unique; the lesions are naturally placed in various parts of the body in different shapes and forms. In some cases, the visibility of the lesions increases over time, and I call this increase the evolution of the skin. This skin evolution affects models with vitiligo emotionally, mentally, and physically.



Figure 16: Evolution of the skin, Instagram post 1

Source: Harlow (2019)

Winnie Harlow's Instagram post above (*Figure 16*), shows her vitiligo lesion evolution. I adopt the term evolution used by Harlow to indicate transformational progression of the skin condition, also known as the morphological changes.

Her caption reads:

My skin has changed so much in the past 6 years... it's incredible. Evolution of Vitiligo is beautiful [heart-eyed emoji]. Don't be ashamed of what makes you different. My skin changes all the time, I relearn how to do my makeup all the time based on what suits it in that time. Skin is just skin. We shouldn't judge based on it, condition, or race. Like our minds and souls, my skin is ever evolving [red heart emoji].

Her words encapsulate her experiences. The fact that Harlow needs to change and adapt to a new makeup routine every time her skin evolves shows self-acceptance: “[d]on’t be ashamed,” she says. In our daily life experiences change, either intentional or unintentional, is already difficult to adjust to. I argue that the evolution of vitiligo skin results in a continuous cycle of self-acceptance—it is not overlooked when changes occur, and so does your identity. What Harlow says, “[m]y skin changes all the time, I relearn how to do makeup all the time...”, the emphasis is on “relearn”, in a sense she exercises patience in understanding herself multiple times. Although the skin condition, can even cause stress from time to time there is always something new to learn. Harlow does not see vitiligo as a challenge, instead reframes it in positive terms.

The image in *Figure 16* shows how the vitiligo lesions around her eye area has decreased.

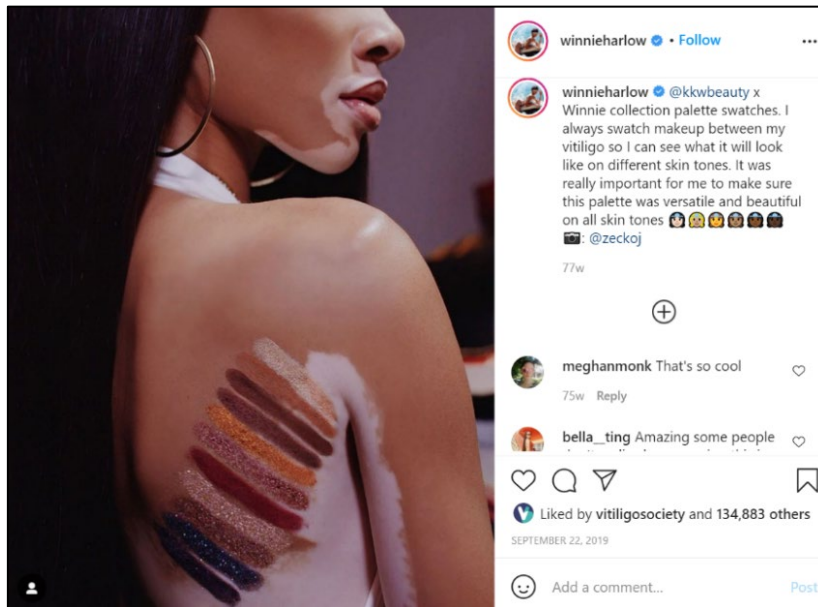


Figure 17: Evolution of the skin, Instagram post 2

Source: Harlow (2019)

In *Figure 17* above, Winnie Harlow illustrates her swatching make-up strategy on her skin for her collaboration with the KKW Beauty brand. Swatching is a term used to describe the process of testing a makeup product on the skin, to ensure if it is suitable for a specific skin tone. This is one of the ways she relearns her makeup, and the beauty collaboration was a way to test the colour palette for all skin tones (see caption). Skin evolution applies to all individuals with vitiligo not only Winnie Harlow. In the discussions on fashion models that follow, attention is paid to how the change of skin changes models' perceptions towards themselves in their daily lives and how it has affected their self-esteem in the past, in the present, and will in the future. For example, in the *TEDxTeen* (2014), Harlow poses a question to the audience: "What do you find most beautiful or attractive, specifically in a person?" Without the expectation of receiving a response she continues to express her perspective on beauty, highlighting that current definitions derive from social media, magazines, and models (TEDxTeen 2014). I found her perspective and questioning of beauty as one of the links that connect the idea of beauties representing themselves with vitiligo as fashion models and through the use of a particular social media platform, Instagram. She tells the story of her childhood journey, specifying that her experiences led her to believe that "beauty is in everything". Her *TEDx*¹⁰ talk emphasises that beauty comes from within, and from how we personally reflect ways in which to perceive the beauty in everything. She is therefore affirmatively proud to say that her story is painted on her body.

¹⁰ The *TEDx* Program or event is an initiative created to share worthy ideas through passionate individuals who ignite conversation of their communities or simply share their personal stories and experiences to inspire others (TED 2021).

3.3.2 Stephen Cone

Stephen Cone is a London-based model. As a case study, Cone is quite different compared to other international models discussed in this chapter. He is male and his vitiligo formed differently to the female fashion models (this is discussed later). I am aware of these differences but included Cone to align with the concept of inclusivity which is prominent in this study. Being inclusive also means considering both genders.

Cone developed vitiligo at a late stage in life, during his studying and modelling career (Elitou 2017). In an interview with Elitou (2017), Cone states that throughout his schooling years, he was either bullied or tormented for having a darker skin tone. Through the support of family, friends and role models, he was encouraged to develop confidence in his dark skin and to get into modelling—which was when he unexpectedly developed vitiligo lesions (Elitou 2017). His first reaction was disappointment with the reality that he had to re-encounter a negative gaze and suffer embarrassment because of his skin (Elitou 2017). Initially, he mistook vitiligo to be a rash (Elitou 2017). *Figure 7* shows how and where vitiligo lesions first started to appear. Regarding his pursuit for modelling, he found it difficult in terms of how he would be photographed or perceived (Elitou 2017).

Thereafter, Cone struggled with insecurity and lack of self-confidence, but he decided to shift his perspective towards using social media to express “beauty from a male’s perspective” (Elitou 2017). In my discussion of Stephen Cone’s Instagram posts (*Figures 18-22*), I attempt to show these shifts in his perspective. The posts are from 2017 to 2018, and his captions seem to capture how he regained his strength and confidence in his skin. Cone replies to comments he receives by making use of hashtags which include #vitiligonation #vitiligomodel #getscouted #melanin #darkskinmale #bodypositive (see *Figures 18 to 21* for more). Hashtags are quite specific and are used to draw attention to particular words by making posts thematically easier to find.

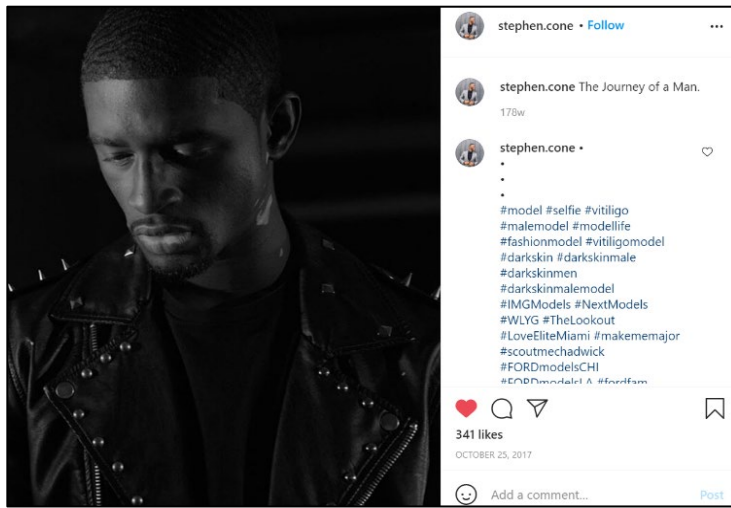


Figure 18: Stephen Cone Instagram post 1

Source: Cone (2017)



Figure 19: Stephen Cone Instagram post 2

Source: Cone (2017)



Figure 20: Stephen Cone Instagram post 3

Source: Cone (2018)



Figure 21: Stephen Cone Instagram post 4

Source: Cone (2018)

The images featured in *Figures 18 to 22* exude potent emotional body and facial expressions. In the first figure (*Figure 18*) which Cone names “The journey of a man,” his expression seems to be concerned with his modelling career. He faces downwards and accompanies the image with the hashtags: #vitiligo, #melanin and #modellife. These hashtags are significant because melanin describes his natural skin pigment which is, and he expresses acceptance of his dark skin. #Vitiligo indicates the shift in his pigmentation and the loss of melanocytes resulting in his vitiligo lesions and accepts as his new skin. As previously mentioned, vitiligo appeared in Cone’s life at a late stage, and he therefore faced chronological changes in his #modellife. In my interpretation, this is the journey that Cone talks about.

In *Figure 19* he looks up with more of an accepting look and less doubt, shirtless and bare-skinned, and asks a rhetorical question in the caption: “What’s Next?”. Cappellen and Rime (2014: 3), explore and examine self-transcendence as a result of positive emotional states in people who perceive themselves positively disregarding what the world may think. Their own perceptions are more valuable. For example, in the third post (*Figure 22*) Cone is seen posing cross-armed, hugging himself, an expression of self-love for the “Past. Present. Future” journey of his body image and skin condition. His posts started off in black and white (*Figures 18 to 20*), but from 2018 onwards they displayed a more colourful, natural and happier tone. In *Figure 21*, he speaks of how his life has changed but says mentions “I promise I’m still the same me.” This is how Stephen Cone continues to express his positive (or negative) emotions. In *Figure 22*, Cone continues to represent himself and his skin condition through his Instagram post. He captions to “[b]e a lover not a hater”, which depicts that he may have experienced social barriers through the evolution of his skin, however his post including the colour of green, hints on a revived spirit to encourage a positively fresh perspective. Cappellen and Rime (2014: 4) conclude that the process of self-transcendence does not occur only within the self; the positive process can be shared through interpersonal and individual levels reducing the boundaries between themselves and others.



Figure 22: Stephen Cone
Instagram post 5

Source: Cone (2018)

Because vitiligo is present in individuals of all genders and races it adds to the challenge of changing accepted perceptions of ideal beauty. Gender stereotyping posits that males are less emotionally expressive than women (Plant *et al.* 2000). Men are also perceived as stereotypically strong masculine figures. According to Plant *et al.* (2000), it is fundamental to note that men and women express emotions differently. Stephen Cone mentions in the interview by Elitou (2017) gives advice to men "to continue to be strong because that is our identity; to be strong and to be leaders but in that we have to show emotion." This relates to how he takes a stand as a fashion model to express his emotions through his Instagram posts, making it clear that men can be strong and show emotion at the same time. Cone emphasises his dark skin through his posts with hashtags (*#darkskinmale*, *#blackmalemodel* and *#melaninonfleek*¹¹), and includes the minimal yet visible vitiligo lesions on his neck (*#vitiligomodel*) to position himself in the fashion industry as a fashion model of contemporary times.

¹¹ "On fleek" is an English phrase, informally used to exaggerate about something that looks good. Cone's hashtag is to highlight that the melanin of his skin looks so good.

3.3.3 Ninu Galot

Ninu Galot is a British-Indian fashion model. She was diagnosed with vitiligo at the age of eleven and spent many years battling the lesions and scarred self-esteem (Chavda 2018: para. 2 line 1). Today she is an entrepreneur and fitness model who uses her Instagram page to embrace her skin condition, express her story, and raise awareness about vitiligo.

Figure 23 - an Instagram post of her sharing articles about her story:



Figure 23: Ninu Galot Instagram post 1

Source: Galot (2018)

Galot tried a few UV special skin treatments that only helped to contain the spread. In an interview with Chavda (2018: para. 4 line 2), Galot says that doctors do not take this condition seriously since it is not life-threatening illness, and affected individuals suffer in silence because of being stared at, bullied, or shunned because of the misconception that vitiligo is contagious.

Galot's (2020: para. 4 line 2) foundation website expresses her story and further mentions that becoming a model was not an easy decision, as she felt afraid of being exposed. However, she agrees that her decision has changed her life and her perspective, accepting her body for what it is (Galot 2020: para. 4 line 3). Becoming a model gave her the opportunity to address the challenges faced associated vitiligo, and today she has also created the "*Ninu Galot Foundation*" to educate others on health and fitness to allow other affected individuals to gain

mental and physical strength and overcoming the stigma which exists in some societies (Galot 2020: para. 2 line 1). She also runs campaigns and hold events at schools around issues of anti-bullying by encouraging social acceptance. When Galot won a fitness competition, she saw the potential to use the fitness competition platform to start a campaign to spread awareness about vitiligo (*Figure 10*). The purpose of her campaign is “to debunk myths, like eating fish and milk causes this skin condition to develop” (Madan 2018).

She also started a campaign for vitiligo using the slogan #ShakeHands4Vitiligo through Instagram and created new hashtag #VForVitiligo to help her campaign to continuously encourage individuals with vitiligo to remain confident during the Covid19 pandemic—a time during which psychological effects can become worse and affect the spread of the condition (Galot 2020: para. 4 line 3). The ‘V’ in the hashtag stands for Victory and was inspired by the ‘V’ shaped lesion on her stomach as seen in *Figure 24*. See the collation of Instagram posts (*Figures 24, 25 and 26*) below in light of her campaign video, including the comments she has received for the work she does to raise awareness:



Figure 24: Ninu Galot collation of Instagram posts 1

Source: Galot (2020)

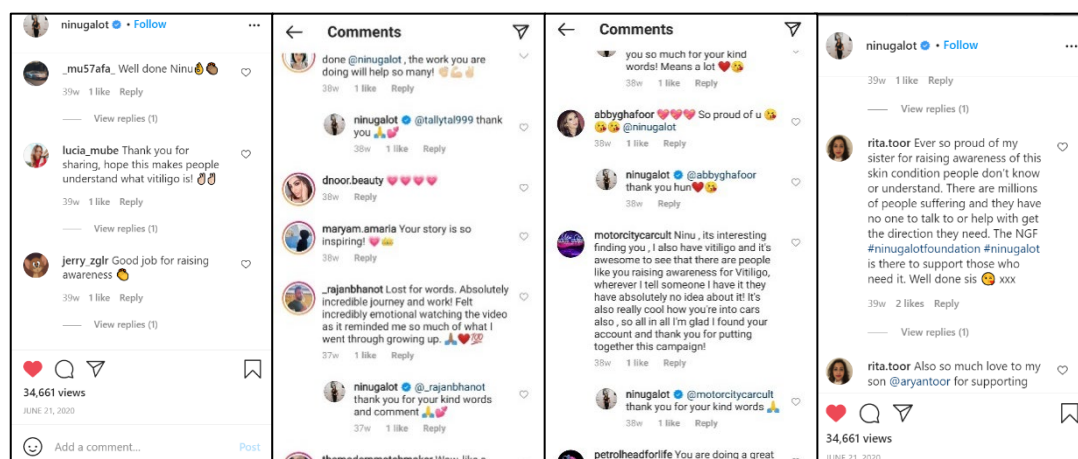


Figure 25: A collation of Instagram comments based on Galot's posts

Source: Galot (2020)



Figure 26: Ninu Galot Instagram post 2

Source: Galot (2020)

In Figure 26, Galot says, *“One of the main reasons I started raising awareness for #Vitiligo is because I know how this can affect someone’s mental health as it affected me too. I had no control over the vitiligo and I still don’t. The only thing I can control is my mind. Vitiligo can be a struggle for adults and children.”* This statement supports the fact that promoting positive thinking can strengthen mental health and build stronger perceptions towards an individual self-esteem, even though it does not result in a cure for vitiligo.

Evidently, Galot has used the Instagram platform differently compared to the other models previously discussed in this section. She started a campaign with the specific purpose of using the lesions on her skin to promote vitiligo awareness. According to Borawska (2017), the success of creating such initiatives depends on an individual’s personal perspective and understanding of an area of concern that needs positive change. Galot’s contribution is unique in so far as she uses her own skin lesions as symbols of meaningful communication. Similarly for this study, as a researcher and fashion designer, I feature the shapes of my vitiligo lesions to create textural laser cut designs for fashion artefacts. Social campaigns that are designed to create awareness would acquire effective marketing strategies through various channels of media (Borawska 2017). For example, Galot may not be a fashion designer, however she does use clothing such as T-shirts to market her campaign in an effective marketing strategy that seems to work. She uses a basic T-shirt pattern with screen-printing techniques to communicate her message (Figures 24 and 26). This is relevant to my study which also uses garments and fashion to communicate a broad message about inclusivity and a specific message about vitiligo. This informs the practical component of the study.

3.3.4 Genesis Castillo

“Vitiligo is a condition that does not make us different, it makes us special”

- Genesis Castillo (Yong 2017)



Figure 27: Genesis Castillo Instagram post 1

Source: Castillo (2018)

Genesis Castillo became well-known after a photograph of herself, and another model was posted and went viral on Instagram (*Figure 27*). Going viral means that information such as image/s, text or video/s is publicly broadcast through the internet (Tiruwa, Yadav and Suri 2017). “Going viral” can also occur within social media platforms, due to the huge and diverse population that are part of these platforms namely, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube (Boynton 2008: 11). For example, Genesis Castillo’s post (*Figure 27*) went viral through Instagram yet still appeared through internet findings articulated by Yong (2017). The main point is that images or Instagram posts go viral when they get shared or reposted multiple times. YouTube contents are described as “going viral” when a video has generated an extremely high number of views (Boynton 2008). Another perspective on going viral in relation to the health sector, is the rapid worldwide spread of the covid19, corona ‘virus’¹² (Paudel *et al.* 2020). Hence, the term of ‘viral’ is used to describe information shared within a short period of time.

Agam (2017) explores the impact and concept of “viral marketing through Instagram.” The study uses Malaysian fashion designer Maatin Shakir’s business as an example to show how the effectiveness of using Instagram has created successful brand awareness. As a result of

¹² Covid19 (coronavirus disease) – a pandemic faced in South Africa and other parts of the world (Paudel, Dangal, Chalise and Bhandari 2020).

questionnaires which had been distributed to Shakir's Instagram and Facebook followers, Agam (2017) obtained interesting findings, which showed that eighty-nine respondents preferred Instagram as more useful instead of Facebook to share information about Shakir's clothing brand and products (Agam 2017). Ninety respondents agreed that viral marketing allows freedom of speech in the communication about his brand, whilst a few other respondents agreed that Instagram's repost feature enhances Shakir's brand popularity (Agam 2017). These results show that Instagram is used as a great networking communication tool, including building awareness through various campaigns such as Castillo's strategy through strong photographic visuals (*Figure 27*).

Viral marketing or advertising has become a trend through word-of-mouth and social media platforms (Tiruwa, Yadav and Suri 2017). According to Li, Chong and Ch'ng (2015), one of the triggers associated with potential viral advertising is using emotion to attract attention. For example, positively generated content will showcase and inform positivity amongst viewers (Li, Chong and Ch'ng 2015). Genesis Castillo's Instagram post is emotive and the visible vitiligo lesions are eye-catching. According to Yong (2017), the post (*Figure 27*) aimed to embody normative appearance, communicating that having vitiligo should be viewed as beautiful, unique, and not a condition to be ashamed of.

Castillo created an awareness campaign to showcase, educate and promote vitiligo in beautiful ways. She incorporates the following hashtags into her Instagram posts (*Figure 28*): “#TeamVitiligo, #NoCureDontCare and #Vitiligo” (Yong 2017).



Figure 28: Castillo's Instagram bio

Source: Castillo (2021)

The reason that catalysed Castillo's campaign was modelling which led to the exposure of her skin. Apart from her posts and hashtags, her following included other campaigns and organisations which are @vitiligosociety, @viticomunity and @vrfoundation, to highlight a few. These Instagram pages also follow other models and individuals who communicate about their vitiligo on Instagram.¹³

¹³ The United States of America's, *Vitiligo Research Foundation* (VRF) is a non-profit organisation determined to find a cure to vitiligo (VR Foundation 2021). VRF's webpage provides information about their page and vitiligo. Dmitry Aksenov established this foundation in 2010 after his daughter was

3.3.5 Part A Conclusion

While the role of a modelling career is short lived, models like Winnie Harlow engage in their careers making the most out of their modelling opportunities, so that their representations through Instagram posts of work can carry messages of a longer lasting effect. For example, Harlow's caption in *Figure 11* say that "[t]his is a movement [a]nother step for representation [and a]nother step for diversity." Other international models joined this movement and have also proven to take the next step towards representation of their own experiences of having vitiligo. Harlow also touched on thematic areas which additional representations can be built upon. The themes emerged from her Instagram posts were inclusivity and diversity, the importance of knowledge, evolution of the skin and beauty. As Harlow speaks of knowledge, the theoretical perspective of this study also builds on knowledge to expand on the current literature surrounding the discipline of fashion and health, vitiligo.

Evidently the models' use of Instagram in the creation of hashtags, as seen in the above two examples with Galot and Castillo, has become their primary form of communication to enhance vitiligo awareness. Cone perceives beauty from a male perspective, hashtags body positive and shares his self-transcendence. Galot focuses on anti-bullying, social acceptance and debunking the myths of vitiligo. The analysis of the models' Instagram posts showed their own differences in representation and themes through communicative modes that include comments, hashtags, captions, images, and Instagram biographies to name a few. This study continues to examine the representation of these models specifically South African fashion models with vitiligo on Instagram, by applying the multimodal discourse analytic process of modal transfer. The four steps in the modal transfer process: transformation, transduction, chains of semiosis and the transmodal moment that the study seeks to approach were used

diagnosed with this skin condition and multiple treatments were not effective enough to make a difference (VR Foundation 2021). The reason for Aksenov's added concern was due to the lack of attention of "the neglected disease" and lack of medical research on vitiligo (VR Foundation 2021). According to VR Foundation (2021), their mission is to develop "effective treatments" for individuals diagnosed with vitiligo worldwide and to support scientific research in achieving such outcomes. In addition, they have created a global awareness campaign titled "World Vitiligo Day" on 25th June 2011 with 2021 becoming the 11th annual year to mark this day. Whilst viticomunity is an IG page for vitiligo individuals to feel inclusive in their own community, Vitiligo Society (2020) established in 1985, a charity organisation that supports and educates about vitiligo. Their Instagram page showcases inclusivity of all body shapes, colour, and sizes of individuals with vitiligo. They spread continuous positivity, sharing the talents of individuals in how they have used their skills to uplift individuals with vitiligo or to educate about it.

to create meaning and understanding of South Africa's fashion models and their visual representation of themselves, about vitiligo and how they challenge and expand the notions of beauty.

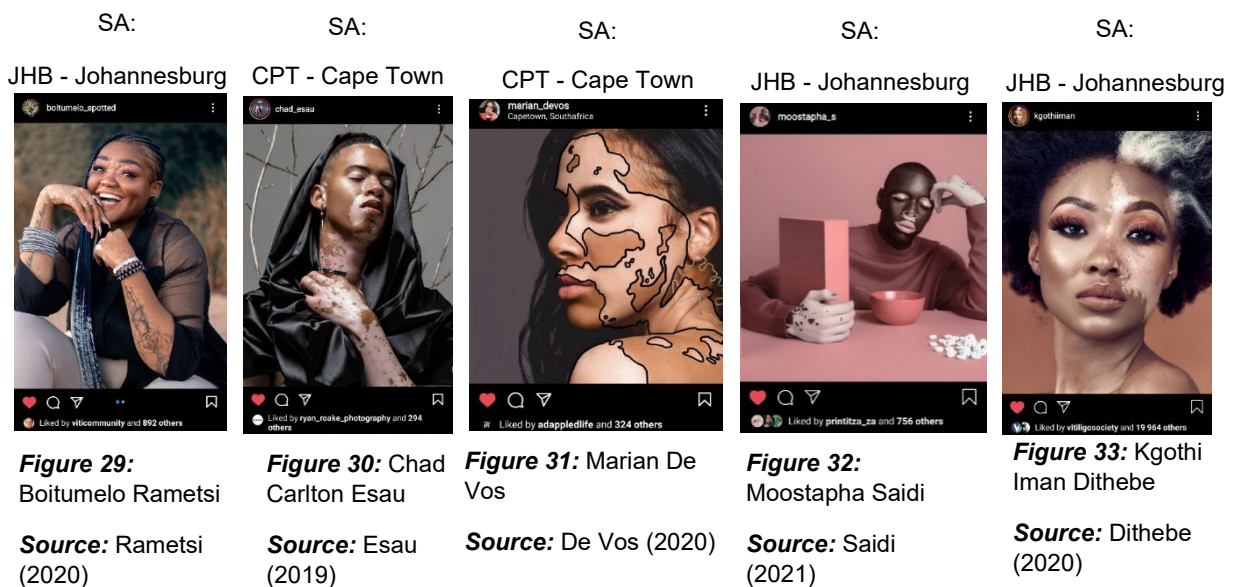
PART B

Multimodal discourse analysis of Instagram pages: South African fashion models with vitiligo

3.4 South African fashion models with vitiligo and their Instagram pages

Beauties are significant in Part B of this chapter which is a continuation of the multimodal discourse analysis process that focuses on the South African component of Instagram pages of models with vitiligo. Part B of this chapter attempts to inquire into ways in which South African models with vitiligo represented themselves through their Instagram pages between the years 2015-2021. The gathered data includes information from the models' Instagram pages, which comprises posts, captions, comments by their followers and the models' responses. These elements are regarded in this study as visible multimodal forms of communication. Instagram pages may be viewed as a space to create an individual's visual story, perspectives and sharing insight about their personal lives and emotions.

The information was collected through screenshots¹⁴ of Instagram content generated by myself, captured from the pages of Boitumelo Rametsi, Chad Carlton Esau, Marian Devos, Moostapha Saidi and Kgothi Iman Dithebe (*Figures 29, 30, 31, 32 and 33*).



The inclusion of these five South African fashion models with vitiligo will contribute to the current literature, showing representation that stems from and is used to express personal

¹⁴ A screenshot is a term used to define the capturing of contents displayed on a phone screen in form of a digital image.

stories in the South African context. I analysed the five models' uploaded content on their official Instagram pages which are publicly accessible. In analysing their pages, relevant multimodal elements were found and collected as data. Firstly, I wanted to perceive how the subject of vitiligo is presented on their pages. Secondly, I wanted to identify their evolution as South African fashion models with vitiligo. The data collection process shows that the models post regularly about the skin in the months closest to June and July. In Devos's analysis, it is evident that World Vitiligo Day is in the month of June, and this could be their reason for representing vitiligo the most during the days before and after the month of June.

The following steps are explained to clarify the analysis process:

Step one is an organised arrangement of representational resources collected and portrayed as time-lined posters. *Figures 4 to 22*, showcase how each model's Instagram page was deconstructed accordingly to separate communicational modes like their posts in the form of images, videos, captions, and comments by the models' respective followers, responses by the model, and hashtags. The purpose of deconstructing the multimodal elements is to clarify the sign-making process. An estimated 100 screenshots were taken to capture data into a time-lined poster, to depict an overall multimodal view of the data demonstrated as thumbnail images. While sign-making and discussion continues to evolve through all the steps in the process, these screenshots will re-appear below each time-lined section of each South African model. The purpose of the first step of the modal transfer process, explained by Kress (2010 and 2000), is this 'transformation'. Signs generated from the deconstructed Instagram page elements are highlighted and grouped into themes.

To introduce the second step, namely 'transduction' of the analysis, Instagram posts are grouped and linked to relevant themes that stand out. Some posts speak of a particular theme. The grouping of posts are numbered and inserted as posters and figures that I designed. Thereafter the various communicational modes present were interpreted to highlight the signs such as messages through their captions which were then followed by a process of creating meaning.

The third step, 'chains of semiosis' interlink the shifts in meanings which can result in prominent themes surfacing (for example body positivity) that can be supported with scholarly text. This helps in the creation of new meanings and understanding concepts and key features incorporated in the practical component. Further examples are contextualised and explained after analysing the presented data.

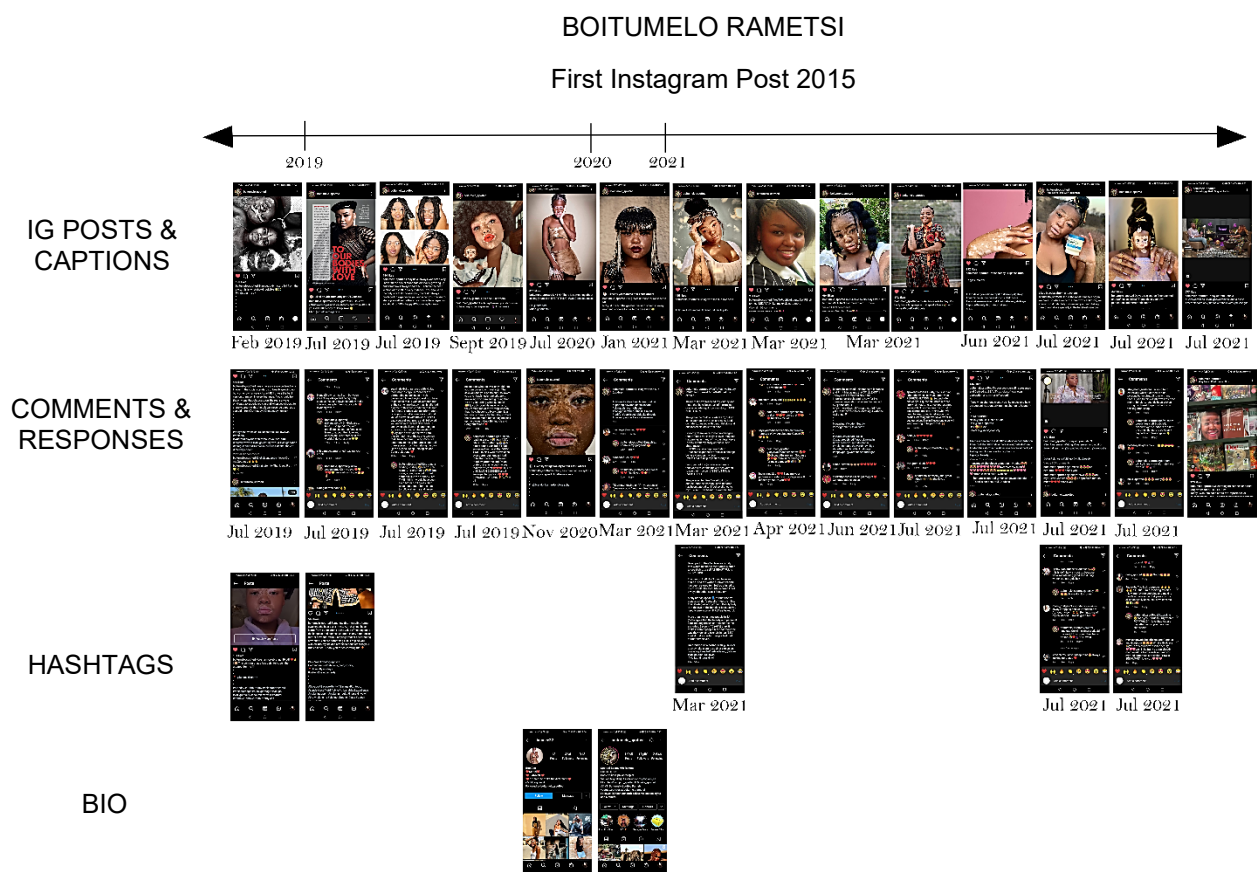
The final step, the ‘transmodal moment’ is used to conclude the findings and interconnect important meanings relevant to the purpose of the study. This purpose was to apply MDA to analyse how the selected fashion models communicate and represent themselves through their Instagram posts. These findings, together with those of the international fashion models, were used to inform the practical component.

The MDA of Part B continues with the following selected local models:

3.4.1 Boitumelo Rametsi

“You’re so much bigger than this. You are literally the walking embodiment of God consciousness. Carry yourself that way.” – Boitumelo Rametsi (Ebrahim 2019)

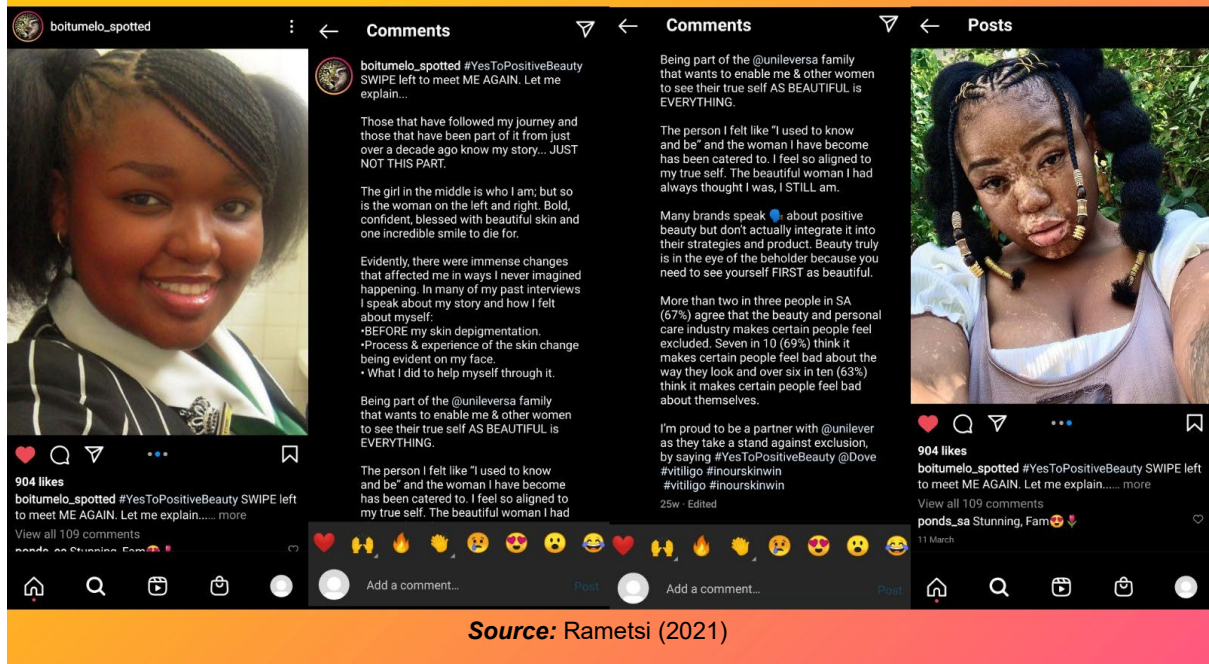
Displayed below is an organised timeline of Boitumelo’s Instagram posts collected for the analysis:



Poster 1: Timeline of Boitumelo Rametsi

Created by: E. Sarupdeo

Figure 34: Instagram posts of Boitumelo Rametsi _1



Source: Rametsi (2021)

Boitumelo Rametsi was born in Soweto and is a qualified brand strategist who has been in this industry since 2013. Her Instagram page is titled Spotted Beauty and Boitumelo Spotted, and she describes herself as a body positive philanthropist in her biographical profile (Figure 35). The title, body positive philanthropist, is also a prominent theme found across all her posts and captions. The analysis I provide of Boitumelo Rametsi is not solely based on her communication of vitiligo through her Instagram page, it is also supported by Ebrahim's (2019) article. Ebrahim (2019: 1) describes Rametsi as a body positive model and spokesmodel for vitiligo. Although she is known for this, Rametsi was not born with vitiligo lesions as can be seen in Figure 34—similar to Galot and Cone whose conditions developed later. Rametsi's vitiligo appeared around the age of 12, and the lesions started to spread more rapidly around visible areas of the body in her university years (Afternoon Express 2015: 1). She believes that her excessive exposure to the sun whilst driving caused her skin condition to increase. Having vitiligo can cause continuous morphologic changes over a period of time (Menzies *et al.* 2001). Like Harlow, Rametsi often found it difficult to accept how the appearance of skin lesions had morphologically changed. In a post where she partners with Unilever and Dove¹⁵, Rametsi uses the hashtag #YesToPositiveBeauty. She says she lacked confidence and wanted to look like other individuals without vitiligo (Ebrahim 2019: 1). In earlier days of the lesions appearing on her skin, Rametsi applied makeup to cover them up, but this has since

¹⁵ Unilever is a world-renowned consumer good company. They have over 400 brands ranging from foods, home, personal, beauty and skin care. Dove is regarded as personal care and is one of those 400+ brands owned by Unilever.

changed and now embraces herself as she is. This motivated her to create makeup brands: “B Glam SA” and “Spotted Beauty” (Ebrahim 2019: 1). She created the phrase “spotted beauty” (Ebrahim 2019)—a phrase of positive affirmation and a personal mantra used to accept her vitiligo lesions and her plus size body-image.

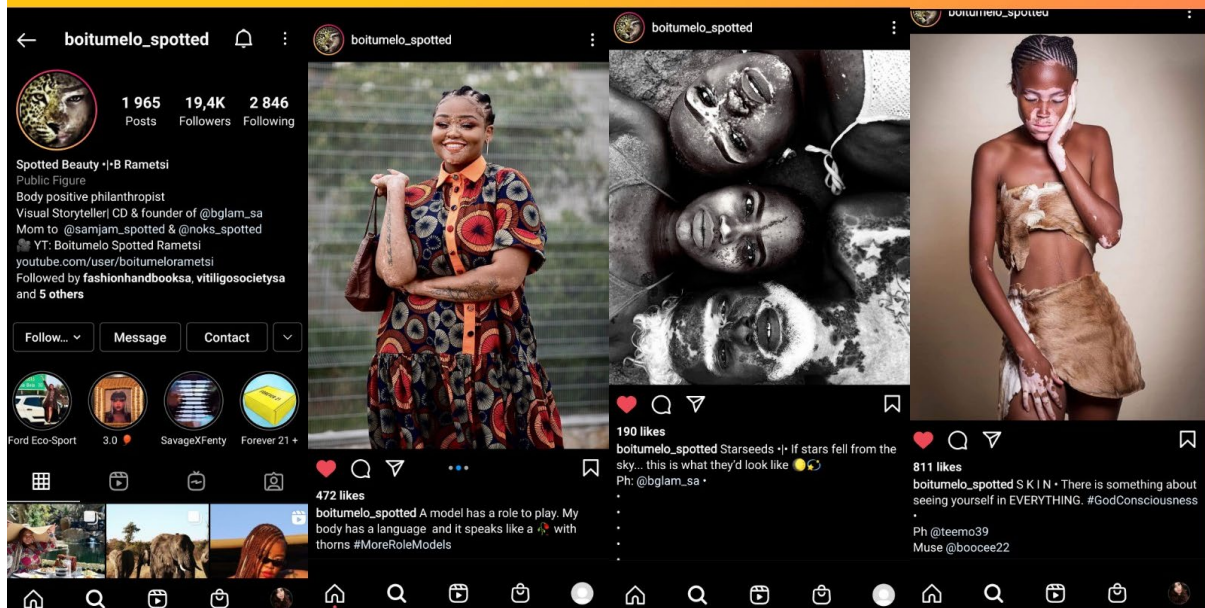
Andropoulos and Pilane (2021) include a portrait taken by Zuma (2021) of Rametsi and they write, “the face of vitiligo continues to be challenged in mainstream media as discourse about the rare skin condition [vitiligo] takes centre stage.” It is now a norm for companies to expect or see local social media users from the fashion industry form creative collaborations¹⁶ through digital media platforms. In saying this, businesses and organisations have become more economically and sociably inclined to engage and invest their marketing efforts on popular social media. According to Smith *et al.* (2018), “[i]n 2016, organisations in the United States spent an estimated \$570 million on brand ambassador¹⁷ campaigns on Instagram alone (Drolet 2016). The change of face-to-face monologues of a brand ambassador to searching for brand ambassadors using Instagram, is developing into social dialogues on larger networks (Smith *et al.* 2018; Botha and Mills 2012).

Some of these social dialogues can be seen in the comment and caption areas on Instagram posts or even shared amongst online communities through direct messages, videos, and stories. Sadrabadi, Saraji and MonshiZadeh (2018) evaluate the role of brand ambassadors on social media and conclude that brand ambassadors together with a relational perspective in brand concepts (brand image) positively affect brand awareness on Instagram. Findings also reflect significance and positive effects that brand ambassadors have on consumer behaviour (Sadrabadi *et al.* 2018). However, Rametsi stresses that no one individual should be regarded as the face of vitiligo (Ebrahim 2019: 1). In the previous section, I discussed how international models with vitiligo represent themselves and their skin condition to create awareness and are not committing to modelling because people see vitiligo or albinism as a trend. I argue that like Harlow, Rametsi is aware of the perils of being considered a trend. Rametsi is not concerned with popularity (regardless of currently being popular) for flaunting her natural self. She is rather passionate about how she chooses to represent herself and vitiligo positively due to her visibility creating community upliftment (*Afternoon Express* 2015: 1).

¹⁶ Creative collaborations involve a selected team of artists, photographers, models, and designers where all their creativity is expressed and shared freely. Collaborations usually benefit the team to promote each other's work and requires not payment fees. Some collaborations can include payment or free products in return of marketing or promoting a brands product especially through social networking platforms.

¹⁷ A brand ambassador is also known as the face of a brand or a promotional model. Ambassadors have a level of influence which the brands target market or audience has a liking for (Steenkamp 2018).

Figure 35: Instagram posts of Boitumelo Rametsi _2

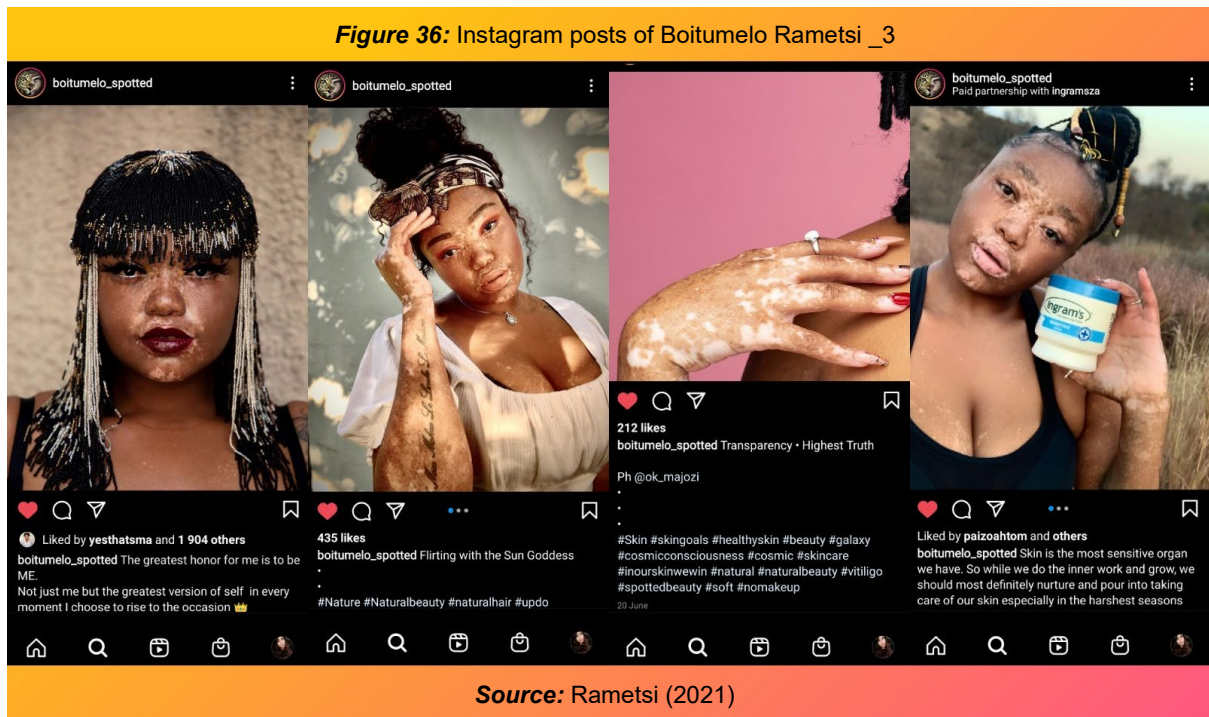


Source: Rametsi (2021)

In Figure 35 she says, “A model has a role to play. My body has a language, and it speaks like a [rose emoticon] with thorns #MoreRoleModels.” This shows how she considers the importance of being a role model. It also sets the tone for how she depicts the type of model she perceives herself to be and specialises her work to her unique body positive experiences as a visual storyteller to support inclusivity. Body positivity is a movement that emerged around 2012 and was highlighted through social media. Lazuka *et al.* (2020: 1) note that “body positivity challenges the unrealistic standards of beauty present in the media by the promotion and acceptance of diverse body sizes and appearances.” A focal theme surrounding the Instagram posts of Rametsi is therefore body positivity through visual storytelling and another theme is the beauty of inclusivity and diversity.

Seen on the right in Figure 35, are two posts where Rametsi includes emerging models who also have vitiligo lesions. In the caption she writes “Starseeds, if stars fell from the sky this is what they’d look like.” According to Sarfarazi (2019) starseeds are ascended beings, created external of earthly dimensions yet incarnated for a higher purpose, namely, to benefit humanity. The post showcases a black and white portrait that highlights the vitiligo lesions of her body including the star tattoo, to imitate a constellation of stars. Rametsi and the other models featured in this post believe their positive representations are beneficial to humanity or individuals who can relate to their experiences. Fashion is often accused of adapting and treating serious issues as frivolous and for the benefit of fashion (Neumann 2011; Blumer

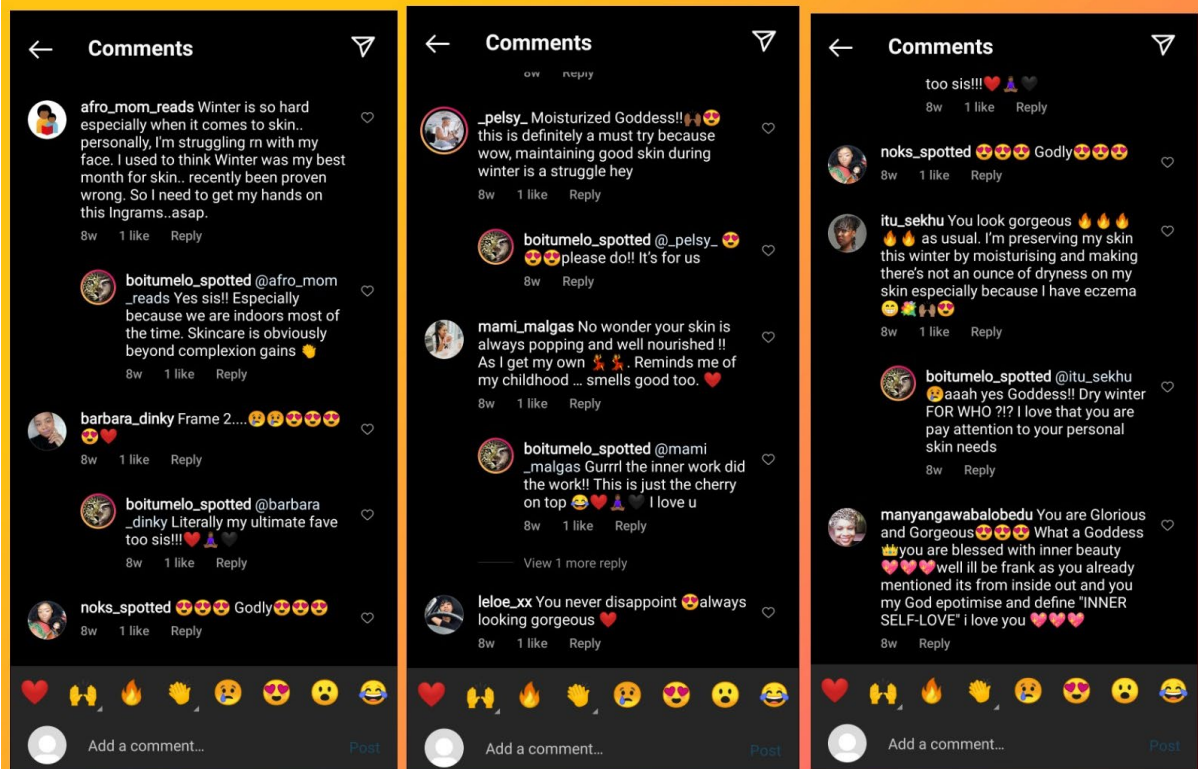
1969). I therefore argue that individuals can often easily confuse various movements for being a trend while they may have served own purposes or ideologies.



I interpret the collated screenshots of the posts above (in Figure 36) as indicative of Rametsi's acceptance of and admiration for the evolving versions of herself as a model with vitiligo. This is evident as she zooms into her skin and shows that she does not conceal the patches with makeup as she previously attempted to. I link this to self-care and visual storytelling of body positivity.

Hemby and Forney (2020: 1) discuss the rise of the 'self-care' movement which resulted in a decline in the use of makeup which initially contributed significantly to the financial success skincare brands. They found that cosmetic brands saw a 55% decrease in purchases from 2019 to 2020. One of the reasons for this decline was Covid-19 which brought about a change in lifestyle and led to a change in testing makeup colour variations in-store, including a decline in face-to-face consumer interaction with beauty products (Hemby and Forney 2020). Covid-19 and the practice of working from home has meant a decline in the use of make-up, and in the context of vitiligo it has meant exposing one's lesions. Women such as Rametsi have been seen to embrace their natural skin beauty. Like Winne Harlow and Stephen Cone, Rametsi accepts her own form of beauty.

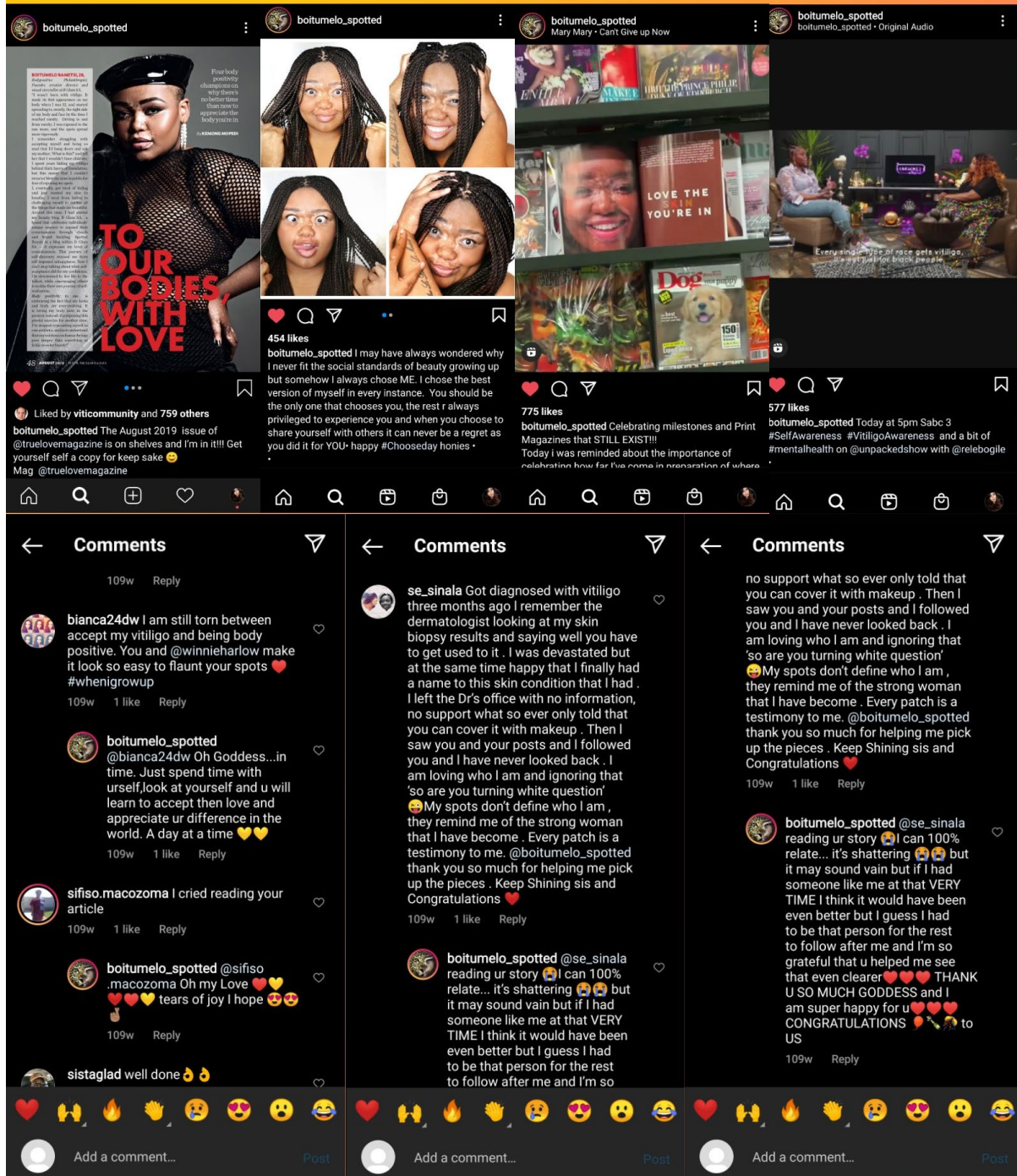
Figure 37: Instagram posts of Boitumelo Rametsi _4



Source: Rametsi (2021)

Responding to a comment (Figure 37), Rametsi writes, “skincare is obviously beyond [gaining] complexion” which speaks to how individuals admire her skin through a different perspective and that there is a shift from aiming to look flawless, to highlighting the real beauty of one’s skin. Skincare which I link to self-care, is a call to physically and mentally build one’s self-esteem which links with the idea of inclusivity. Rametsi has not only inspired individuals with vitiligo, as seen in Figure 37 where part of a comment reads “I have eczema.” Hemby and Forney (2020) state that women want beauty products that can best resolve their skincare problems or conditions. I argue that natural beauty should be understood as women and men not feeling obligated to alter their appearances according to popular beauty standards, and therefore do not have to conceal ‘imperfections’. Figure 37 showcases the type of social commentary surrounding the promotional work and representation of these models. In these posts it is evident that skincare has become significant.

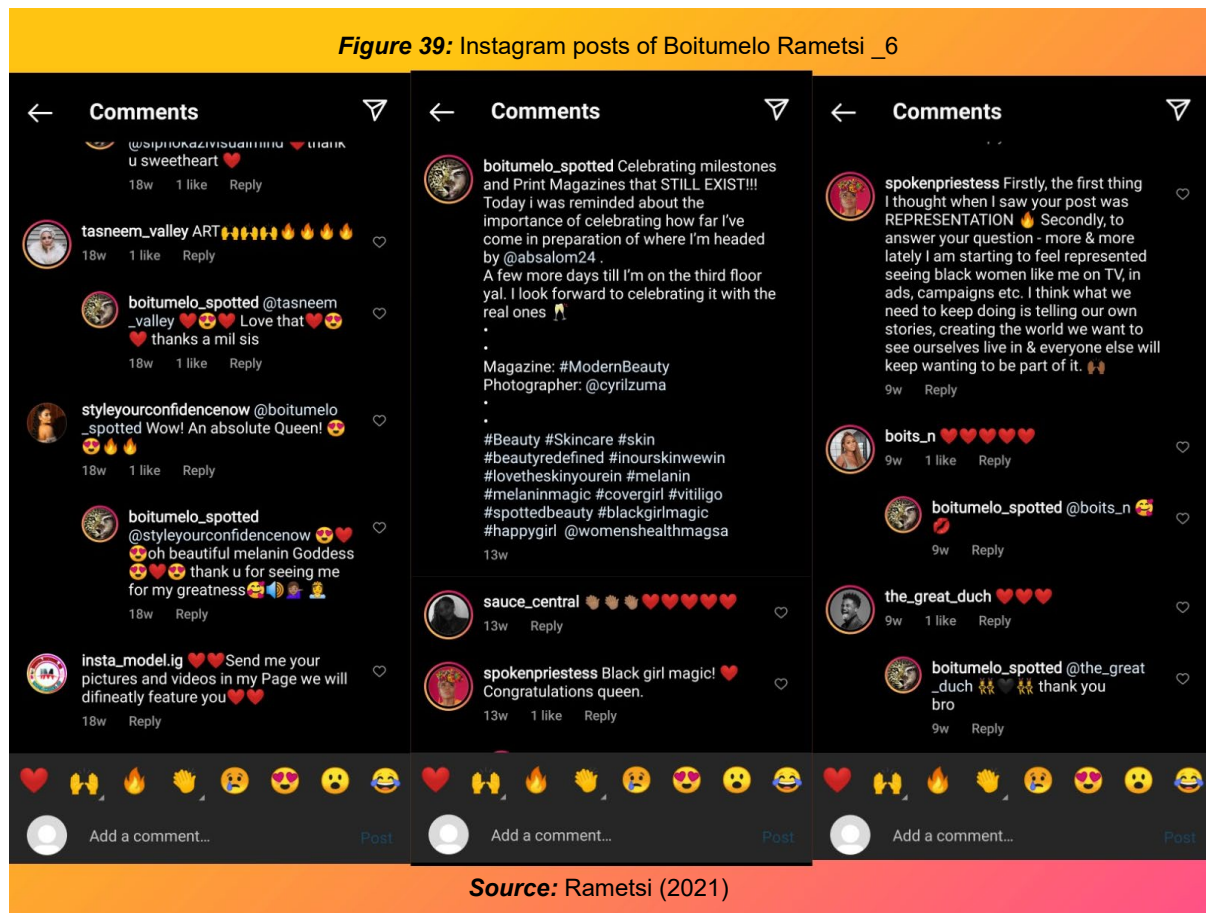
Figure 38: Instagram posts of Boitumelo Rametsi _5



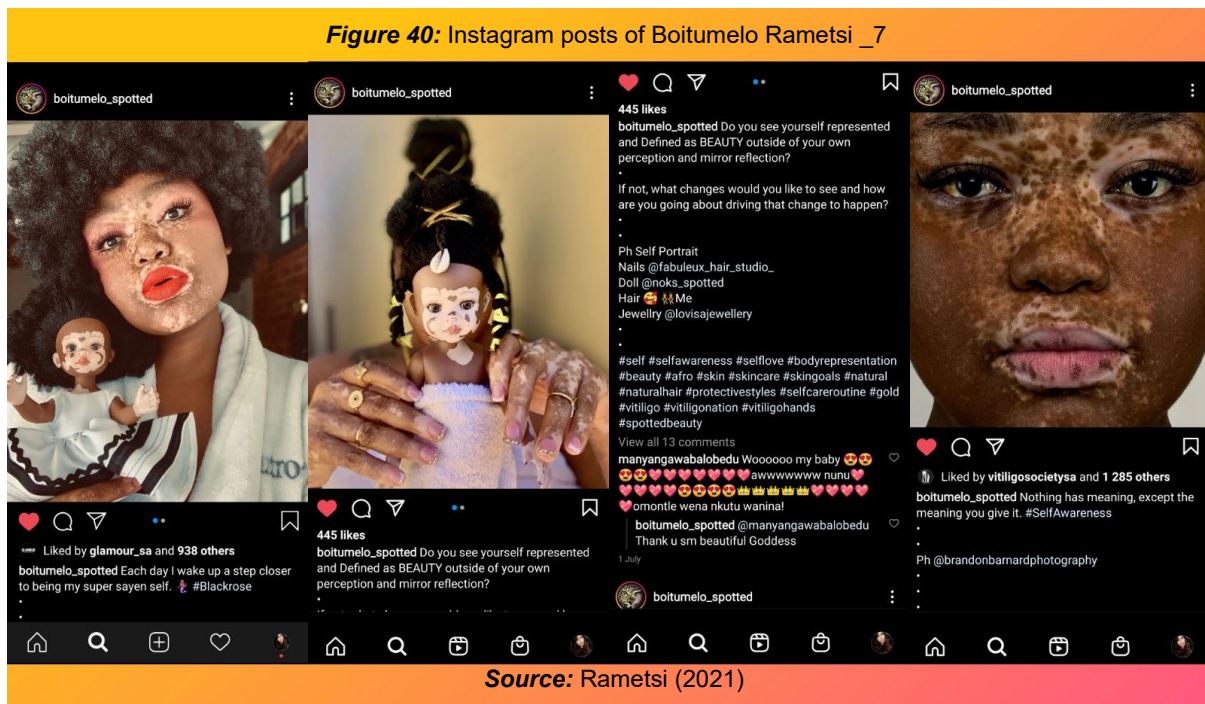
Source: Rametsi (2021)

Once again, Rametsi is captured promoting body positivity as seen in Figure 38s magazine article titled, "[t]o our bodies with love." Figure 38 shows some of the other ways in which Boitumelo Rametsi has publicly expressed herself—from magazine publications to talk shows. "I may have always wondered why I never fit the social standards of beauty growing up but somehow I always choose ME." By also promoting the beauty of self-love in her work, Rametsi receives positive comments from her followers for helping them to "love the skin [they are] in."

Figure 38 shows how she expands and challenges notions of beauty in her work and guides other individuals to do so likewise.



The first Instagram post in Figure 39 shows that her representations also promote her modelling career since she receives requests to model. An individual commented, “[f]irstly the first thing I thought when I saw your post was REPRESENTATION. Secondly to answer your question – more and more lately I am starting to feel represented seeing black women like me on TV, in ads, campaigns etc.” Generally, representation can expand in meaning, often based on images and text (Beltran 2018: 97). Although the individual specified ‘black women’ this does not mean that vitiligo presents only in one type of race as seen in the last video post of Figure 38, where Rametsi highlights the fact that vitiligo can appear in any individual regardless of race or colour. The comment continues: “I think what we need to keep doing is telling our own stories, creating the world we want to see ourselves live in and everyone else will keep wanting to be part of it.” As we continue with Boitumelo’s posters, it becomes evident that the same themes are highlighted in different ways (Figure 40).



Source: Rametsi (2021)

Figure 40 depicts the notion of #SelfAwareness and again questions definitions of beauty. However, there were not many comments that answered the question asked by Rametsi in her post. Nonetheless, she persisted in delivering posts that showcase the natural beauty of her spotted. She captions: “[n]othing has meaning, except the meaning you give it.” She is seen to incorporate a doll with vitiligo and other products made to raise awareness. Dolls with vitiligo have been introduced in South Africa to educate younger individuals about inclusivity and diversity in our societies (Masombuka 2018: para. 1 line 1). Concerning the lack of diversity in dolls, two women, Caroline Hlahla and Khulile Vilakazi-Ofosu, started a business in 2016 to create dolls embracing the spectrum of children in South Africa (Hlangani and Mamacos 2019: para. 1 line 1).



Figure 41: Ndanaka doll with vitiligo, proudly made in South Africa

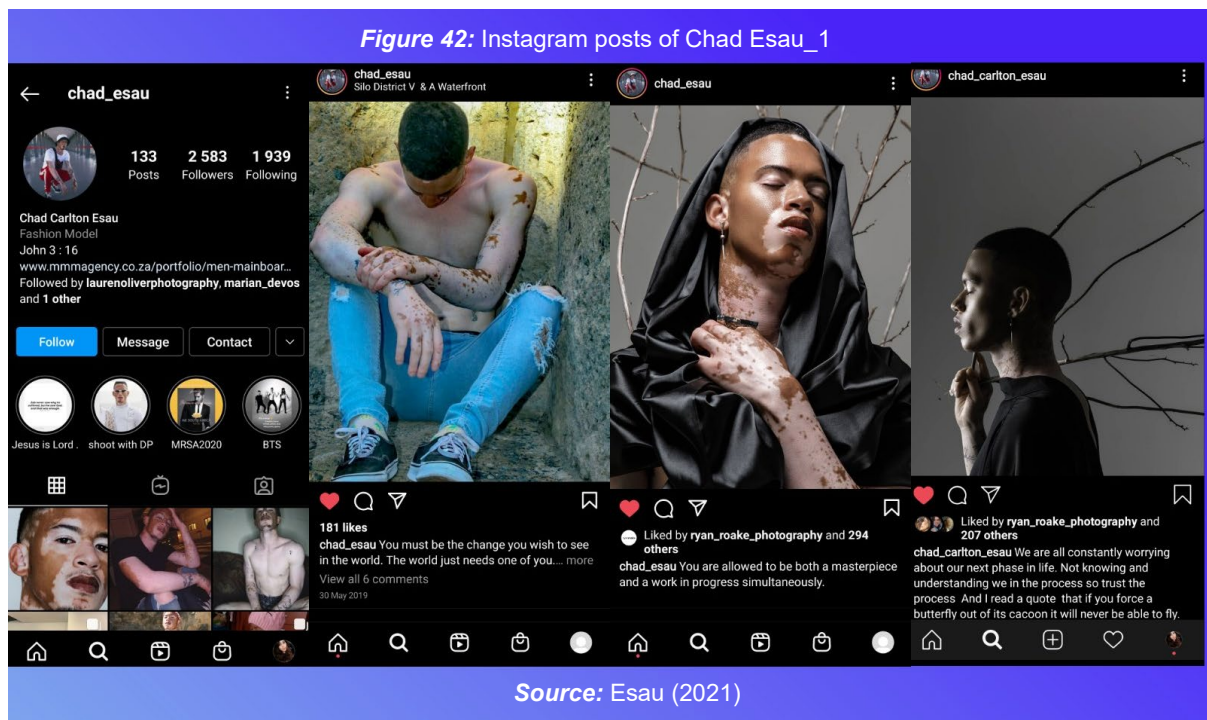
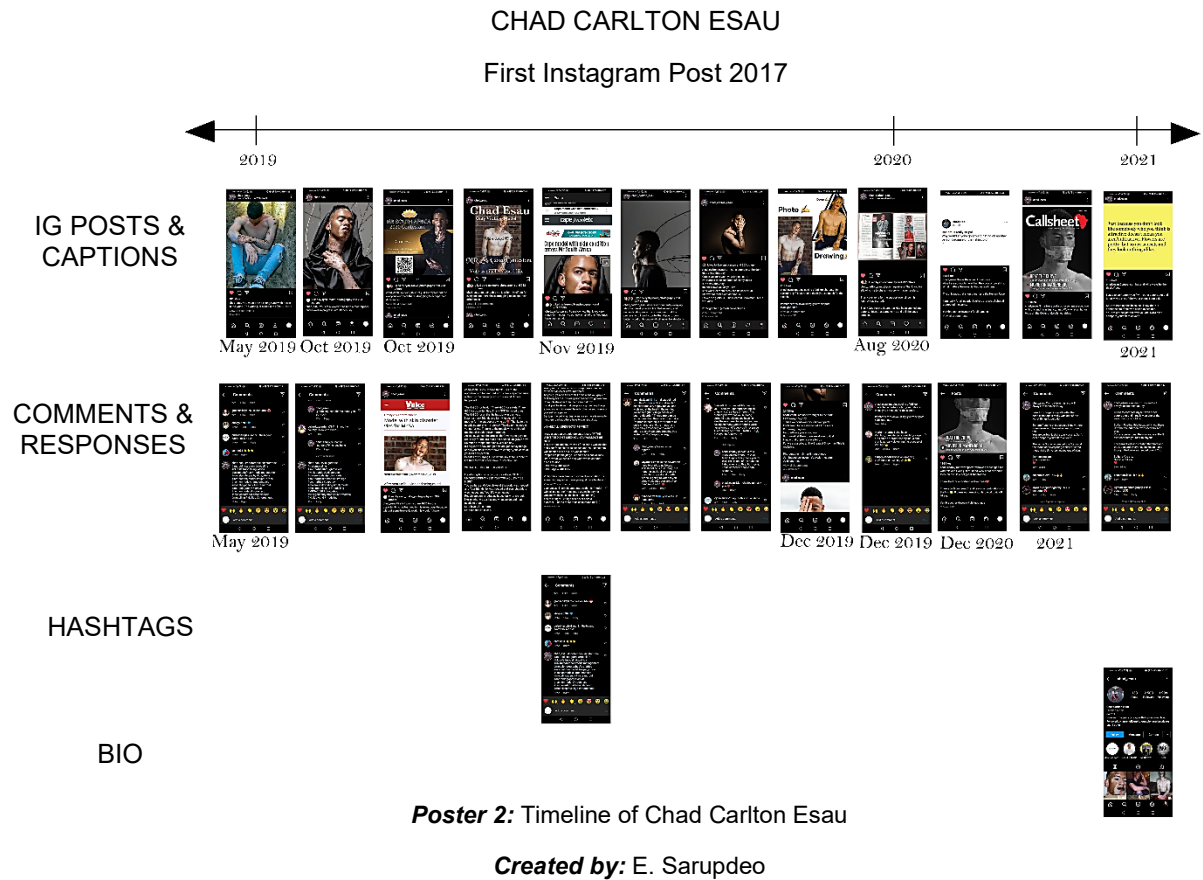
Source: Hlangani and Mamacos (2019)

Figure 41 shows a doll with vitiligo were ‘Ndanaka’ meaning ‘I am beautiful’ in Shona. Apart from the appearance of beauty, the consideration of clothing silhouette, body shape and

design detailing of the skin itself, further adds to the perception of beauty (Hlangani and Mamacos 2019: para. 3 line 3). The South African doll Ndanaka has existed for several years and embraces inclusivity and diversity through a different form to raise awareness of self-love (Wagner 2018).

Boitumelo Rametsi's Instagram posts exude a body positivity theme, and she uses Ndanaka to promote the body positive, inclusivity, and diversity beauty purposes. As a designer, I consider how fashion can be used as a tool for representation and communication and make use of this in the creation of my artefacts.

3.4.2 Chad Carlton Esau



“Inside us lies a personality that no one else has, you are so much more than what you look like on the outside” – Chad Esau (beautiful news 2020)

The quote above by Chad Esau in comes from the publication, Beautiful News (2020). I find this quote to encapsulate Esau’s philosophy in his Instagram posts. He sees the interrelations and links between the internal and external body of the human being. This helps to visualise my analysis of Esau’s Instagram page under the theme of internal and external beauty.

In Esau’s teenage years, he was continuously bullied and faced the title of ‘ugly’ numerous times until he felt hopeless, lacked self-confidence, and isolated (Valentine 2019: para. 1 line 1). His career evolved from being a computer technician student to working in a coffee shop (Mr SA hopeful shining a light on vitiligo 2020: para. 2 line 1). To his surprise whilst working his shift at the shop, he was randomly scouted by a modelling agency (Mr SA hopeful shining a light on vitiligo 2020: para. 2 line 1).

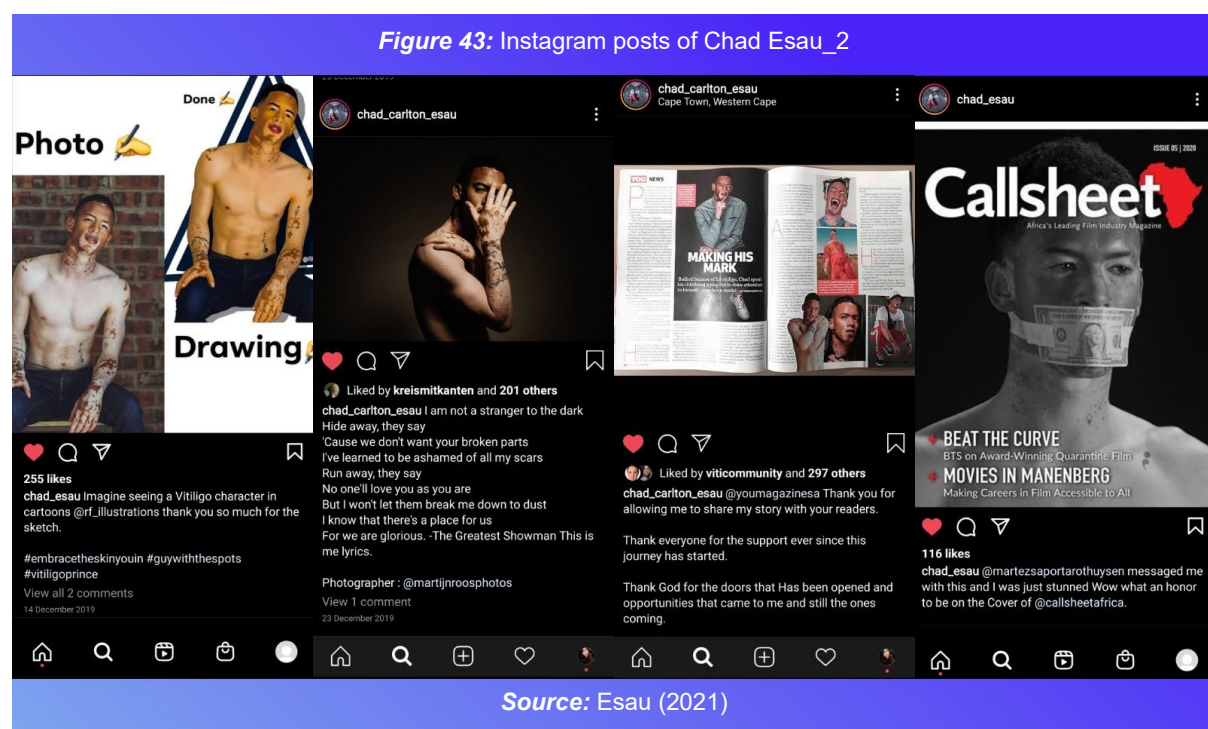
Esau’s Instagram posts from 2019 to 2021 display both external and internal beauty. I believe one needs to recognize the difference between internal and external beauty and its relationship to a work of art or any object to understand beauty. External beauty, either natural or created, is evident through sight and touch. It is both tangible and intangible. For example, Esau’s external beauty would be tangible in his experience when model photoshoots take place. In this way he is able to expose his external beauty, the touch of the garments on his skin, and feelings in the moment. We as the viewers perceive his vision of representation, intangibly.

Gilmore (2005: 147), posits that internal beauty belongs closely to the meaning of a work or object and how it is portrayed. The internal therefore becomes a true reflection of Esau’s expressed emotions through his body language and captions. *Figure 42* encapsulates his form of visual representation through photoshoots, and he encourage individuals to become the first step of change by using a quote by Mahatma Gandhi: “you must be the change you wish to see in the world” (Gandhi 1913 and Lorrance 1974: 85). Esau’s Instagram posts feature modes of semiotic resources such as captions and photographs, which I interpret as his use of semiotic resources to express himself. I find the tone of his expression to be emotive.

The idea of being emotive is connected to the internal, which is expressed through descriptive words and choice of photographic body language. Feng and O’Halloran (2012) use a social semiotic approach to examine the meaning of emotion portrayed and represented through visual imagery. These emotive behaviours and semiotic resources are called indexes or icons of indexes; the sign taken into consideration of what is being represented (Niekerk 2018).

Symbolic signs of emotion embody an iconic representation (Feng and O'Halloran 2012). Non-verbal emotive behaviours in images are made up of the facial expressions, body language and orientation. For example, in my analysis of Esau's photograph (*Figure 42*) seated with his head faced to the ground depicts his vulnerability risking his first step of change by exposing his vitiligo lesions on Instagram. After the photograph was posted on Instagram, Esau proceeded to share content of the modelling opportunities that followed this post.

The photograph posted on the extreme right of *Figure 42*, shows a side profile of Esau holding a bare leaved branch which he captions about how "we are all constantly worrying about our next phase in life." He uses the evolution of human life to resonate with the idea of a butterfly's evolution of life (metamorphosis), by highlighting that we need to trust the process. On the external front I interpret the idea of metamorphosis to be symbolic of Esau's career development as he made his mark in big name media publications and participation in fashion platforms (see *Figure 43, 44 and Poster 2*). Internally, his photograph depicts self-reflection, representation, and a positive introspection dealing with his skin's evolution.

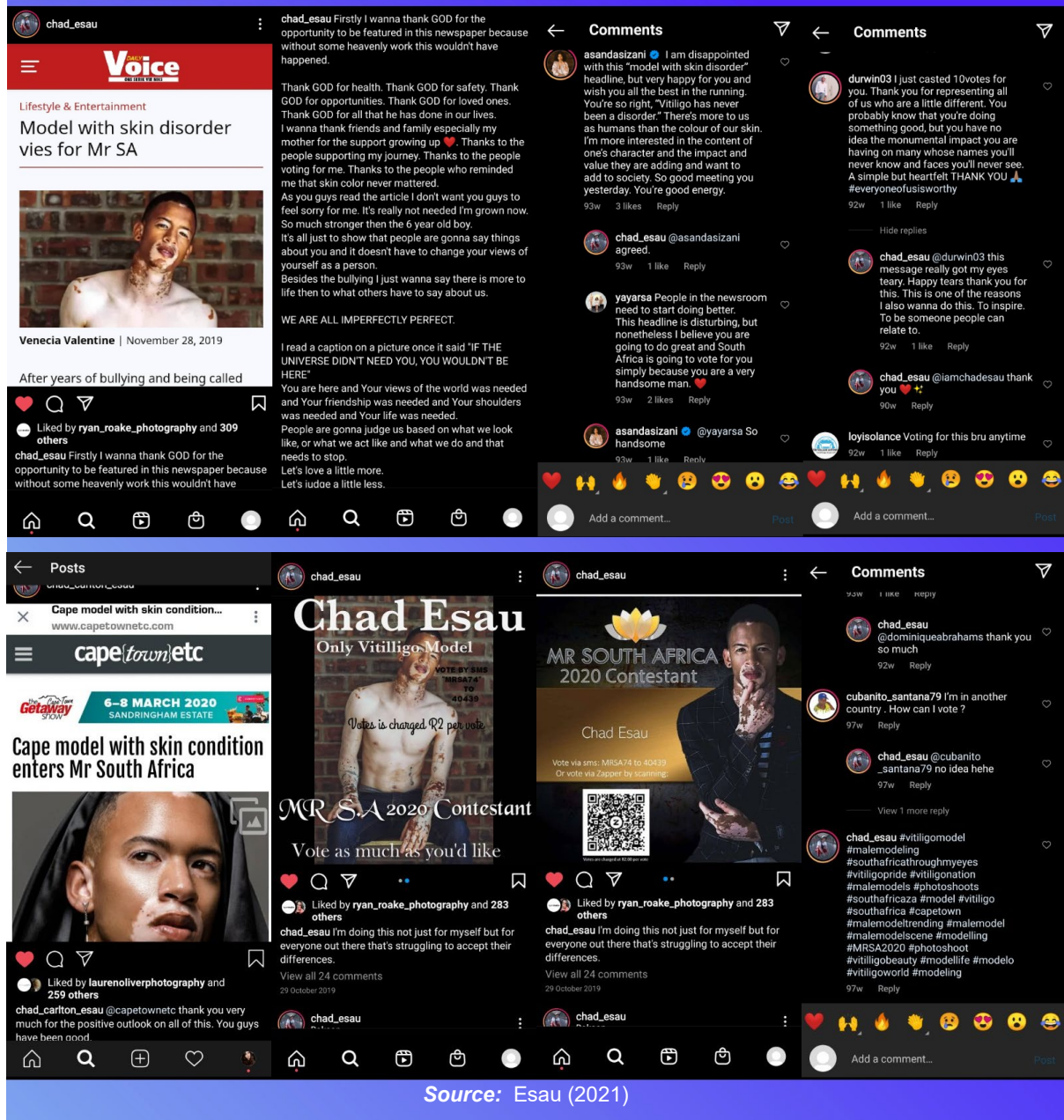


Representation is more complex than surface appearance. To make sense of the semiotics of an object equal understanding the representation constructed to create or be perceived through an object (Rettberg 2017). As Rettberg (2017: 4) states, "a representation cannot mirror reality because we all have different experiences and interpretations of 'reality'". Therefore, self-representation is a constructed expression through the experience of one's

own reality and creates an avenue for discourse for others of a similar reality to co-create meanings and feel heard and confident to join movements or respective organisations. I read Esau's display of imagery in *Figures 42 and 43* as him challenging the norms of beauty after vitiligo had drawn the wrong attention towards his appearance for many years (Valentine 2019). In Esau's Instagram posts, there is a connection to modelling through his poses and body language which results in emotionally expressive content. Esau's representation merges his emotions of self and journey of being a South African fashion model with vitiligo.

The far left of *Figure 43* shows an illustration of Chad Esau designed by one of his Instagram followers. Esau posted this work to communicate representation through imagining seeing a "vitiligo character in cartoons." In addition to this post, Esau adds lyrics "I've learned to be ashamed of all my scars" taken from the song *This is me* of the movie *The Greatest Showman* (2017). Adding the lyrics enhances the emotive tone of his expression to the post. This line is written in the past tense which may indicate Esau's experience and his urging that the purpose of sharing his vitiligo journey is not for people to feel sorry for him. He shares more lyrics from the song such as "I won't let them break me down to dust, I know that there's a place for us, for we are glorious." I interpret these lyrics as Esau's expressing a sense of determination to represent himself and others who have experienced a similar journey. This is in support of inclusivity and highlighting the perception of all as beauties. The photograph captures a dark background with the lighting effect focused onto him, however, the positioning of his hand across his face creates less focus on himself and more around shedding light on his skin lesions. Chad Esau is seen to be represented in *YOU Magazine* in a feature story and *Callsheet Africa's leading film industry magazine* as the cover model. Current media publications in magazines such as *YOU* and *Callsheet Africa* are perceived to highlight models with vitiligo in support and to bring about positive awareness towards the representations of the skin condition.

Figure 44: Instagram posts of Chad Esau_3

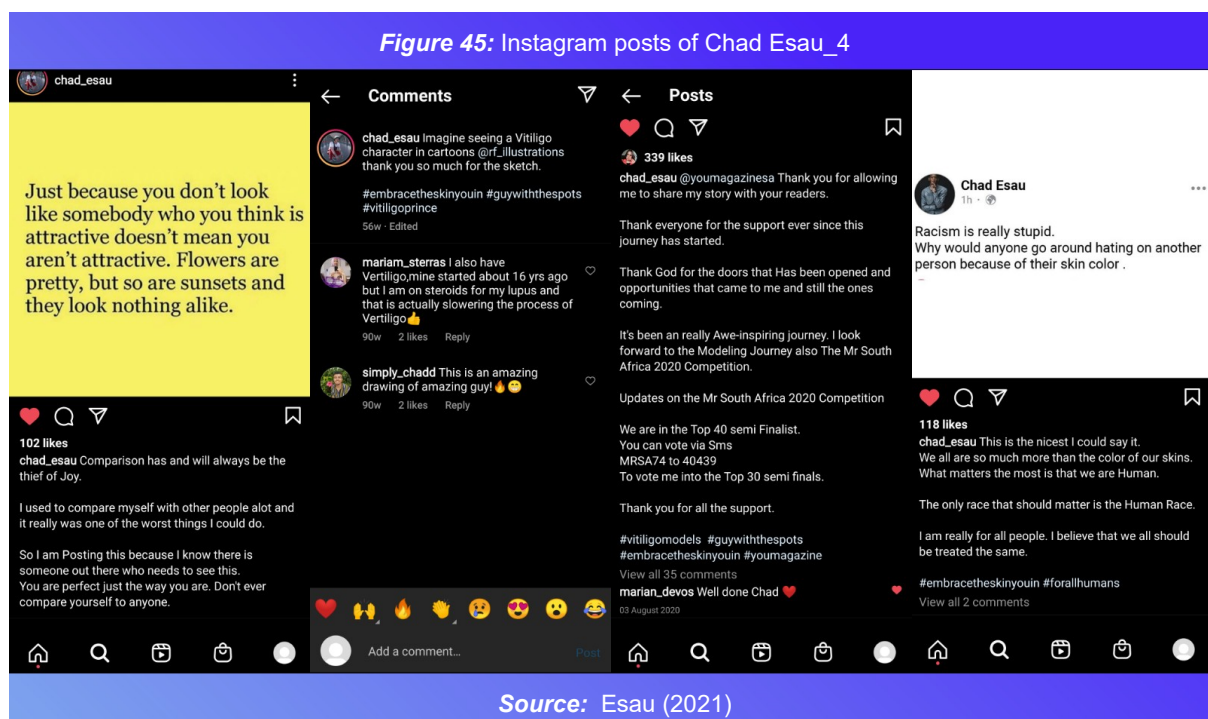


Source: Esau (2021)

Social media platforms such as Instagram link a huge public network of individuals who view posts that are willingly shared. Esau, for example, was in the running for the *Mr South Africa*¹⁸ title 2020 and becoming an ambassador for the '*BraveHeart*' organisation to encourage anti-bullying. He aimed to use these platforms to help others who are experiencing the same difficulties and challenges (Role model 2020: 14). In *Figure 44*, Esau writes "[t]hanks to the people who reminded [him] that skin colour never mattered" especially to his supporters who voted for him. However, Everhart (2011) studies the effects that unrealistic beauty standards

¹⁸ Like most beauty pageants such as *Miss South Africa*, *Miss World* and *Miss Universe* are known to include female models. Mr. South Africa likewise, is a pageantry platform for male models and they aspire participants that have instilled specific values required to win the title to inspire change.

in pageantry have on participants, leading to body dissatisfaction. Similar to fashion modelling, it takes great courage to participate in beauty pageantry. While it is understood that modelling and pageantry are different modelling genres, they share the most basic similarity like the use of fashion worn by models. Everhart's (2011: 23) study shows that female participants in American pageants are more self-conscious and have an increased level of depression, and while this may be the case these models also acquire greater self-esteem and confidence compared to non-participants. Furthermore, Everhart (2011: 10) states that social comparison may lead to internalising expectations of realities by questioning one's own self-worth in order to evaluate reasons for success. In recent times I think there has been a change in social comparison based on the cases of South African models with vitiligo, whose manner of multimodal communicating on social media is something I interpret as initiating a discourse on changing and expanding notions of beauty.



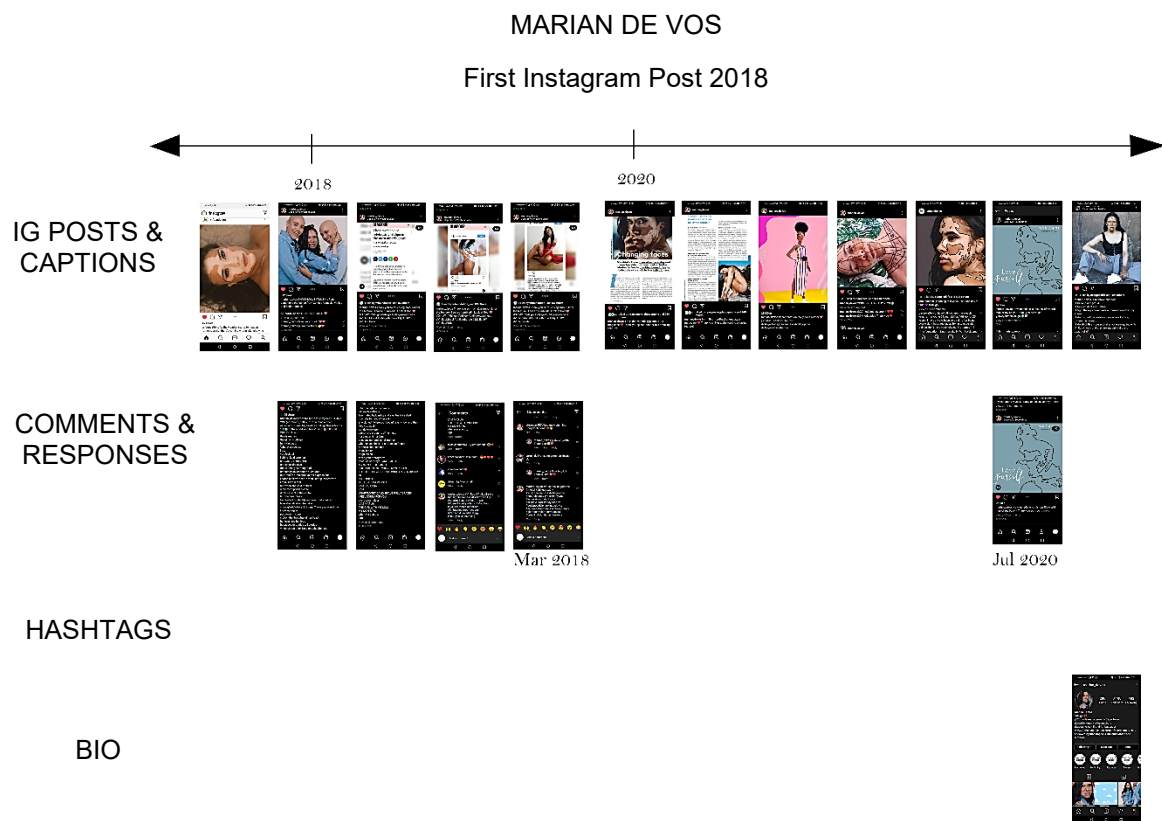
As has been discussed, hashtags are the modes that individuals use to emphasise points expressed through imagery. Potter (2018) uses a group called the Sartists to analyse Instagram hashtags and the number of times a particular hashtag has been used on.¹⁹ The study is informative for my own since South African models with vitiligo repetitively use hashtags about vitiligo. I argue that repetitive use of a hashtag is meant to continually

¹⁹ The Sartists are a group of multidisciplinary creatives who use contemporary 'Zuluness' in their work and perceive themselves as "storytellers through style" (Potter 2018).

communicate and inscribe a message about their contextual understanding of beauty. For example, #sartists or the name of collections like #blackexcellence was used in Potter's (2018) study to describe ways of grouping, organising, searching and making data visible on social media. Esau repetitively shares three hashtags, namely #embracetheskinyouin, #guywiththespots and #vitiligoprince as noticed in the Instagram posts of *Figures 43* and *45*.

It is understood that representations rarely attract a good number of audiences on a social media platform like Instagram (Rettberg 2011: 4). Meaning that people viewing posts on Instagram are least likely to gravitate their personal interest in viewing toward sombre matters and therefore some representations go unnoticed. However, for Esau, the achievements of his modelling experiences served as motivation to represent himself and his skin condition. In *Figure 45* we can see his perspective on comparisons and questioning racism. There is nothing like real emotion to evoke in-depth meanings. Chad Esau therefore is seen to display selective images from photoshoots and more than externally represents his purpose to the eye of the viewer. He uses his work experiences as a fashion model to interpret his internal feelings, as an expressive way to create additional meaning. His choice of text descriptions and hashtags in the Instagram captions become reflections of internal beauty through publicly shared content. Esau's opportunities allowed him to evolve as a model and his experiences which led him to expose his skin multiple times transforming his perception of himself and the way he intends to represent himself.

3.4.3 Marian De Vos



Poster 3: Timeline of Marian De Vos

Created by: E. Sarupdeo



Marian De Vos is originally from Cape Town where she studied fashion design. In 2014, she was recognised through her participation in the reality-competition television series *Survivor South Africa* for her competitiveness to become the ultimate survivor (TVSA 2022). According to *News24* (2022) she was unfortunately eliminated sooner than she expected. In the time of De Vos's participation, she did not yet have vitiligo, which developed after the *Survivor*²⁰ show. Due to fact that phones were excluded during the competition, Marian De Vos's Instagram page does not feature any photographs of that time and with no photographs of herself without vitiligo. Recently, De Vos announced a comeback, now with vitiligo, in the new season of *Survivor South Africa, Return of the Outcasts*, where she hopes to embrace her true survivor spirit and strength (De Vos 2022).

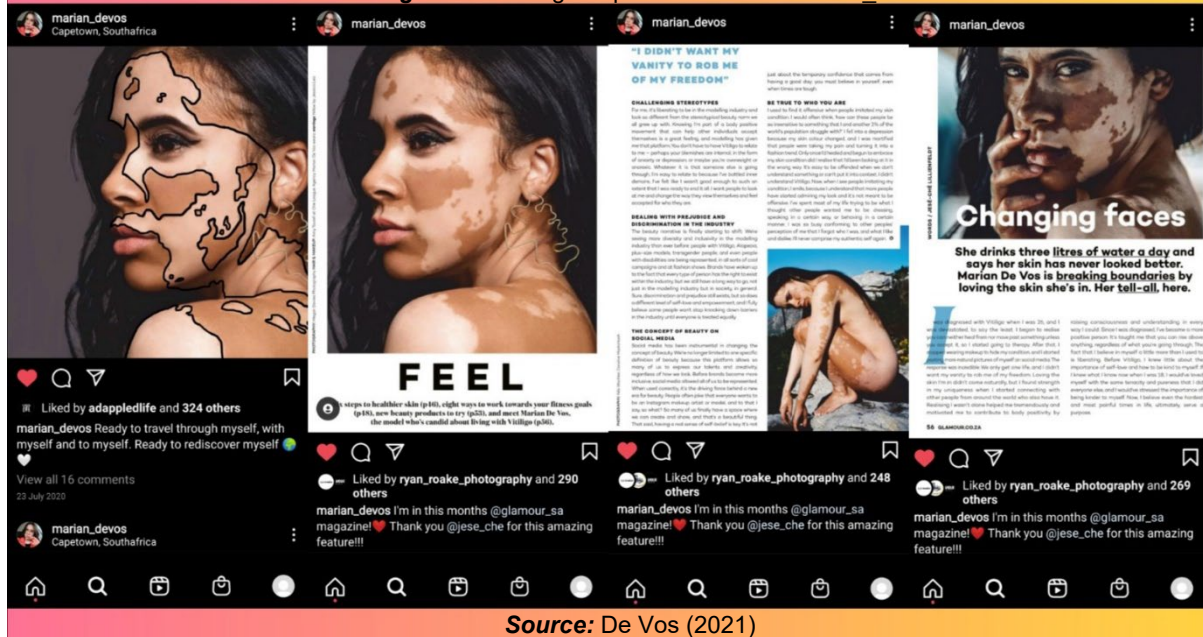
Moreover, her interest in fashion led her to fashion modelling to embrace her change and skin condition. I categorise De Vos's Instagram posts as a fashion model with vitiligo since her Instagram page displays herself as a model with a skin condition and not a fashion designer.

The extreme left image of *Figure 46* shows De Vos and two other women with a caption that honours all women (including herself) as BRAVE WOMEN. The caption is followed by the text BE YOUR OWN KIND OF BEAUTIFUL. This photograph brings to the fore different health conditions in a single photograph, namely cancer, alopecia, endometriosis, and vitiligo. The three women are captured embracing in a pose which communicates individuals' closeness. The closeness in embracing each other also challenges the misconception that vitiligo is contagious through skin to skin contact or assuming that individuals with vitiligo are unhygienic because of their contrasting lesions. These misconceptions are also discussed by Eram (2017). De Vos's post also captures the theme of inclusivity and diversity.

De Vos's Instagram page, much like the South African fashion models analysed in this study, include content of their participation in television talk shows and magazine articles where they were interviewed. In the case of De Vos, she includes an article by London (2018) whose interviewer describes her as 'empowering' (See Figure 46). De Vos's purpose as seen by both the subject and London (2018) is to not only represent herself but other individuals too. She depicts beauty as having no skin tone and by accepting yourself with your 'imperfections' you make the first step to being inclusive.

²⁰ *Survivor South Africa* is a reality-competition TV show where participants are grouped to fend for themselves in isolation with zero provided necessities. They join in teams for challenges to compete against each other. Eliminations take place within the losing teams until there is an ultimate winner titled the Survivor for that season.

Figure 47: Instagram posts of Marian De Vos_2



Source: De Vos (2021)

I compliment my multimodal analysis with a *Glamour* magazine article in which fashion journalist Lillienfeldt (2020) interviewed De Vos.

Figure 47 displays two face shots of Devos. The second is natural with no visible enhancement while the first is overlaid with black lines that emphasise the lesions on De Vos's face, neck, and shoulder. I view these black lines as a symbolic representation of De Vos's lesions as globe maps and as her mapping her skin. The enhanced image captures the evolution of her skin lesions which is also an expression of her journey. In the interview with Lillienfeldt (2020: 1), De Vos speaks about challenging stereotypes by acknowledging difference, and states that she joined the body positive movement to help change the narrative for people, beyond vitiligo. In the interview, De Vos states:

The beauty narrative is finally starting to shift. We're seeing more diversity and inclusivity in the modelling industry than ever before: people with Vitiligo, Alopecia, plus-size models, transgender people, and even people with disabilities are being represented, in all sorts of cool campaigns and at fashion shows. Brands have woken up to the fact that every type of person has the right to exist within the industry; but we still have a long way to go, not just in the modelling industry but in society, in general. Sure, discrimination and prejudice still exist, but so does a different level of self-love and empowerment, and I fully believe some people won't stop knocking down barriers in the industry until everyone is treated equally (Lillienfeldt 2020: 1).

Marian De Vos shows her understanding of the fashion industry. The evolution of her skin evolved with the shift of the beauty narrative she talks about. She is witnessing a shift as the industry gradually becomes more diverse and inclusive. In the same interview, De Vos also discusses beauty and representation in social media and continues to align beauty and representation with the idea of being inclusive and diverse:

Social media has been instrumental in changing the concept of beauty. We're no longer limited to one specific definition of beauty because this platform allows so many of us to express our talents and creativity, regardless of how we look. Before brands became more inclusive, social media allowed all of us to be represented. When used correctly, it's the driving force behind a new era for beauty. People often joke that everyone wants to be an Instagram makeup artist or model, and to that I say, so what? So many of us finally have a space where we can create and share, and that's a beautiful thing. That said, having a real sense of self-belief is key. It's not just about the temporary confidence that comes from having a good day; you must believe in yourself, even when times are tough (Lillienfeldt 2020: 1).

Through her journey she has maintained a resilient spirit towards life. De Vos specifies Instagram as a platform to freely communicate, create and share diverse beauties, to challenge stereotypes, beauty norms, and discrimination, as well as explore perceptions and rediscover her true self and interactions with individuals. These are prominent themes of this study. De Vos's statement below shows the idea of challenging and expanding the notions of beauty in an inclusive and diverse environment. She also raises the point that this study has made, that is that the prominence and use of individuals with vitiligo in the fashion industry as models should not be seen as a trend.

"I used to find it offensive when people imitated my skin condition. I would often think, 'how can these people be so insensitive to something that I and another 1% of the world's population struggle with?' I fell into a depression because my skin colour changed, and I was mortified that people were taking my pain and turning it into a fashion trend. Only once I'd healed and begun to embrace my skin condition did I realise that I'd been looking at it in the wrong way. It's easy to be offended when we don't understand something or can't put it into context. I didn't understand vitiligo. Now, when I see people imitating my condition, I smile, because I understand that more people have started admiring my look and it's not meant to be offensive. I've spent most of my life trying to be what I thought other people wanted me to be: dressing, speaking in a certain way, or behaving in a certain manner. I was so busy conforming to other peoples' perception of me that I forgot who I was, and what I like and dislike. I'll never compromise my authentic self again." (Lillienfeldt 2020: 1).

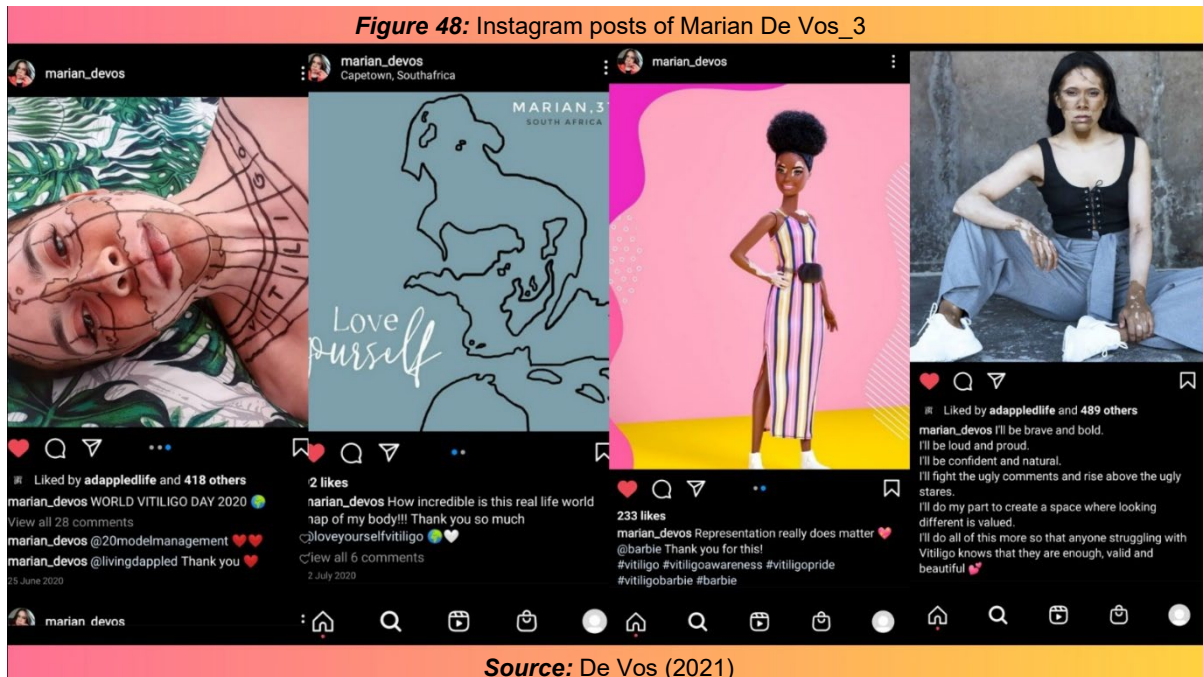
A recent study investigated the impact of advertising campaigns by the European fashion brand, Desigual® (Lapostolle *et al.* 2020). In the campaign, the brand used Winnie Harlow as their model and thus, Lapostolle *et al.* (2020) investigated the number of searches through a *Google Trends* analysis following the advertising campaign. The analysis was examined before and after the display, a period of eight years, with recorded statistics. A frequency of worldwide searches resulted in a scale ranging from 0 to 100 *Google Trends*. The authors were interested to understand the impact that publicly displayed 'rare disease' had on internet searches, and their *Google Trends* search specifically recorded searches that included the term vitiligo, placed before or after the model's name. While the face of Desigual® was Winnie Harlow, she was the first research study associated with models with vitiligo since 2014 (Lapostolle *et al.* 2020). Their study resulted in the following statistics: before 2014 the median

frequency of searches was 54, during the campaign the median frequency of searches increased to 68,5 and after the campaign the median frequency of searches significantly increased to 70.

The intention of mentioning this study is not to take away from De Vos's narrative by including Harlow, but to show how campaigns can be used to trigger interest in vitiligo in order to know more about the condition by using models like Harlow who have the condition. Awareness campaigns become successful by exposing their purpose in these ways. While the condition continues to trend on internet-related searches and more models with the condition continue to emerge, vitiligo should not be labelled or treated as a fashion trend because this is a lived experience for people.

My personal relation to vitiligo both as a researcher and fashion designer is meant to alter the notion of fashion artefacts as fashion trends. The fashion artefacts produced as part of this study are not randomly created to mimic vitiligo. The artefacts include shapes, are sculptural in aesthetic and silhouette and are used to communicate and shed light on vitiligo and how the condition serves as an index of beauty being diverse—a theme found in my analysis of De Vos's Instagram page.

According to Sawyer (2012: 1), this sort of communication through a virtual medium to promote and interact regardless of differences can improve levels of inclusivity. Meeting the demands of what people feel needs to be represented and creating a new cultural environment is called intercultural adaptation. Representations based on vitiligo by South African models can be viewed as multicultural because it does not target a specific gender, colour, or race. We are diverse in nature.

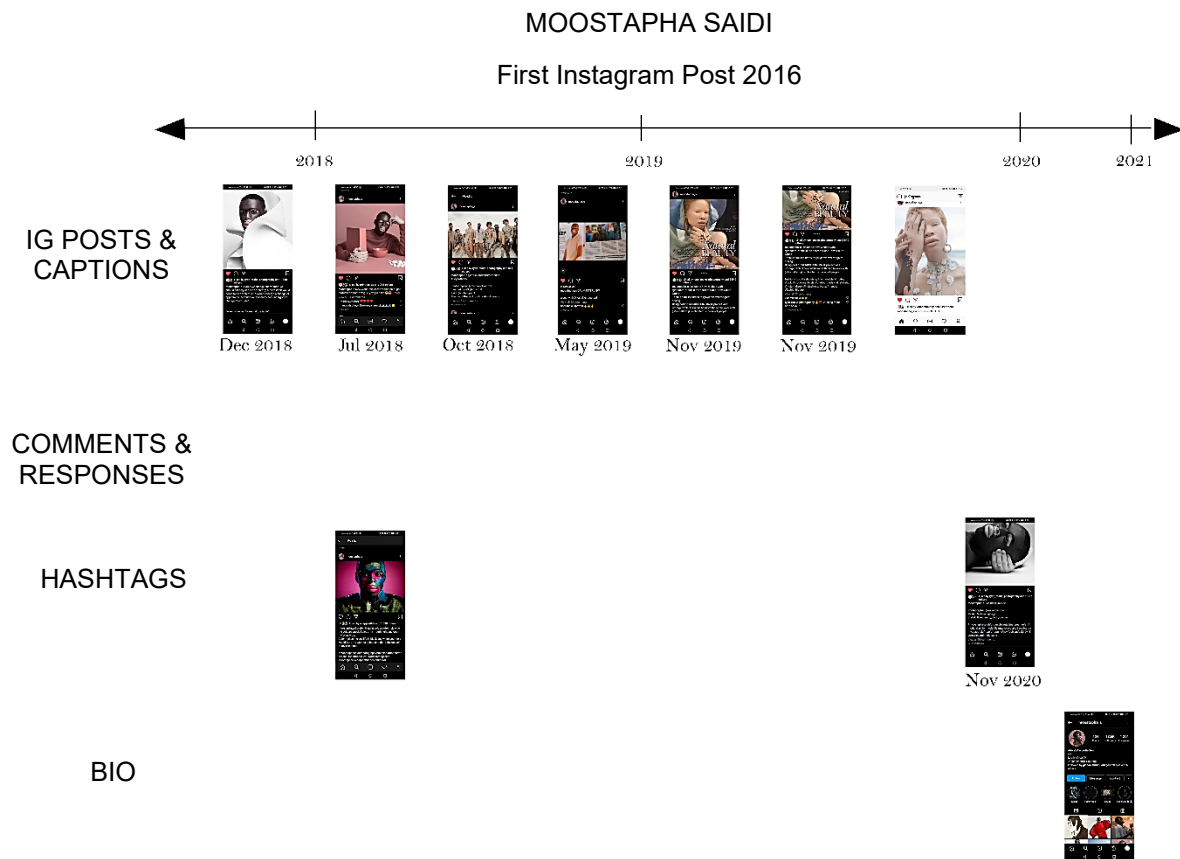


An intercultural adaptation example of creating awareness is evident in *Figure 48*, where Marian De Vos celebrates her skin in the month of June 2020, captioning “WORLD VITILIGO DAY 2020.” The 25th of June has marked *World Vitiligo Day* in the United States of America since 2011 (vrfoundation_ 2022). This is a global campaign initiated by the *Vitiligo Research Foundation*, a non-profit organisation. Organisations such as @vrfoundation_ (Vitiligo Research Foundation), @vitiligosocietysa and @viti_community are active on Instagram and follow models with vitiligo regardless of which country they originate from. In this way, the campaign has reached models with vitiligo in South Africa who have joined to represent themselves and others with vitiligo, creating self-awareness and sharing knowledge of the condition.

Additionally, in 2020 the leading toy brand ‘Mattel’, manufacturer of Barbie dolls launched a Fashionista line that featured Barbie dolls with vitiligo and other disabilities, different genders, races, various hair-lengths, and skin tones (Anon 2020: para. 1 line 2). Mattel’s aim is to promote inclusivity and diversity and to showcase multi-dimensional perspectives of beauty. Historically, models and Barbie dolls have had very similar features, slender bodies, and ‘perfect’ appearances. Today, the ideal perception of beauty and fashion bodies are evolving to include alternative examples of the way beauty should be perceived. A change of beauty ideal standards incorporated in the product design of dolls is used analogously to Instagram accounts, to develop a positive perception and represent individuals with vitiligo and of other health conditions or differences.

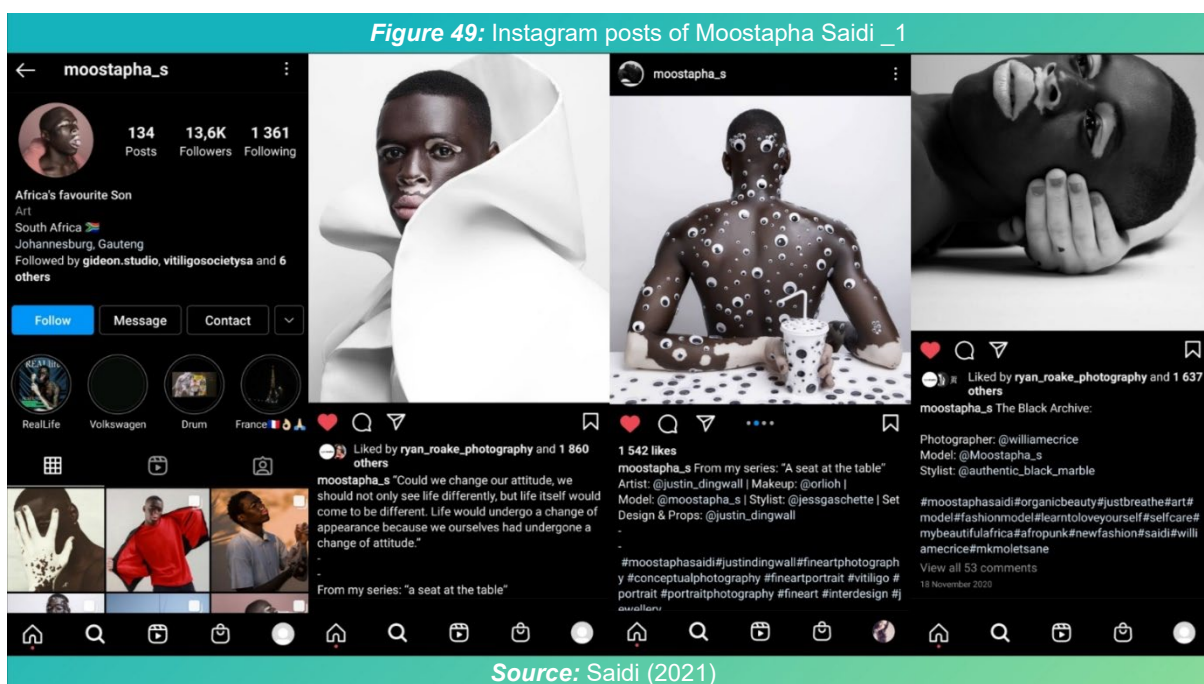
According to a *CNN* report, the prototype Barbie doll with vitiligo, as appears in *Figure 48*, was one of Mattel's most liked Instagram posts in history (Dreier 2020: para. 4 line 2). There are many individuals facing challenges with vitiligo in their daily lives who show appreciation for representations that break the silence. By reposting the Mattel post, De Vos shows her appreciation and also shows the continued journey and importance of representation: "I'll do my part to create a space where looking different is valued. I'll do all of this more so that anyone struggling with Vitiligo knows that they are enough, valid, and beautiful." A signified theme of the beauty of inclusivity continues to emerge as can be seen in this caption. De Vos is also a proponent of change.

3.4.4 Moostapha Saidi



Poster 4: Timeline of Moostapha Saidi

Created by: E. Sarupdeo



“A change of attitude [and] a change in perspective” could be the key to a positive change towards the manifestation of vitiligo (see the second Instagram post caption of *Figure 49*).

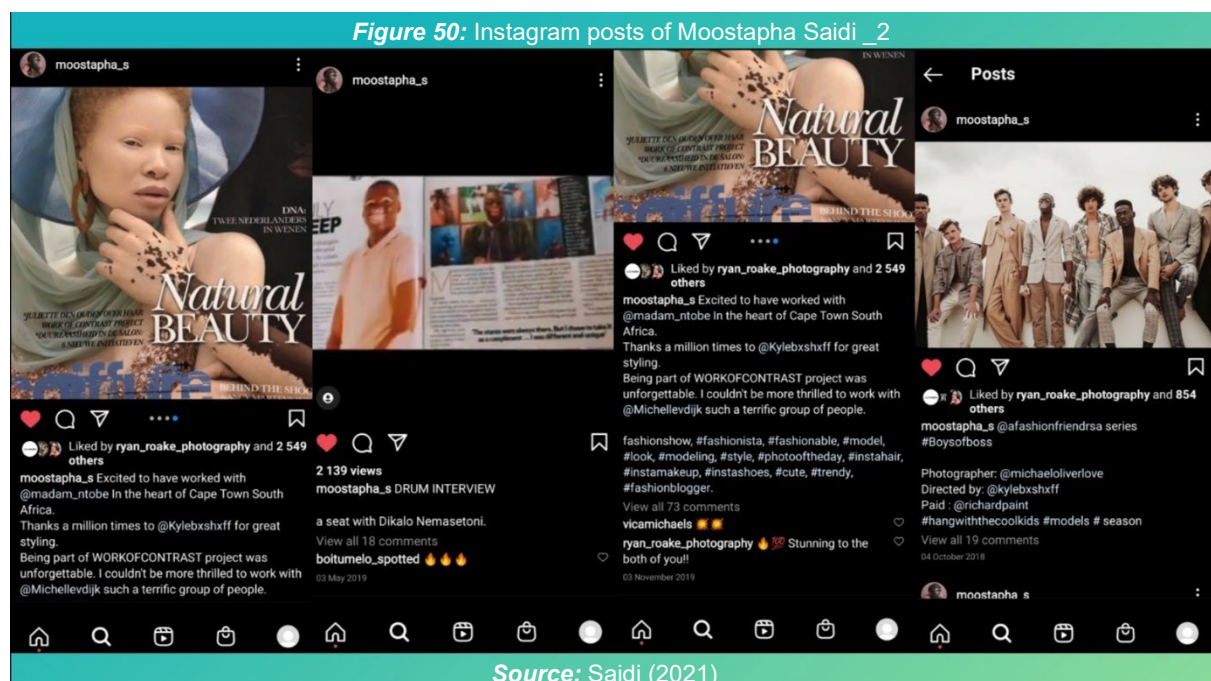
Figure 49 displays the work of Johannesburg-based and Zimbabwean-born fashion model, Moostapha Saidi together with the South African photographer, Justin Dingwall. It was Saidi who initiated the collaboration with Dingwall and curate the photographic direction for the concept. Following this collaboration and due to Dingwall’s impressive visual storytelling, Saidi gained numerous opportunities, one being signed by Boss models, a well-known modelling agency. The work highlights the theme of the gaze by incorporating Saidi’s lived experience into the concept. The photographs in *Figure 49* use creative symbolism and thoughtful placement of eyeballs to comment on the gaze from people who encounter individuals who have vitiligo.

The idea of the gaze is on the awareness of oneself to be able to perceive another individual. As a concept, the gaze is discussed in various disciplines such as critical studies, sociology, and psychoanalytic theories (Eknor 2016, Germov 2015 and Jensen-Clayton 2017). The significant type is oppositional, which involves a psychological system of power, mostly in relation to gender or groups in society. For example, the male gaze was introduced by Laura Mulvey (1973: 808) and involves women observed in a negative manner by the opposite sex. The male becomes the gazer (watcher), and the female is gazed (watched) (Mulvey 1973: 808-809). The female gaze revolves around a similar concept to the male gaze by becoming a response to it and being the spectator by similarly perceiving through a male lens as a female. Gaze is present in our everyday life—whilst walking in shopping malls, as the audience who watches movies, between characters, sexual desires, directors and by political parties. In my analysis, I use the artistic concept by Saidi and Dingwall to explore the idea of gaze in the context of vitiligo.

While I only discuss the idea of the gaze in the context of Saidi, it is assumed that other fashion models with vitiligo and non-modelling individuals with vitiligo have experienced the gaze. According to Geetha and Sarulatha (2017: 5) the theories of the gaze have raised awareness in the literature. This sort of information becomes signs through gathered information and based on interpretation the gaze has usually been perceived as one-sided between genders, as already mentioned. Therefore, Geetha and Sarulatha (2017: 5) question if the gaze is equal in the sense of mutually regarding genders. Vitiligo progression²¹ however is not gender

²¹ Progression or positive is not always referred to as a good term to describe the amelioration of a health condition. This is a fact which I have learnt as a patient, from a doctor. To say one’s own health condition is progressing means that it is actually worsening. Similarly, if referring to an individual who is positive with Covid19, it is not actually a result you would feel positive about. In this way, the medical discipline differs when using such terms and therefore it is best to say “shedding light on vitiligo” than constantly saying positive or vitiligo progression.

specific and neither is the gaze received by individuals with vitiligo. In relation to the purpose of this study, I believe that the gaze is mutually inclusive amongst all genders. The gaze experienced by individuals with vitiligo does not become intentional but is rather motivated by curiosity. Also, when Saidi's lesions started and progressed over time, even his community was unaware of his condition, calling his condition contagious and assuming it was the cause of evil spirits, which altered the way people viewed his race identity or appearance (Nemasetoni 2019). Overall, in *Figure 49* Saidi is photographed at various angles (upright, backwards and lying down in a $\frac{3}{4}$ perspective), which I interpret as a purposeful display to encourage changes in viewers' perceptions.

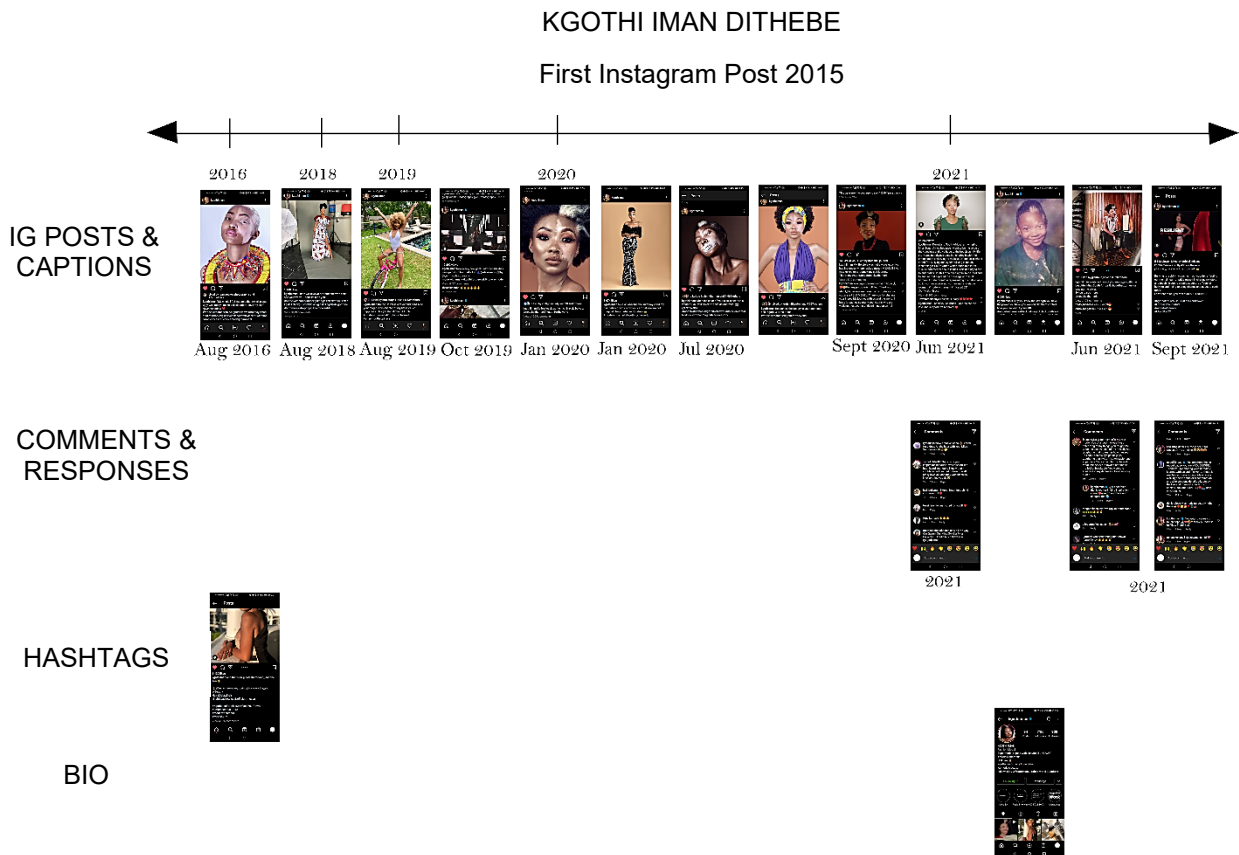


I understand Saidi to have a conceptual and artistic response to the gaze he received because of vitiligo. He names this photographic concept “a seat at the table”— and similarly in *Figure 50* where he displays himself featured in the *DRUM* magazine interview; he uses the caption “a seat with Dikalo Nemasetoni” (the interviewer). I interpret these concepts as Saidi turning the gaze back at those who direct it at him, in a positive way as he confidently embraces his skin towards the camera and viewers. *Figure 50* showcases other works by Saidi. He was part of a photoshoot called the WORKOFCONTRAST project that featured a fashion model with albinism. Both models are shown in their natural skin, and it depicts Saidi diverting the female model's gaze toward the gazer, merging the inclusion of their skin differences and a shift of power dynamic of gaze. Looking and being looked at become mutual with no objectification.

Additionally, *Figure 50*'s second to last post showcases some of Saidi's hashtags. Surprisingly, Saidi's use of the hashtags #trendy and #newfashion (in the last post of *Figure 49*) are contrary to how the other models with vitiligo analysed in this study feel about the idea of trends. In my observation and analysis Saidi could be motivating natural beauty as the new fashion trend and not necessarily vitiligo as a trend. I come to this conclusion since his other hashtags are geared more towards what could be regarded as fashion language such as #fashionista, #fashionable, #modelling, #style and #fashionblogger.

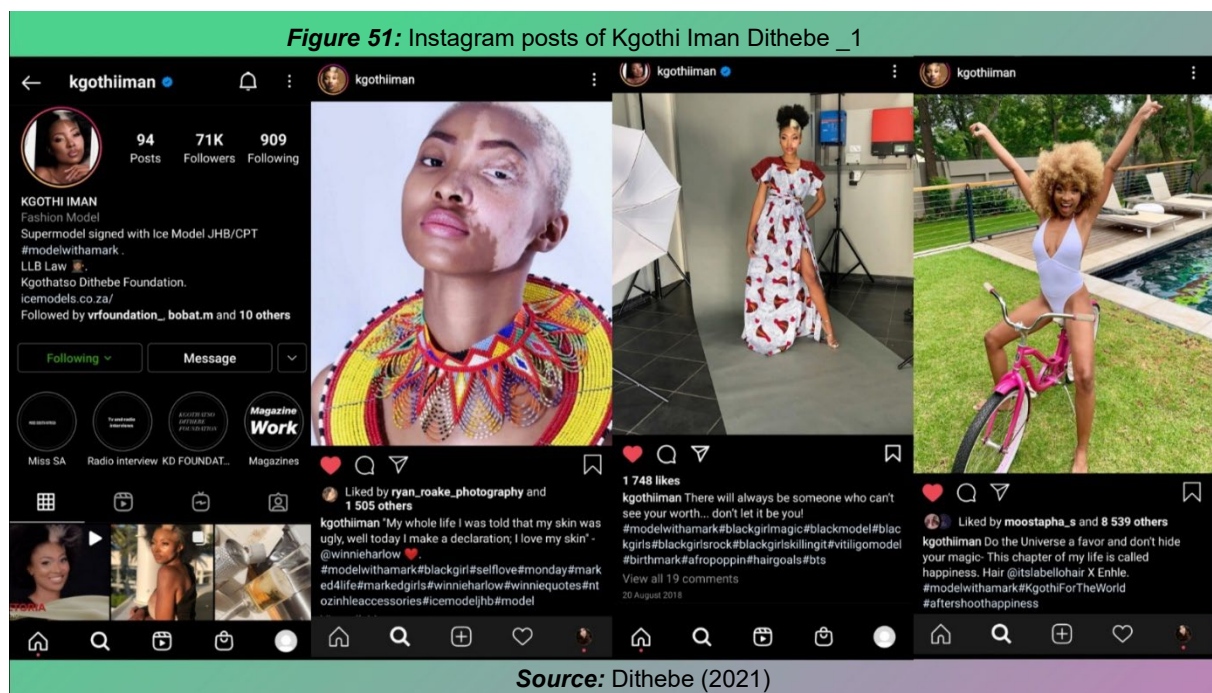
Digital gaze implies using gaze theories and the engagement of looking on social media (Cosinuke 2020: 6). According to Cosinuke (2020: 6) the digital gaze is associated with the queer and oppositional gaze which moves away from Mulvey's male gaze of looking, and therefore destabilises the gendered gaze whereby looking becomes a way of being amongst all individuals. In this way, Awobadejo (2019; cited in Cosinuke 2020: 9) states that "we are able to authorize and direct what people can gaze on by minimizing engagement with this gaze...People often use this as a means of self-expression free from any unwanted gaze." Using this idea, I argue that Saidi uses Instagram to express his form of self-representation as an attempt to change the perception of unwanted gaze and reminds those who may stare that they too can attract the gaze for their own supposed 'imperfections'. I understand this to be Saidi's contribution to changing people's attitudes towards difference.

3.4.5 Kgothatso Iman Dithebe



Poster 5: Timeline of Kgothi Iman Dithebe

Created by: E. Sarupdeo



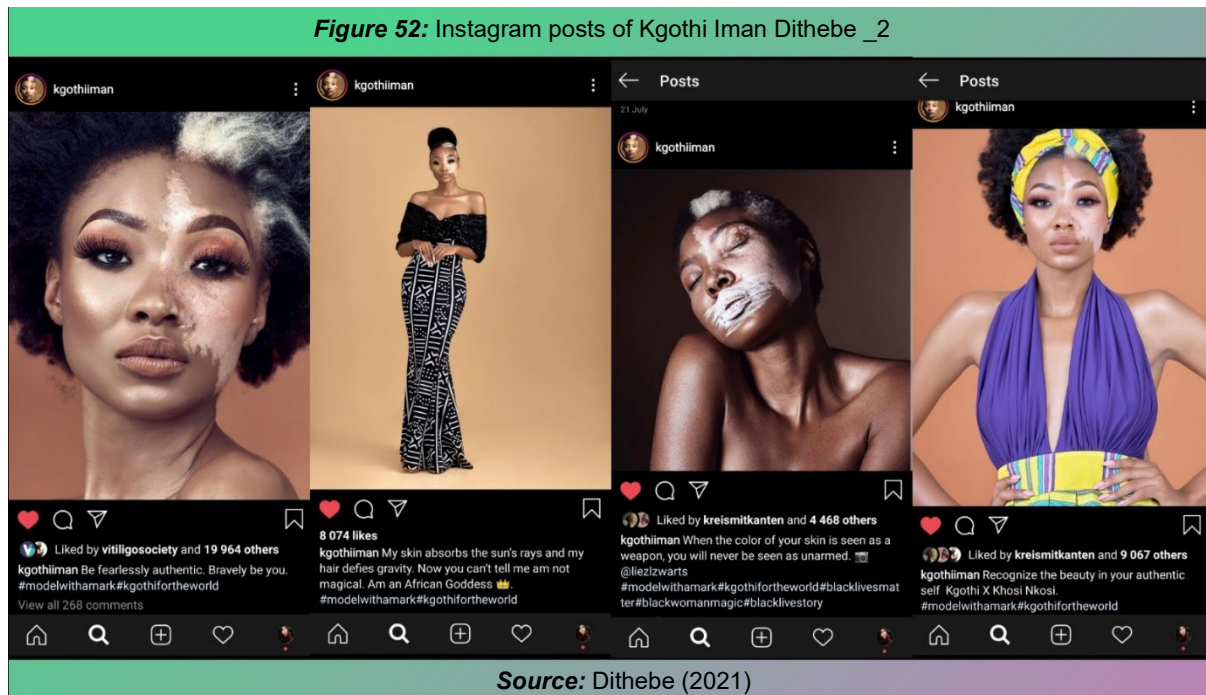
Kgothatso Iman Dithebe also known as Kgothi Iman, is a business owner, law student and fashion model based in Pretoria. In comparison to other South African fashion models with vitiligo, Dithebe and Rametsi both began their Instagram posting in 2015. On the basis of the number of likes and followers received by both, Rametsi and Dithebe are popular on Instagram.

Dithebe has a mark that starts on her face and extends over her hairline. Some media articles refer to Dithebe's mark either as a birthmark or vitiligo (Magwaza 2017; Mabula 2017; Stockenstroom 2019; *ZAlebs* 2020; *Live-Breaking-News* 2022; and Suarez 2021). I questioned myself about why it is important to include her as a case study when it is unclear whether her mark is a vitiligo lesion or not. To respond to this uncertainty, I considered how Dithebe communicates about her mark and how she is perceived representing herself on Instagram.

Disetlhe (2016) interviewed Dithebe who mentions Winnie Harlow as her role model, which, for me, is her associating the mark with vitiligo since Harlow became the first fashion model with vitiligo to gain widespread visibility. In the many Instagram posts, Dithebe credits Harlow's contribution in representing and visibilising models with vitiligo in the fashion industry. Additionally, while there are instances where Dithebe does not directly name the mark such as her use of the hashtag #modelwithamark, there are also instances where she names the mark vitiligo such as in her use of the hashtag #vitiligomodel, as can be seen in the third screenshot of *Figure 51*.

Vallerand *et al.* (2019: 1371-1378) speak of the loss of skin melanocytes that result in white or colourless lesions. Her mark which is also white, can be regarded as a vitiligo lesion. The white colouration present in the hair is called follicular vitiligo or leukotrichia, another form of vitiligo—while vitiligo is also known as leukoderma. I therefore include Kgothi Iman Dithebe in this study as another South African model with vitiligo.

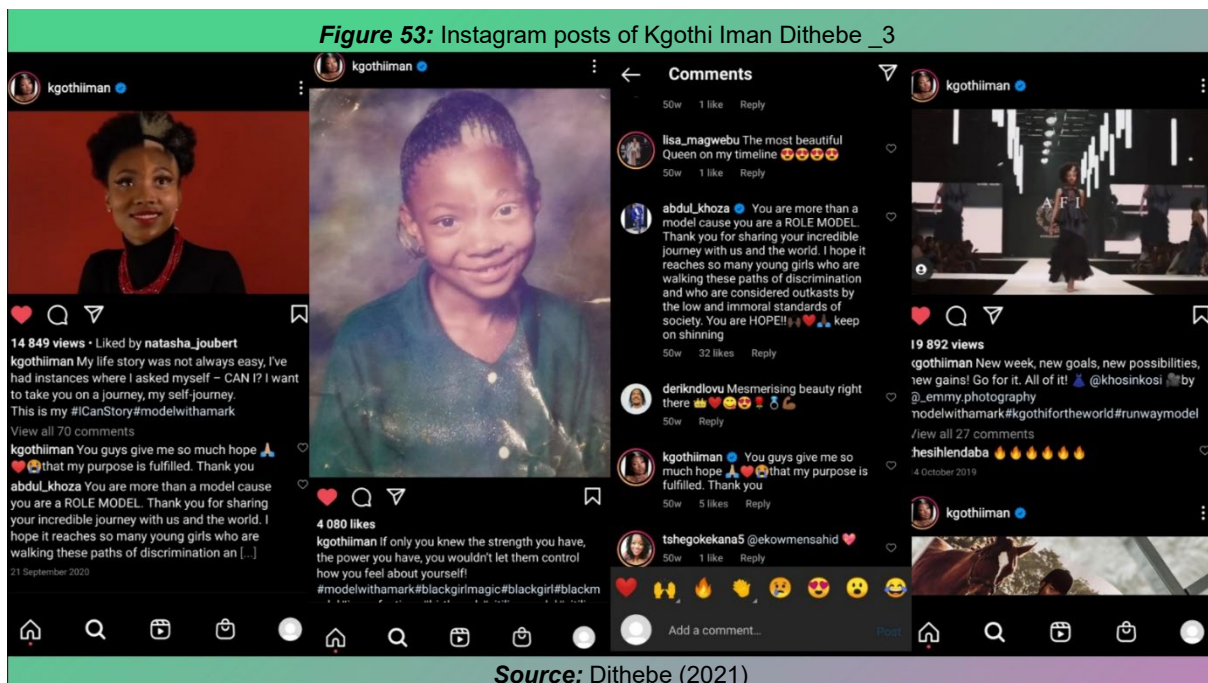
Generally, Dithebe's Instagram posts seem to suggest her contributions are aimed at changing peoples' perceptions about vitiligo, but she also continuously declares self-love and self-affirmation. For example, she expresses that, "there will always be someone who can't see your worth...don't let it be you!" She also includes the captions "don't hide your magic". My interpretation of these captions is her telling individuals not to hide their vitiligo lesions or any other quality that makes them special. Dithebe calls these instances of self-love and self-affirmation, happiness. The hashtag #aftershoothappiness shows that Dithebe finds joy in being a model with vitiligo, exposed in good ways that do not affect her perception of what other individuals think of her.



Cohen and Sherman (2014) study the psychology of change regarding self-affirmation and social psychological intervention. They recognise that social inequalities may have barriers and therefore the idea to reinforce social psychological interventions can ensure long term improvement towards change. (Cohen and Sherman 2014: 335), for example, by a recurring practice of self-affirmation exercises for a few minutes. Psychological threats can overload individuals with anxiety in situations which they have less control over; they can experience trauma, aggravations, and challenges, and it can consume their mental and emotional health which can lead to major setbacks in life (Cohen and Sherman 2014: 336). In the case of having vitiligo, the psychological impacts can increase the spread of the lesions caused by stress. According to Cohen and Sherman (2014: 336), a healthy narrative includes striving to remain in a state of optimism by being hopeful, calm, and non-defensive in situations, to maintain self-integrity, and not to focus on the appraisal of others but rather on the self. Hence, a repetitive cycle of “the self-acts; the social system reacts” occurs leading to the importance of self-love and self-affirmation (Caspi and Moffitt 1995 cited in Cohen and Sherman 2014: 335). For individuals with vitiligo this can also refer to the social gaze as a threat as examined in the analysis of Moostapha Saidi. The idea of self-love and self-affirmation is not to seem self-conceited or better than others, but rather it is to know that you are good enough. I interpret this theme to go beyond the self so that one can also place themselves in others’ shoes by understanding the self to begin with. Also, I contend that following an Instagram users account who is self-affirmative and enhances their authenticity through good practices such as Kgothi Iman Dithebe, can display a positive notification feed that can form a psychological

intervention technique through social media platforms like Instagram. I therefore analyse Dithebe's shared posts of her modelling journey to signify themes of self-love and self-affirmation.

In *Figure 52*, Dithebe posts photographs that visibly show her skin lesion. She is captured as confident and not shying away from the camera and this confidence is enhanced with her use of words such as "fearlessly", "bravely", "authentic", and "goddess". These words resonate with her description of the beauty of the self. Dithebe also writes "Now you can't tell me I am not magical", which gives a sense of self-affirmation. I perceive and interpret her posts as clear and direct in eye-contact. The third post in *Figure 52* is more emotive due to her bare-skinned upper body, zero eye-contact as she looks away from the camera with white brushstrokes across her mouth being the only visible makeup applied to her skin. I interpret her photograph as showcasing a side of vulnerability, being silenced from the public eye and yet still hopeful as she faces towards the light. She positions herself to reflect how others may feel having vitiligo and captions affirmatively using her skin as her armour and protection to say, "[w]hen the colour of your skin is seen as a weapon, you will never be seen as unarmed." These words reinforce the idea of experiencing a psychological threat and using our own self-belief as the affirmation to give ourselves strength in such situations.



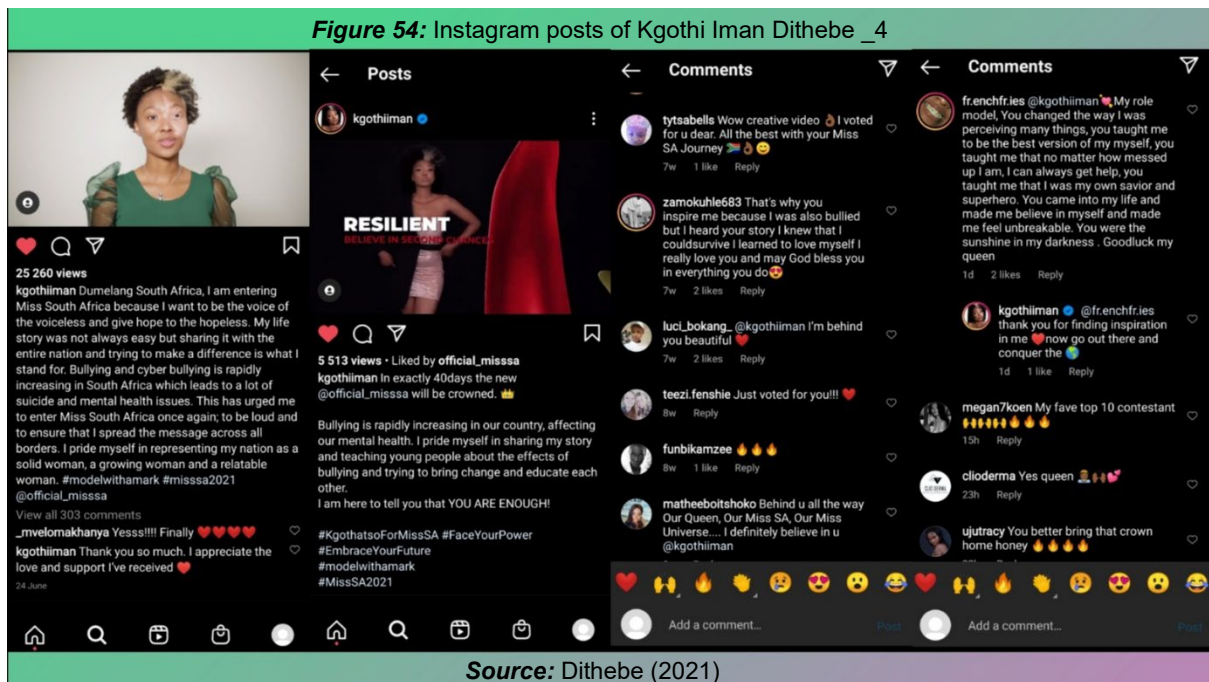
Smith, Vandellen and Ton (2021) focus on how expressing oneself can result in the way authenticity is perceived or can alter individuals' perception, through promoting beauty work via online platforms like Instagram. The authors mention how the first impression of work

surrounded by beauty is sometimes viewed as inauthentic, for example through the use of excessive makeup concealing one's identity and therefore a deception of appearance which can lead to a false judgement of attractiveness. They propose that reframing beauty as a form of self-expression can alternatively enhance authenticity. In Smith, Vandellen and Ton's (2021: 103) study, the differences between two notions of authenticity are explored, namely essentialist (true as in the natural form, innate) and existentialist (the created self).

In a study understanding how models with vitiligo represent themselves on Instagram over a period, it is important to acknowledge the signs seen include the meaning of such signs and how it is perceived by others. Smith, Vandellen and Ton (2021: 103) explain that the assumptions of viewers lead to a poor perception of authenticity if the person such as models with vitiligo are self-enhancing (altering who they really are) themselves. However, I argue that models with vitiligo are representing their true beauty. The wearing of makeup or promoting skincare brands are only added to the essentialist self. The representational changes from existentialist to motivating the essentialist beauty of the self and challenges the stigma of beauty associated with self-love and affirmation (Smith, Vandellen and Ton 2021: 105).

As a young girl Dthebe was bullied because of her skin. The bullying experience is the reason behind her determination and purpose to create awareness to avoid bullying from happening to others. When she entered the modelling industry, she was often criticised because of her skin. Dthebe aims to be the voice of many through her #ICanStory by sharing her journey as a reminder to always see oneself for who you are and to love your own form of beauty (*Figure 53 and 54*). Smith *et al.* (2021) state that the essentialist beauty was seen as most authentic by observers. Similarly in *Figure 53*, Dthebe's posts have comments that support her representation of essentialist beauty. *Figure 53* also connects to Cohen and Sherman's (2014) study about not focusing on the appraisal of others while enhancing self-affirming belief in oneself, which Dthebe captions, "[i]f only you knew the strength you have, the power you have, you wouldn't let them control how you feel about yourself".

Disetlhe (2016) writes that Dthebe was turned down by modelling agencies who regularly told her to cover up her marks (referring to vitiligo lesions). Covering up one's marks is altering oneself to gain social acceptance, which is arguably an unacceptable and unethical practice. In contemporary times though, an appreciated beauty factor in the modelling industry is exposing the true self in relation to colour, race, shape and more. This message of exposing the true self to public audiences is to reinforce the idea of loving oneself for who you are regardless of your appearance or health status.



Dithebe redefined beauty standards from the time she participated in the 2019 and 2021 *Miss South Africa* pageant. In the 2019 edition of the competition, she was in the top five. She redefined beauty standards because prior to the year 2019, the *Miss South Africa* pageant had not featured a contestant with vitiligo. In her caption in *Figure 54*, Dithebe makes a point about the need to make a difference regarding the increase of “bullying and cyber bullying” in South Africa. Bullying is also a psychological threat and therefore links to the idea of producing and instilling self-affirming beliefs to avoid suicide and other damaging mental health issues. In the second post in *Figure 54*, she mentions that she is “trying to bring change and educate each other” and adds that she is “here to tell you that YOU ARE ENOUGH.” I quote her words because they resonate with Cohen and Sherman’s (2014) perception of psychological intervention and how people need to know that they are enough. These words by Dithebe further connect to the self-loving theme that becomes evident through the comments she received such as “I learned to love myself” and @kgothiiman “[m]y role model, [y]ou changed the way I was perceiving many things, you taught me to be the best version of myself” (*Figure 54*). I therefore conclude that through her Instagram page Kgothatso Iman Dithebe shares the journey of her life experiences through multiple modes. She communicates self-affirmatory and self-loving messages which I argue serve as a catalyst for change for individuals to mutually respect, love and understand each other.

3.4.6 Transmodal moments of all fashion models with vitiligo

In this section, I conclude the analysis by using the transmodal moment which is step four of the framework I use in my multimodal communication. I consolidate the analysis of the Instagram pages of the fashion models. The models with vitiligo discussed in the study are viewed as who they are—people and not objects who personify any sort of trend. Both international and South African-based fashion models have achieved some aspects of self-actualisation and have chosen to continue in their passion for modelling and to represent themselves creating awareness about vitiligo despite the positive or negative personal feedback they receive from the public such as Instagram followers. The identity formation of the link between self-actualization, self-transcendence and affirmation seems to be a constant 'becoming'. The story-telling of lives on Instagram is the start although much work still needs to be done, however the process of transformation is better.

The analytic process of their pages showed that these models posted less content of their runway modelling work and more of their experiences in photoshoots, pageantry, magazines and talk shows. It is important to interpret this outcome from a multimodal communication point of view. Although the genre of runway modelling can involve models expressing the mood of the show, the mood expressed in a particular show belongs to the mood determined by the fashion designer whose collection the models are showcasing. Therefore, the views that the models hold or may want to express may not be communicated. However, pageants, magazines and talk shows seem to have afforded the models platforms for self-expression and communication and the links or images are then posted on their Instagram accounts. This finding relates back to the use of multimodal communication and how various modes can be used for representation and expression. Videos were also shared on the models Instagram pages; and I would urge viewers to have a look at the videos, as screenshots do not capture every detail of the video clips that were very informative for this study. The practical component of the study is therefore showcased in a photoshoot and virtually expressed on Instagram platform, allowing other models to express themselves with bodily gestures to show off the fashion artefacts designed by me.

Part A of this chapter focused on international models with vitiligo with the purpose of answering the research question of how international models with vitiligo can be seen to have represented themselves in the last 10 years. Harlow's participation on *ANTM* seems to have been a breakthrough for the presence and emergence of models with vitiligo. Her Instagram page show instances where she emphasised the need for representation, and inclusivity. Harlow also used the platform to inform the public about the condition such as the evolution

of the skin through her changing vitiligo lesions. Cone challenges “beauty from a male’s perspective” and like Harlow, also strives for inclusivity. Ninu not only challenges misconceptions about the skin condition but initiated her own campaign to raise awareness about it. Castillo’s exposure after her viral post led her to also create an awareness and education campaign about vitiligo.

The idea of vitiligo not being a trend was another theme that occurred multiple times with both the international and South African models. For example, Harlow’s skin was initially incorrectly perceived as a fashion trend by the media. Castillo’s viral post could easily be perceived as how a trend goes viral. Rametsi thought that there should not be one specific face of the skin condition. De Vos realised that instead of being mortified about vitiligo as a fashion trend, she changed her perception to view the idea of trend as representation to create awareness about the skin condition. Looking at Lapostolle *et al.*’s (2020) study based on a *Google* trends analysis, many individuals searched Harlow’s skin condition when she was publicly displayed by the Desigual campaign. The campaign called vitiligo a rare disease, targeting the attention of viewers. Therefore, searches of Harlow’s name with vitiligo also led to the brand gaining further public exposure and popularity. As the misuse of portraying the skin condition can lead to brand exposure, fashion models can also use their modelling work to represent themselves and the condition on Instagram by shifting the narrative of beauty rather than highlighting trends. Hashtags are one of the modes in communication that Saidi is observed to use as a motive to turn the gaze back to the gazer. For example, he mentions #trendy in some posts as the #newfashion towards natural beauty and not by labelling trends to vitiligo specifically. In this way, he also uses fashion and social media to communicate, diverting the idea of models with vitiligo from being viewed as a trend.

As the models are expressing and representing themselves, they are also sharing their own views on beauty. In fact, their views on beauty were the building themes uncovered while analysing their Instagram pages.

The analysis of Rametsi’s Instagram page echoed the theme of body positivity such as her description as a body positive philanthropist. Other examples of body positivity were seen through her communication as a visual storyteller, her messages of self-care and representation through featured magazines. Her content highlights beauty as not one definition but many, such as “spotted beauty” and “#YesToPositiveBeauty” which I argue are variations used to describe beauty which resonate with this study’s plural form of beauties. Her consideration and direction also speak to the beauty of the theme of inclusivity and diversity.

Esau's analysis expresses both internal and external beauty seen through photoshoots and captions. He also tells his story visually through the inclusion of other work and quotes infused with his own presentation.

The theme in Saidi's analysis is about reversing the gaze. This was evident through his own concept in a collaborative photoshoot with Dingwall. Saidi shifts the focus of the gaze to alter attitudes and people's perceptions— he faces the gaze.

Kgothatso Iman Dithebe's analysis reflected beauty through self-love and self-affirmation. My analysis shows Dithebe showcases her authentic self which enhances her Instagram messages of self-affirmation.

Marian De Vos's posts also express the theme of inclusivity and diversity. My analysis of her page showed how she uses the idea of beauty to challenge stereotypes attached to certain health conditions, for example, changing the perspectives of people who view certain health conditions as contagious. She therefore includes other individuals with similar experiences yet different health conditions to focus on inclusivity and diversity beyond the colour of skin. In *Figure 45* De Vos also applies emphasis on the viral body positive movement of 2018. She applies her knowledge and understanding of the fashion industry as a former designer and continues to shift the narrative as a fashion model. Similarities between themes were noticed for example, Boitumelo Rametsi's view on the beauty of inclusivity and diversity is also a theme represented by Marian Devos. The inclusion of dolls was found in the Instagram pages of Winnie Harlow, Boitumelo Rametsi and Marian Devos. Each doll presents a different body size, hair, and position of lesions. For example, Harlow expressed the importance of educating children about vitiligo at a young age in a post she shared of a child holding a doll with vitiligo. Rametsi owns a South African produced doll which she dresses up to mimic herself. I interpret Rametsi's use of the doll to communicate inclusivity and body positivity as part of her visual storytelling.

Marian De Vos included a doll with vitiligo from the Mattel brand, Barbie. She captions: "[r]epresentation really does matter @barbie [t]hank you for this #vitiligo, #vitiligoawareness, #vitiligopride #vitiligobarbie, #barbie" which I believe speaks to the idea of inclusivity and diversity in shifting the beauty narrative as previously highlighted by De Vos. This study questioned how models represent themselves in their Instagram accounts, and the finding shows how dolls play a role in the way fashion models communicate about themselves and

vitiligo. These three models show the communicative qualities and potential of dolls in these contexts.

Part A of this chapter analysed how international models with vitiligo have communicated about themselves in the last 10 years, and Part B analysed in what ways South African fashion models with vitiligo have represented themselves through their Instagram pages between the years 2015-2021. Part B was analysed using the process of modal transfer developed by Kress (2000 and 2010). In the case of South African models, it was also found that as they represent themselves through the inclusion of others in the process of representation. For example, Harlow includes youth and is one amongst many models who speak about the representation of vitiligo dolls. Castillo's viral post was captured with another vitiligo model, and Rametsi's interpretation of starseeds is that they are beneficial to humankind, displaying a group photo with other models. The example of starseeds is another shared concept, namely seeing constellations of stars as the interconnection between humans and being a human of more than one skin tone shade. Esau and Saidi include their work with other creatives and work produced by creatives for a combined form of expression. Another example is where De Vos features other health conditions in her post. Coherently, most models in some way in their Instagram posts have collaborated with other people, brands or media publications who have played significant roles in their forms of representation. There are more similarities than differences between the models and how they communicate the same idea of beauties, which is why they are interconnected. I interpret the inclusion of others which was found in the analysis of models' representation of themselves, to resonate with Ibanga's (2017) idea of shared beauty. Although I tried to separate Part A and B, I also found that there are similarities, shared qualities and interconnectedness between international and local models and their communication about vitiligo on Instagram. I interpret these shared qualities and interconnectedness amongst the analysed models to coincide with ubuntu. "Ubuntu stresses the importance of community, solidarity, caring and sharing" (Gade 2012: 492). Ubuntu is a social value that holds that I am because you are, therefore, you are because I am (Gade 2012: 492). While it is possible that international models may not know this African philosophy, looking at the Instagram pages and that of South African models, shows the worldwide relevance of this philosophy in communicating about a subject that is important to all of them.

3.4.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings of the analytical process inform the practical component which adopts some features such as understanding how to reflect the plural form of beauties through fashion and representing to create awareness through fashion as a mode of communication. In this way each stage of the research from international to local is shared findings and theories are shared to develop a conceptualised practical component. The next chapter focuses on the practical components and elements that emphasise the connection of meanings and theories into creative practice.

CHAPTER FOUR

A VITILIGO STORY THROUGH THE CREATION OF FASHION ARTEFACTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter answers the third research question of how the subject of vitiligo and body positivity can be communicated through fashion artefacts. Responding to this question also requires an exploration of how other designers who have embarked on similar endeavours have used fashion to communicate a particular social message. The chapter contextualises the creative practice into research as per Sullivan's framework that aids knowledge into the developed creation of a practical component comprising fashion artefacts (Sullivan 2010 and Skains 2018: 86). I start Chapter Four by providing a definition of fashion artefacts as the term relates to this study. Next, I investigate how products of such a nature get used to communicate in fashion. Fashion is then looked at as a form of multimodal communication and the discussion leads to the body expressed through fashion. During the making of fashion artefacts for this study, each design process was documented. This chapter looks closely at the thought process, meanings, and development of the practical component. Further explanation and reflection are followed around the practical collection. The fashion artefacts are presented at the end of the chapter to show my own process of positioning myself as a fashion designer who chooses to communicate about vitiligo through my own work and in Annexure A.

4.2 Fashion Artefacts

The section on fashion artefacts commences by briefly defining artefacts broadly before refining the context to fashion artefacts. Artefacts are not words; they are man-made objects to which we give form to or create abstractions (Miller 1994: 396-419). It can include meaning to represent various concepts such as cultural, historical, political, economic and regarding social.

Fashion artefacts have not attained an operative definition, rather there are various ways in which they can be understood from various perspectives (Rafaeli and Pratt 2006: 210). According to Teunissen (2018: 7), a fashion artefact can be approached as a metaphor with reference to current societal matters and reflecting our social behaviours. The exposure and creation of fashion artefacts communicate with the viewer through thoughts and tools used or incorporated by their curator. Daniel Ramos Obregon believes that a fashion artefact "encompasses a perfect balance between beauty and sensibility of fashion, the intellectuality of art and the powerful skillset of crafts" (Why what who: celebrating 10 years of fashion artefact 2018: 17). I agree with Obregon that fashion artefacts can conceptually have a perfect

balance of beauty that can collectively be crafted through form and design to reflect that and speaking of the themes of beauties of this study. The creation of fashion artefacts can equally reflect the themes of beauties to highlight vitiligo through the consideration of theory, garment and pattern construction, and creative design.

Since the study associates digital platforms and multimodality, it benefits and allows the designer to showcase fashion artefacts in many ways either through exhibitions or installations. Capacete-Cabellero, Caulfield-Sriklad and McKay (2013) state that incorporating technology in the display of garments has gained momentum in recent times. Their study expresses how storytelling of fashion artefacts or products in the field of arts and design use moving imagery, graphics, sound and even text to convey messages more effectively than an exhibited display (Capacete-Cabellero *et al.* 2013).

According to Capacete-Cabellero *et al.* (2013) museums have modernised their perceptions of visual culture to create awareness of social issues by using technology and thus providing unique exhibition opportunities and experiences. The same approach has been applied in the display of garments or fashion artefacts in my work to function as fashion that communicates a message, in this case about vitiligo. The display of fashion artefacts has evolved, and this evolution informs my practical approach. Display mannequins do not always do justice to how a fashion artefact can appear. When artefacts are placed on a living body accompanied with styling features and bodily movement, they create greater effect. This should be regarded as linking method to the practical component as much as possible.

In addition to linking methods to the practical component, the fashion artefacts are virtually exhibited on Instagram and akin to fashion models' ways of communicating in multimodal images, captions (text with hashtags), videos, IG stories, and highlights—which are used in my own display. In this way, I organised a fashion photoshoot to effectively capture the collection of fashion artefacts produced. The planned photoshoot involved a collaboration of talented individuals (photographer, videographer, makeup artists, assistants, and models) to help shed light on vitiligo through fashion artefacts. The Covid19 pandemic brought about changes in social lifestyles and exposure to public places as health and safety precautions have had to be met. Exposing the fashion artefacts through a digital and social media platform such as Instagram therefore attracts a greater audience. The pandemic is however not the only reason for the choice of showcase, but perhaps enhanced the exposure of posted content through online platforms. Using Instagram also aligns with the study aims and theory of how representations through Instagram by the South African fashion models with vitiligo are

succeeding in their online communities and how I would represent in my own way as a designer.

4.3 Communication in fashion discourse

The creative output for this study serves to communicate about vitiligo using fashion. Studies have demonstrated how fashion can be used as a tool for representation and communication (Busch and Hwang 2018: 29; Kaiser 2012: 21; Barnard 2002; Hollander 1993; Kaiser 1995: 448 and Barnard 1996: 26). We can say that clothing is referred to as our “second skin”—an extra protective layer to our bodies (Busch and Hwang 2018: 29). Clothing can therefore communicate our genders, age, profession, and social statuses (Busch and Hwang 2018: 29). This communicative potential of fashion signifies how our bodies “morph into an amalgamation, or an assemblage, with clothing” (Busch and Hwang 2018: 30). Similarly, concepts that hold symbolic meanings to society in creating awareness by shedding light on vitiligo are morphed into fashion artefacts. In the book *Fashion and Cultural Studies*, Tulloch 2010 (cited in Kaiser 2012: 21), interprets clothing styles as fashioning the body—a way which for individuals to express themselves as who they are or becoming, for example, how cultural styles evolve leading to various significant interpretations of identity. Barnard (2002) and Hollander (1993) also outline cultural identities, rules of rituals and the impact of perceptions associated with and constructed by fashion. People of different ethnicities can relate themselves with their cultures and religion through symbols and symbolic meanings of clothing associated with their cultures and religions (Kaiser 1985: 448). According to Barnard (1996: 26), it is said that through our societies’ daily experiences, “culture may itself be understood as a signifying system, values and beliefs are communicated through practices, artefacts and institutions.”

Terms of fashion, clothing and clothing styles as referred to in the aforementioned literature are many examples of fashion’s connection with communication and these terms are adopted in this study. Adopting these terms shows how clothing and fashion-related artefacts can relate to the body, and the ways that fashion and fashion artefacts can be used to communicate and represent an individual in society. The theory of fashion as communication is helpful for this study in the sense that it provides examples of multiple interpretations which can assist in creating the idea of how I aim to show a body positive representation about vitiligo in my own work as a designer. Kefgen and Touchie-Specht (1986) state that fashion is a silent language which implies that fashion is used as a form of communication, and how clothing is non-verbal, yet the meaning of signs provides a tool for communication. Individuals also have a choice in how they choose to represent themselves with their choice of clothing styles. Kaiser’s (1990)

study on the psychology of clothing and how our personal choice of appearance and sense of style can be used to depict an understanding of those around us including ourselves, is helpful.

Fashion as communication is helpful as my intention is to use the fashion collection to make commentary and to communicate. I analysed fashion models communication techniques through multiple modes via their Instagram posts as ways in which they represent themselves, talk about vitiligo, and thus challenge and expand notions of beauty. With the fashion collection of artefacts, I adopt a similar vision to expand notions of beauty. I argue that if models can use their work to communicate, I too, can use my work, namely the design of fashion artefacts, to communicate.

The following section delves deeper into examples of how artistic and creative modes such as fashion can be used as ways to express a message through fashioning the body. This expression includes how the body itself is expressed through the incorporation of artistic elements and design principles to create the desired aesthetic and message. My contention is that the idea of the body links with myself as the designer and the models, as vitiligo presents itself on the body, specifically the skin. In addition, I analysed the selected international and South African fashion models' Instagram pages through a multimodal discourse to understand how their vitiligo bodies were presented as a form of communication. I proceed by exploring the idea of the body expressed through fashion.

4.4 Body expressed through Fashion

Fashion research and discourses often ignore a significant aspect of the arts; “the aesthetic” (Kim 1998: 51). Aesthetic is defined as the sense of appreciation towards notions of beauty or what can be considered as beautiful (*Lexico* 2020). To achieve this sense of appreciation through fashion artefacts, the application of artistic elements and principles are incorporated to aid the design process. Arts alignment to fashion in this case contributes to the knowledge of body discourse and creative output.

Over the years international designer Rei Kawakubo, has consistently challenged accepted notions of beauty by creating fashion statements through her fashion collections. Her brand ‘Comme des Garçons’ was established in 1973 in Tokyo (Kindersley 2012: 403).²² In an

²² Her debates around women’s status, questioning stereotypical images and how she perceives women through fashion was reflected in her designs and is described as having an “underlying feminist ideology” (English 2011: 69). Kawakubo experiments with various unconventional and unique techniques such as her oversized coats, shapeless knitwear, ripped and distressed textile and uneven hemlines (English 2011: 71).

attempt to disregard social constraints her conceptualisation of dress expressed notions of perseverance and dignity (English 2011: 69). Kawakubo's design incorporates multiple elements to showcase the aesthetic, achieve success, and is equipped to communicate fashion statements or messages to the viewer (Racine 2010: 15). The notions of form over fit and the inner and outer space of design also play an important role in creating a difference as can be seen in the works of designers Issey Miyake, Yohji Yamamoto and Rei Kawakubo (English 2011: 72). These notions are applied to garments to create a sculptural form.

Kawakubo's vision of dress becoming body is evident in her spring/summer 1997 "Body Meets Dress, Dress Meets Body" collection, also known as the Bump collection (*Figure 55*) and on a similar continuation in 2010 with her Autumn/Winter *Inside Decoration* collection (Miller and McNeil 2018: 121; Ahmed 2016). In the 1997 collection she expressed dress quite distortedly around the contours of the body including padded sections in randomised areas. Although Rei Kawakubo's Bump collection was revolutionary in 1997, in contemporary times it has the potential of attracting critique in the sense that she pads models with 'conventional' bodies to appear 'unconventional'. This relates to the modern critique of how the film industry is known to cast straight actors to play gay, transgender or transexual roles.

Rei Kawakubo's conceptualisation of design relates to this study in the sense that she portrays her perception towards the body with fashion. Through the Bump collection, as shown in *Figure 55* below, I argue that Kawakubo challenges the notions of what a 'perfect' body should look like. Likewise, the use of vitiligo in this study aligns with this type of discourse that challenges hegemonic ideas of beauty.



Figure 55: Rei Kawakubo's design from Bump Collection

Source: Comme Des Garçons
Bump Collection 1997 Spring/
Summer (2011)

Rei Kawakubo is not the only fashion designer whose works may be understood as a form of social commentary or visual communication. The late British fashion designer Alexander McQueen also created and conveyed these ideologies through his work. His powerful conceptualisation in his feminine aesthetic collections involved thoughtful use of mixed medium materials and techniques (Vargas 2013). McQueen's out-worldly artistic vision for fashion entails exquisite skill in tailoring and pattern construction (Swarovski 2015). Just like Kawakubo, McQueen developed a strong persona breaking the rules of fashion (Vargas 2013: 10). His work always sparked controversy and was at times intentionally created to do so. McQueen often experimented with three-dimensional silhouettes of various shapes and forms.

He was also one of the first well-known designers to visualise beauty in different or disabled bodies (Ishaku 2020), for example by creating clothing for disability as shown in his *No. 13* London runway show in 1999 (Ishaku 2020). Technology and the mid-1880's arts and craft movement involving architectural and decorative aesthetic inspired his collection (Vargas 2013:16). His show involved disabled models, one of them being the double amputee American athlete Aimee Mullins who at the time was also his muse (Ishaku 2020).

Shown on the left of *Figure 56* below, features Aimee Mullin dressed in McQueen's ensemble from his *No. 13* collection:

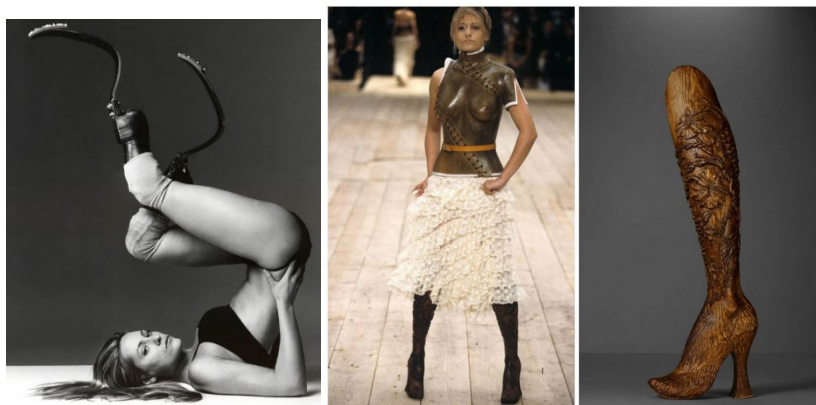


Figure 56:

Left: Aimee representing her beauty as a double amputee.

Source: Fashionlady (2013: 1)

Middle: Aimee Mullin dressed in Alexander McQueen

Right: Elm wood designed leg prosthetic

Source: Vargas (2013: 16)

Seen on the right in *Figure 56*, McQueen specifically designed functional leg prosthetic artefacts carved from elm wood by Bob Watts which Mullin used to strut down the runway (Vargas 2013). Other items of this collection included corsets and free-flowing garments to portray a floral and sculptural aesthetic (Vargas 2013). However, McQueen's creative vision, in this instance, may be debated as him taking disability and celebrating it as an abled body. This can be seen as an example of fashion artefacts used for the sake of fashion. However, I argue that his presentation focused on his prosthetic design rather than shedding light on Aimee Mullin as a double amputee.

Through this study's practical component, I hope to join these fashion practitioners who, through their work, use fashion to communicate about the body and challenge ideal forms of representations of beauty, and do not use beauty for fashion's sake. Similarly, as a fashion designer and through the practical work creation of this study, I also challenge accepted notions of beauty by celebrating other forms of beauties through fashion. The adornment of dress is one of the reasons why bodies become social and are given meaning and identity (Entwistle 2000: 7). Art can therefore be understood as a language system. It can also be used as a thinking tool (a creative cognition) in contemporary studies relating to design practices (Loke and Robertson 2011: 182). For instance, fashion's three-dimensionality, as visual art, distinctly resonates with sculptural qualities (Kim 1998: 64).

Kaiser (2012: 1) writes that "fashion is never finished, and it crosses all kinds of boundaries. It is ongoing and changes with each person's visual and material interpretations of who he or she is becoming and how this connects with others' interpretations." In relation to this, I provide an understanding of how and why the body is conceptualised in fashion by the application of art principles and elements of designs into fashion artefacts to communicate which holds significance to the study. I say this as my study crosses disciplines, shares and merges and therefore apply my adopted knowledge of understanding to incorporate a positive message about vitiligo through fashion artefacts.

To continue my discussion of the practice of other fashion designers, I look at Derek Lam who mentored emerging fashion design students from the Parsons School of Design, Fashion Institute of Technology and Pratt Institute, to showcase a fashion show for the Cerebral Palsy Foundation in 2017, as a Design for Disability initiative (Borovic 2017). The student designers of that year were Emily Ridings, Claudia Poh, Johnathan Lee, Dominique Kelly, Indigo (Youjeong) Choi and Kristi Siedow-Thompson (Cerebral Palsy Foundation 2017).

As shown in *Figure 57*, an individual with cerebral palsy models one of the clothing ensembles designed for disability.



Figure 57: Cerebral Palsy Foundation -Design for Disability Gala fashion show

Source: Hyland (2017)

Whereas Rei Kawakubo's design showcased the body in distorted forms (Bump) through fashion, Derek Lam and the emerging designers created fashion designs around actual bodies. The garment designs for the *Design for Disability* Gala fashion show were designed especially for individuals who are physically disabled due to neurological conditions and movement disorders called cerebral palsy. The outcome of the fashion show collection presented unique designs of various size and shape based on the models form or stage of disability and to suit their needs in clothing (*Cerebral Palsy Foundation* 2017).

In a YouTube video showcasing the behind the scenes of this event, another representative mentor Lucy Jones (cited in *Cerebral Palsy Foundation* 2017), from the Parsons School of Design, advised students that "we're all different bodies, you really have to consider all of those bodies and not just this cookie-cutter sizing system." Similarly, it is important to include and consider the nature of all individuals for who they are and not what they are meant to be. In addition, the students got to work closely with disabled individuals as their models. Each model was given the opportunity to share their experience and difficulties in terms of the functionality and accessibility of clothing. This helped the designers through the design process with the aim of alternating perceptions (*Cerebral Palsy Foundation* 2017), to show how design principles and artistic elements are useful to create garments for various body forms and shapes. This example contributes to diverse forms of beauty, that is, beauties.

As a practitioner, I concur with the idea that the nature and form in which the body is expressed, articulates a vital form of social commentary and visual communication through design as stated by Barnard (2002). According to Kang (2010: 1-7), artists express their aesthetic perspectives of the body in various forms. Elements of art and the senses and principles of design aid the process of visual communication in artworks and help to convey meaning through design (Elements of art and principles of design 2020; *Bradford* 2017: para. 1 line 1). Hence, my incorporation of some design elements in the design process of the practical component aids the communication of vitiligo through fashion.

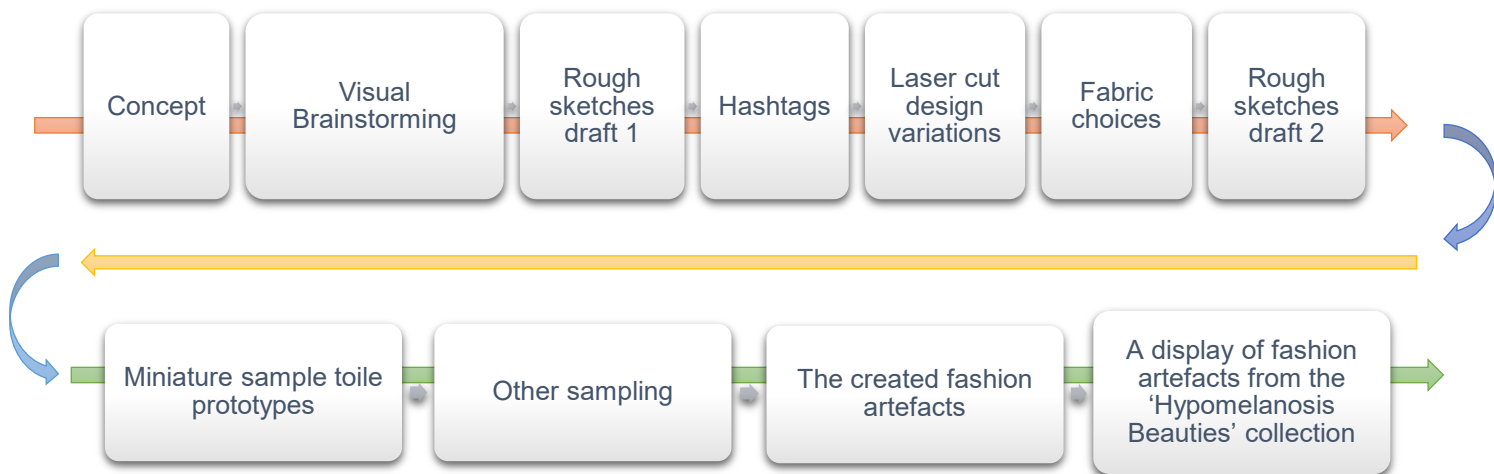
Colour, shape, form, line, space, and texture were all design and artistic elements thoughtfully incorporated in the process. For example, as part of the creative design process in fashion, a colour palette is usually chosen, followed by rough sketches or final designs (unity) that reflect different silhouettes (scale and proportion) which incorporate elements like form, space for placement or volume, shape, and textures during pattern making or considering fabric choices

and fabric manipulation techniques (variety). Unity, scale, proportion, and variety are the design and art principles which merge with the other elements involved.

Moreover, the idea of disability does not relate to or apply to the fashion models with vitiligo. All examples, representations and health conditions mentioned in this study in terms of meaning, purpose and concept of design are individually acknowledged with respect. Basically, the expression of the body in fashion and understanding of art helps the researcher to idealise how multimodal representations of the skin (specifically vitiligo) can be expressed through fashion.

4.5 Amalgamation of Rationale and Reflection

Below I display a flow chart to show the actual development process of the fashion artefacts.



4.5.1 Concept

Fashion designers make themselves aware of emerging trend forecasts that provide insightful information of popular pantones, design elements, silhouettes, fabrics, concepts, themes and more. My skin is not a trend, and my study will not consider vitiligo or any health condition for that matter as a trend. This matter was expressed by some models whose Instagram pages I analysed. Hence, the concept is about communicating the subject of vitiligo through fashion artefacts, reflecting the beauty of a vitiligo story. The concept of the practical component has been reinforced throughout the study.

4.5.2 Visual brainstorming

Visual brainstorming is a creative method of grouping a sequential flow of ideas like words of a relatable category to stimulate fast idea generation (Börekçi 2017: 3). I believe that brainstorming is an essential method in design creation. My brainstorming was formed by a

grouping of ideas such as silhouettes, colour palettes, textiles etc. This strategy became a process of elimination which helped to highlight key elements needed to make up the fashion artefacts. A strategy beneficial in promoting more connected ideas such as the making of an inspiration board further helped to visualise the concept.

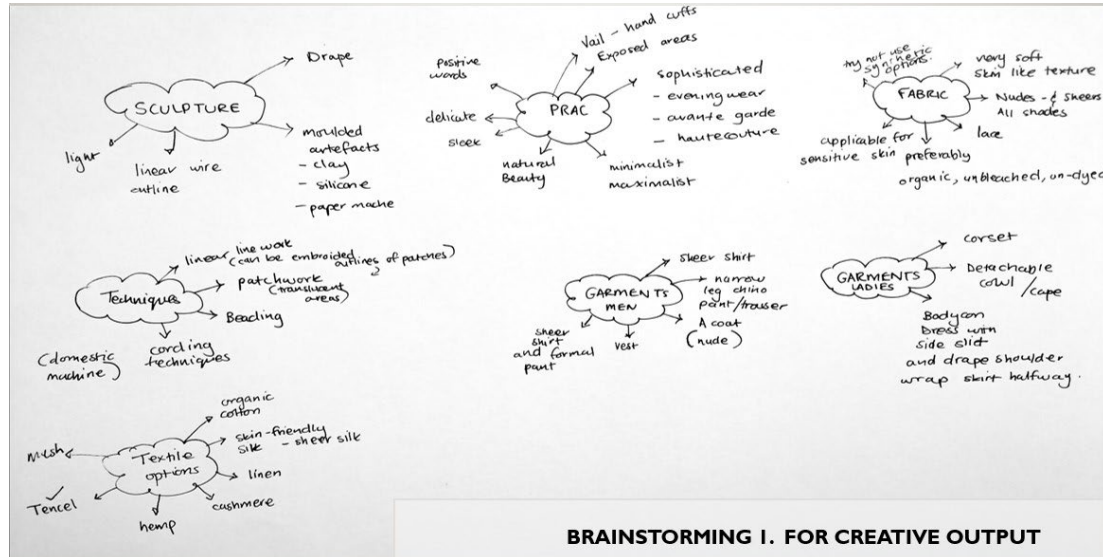


Figure 58: Visual Brainstorming

Created by: Sarupdeo (2021)

Mood boards or inspiration boards are often used in the fashion industry and in design processes to collate and present visual data conceptually (Cassidy 2011: 230). It is the mood of the design concept that needs to be reflected to viewers for the concept to be understood. Cassidy (2011: 233) elaborates that mood boards are used as a form of qualitative research design tool where designers are expected to enhance their creative thinking skills to articulate a form of communication through visual presentation. There are various ways in which the arrangement of visual data can be presented. As mood boards are conceptually presented with limited imagery, an inspiration board is similar in purpose, however, it includes specifics of design ideas like the choice of colour palette, textures, detail and conceptual images (inspiration boards present more visual data of ideas). Due to the concept excluding WGSN trend themes²³, as a way to not misuse the subject of vitiligo into a merged or created trend, I searched for inspiring images which I believe speak to the collection of fashion artefacts I envision. The curation of images included to the inspiration board, helped me to identify a suitable colour palette for my collection. The colour palette consists of neutral shades and of course the choice is obvious due to the reason of being inspired by diverse skin tones.

²³ WGSN is a worldwide trend forecasting and analytic company that is used by all types of designers and other fashion companies to follow and familiarise themselves with the latest trend themes, colours, styles and more. These forecast ideas usually become a starting point in design processes to produce a fashion collection or accessory that is in trend.

This study makes use of various types of digital software for visual presentation. Therefore, a digital version of an inspiration board is used in the initial stages of design and an audio visual (AV) mood board for the end of the practical process. The AV mood board is a digital version of a physical mood board, constructed with juxtaposed still images and video motion. According to Edwards, Fadzli and Setchi (n.d.), the most successful mood boards are expensive, time consuming, a good collection of relevant imagery and in addition is optional to integrate features which make them three-dimensional.

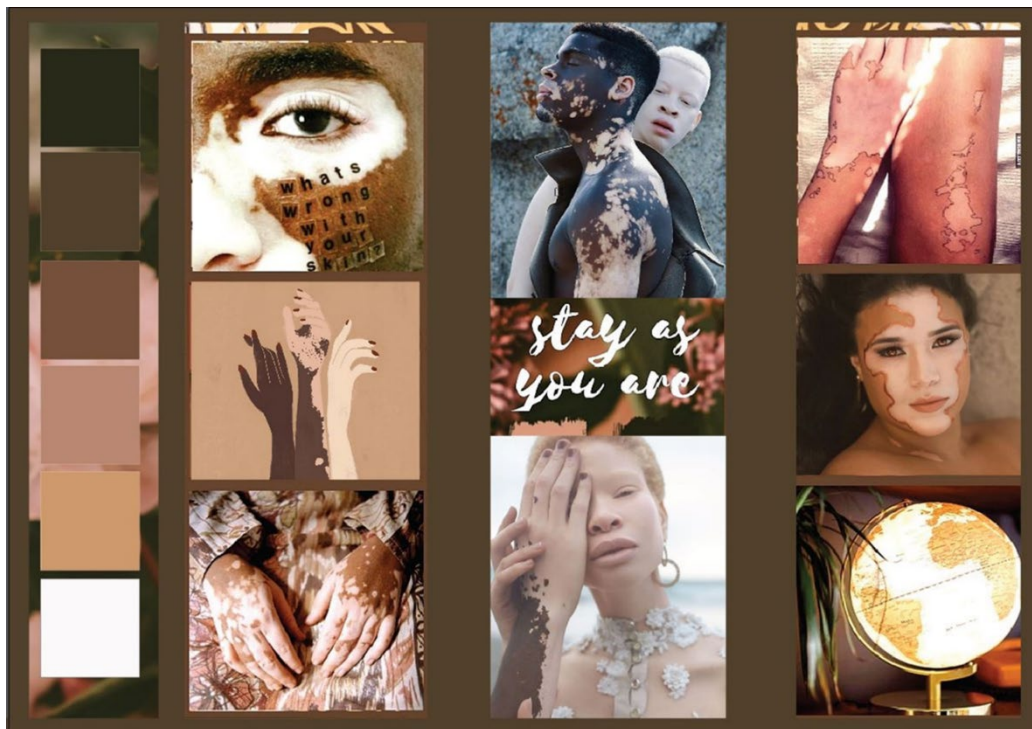


Figure 59: Inspiration Board

Created by: Sarupdeo (2021)

4.5.3 Rough sketches draft 1

The first draft to rough sketching featured digitally drawn garment styles using Adobe Illustrator. However, the sketches did not portray the concept I had envisioned effectively and cohesively, therefore I decided to go back to the drawing board. Other hand drawn supporting design details such as a hand lamp shade was designed, and 3D printed to shed light on vitiligo.



Figure 60: Rough sketches draft 1

Created by: Sarupdeo (2021)

4.5.4 Hashtags

To spark my sense of creativity in a pandemic where it was quite difficult to seek inspiration when working in the same environment, I decided to digitally draw using my left-hand interchanging the pen and paintbrush tools in the Adobe illustrator design software. The pen is the main versatile tool to be mastered in order to successfully draw lines, angles and curves called paths in Adobe illustrator (The Pen Tool 2010; Illustrator help/ tool galleries 2015). The paintbrush is a freehand drawing tool that has the additional stylistic features of brushstrokes. These tools were used to randomly doodle shapes that resemble vitiligo lesions mainly looking at my own vitiligo lesions and that of the models that I used in this study. Since Instagram is the social media platform that I used to collect data for the study to understand how South African models represent themselves having vitiligo, I incorporated modes of communication

such as hashtags which are associated with Instagram into the creative component. I used the idea of Instagram hashtags by giving each fashion artefact a name, to create another form of communication—similarly, to how Boitumelo Rametsi, Marian Devos, Chad Esau, Moostapha Saidi and Kgothatso Iman Dithebe have used multimodal communication such as hashtags.

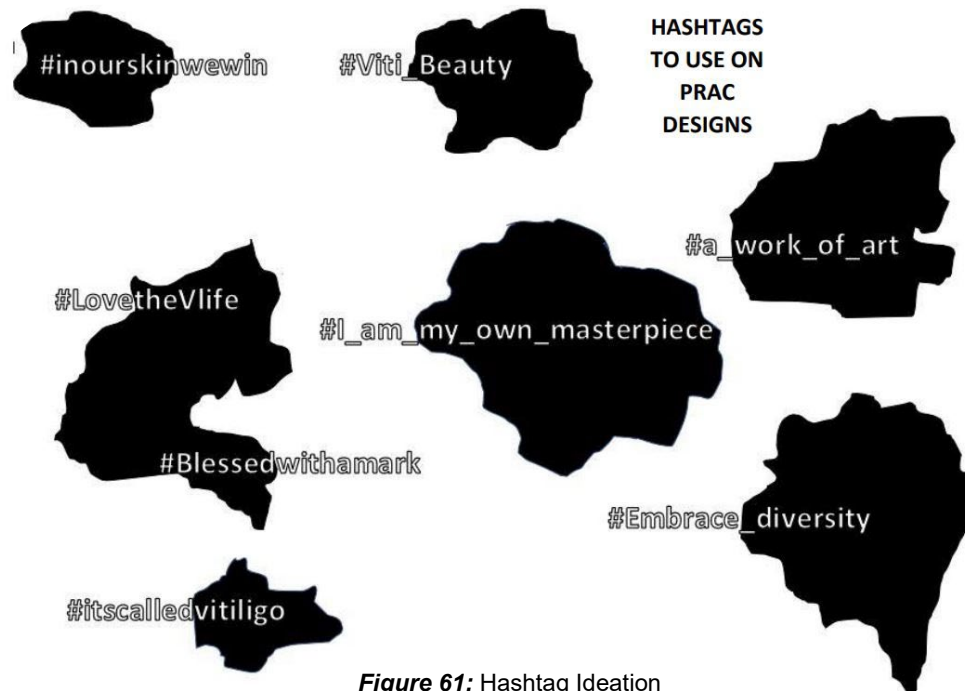


Figure 61: Hashtag Ideation

Created by: Sarupdeo (2021)

4.5.5 Fabric choice

Fabric choices for the collection of artefacts consisted of embossed scuba, scuba, tie-dye georgette, denim, stiff net, mesh, and Thai silk. All these fabrics were chosen in neutral shades to relate with shades of skin tones because vitiligo is associated with the skin. I then purchased fabrics that were available in the closest neutral shades I had hoped for. Pink and yellow undertones of skin colour were also taken into consideration. The scuba is matte with embossed patches that had a subtle sheen to it, creating a contemporary textural look which I believe captured the essence of vitiligo lesions. I incorporated a printed fabric, a muted pink with white tie-dye patches. These patches also visually represented the vitiligo lesions.

A selection of the aforementioned fabrics, however, lacked the stiffness I desired in order to achieve volume and three-dimensionality to communicate sculptural shapes through which I symbolised the body which is a theme of the collection. To achieve the stiffness of fabric, I performed starch tests on all the fabric samples, and unfortunately the test was unsuccessful as the fabrics were the only ones readily available from the shops that I visited. I therefore used recycled tent canvas offcuts to repurpose and reinforce my design details with the

strength it required to mould and bend into shapes. This direction of having to apply a starch test before fabric use including the need to combine tent canvas into light to medium weight fabrics, was a painstaking and time-consuming process that required a lot of effort in handling and sewing the fabric layers.

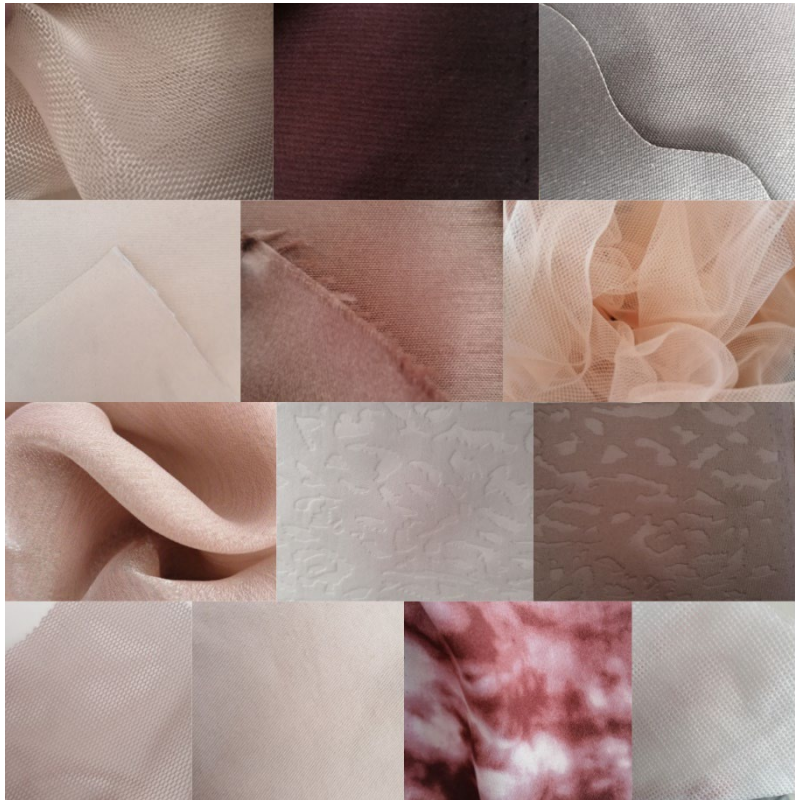


Figure 62: Fabric Selection
Created by: Sarupdeo (2021)

Laser cutting is another design technique featured in this collection of artefacts. I digitally designed my own laser cut lace textile drawn from the vitiligo lesions that I created earlier. Various laser cut prints were designed using Adobe Illustrator saved as a .dxf file²⁴ (other saving formats were PDF and .svg) which is supported by the laser cutting programme. These designs were cut and tested on selected fabrics. Additional designs became props for the displayed practical outcome.

²⁴ A DXF file on Adobe illustrator, stands for Drawing Exchange Format (Adobe 2022). It is a vector file format which is used by many artists, designers and engineers to interchange or share 2D and 3D drawing data that can be opened onto other CAD software's (Adobe 2022).

4.5.6 Rough sketches draft 2

After some reflection, I re-evaluated my initial designs, which resulted in a second draft of digital sketches that had elements of wearability, artistic, avant-garde, and sculptural aesthetics which I believed captured the vitiligo story that I wanted to communicate. Shapes doodled during the ideation process of hashtags, helped to envision silhouettes and styles for these designs.

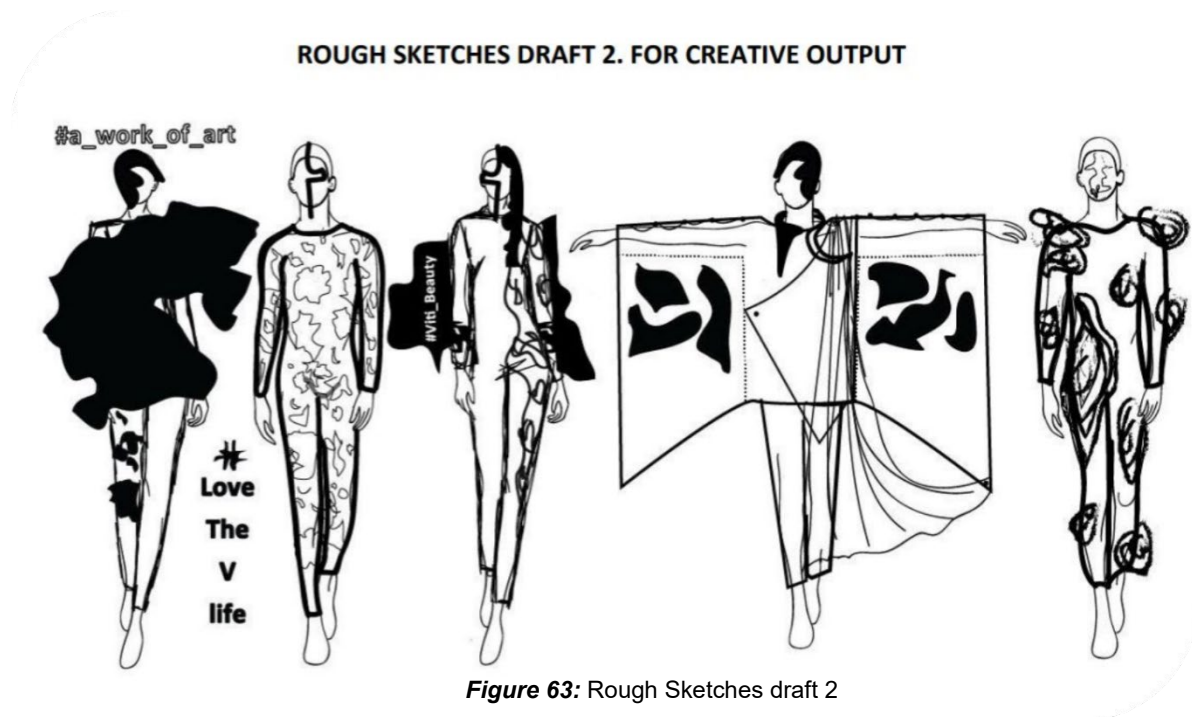


Figure 63: Rough Sketches draft 2

Created by: Sarupdeo (2021)

4.5.7 Miniature sample toile prototypes

After finalising these new designs, I experimented with the shapes by draping them on a miniature mannequin (*Figure 64*). Pinning together pieces of fabric involving sculptural drapes and shapes led to an outcome I found effective and promising, visualising an artefact with a patchwork of neutral shades.



Figure 64: Toile experimentation

Created by: Sarupdeo (2021)

As the developmental process continued, I experimented on other fashion artefacts to complete the look such as a wired jewellery piece and the hand lamp shade. The wired jewellery piece was created to be worn like glasses on the face to complete the look. Only one wired face piece was made that will feature on the Instagram page and not in the completed look of the model because the fashion artefacts were quite textural whilst the models were styled to remain natural, to align with the theme of natural beauty in this study. The shaping of the wired jewellery piece was generally inspired by the shapes of vitiligo lesions around the contours of the face, to communicate feelings of emotion through a transparent lens of how individuals feel having vitiligo in exposed areas of their body and that no matter how they may be perceived by themselves or others, should know that they are being represented and not for the sake of fashion.

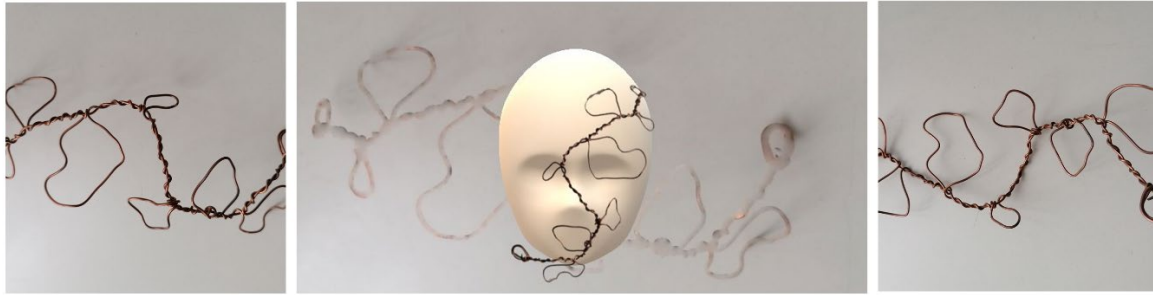


Figure 65: Wired Jewellery

Created by: Sarupdeo (2021)

4.5.8 The created fashion artefacts

The placement of shapes represents both segmental and non-segmental vitiligo lesions. In fashion we refer to these terms as symmetrical and asymmetrical. In addition, three-dimensional design elements represent an avant-garde aesthetic with subtle sculptural fashion effects.

Initially, the developmental processes were challenging. Various thoughts like am I selecting the correct colour palette, silhouette, is the idea too literal? is it too graphic? and will the society like it? led to doubting my creative expression. Eventually, I decided that individuals with vitiligo (including the international and South African models) probably go through the same state of self-doubt. Yet, despite the self-doubt, the selected international and South African fashion models I analysed embrace themselves in a world where their imperfections may have been highlighted. I needed to adopt the same thinking about my design ideas and creative expression since I was not only in the position of creating fashion artefacts to communicate a message about vitiligo but as an insider, I also held emotions about the subject. These thoughts propelled me to join the fashion models and communicate my story of vitiligo through a collection I called 'Hypomelanosis Beauties'. I chose this title because it is creative and descriptive and answers the third research question, namely how vitiligo is communicated through the fashion artefacts. Hypomelanosis is a term used to describe the decreased levels of melanin in the skin, resulting in patches that lack colouration (Oakley, Syuen and Chee 2021). There are, however, variations of hypomelanosis and therefore vitiligo is also a disorder of hypomelanosis. Beauties is included in the title of the practical component to reflect the plural form of beauty which has been the term used in this study.

4.5.9 A display of fashion artefacts from the ‘Hypomelanosis Beauties’ collection

The fashion artefacts were developed through creative stages that were informed by the framework of creative as research approach. Each fashion artefact includes a description. In addition, I numbered and named each using hashtags that have not yet been used on other Instagram posts. The idea of including hashtags helped to share, communicate, and shed light on vitiligo on Instagram. In addition, I intended to use models with vitiligo for the fashion shoot, however, this was unsuccessful as the majority of them are located in Johannesburg and Cape Town, and it proved expensive to fly them to Durban where the shoot happened. Moreover, the collection is not meant to be for individuals who have vitiligo. I initially tried to contact as many as I could locate on Instagram including Chad Esau. Esau gladly responded in support of the study and became my follower to view the end-result although he could not model a fashion artefact due to the time frame and the fact that he resides in Cape Town. The models who were selected to participate in the photoshoot therefore represent a diverse collection of models which highlights inclusivity and diversity—a prominent outcome of my analysis process. The models as well as the entire photoshoot team were aware of the concept and were supportive of the meaning behind the collection. I now proceed to present the final artefacts.

Artefact 1: #Viti_Beauties

Asymmetrical female jumpsuit and coat

The #Viti_Beauties depicts skin with subtle textures of embossed patches including layering of textiles to create unique fabrication techniques. The purpose of layering celebrates the anatomy of layered textures of the skin generally and specifically of vitiligo.



Figure 66: Asymmetrical woman's jumpsuit and coat. Embossed Scuba, Invisible zip, laser cut beige denim layering.

Designer: E. Sarupdeo

Photographer: S. Amedeo Nico (2022)

Artefact 2: #itscalled_Vitiligo

Symmetrical female dress

This symmetrical dress is constructed by using a sculptural design. The choice of shapes attached were selected at random. Whilst looking at my own skin I see that not all the vitiligo lesions appear perfectly curved or rounded—there are also edges. As a result, the pointed looking shapes were incorporated to create a balance and to avoid making the collection too predictable based on the subject of vitiligo. This artefact is bold in design and for that reason I named it #itscalled_Vitiligo to proudly emphasise the skin condition.



Figure 67: Symmetrical woman's sculptural dress. Tie-dye geogette, Tent canvas, Invisible zip, mesh and beige denim.

Designer: E. Sarupdeo

Photographer: S. Amedeo Nico (2022)

Artefact 3: #I_am_my_own_masterpiece

Asymmetrical female dress

The asymmetrical dress was designed to mimic a lesion shape into the appearance of silhouette. Transparent net was incorporated to symbolise the transformation and evolution of the lesions. The evolution of the lesions was a point mentioned by Harlow and Esau; therefore, it was important to visually design to communicate this message in my work. Individuals such as the models with vitiligo are unveiling themselves as they are seen to represent and express their true beauty.



Figure 68: Asymmetrical woman's sculptural dress. Tye-dye geogette, Tent canvas, Embossed scuba, Invisible zip, stiff net and beige denim.

Designer: E. Sarupdeo

Photographer: S. Amedeo Nico (2022)

Artefact 4: #LovetheVlife

Male jumpsuit with randomised lesion placement

The male jumpsuit symbolises vitiligo covering the full body. Laser cutting techniques adds dimension to this look creating shadows in between the lesions. The purpose of these varying patch placements and shades is to reflect vitiligo lesions which may visually appear in different levels of colourless to white coloured brightness intensities, which may depend on the actual skin tone.



Figure 69: Men's patchworked leotard with Laser cut Jumpsuit overlay. Mixture of embossed scuba, Tye-dye georgette, beige denim, silk and mesh for patchwork, Invisible zip and Thai silk.

Designer: E. Sarupdeo

Photographer: S. Amedeo Nico (2022)

Artefact 5: #Embrace_diversity

Male two-piece ensemble, consisting of a front opened coat and a draped elasticated short.

This fashion artefact slightly differs in the sense that a darker colour was incorporated to represent darker skin tones. Creative fabric manipulation techniques were incorporated such as double-sided looping to replicate layering of the anatomy of skin. The front is symmetrical while the back is asymmetrical in design to capture segmental and non-segmental positioning of lesions. The back of the fashion artefact also displays the illusion of the words “MARKED BEAUTY”. This fashioned artefact is lined and also creative in the sense that the side profile, in fact all directions have a different look and appearance to showcase the evolution of skin and to depict diversity as mentioned by the title of artefact 5 as #Embrace_diversity.



Figure 70: Men's fabric manipulated coat with draped dark brown short. Mixture of colour tones, embossed scuba, Tie-dye georgette, beige denim, silk, elastic and scuba.

Designer: E. Sarupdeo

Photographer: S. Amedeo Nico (2022)

Artefact 6: #B_You_Natural

The hand lamp shade

The hand lampshade was another artefact idea as a more literal approach to the sculptural aesthetic by shedding light on vitiligo. It is 3D designed and 3D printed. I used the hand because as a fashion designer with vitiligo, the most exposed lesions on my body are my hands and in the same way that Rametsi and Devos make reference to the vitiligo dolls, I showcase the product of my vitiligo hand as my unique and added form of representation. Using the hand instead of any other part of the body also symbolises the important role that my hands play in making the fashion artefacts as a fashion designer.

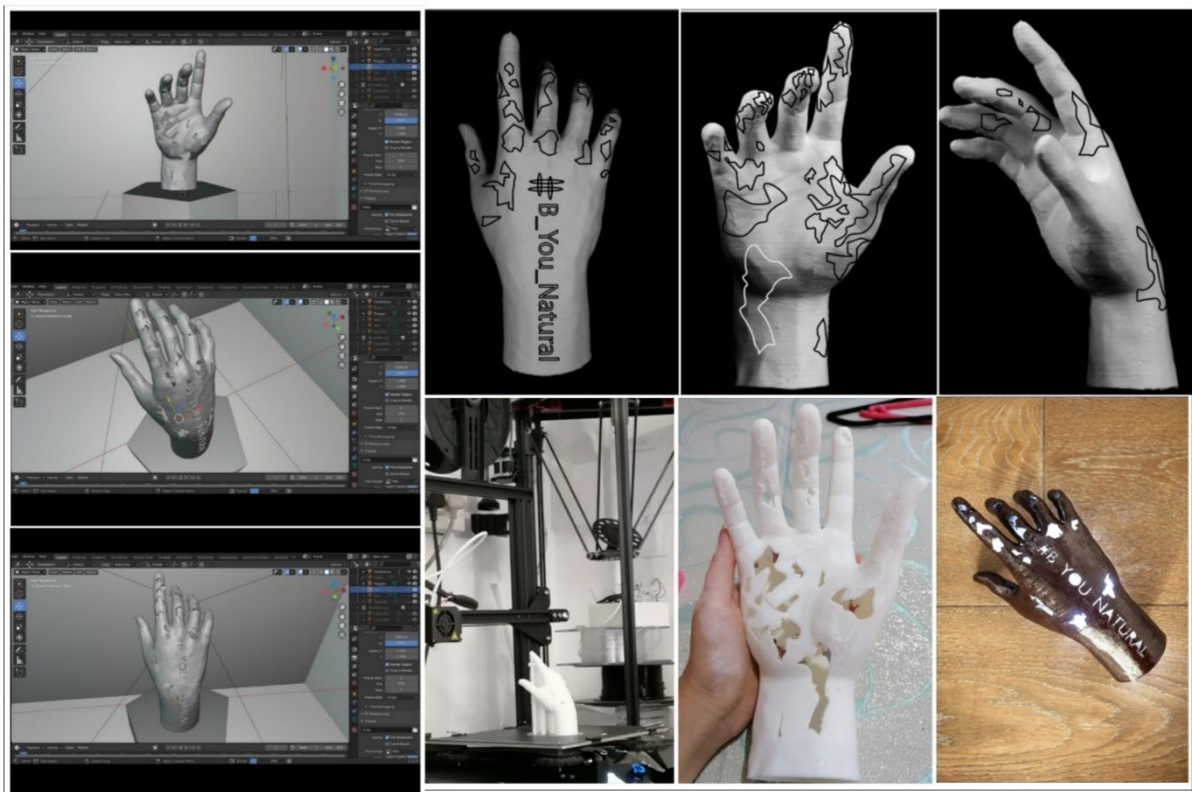


Figure 71: Sculptural hand lampshade. 3D Printed with PLA filament

Designer: E. Sarupdeo

Printed: The MakerSpace

Photographer: S. Amedeo Nico (2022)

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has covered how fashion has and can be made as a form of communication, multimodally. Examples were given of fashion designers such as Rei Kawakubo and Derek Lam, who challenge the notion of beauty by using fashion to comment about health conditions by applying specific elements and principles to their designs. I also provided examples of how clothing styles can be used to understand how individuals choose to express themselves. These examples and the analysis of the models' Instagram pages have helped to assisted me in understanding how I could communicate the subject of vitiligo and body positivity in fashion artefacts.

All the artefacts went through digital design procedures such as laser cutting, 3D printing, digital designing, and photographing pieces to envision changes or build on designs digitally using Adobe illustrator and Photoshop. I believe that the multimodality of this study is featured throughout the design process including the textures which enhance the sign making to cohesively pulling together a collection that resonates with the concept. All the design details were handstitched onto or incorporated into base garment styles.

The collection has the potential to be incorporated into fashion shows, installations, and exhibitions and be shared through various media platforms. The intention for this study was to have a virtual display of the collection via photographs, Instagram videos and creating an Instagram page specifically for this. The reason for deciding on this route is that it worked for this study as one of the key areas of multimodal communication through Instagram. This route allowed models who participated in this study's fashion photoshoot to express themselves freely through body language and gestures to show off the fashion artefacts depicting vitiligo.

I have communicated the vitiligo story to reflect multiple elements and themes which make up the subject. To summarise, I have considered details which began with a neutral colour palate, anatomy of the layers of skin, and the types of vitiligo, namely segmental and non-segmental. The fashion artefacts alternate from a minimalist to a maximalist look to capture the evolution of the skin, subtly and boldly with the addition of sculptural elements. New hashtags were created to name and shed light on vitiligo through the Instagram posts of the outcome. These were some examples used to communicate the subject. The story aspect is how I join in as a fashion designer with vitiligo, creating these fashion artefacts with some of my own lesioned shapes and ideas combined to represent myself and the skin condition. I therefore believe that my work responds to the third research question of this study, namely how I can use what I have learnt through theory to communicate the subject of vitiligo and body positivity via fashion artefacts.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the study in its entirety. It starts with a summary of the study through re-visiting the research questions and providing consolidated responses to these questions. Research findings, recommendations and conclusion follow thereafter.

5.2 Summary and findings to research questions

In this study I embarked on a multimodal analysis of Instagram pages of South African fashion models whom I argued, use this social media platform to represent themselves and communicate about vitiligo outside their modelling profession. The analysis of the models' Instagram pages was followed by a practical component in which I, as the researcher and fashion designer, used fashion to communicate my own message about the skin condition. The study was aimed at adding a fashion perspective to a subject that is mostly discussed in medical studies. The modelling industry thus became a fundamental entry point to start the discussion.

I argued that while in the past, fashion models were expected to have certain appearances that fit within ideal standards of beauty, fashion models with vitiligo are examples of models that both challenge and expand what I perceive to be dated notions of beauty. In saying this it is important to note that whether within vitiligo or not, all humans present 'flaws' or things that may not be considered 'perfect', which I believe needs to be embraced as our plural 'beauties', and not restricted to the singular notion of a standard 'beauty'.

Chapter One provided the background to the topic and some key terms such as the concept of beauty. It also provided the purpose and research methodologies used in the study. I outlined and discussed the aim of study, which was to multimodally explore the connections of vitiligo and the representation of the body in fashion to develop fashion artefacts. With the fashion artefacts, I hoped to shed light on vitiligo to spread awareness and highlight inclusivity and diversity.

Chapter Two offered a discussion of the theoretical frames that underpin this study, and previous studies that used multimodal discourse analysis were reviewed. Reviewing these

studies helped to situate this study within the broad field of multimodal discourse communication and analysis.

Through their Instagram pages, international fashion models presented themes of inclusivity and diversity, evolution of the skin, emotive representations through body language, perceptions of beauty, self-love and education which were all used to communicate about and shed light on and raise awareness of vitiligo. Fashion models use communicative modes such as fashion-related posts to capture inclusive and diverse concepts of beauty. As Harlow says, “beauty is in everything” (*TEDx talks* 2014). This statement became an important one since this study regards beauty in the plural sense, namely ‘beauties’.

In Chapter Three focused on the significance of understanding and applying multimodality by situating the study and analysing how fashion models with vitiligo communicate using multimodal forms of communication. The literature showed that one must be able to identify signs to understand their meanings, which is where semiotics is important. The chapter was divided into Part A and Part B. Part A focused on selected international fashion models with vitiligo. I looked at the Instagram pages of the models to respond to the first question of how international fashion models with vitiligo have communicated about themselves on Instagram in the last 10 years? Part B consisted of the multimodal discourse analysis of local fashion models with vitiligo, to respond to the second research question, namely in what ways have South African fashion models with vitiligo represented themselves through their Instagram pages, between the years 2015-2021?

In the international context, I looked at Winnie Harlow, Stephen Cone, Ninu Galot and Genesis Castillo and in the local context, Boitumelo Rametsi, Chad Esau, Marian De Vos, Moostapha Saidi and Kgothatso Iman Dithebe. Multimodal discourse analysis allowed me to understand ways in which the models represent themselves with vitiligo as a subject within a specified period of their modelling career. Analysing their Instagram pages revealed them featured in collaborative works of fashion-related platforms such as photoshoots, pageants, and fashion magazines. The models also curated their pages in what I interpreted to be their idea of representation and expanding notions of beauty. Their personal content provided me the opportunity to understand them in and outside of the fashion industry.

For the South African models, I created time-line posters from the time they created their Instagram accounts. The time-line posters also included the most relevant posts which showcase their transformations over a period of time. Screenshots were grouped to be analysed as there were multiple posts to refer to. The models used Instagram stories,

captions, reels (videos), image posts, comments and responses including hashtags to represent and communicate about vitiligo. The products of their work regarding the fashion and modelling industry were and is therefore currently still used to continue their own form of representations.

Analysing their pages showed how South African models, like their international counterparts, also challenge and expand notions of beauty. Through analysing their communicative mode themes such as body positivity through visual storytelling, inclusive and diverse beauty, internal and external beauty, changing perceptions of the gaze, self-love, resilience and self-affirmation, were uncovered.

Chapter Four elaborated on the practical component which was framed by the creative practice as research theory. This chapter answered the research question of how the subject of vitiligo and body positivity can be communicated through fashion artefacts. I defined fashion artefacts and looked at other fashion designers whose work and fashion styles get used as a form of communication. This was followed by a discussion of the various features, elements, principles, and themes that informed my practical component which was the creation of fashion artefacts. These features, elements, principles and themes were incorporated in my design work to communicate about vitiligo and body positivity. The practical component aligns with and is a focal point of the study's title of 'Analysing Instagram pages of South African Fashion models with vitiligo using multimodal communication for a practice-based study'.

The study was integrated by a build-up of multimodal communication modes of evidence to analyse and substantiate for example, the inclusion of digital designed AV mood boards to feature as an Instagram reel and story to support practice-based research. In this way similarly, I share the same thought process as the fashion models when planning and showcasing my work on Instagram, to represent the subject of vitiligo through fashion.

I examined ways in which fashion models with vitiligo represent themselves on Instagram, and first found that all models set their Instagram pages to be publicly visible. To represent themselves they use fashion modelling to comment on their personal journeys with vitiligo. Their recounting and commentary on these journeys involve the use of all Instagram communicational features to capture and curate content about themselves through the work that they do. For example, in *Figure 10* Winnie Harlow has the hashtag #representationmatters which concurs with the idea of inclusion as she posted content of her modelling opportunities and being included on big name platforms. Although it would be careless to credit Harlow solely as the one who started to post about representation, what I found is that more models with vitiligo emerged thereafter, and they took the matter of representation into consideration

when posting on Instagram although each one took their own approach. For example, some models emphasised the importance of education to create awareness about the skin condition. Galot and Castillo created campaigns to expand on vitiligo awareness, while Rametsi and De Vos supported international and local companies that create dolls with vitiligo. The dolls with vitiligo were used as an awareness strategy to showcase inclusivity and diversity—a change to how dolls have previously been presented as perfect figures with blue eyes, silky soft hair and ‘flawless’ skin. Through the inclusion of dolls with vitiligo, education about can start at a young age and this can have psychological benefits for children who might develop the condition at a young age and feel under-represented. The doll representations of the past and present is analogous to the evolution of fashion models regarding the interpretation of ideal beauty standards. Understanding the representation of models, covered the aim of the study to examine how vitiligo is represented on Instagram and fashion.

Through the multimodal discourse analysis of the fashion models, both Part A (international models) and Part B (local models) included direct and indirect forms of representation. Direct in the sense that the focus was about vitiligo awareness or their skins. Indirectly the posts were associated with alternative approaches such as Esau’s internal and emotive depictions and Saidi’s play on returning the gaze to create an understanding between the gazer and the gazed. Altogether, the models with vitiligo have used Instagram as a platform to challenge the notion of beauty and in doing so, focalised the challenge around vitiligo, using themselves to validate change.

The models can also be described as visual storytellers and body-positive philanthropists. Some of these descriptions were found on the models’ biographical profiles. Due to there being no cure for vitiligo, I found that the models signify the upliftment of mental health and use multimodal communication features on social media to communicate their strategy of challenging the notion of beauty which happens psychologically, for example Dithebe’s themes of empowerment through self-love and positive affirmation.

Similarly, the creation of my fashion artefact collection speaks to the purpose of this study by expanding of the idea of inclusivity and diversity, raising awareness about vitiligo, and joining the movement of models with vitiligo by challenging the notions of beauty. Inclusivity and diversity are represented by the choice of fashion models and design by merging various skin tone shades into the hashtag of each artefact. Raising awareness about vitiligo coincides with how models with vitiligo have used Instagram to multimodally communicate. In this way, the practical component of my study uses Instagram to create a page to virtually showcase the created fashion artefacts which represents the skin condition. Hence, as the models apply

their personal perspectives in the work that they do, I as a fashion designer with vitiligo do the same through my practical component to achieve the purpose of communicating a positive message by shedding light on vitiligo through fashion.

5.4 Recommendations

In this study, multimodality proved to be effective in understanding how individuals use Instagram as a platform to communicate about a subject such as vitiligo. Future studies can expand on the exploration of multimodality in various analytic ways either qualitatively or quantitatively. Other social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter or new platforms such as Tik Tok can be used to understand how they too get used for other purposes of communication.

The difficulty of scouting fashion models with vitiligo in Durban for my practical component has opened a window for further research to look into whether there is indeed an absence of representation and if there is, to identify the reasons for this absence in the local modelling industry of Durban, can be explored. This potential future study can be looked at from sociological and anthropological perspectives and can benefit Durban's fashion industry. This sort of future study can also further contribute to challenging the notion of beauty by understanding the current expectations of beauty in the local modelling industry. In addition, the study can promote the inclusion of models who present differently. The promotion of inclusion may lead to the promotion of social activism within the modelling industry.

5.5 Conclusion

Multimodal discourse analysis as applied in this study has enabled fashion to add an artistic contribution to vitiligo, a subject that has been discussed widely by the medical fraternity. Data collection through the analysis of Instagram posts was visually rich. There has been a lack of literature on South African fashion models with vitiligo and this study has started a new discourse. Primary information in the form of media, and interviews together with other scholarly works were used to make a scholarly contribution that looked at the local context. The study has built a foundational for interdisciplinary study that incorporates a purposeful form of innovation where emerging gaps in research can be further explored through research and/or practically. This study was specifically drawn to representation as displayed by the models with vitiligo. However, there are other routes to research on Instagram such as focusing on hashtags (e.g., #modelwithamark) and all the related images that show up in that search. Collectively, social media networking is multimodal and a platform such as Instagram can create many avenues of ideas for research topics such as the display of fashion on a virtual platform as opposed to raising awareness about other societal factors, or through an

investigation of a field that should not be viewed as a trend. Idea generation of topics can be formulated to suit all disciplines depending on what is needed or spoken about in society. Generating ideas towards a personal route to a topic could provide a new topic area, research field or meaning. In this study, beauty exceeded cosmetics, body shape, or a pretty face. Rather, the study regarded the plural of beauties. This perspective on beauty adds to the local beauty narrative—one that perceives all gender expressions, races and colours as equally beautiful. This is especially important in a country such as South Africa that promotes itself as a diverse nation.

Overall, this study has enhanced and challenged my ways of thinking as a researcher and a fashion designer. Engaging in this study has enhanced the way I perceive people, literature, signs, and representation. As a designer, I have represented myself and commented through my work in fashion. The study has made me more self-aware and self-affirmative about having vitiligo. From the models' representations I have built upon shared perspectives and challenged the notions of beauty. In this way as a proud South African fashion designer, I too uphold the values of ubuntu. As a researcher I was challenged to face my own skin condition every day and to understand the feelings I go through because the study enhanced my own knowledge about vitiligo. Having written the dissertation during the Covid-19 pandemic created mentally challenging moments. Another challenge was merging information from the medical fraternity which is intricate in terminology plus in-depth statistical research with a creative field such as fashion and textile design. In this way I must create a balance which any individual can understand and relate to theoretically and practically. Hence, the practical component, Hypomelanosis Beauties, was beneficial to complete the study in the hope that my work will make a difference in society. I encourage other individuals to expand on the study by challenging the notions of beauty in their own ways or by confidently showcasing representations of their true authentic selves both internally and externally. Most importantly I have learnt about myself in ways that enabled me to alter my perceptions and become more positive about my own vitiligo. Having a better outlook about my vitiligo also meant allowing myself to be vulnerable and creatively embracing the skin condition through the artefacts I have created. In this way I have not only improved my own perspective but also hope to improve the outlook of others' perceptions and understanding of vitiligo.

I quote the words by Nelson Mandela (1995) as he says:

No-one is born hating another person because of the colour of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People learn to hate, and if they learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite.

I share these words because I believe that my creation of fashion artefacts can be a powerful form of representation of vitiligo. Regardless, all skin colours should be perceived as beauties of the innate form of humankind. It is never too late to learn from negative experiences since these experiences teach us to love. If love is innate to the human heart, then I am unapologetic in expressing myself through my innate form of beauty, for as you should be unapologetic for who you are, humanly.

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ANNEXURE A

MAAF

PRACTICAL

PROGRESS



Study Title

Analysing Instagram pages of South African fashion models with vitiligo using multimodal communication for a practice -based study

Practical Title

The fashion artefact collection is titled 'Hypomelanosis Beauties.'



Esau (2019)

Practical component

The practical component of this study contains six fashion artefacts, which encompass bodily adornment pieces (outfits), photographs and props, to be virtually exhibited on Instagram.

The practical component is framed by Graeme

Sullivan's framework of creative practice as research

(Skains 2018: 86).

- **Theoretical**

"In which the practitioner-researcher is exploring research issues and problems, can be seen as an exegesis of theoretical practice -based research."

- **Conceptual**

Understanding other artists' and designers' research processes, thoughts, artworks and perspectives.

- **Dialectical**

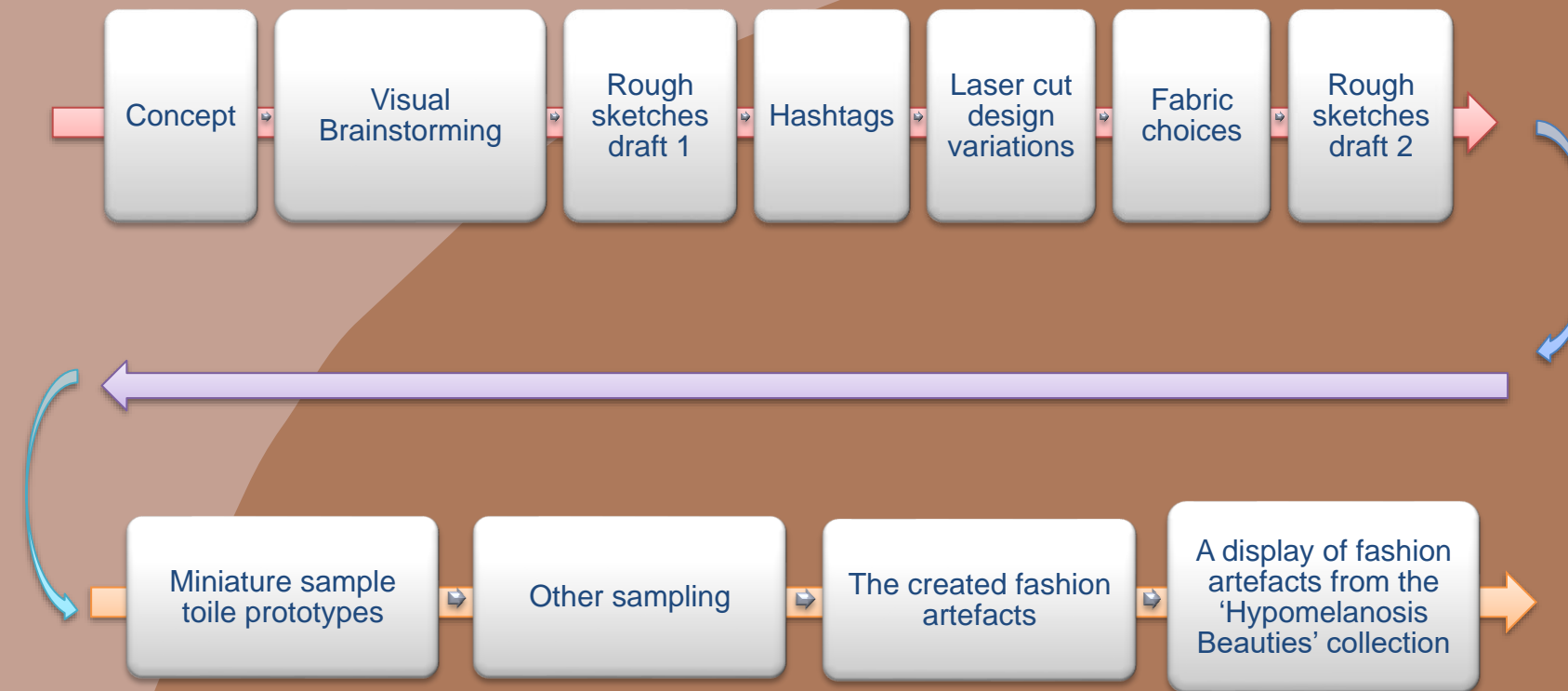
How art conveys meaning beyond mere communication of actants and/or events [how practical related research is explored and gives meaning.

- **Contextual**

This is where the practice hopes to bring about social change.

Amalgamation of Rationale and Reflection

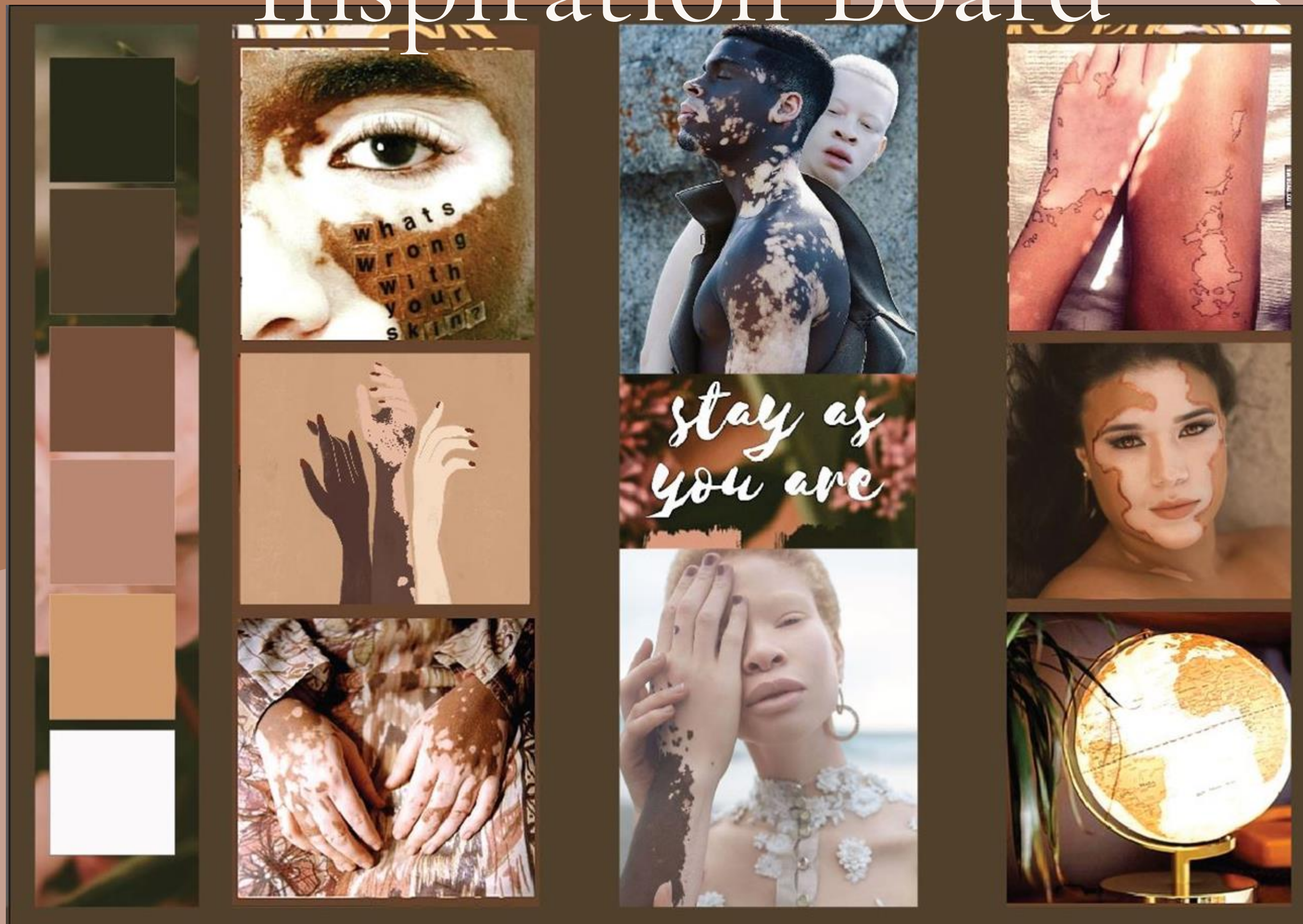
Below, I have displayed a flow chart to show the actual development process of the fashion artefacts.



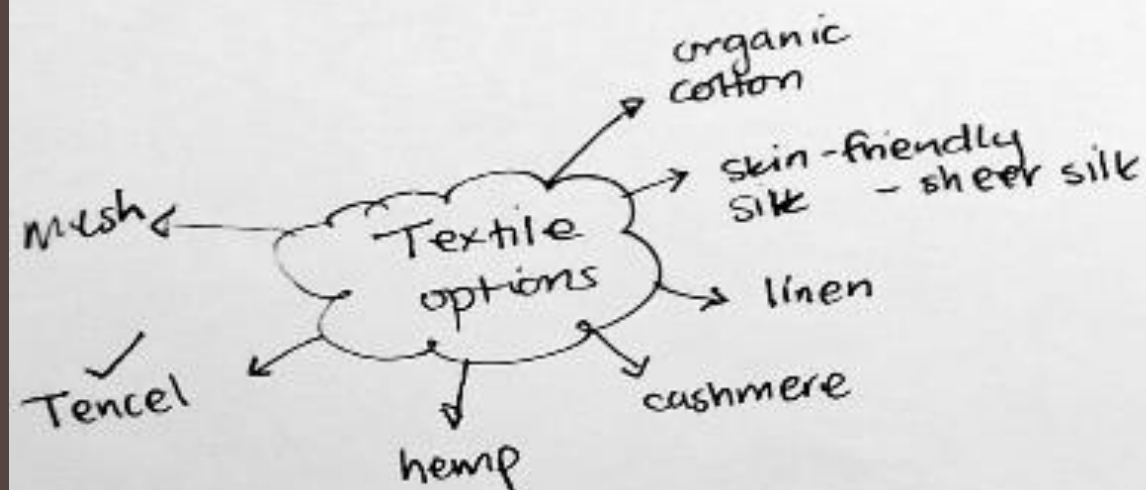
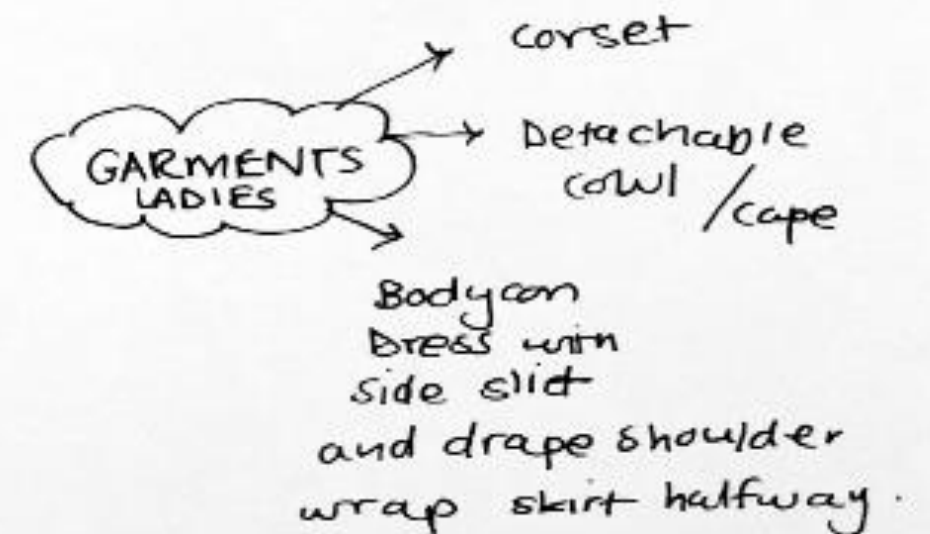
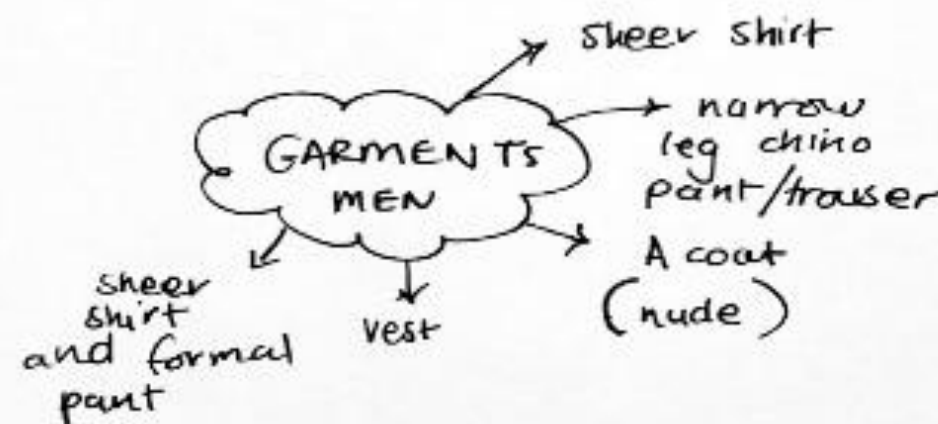
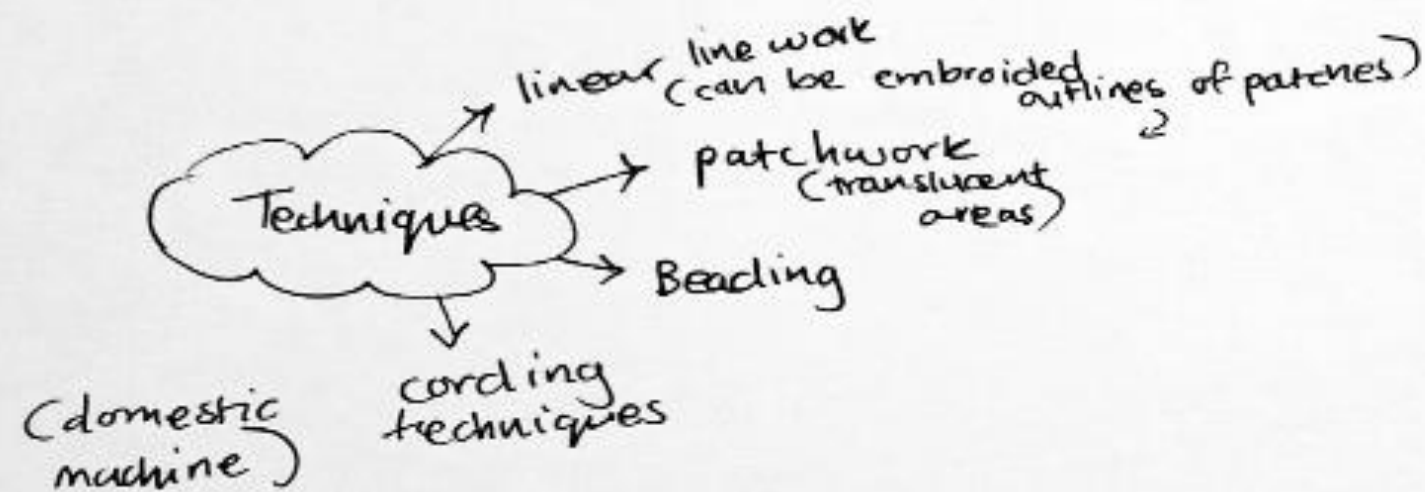
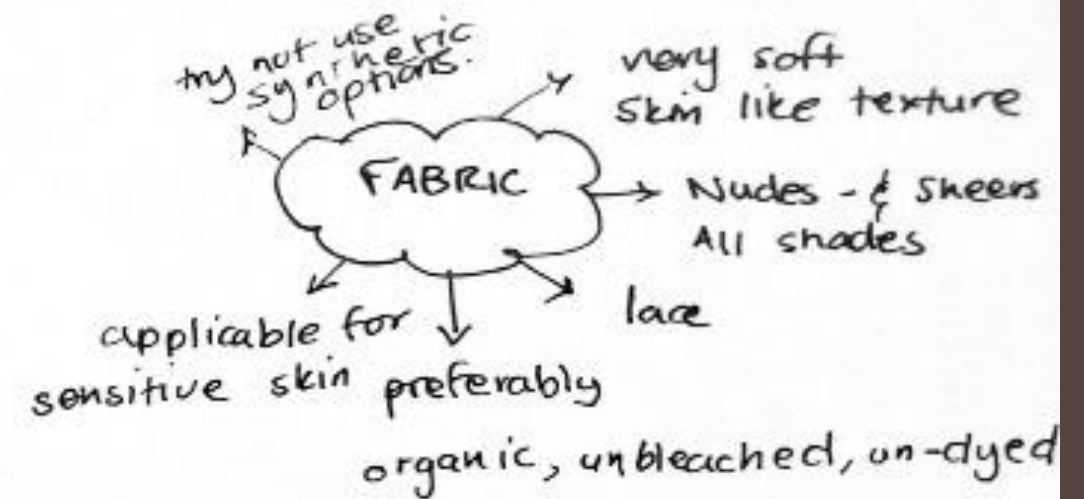
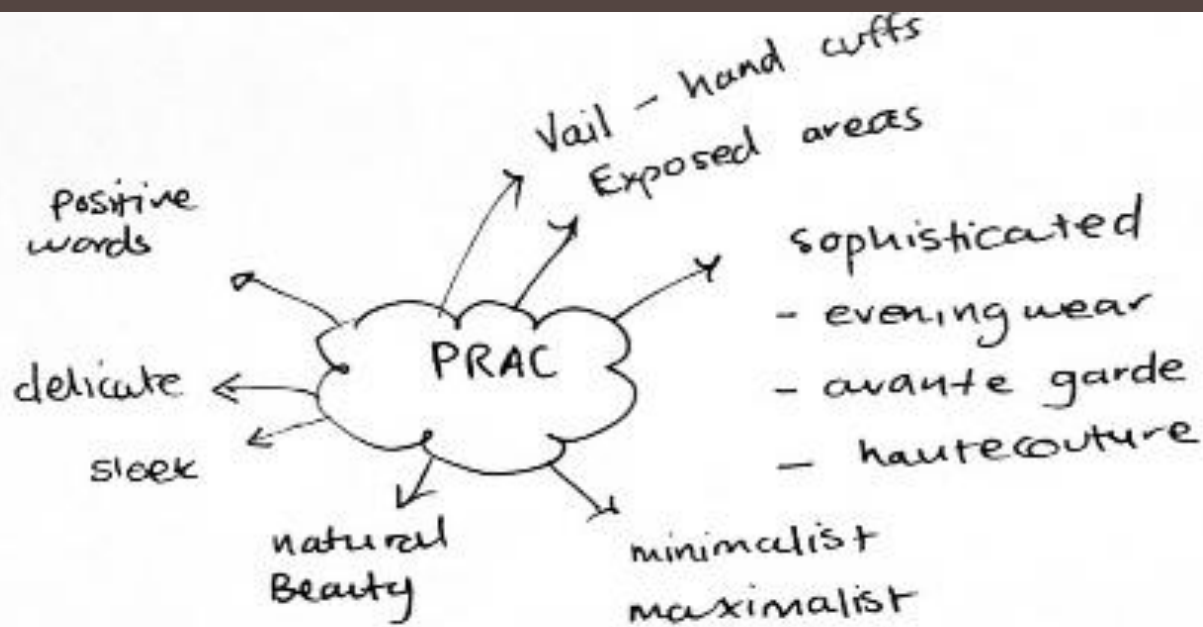
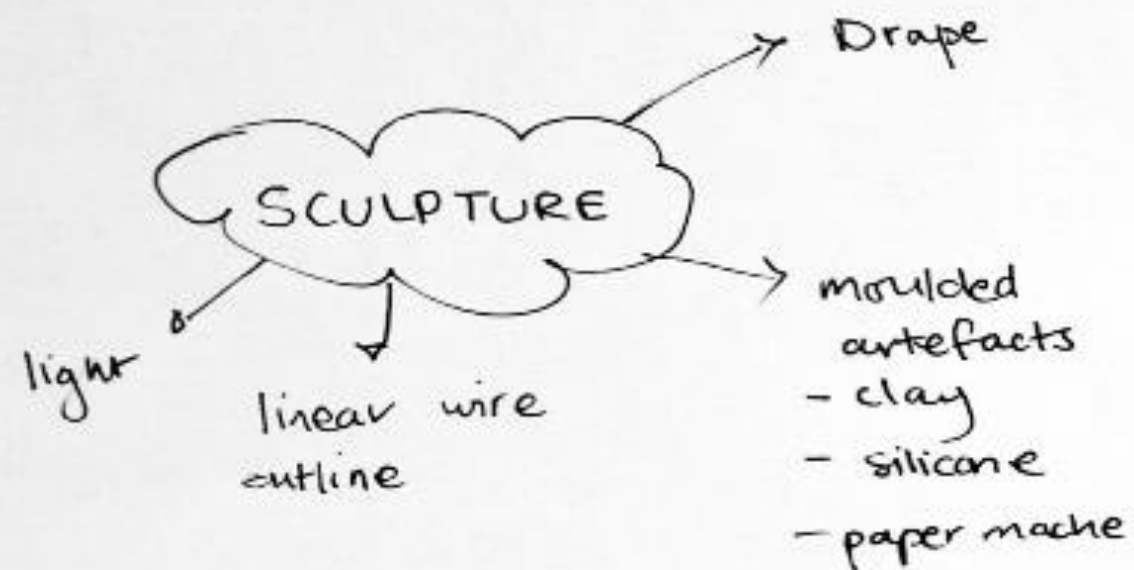
Concept

Fashion designers make themselves aware of emerging trend forecasts that provide insightful information of popular pantones, design elements, silhouettes, fabrics, concepts, themes and more. My skin is not a trend, and my study will not consider vitiligo or any health condition for that matter as a trend. This matter was expressed by some models whose Instagram pages I analysed. Therefore, the concept is about communicating the subject of vitiligo through fashion artefacts, reflecting the beauty of a vitiligo story. The concept of the practical component has been reinforced throughout the study.

Inspiration Board



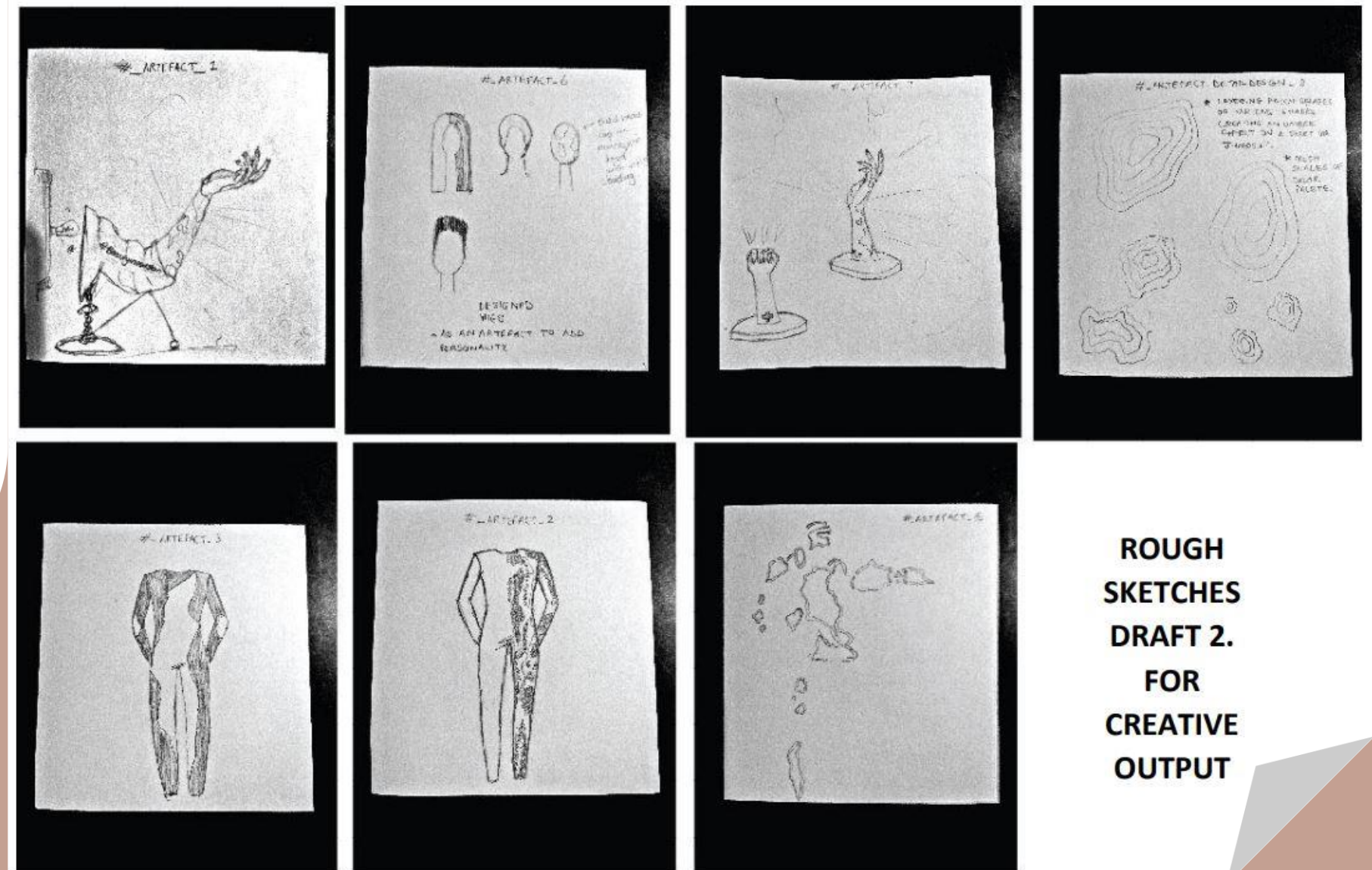
Visual Brainstorming



Rough Sketches I



1st & 2nd Draft



Hashtags

#inourskinwewin

#Viti_Beauty

HASHTAGS
TO USE ON
PRAC
DESIGNS

#a_work_of_art

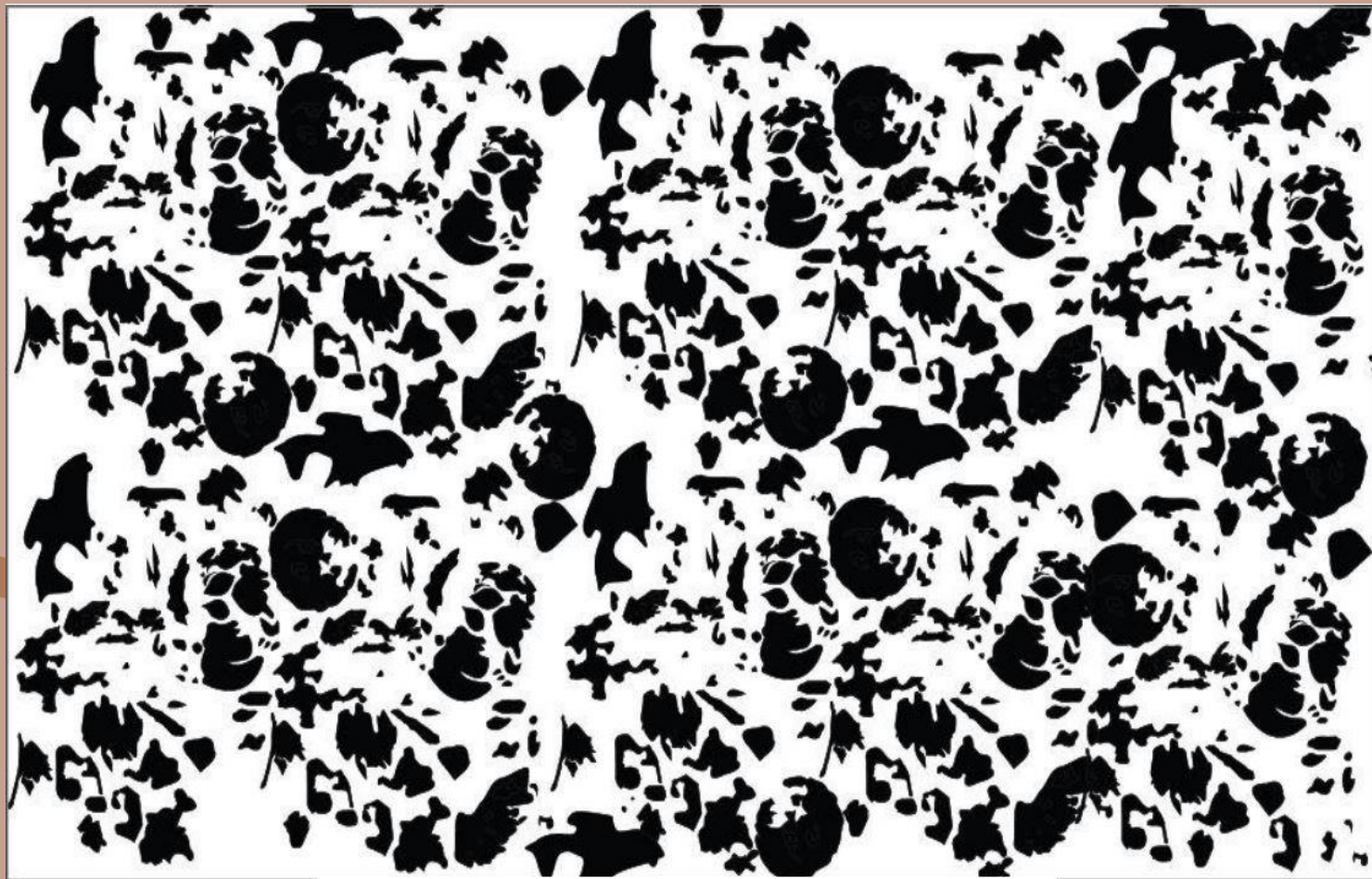
#LovetheVlife

#I_am_my_own_masterpiece

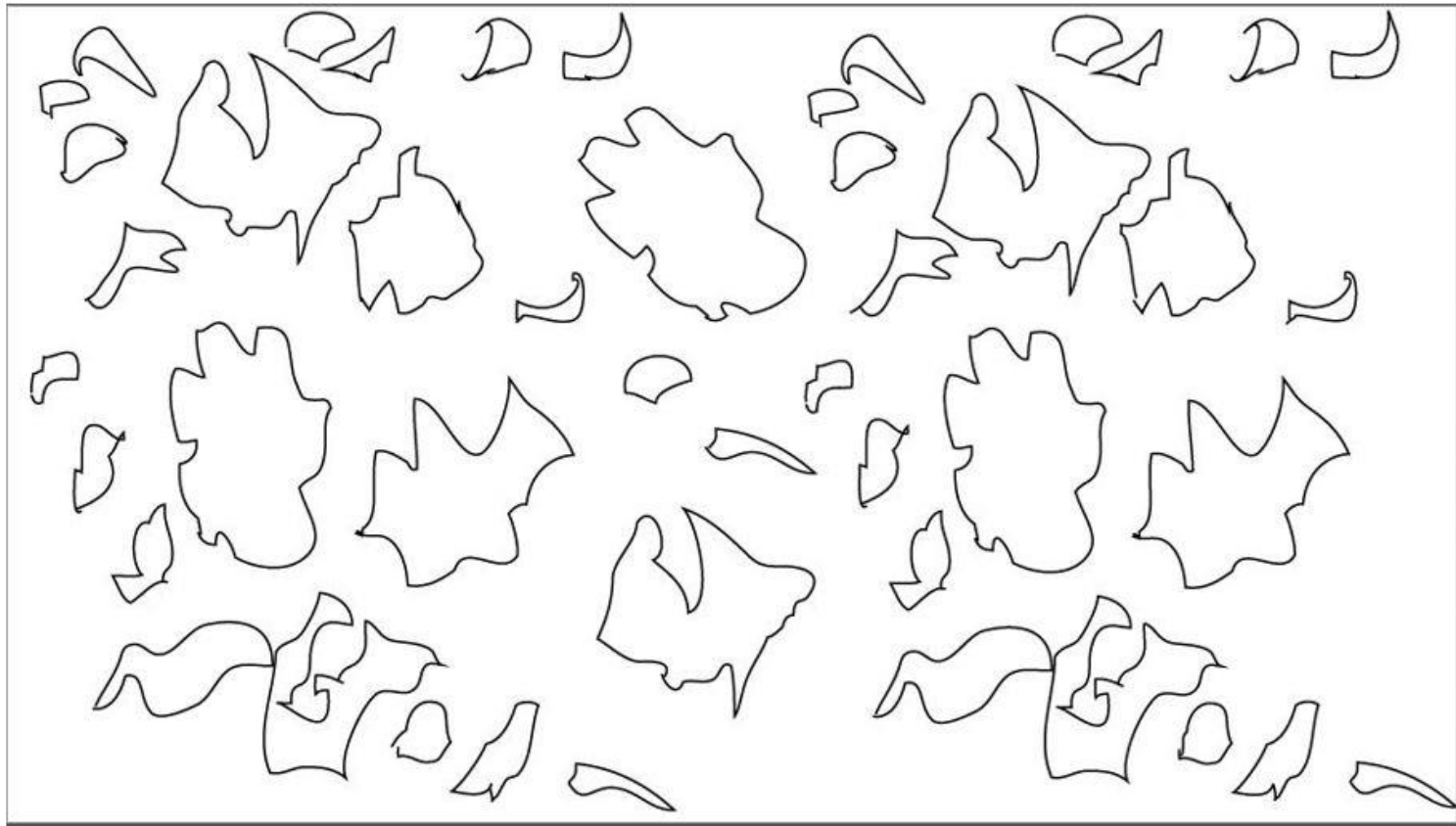
#Blessedwithamark

#Embrace_diversity

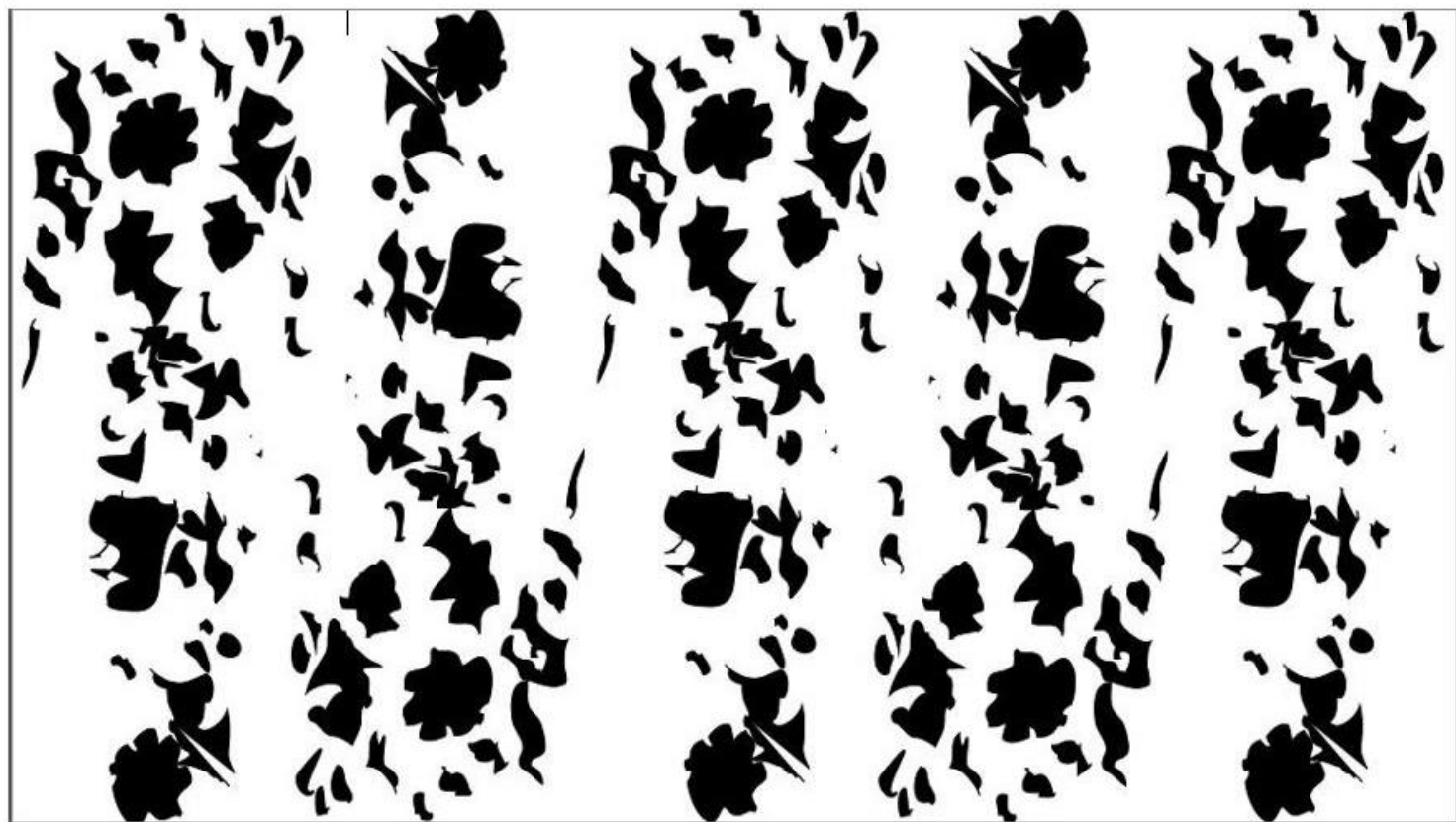
#itscalledvtiligo



LASER CUT PRINT 1



LASER CUT PRINT 3



LASER CUT PRINT 2

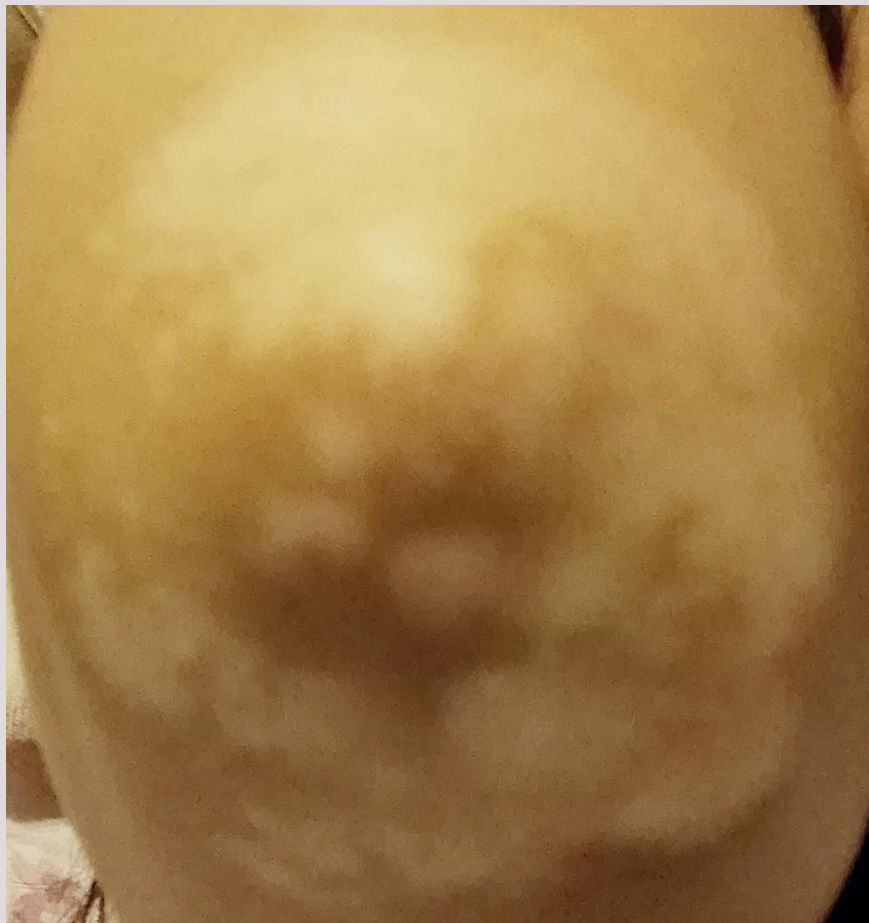
Laser Cut Design Variations



PROCESS OF INCLUDING A FEW OF MY OWN VITILIGO LESIONS INTO THE LASER CUT DESIGNS USING ADOBE ILLUSTRATOR



Right elbow image



Tracing of vitiligo lesion of right elbow

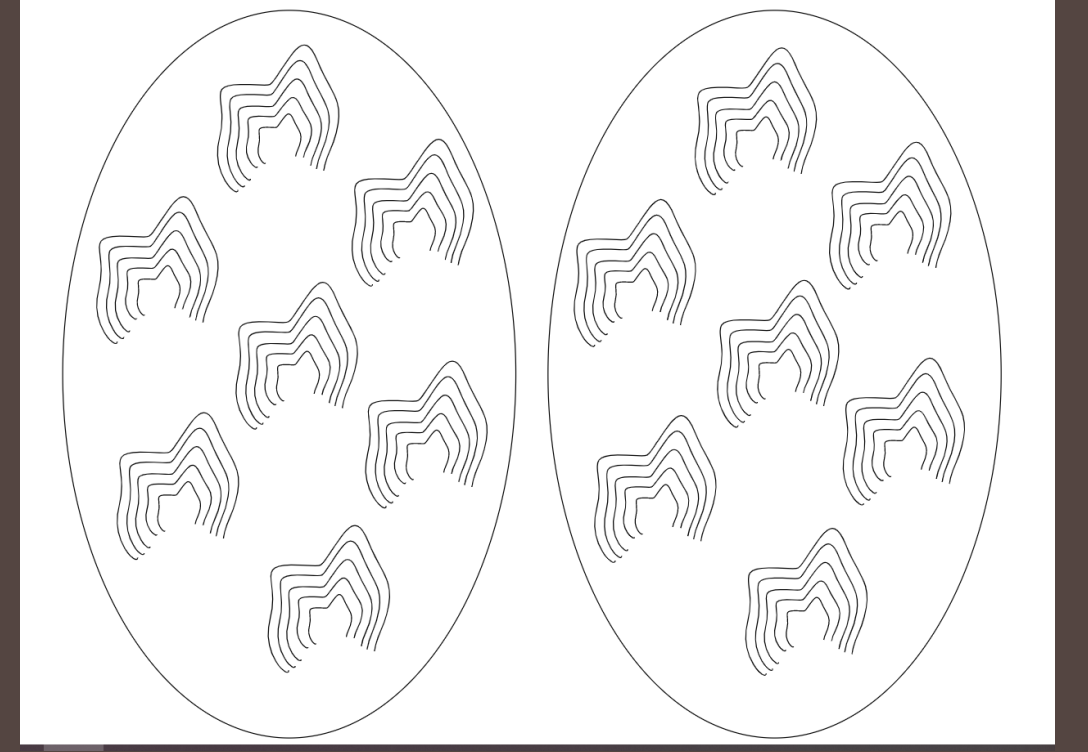
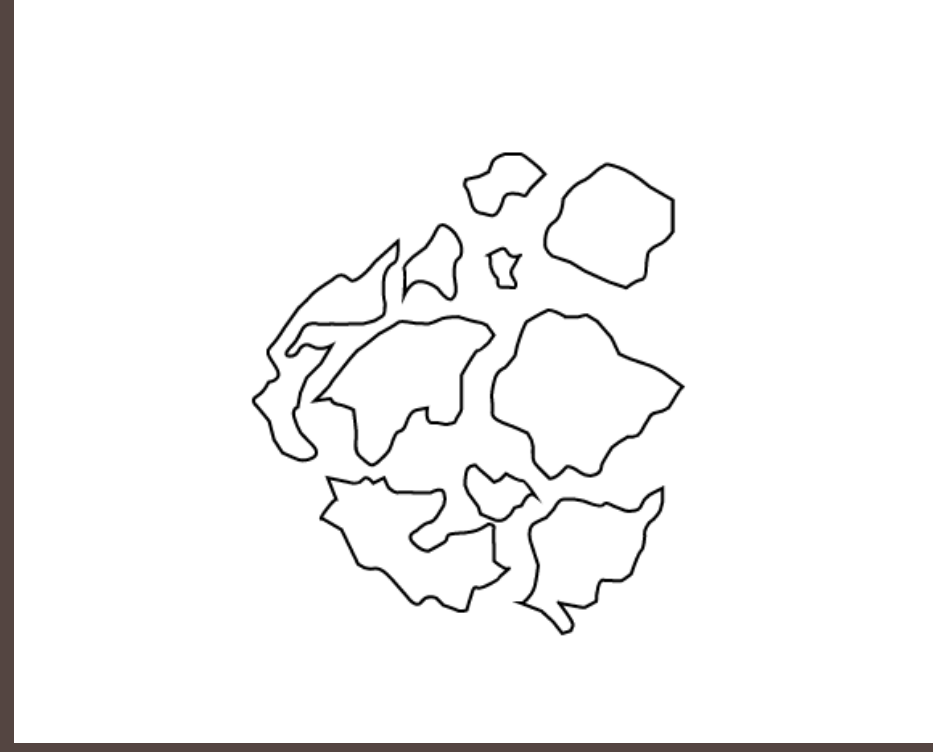
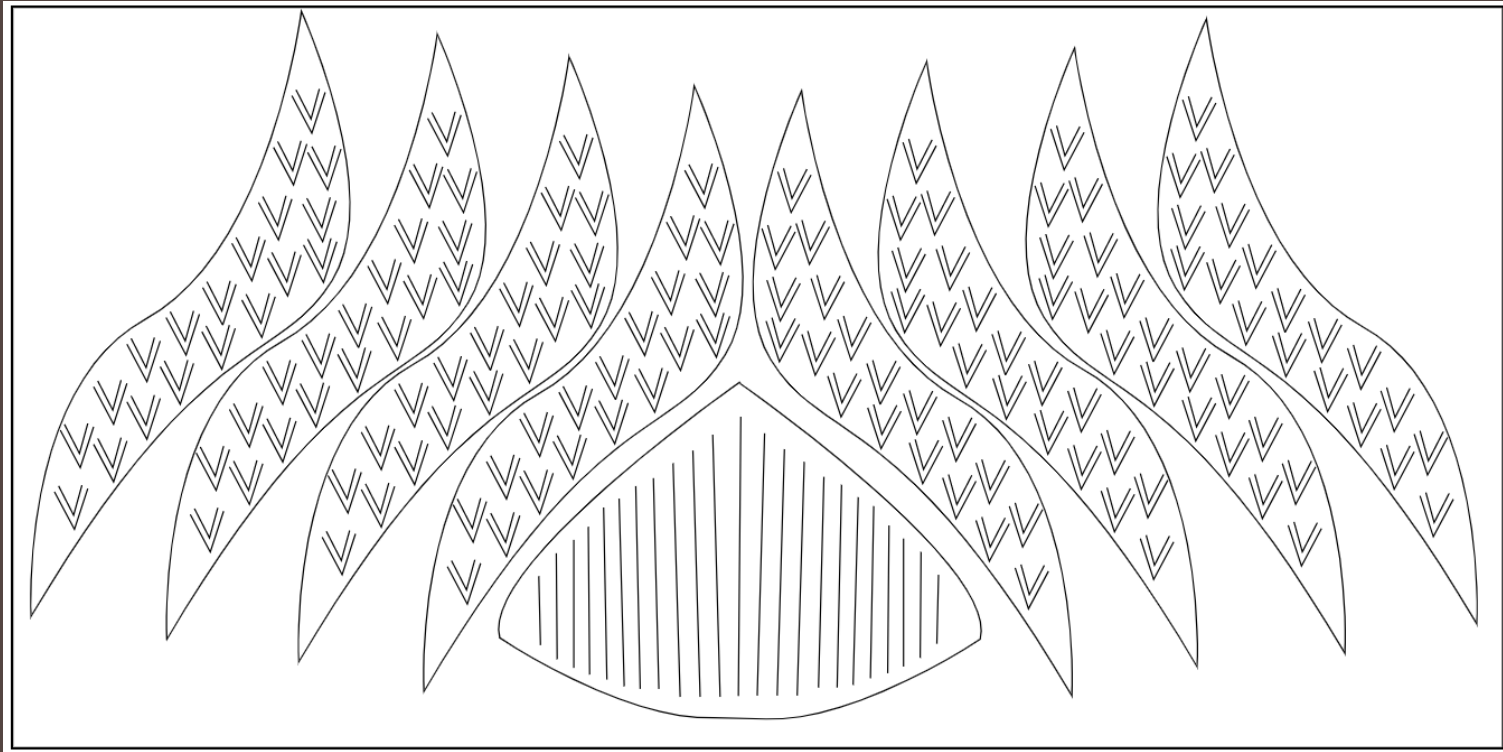
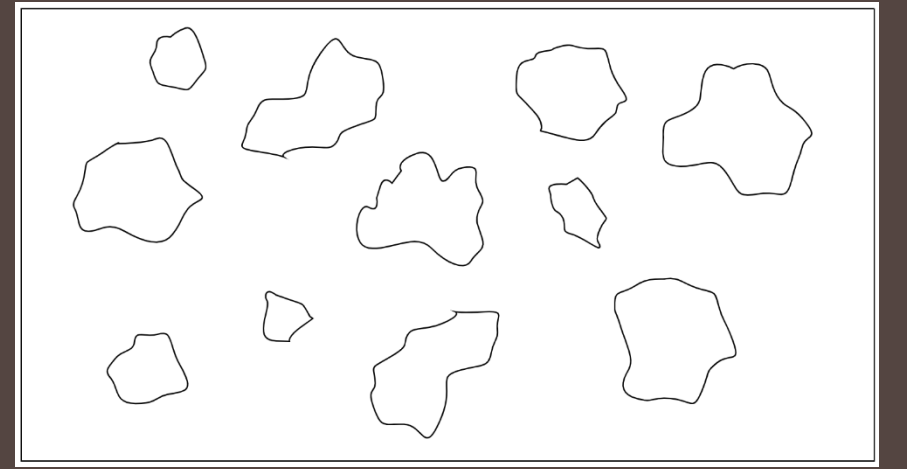
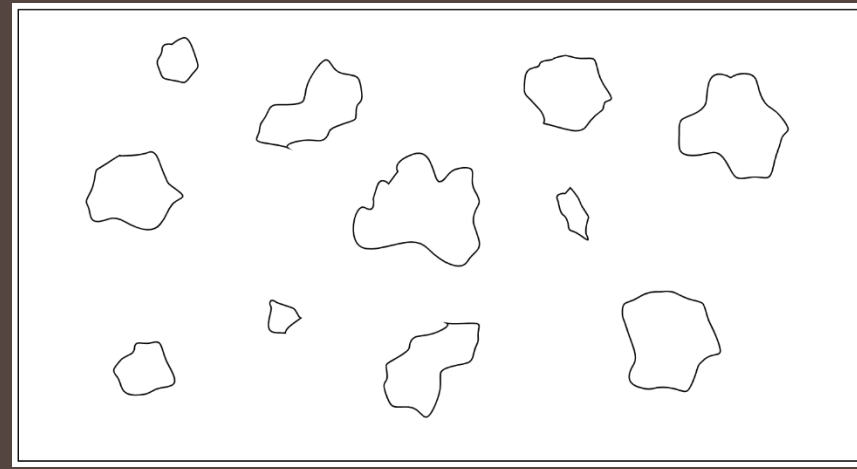
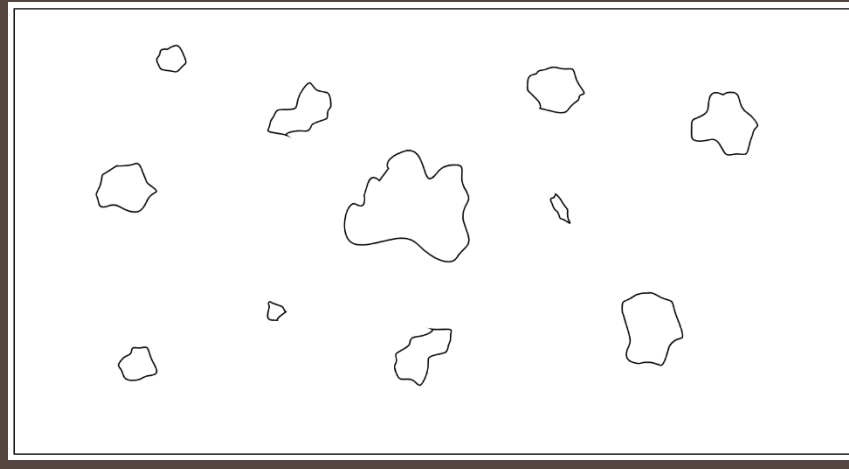
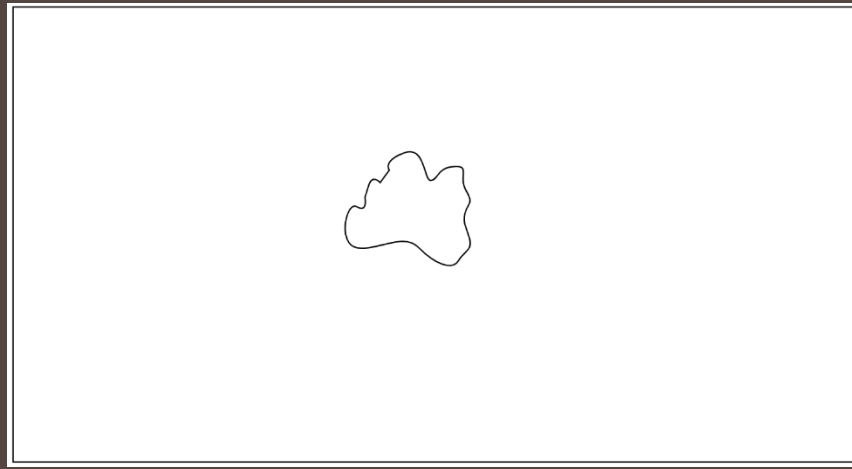


Extracted shape of vitiligo lesion

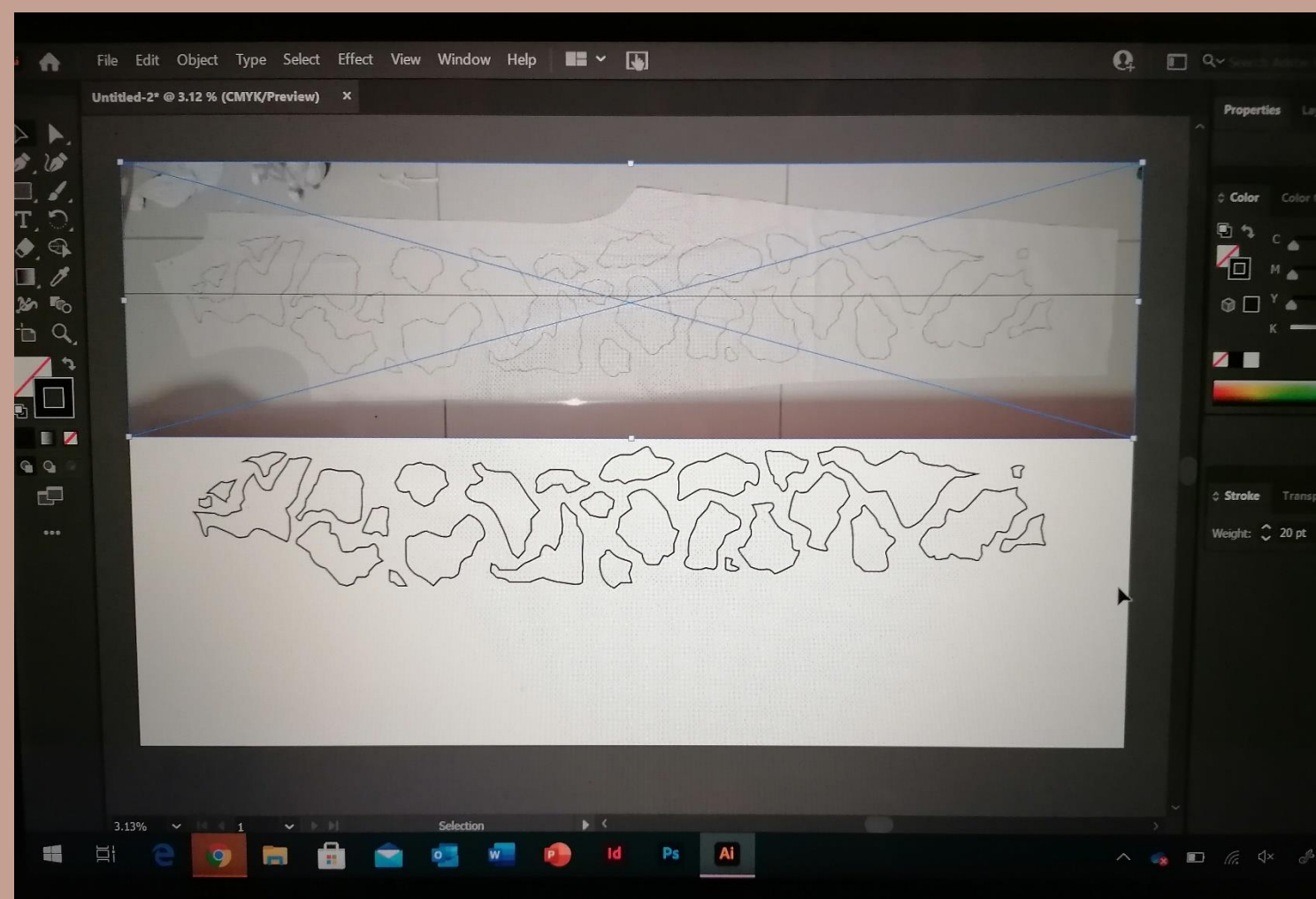


Inclusion of shape in laser cut design

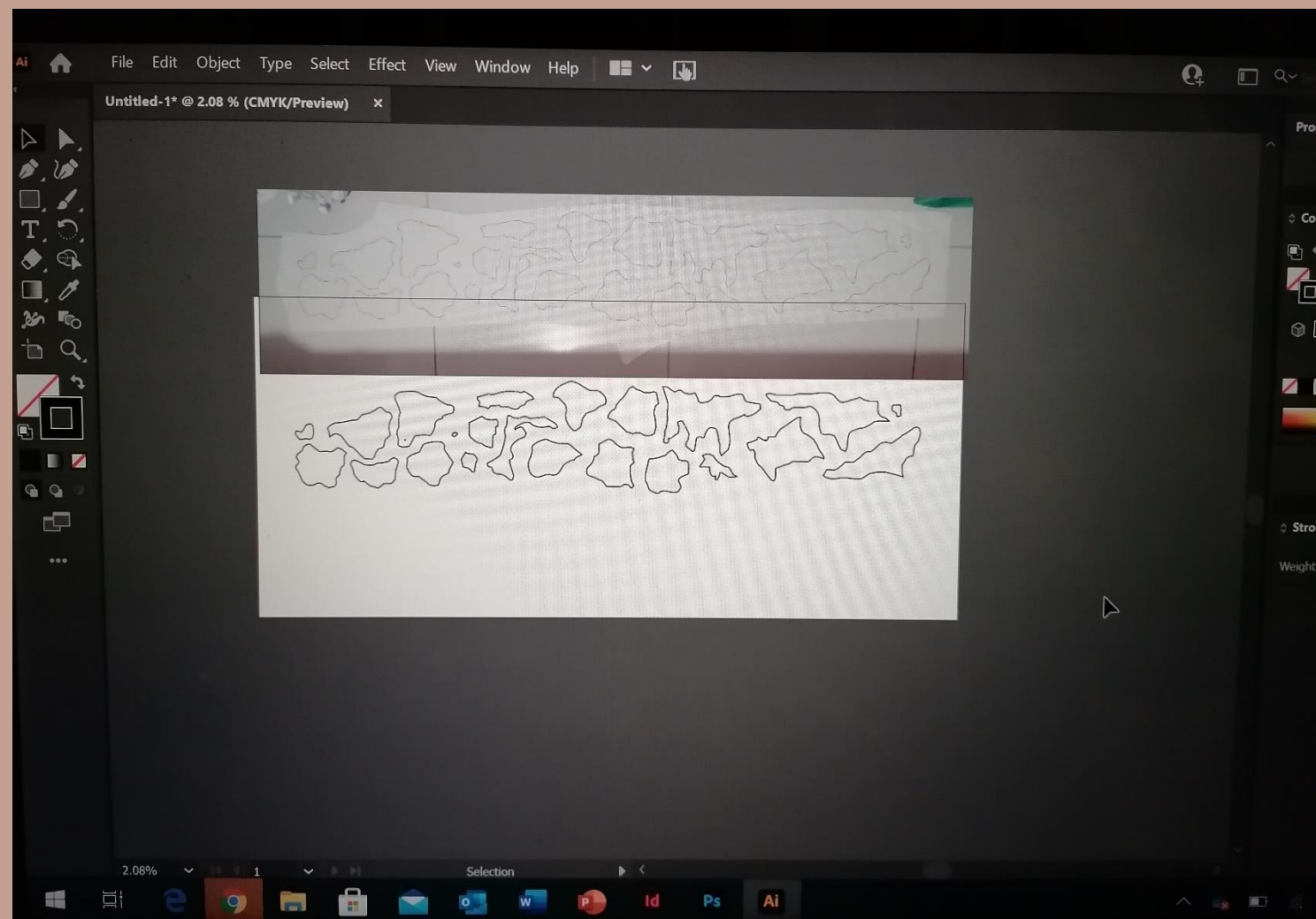




Laser cut designs for
photoshoot props



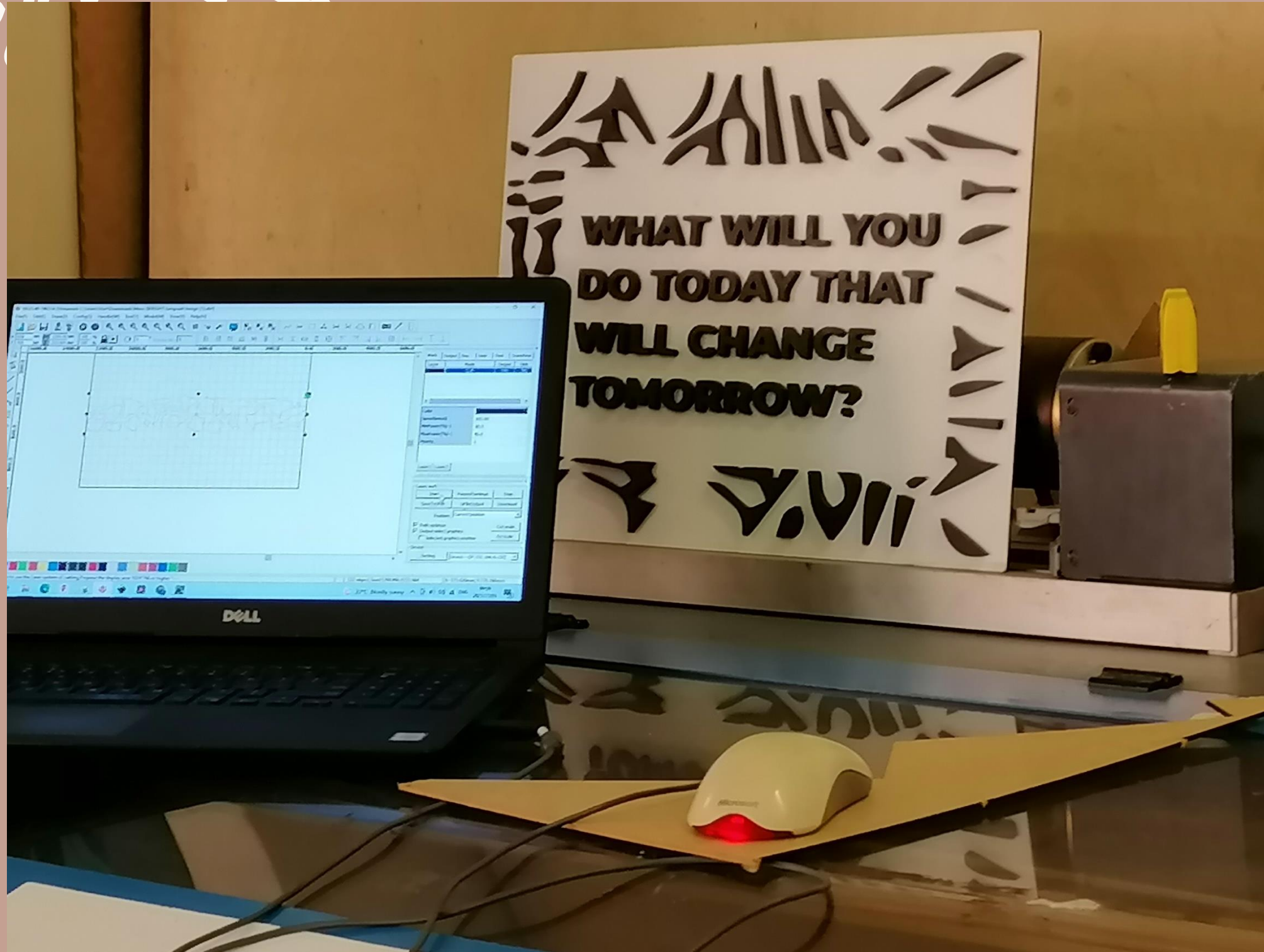
I have used the Adobe Illustrator software to place an image of the 4th artefact mockup (sample/toile). The initial unstitched jumpsuit mockup is displayed as a 2-dimensional version of what a half front and back, full-scale pattern piece would look like, however, in calico fabric. The images on the left were taken before sewing up the sample because it was easier to sketch a laser cut design manually and digitally before the artefact takes a 3-dimensional form.



On the necessary fabric pieces, I had drawn vitiligo lesions manually and thereafter traced the shapes onto Adobe Illustrator for the design to fit within the perimeter of the fabric piece, allocating space for seam allowance in order to sew up the laser up jumpsuit.

The Illustrator file was saved as a .svg file, allowing for the file format to work on the laser cutting software and machine.

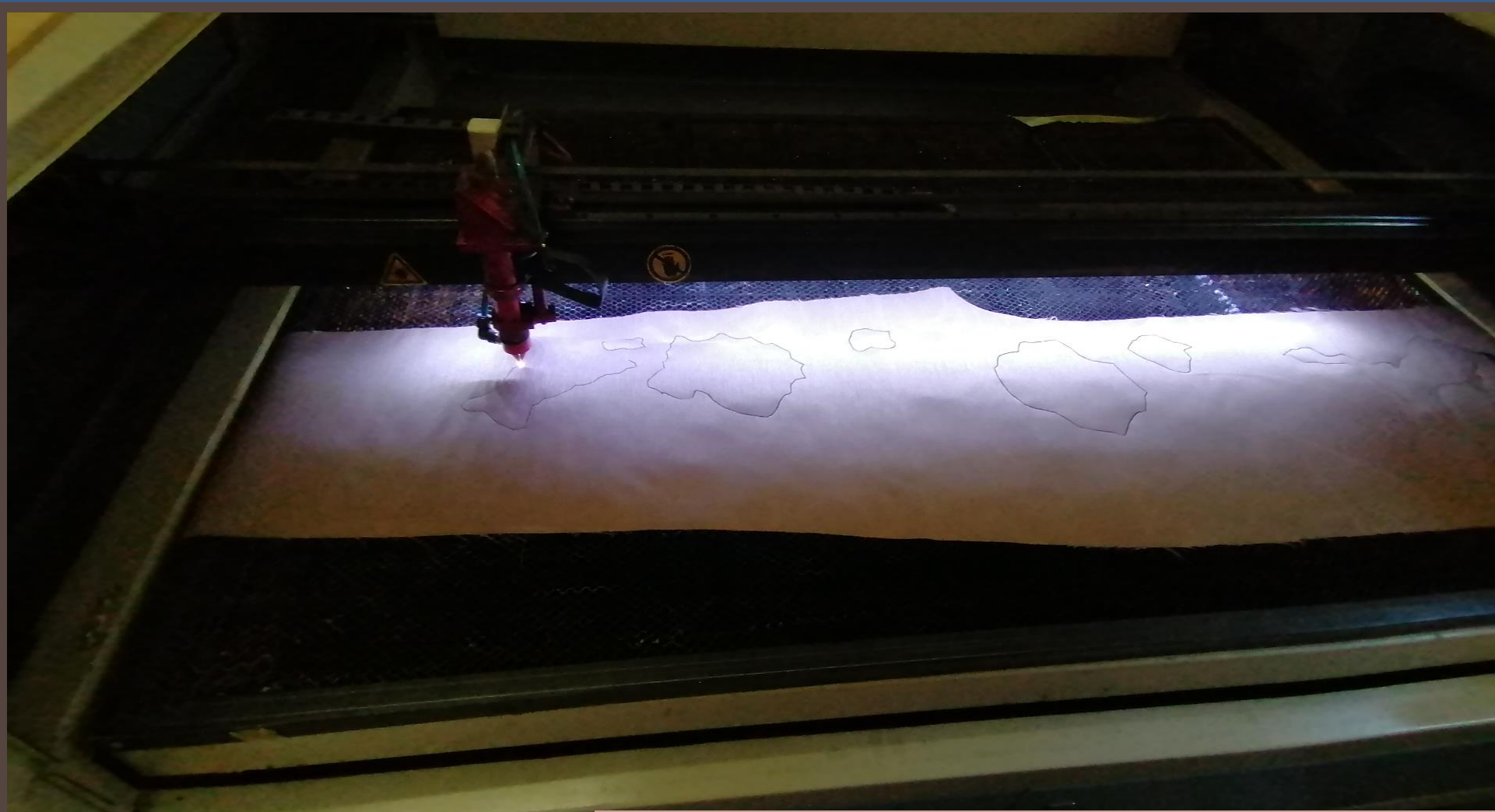
At the MakerSpace is where I had assisted to complete my laser cutting. The creatives that work there, welcomed me to their workspaces to show, educate and assist in using their equipment.



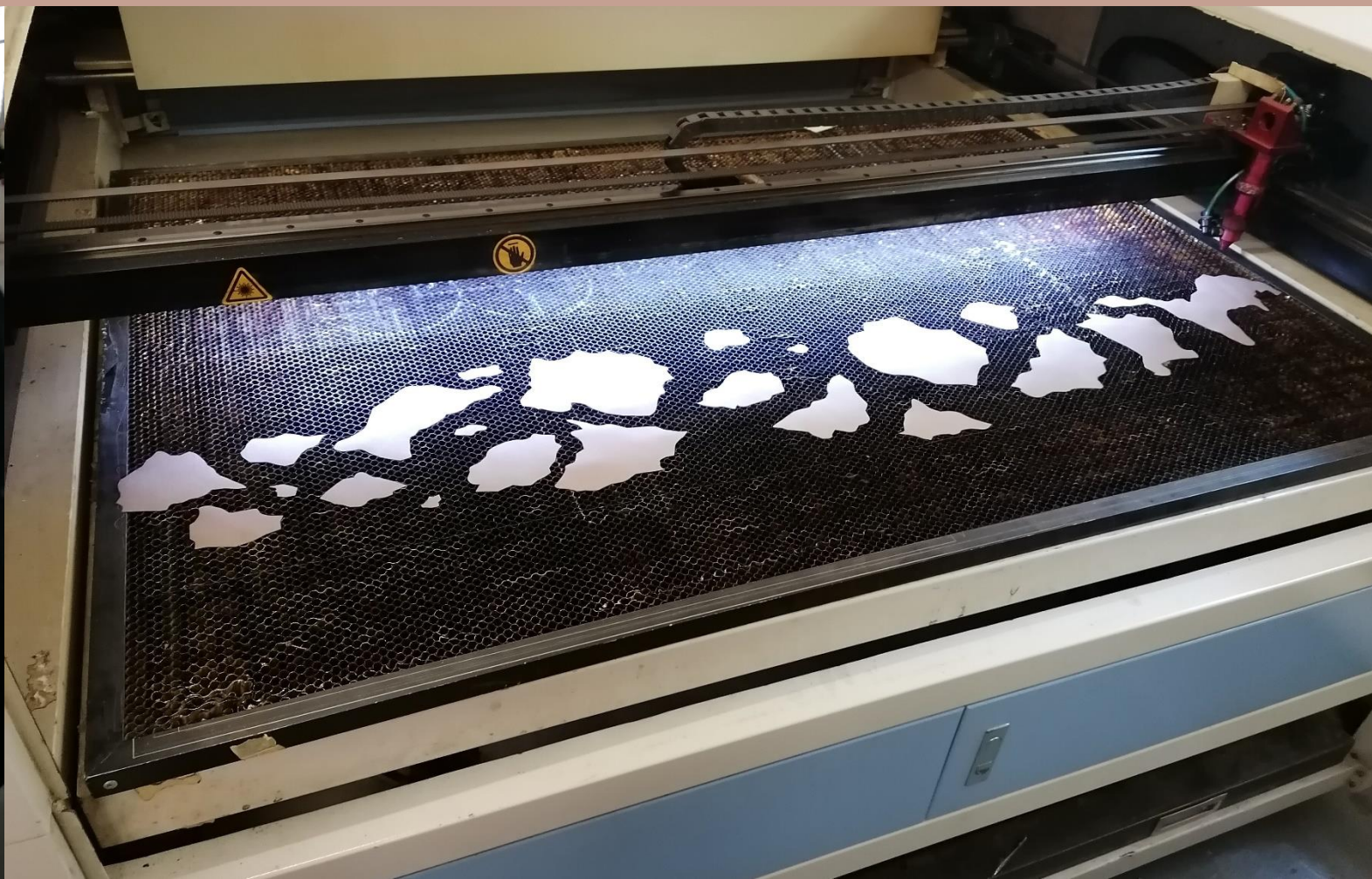
I took this image in the area where my saved .svg files were opened into a software used to program the laser cutting machine. I found the saying of "What will you do today that will change tomorrow?" quite purposeful and inspiring as I aim to shed light on vitiligo.



The laser cutting machine

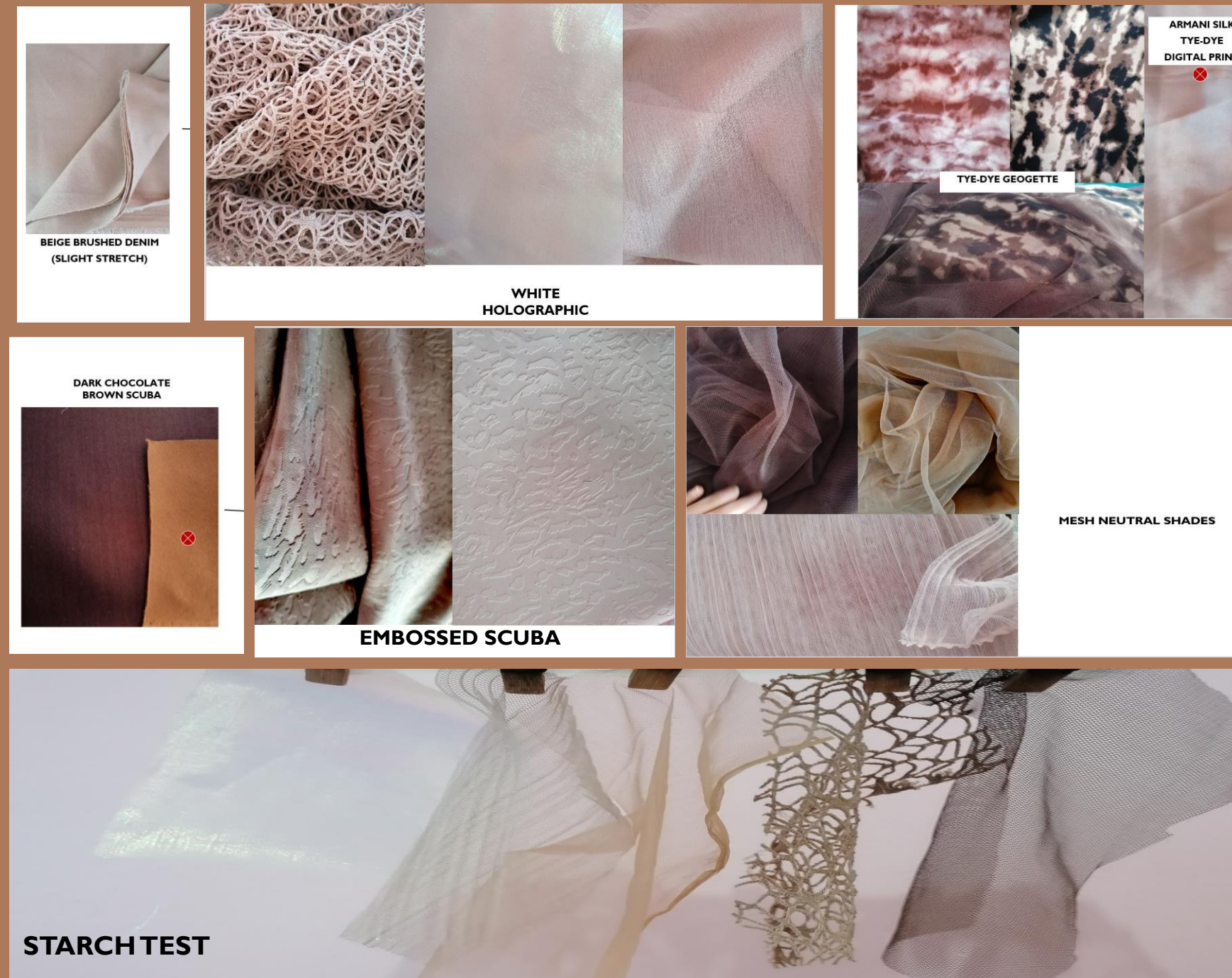


Noku from The MakerSpace, operating the laser cutting machine





Fabric Choices



A variety of suitable fabrics were purchased, where I had conducted a starch test in hope to build strength and structure into the artefacts



The above image reflects the final selection of fabric/textile used toward making up the fashion artefacts.

Rough Sketches 2

ROUGH SKETCHES DRAFT 2. FOR CREATIVE OUTPUT

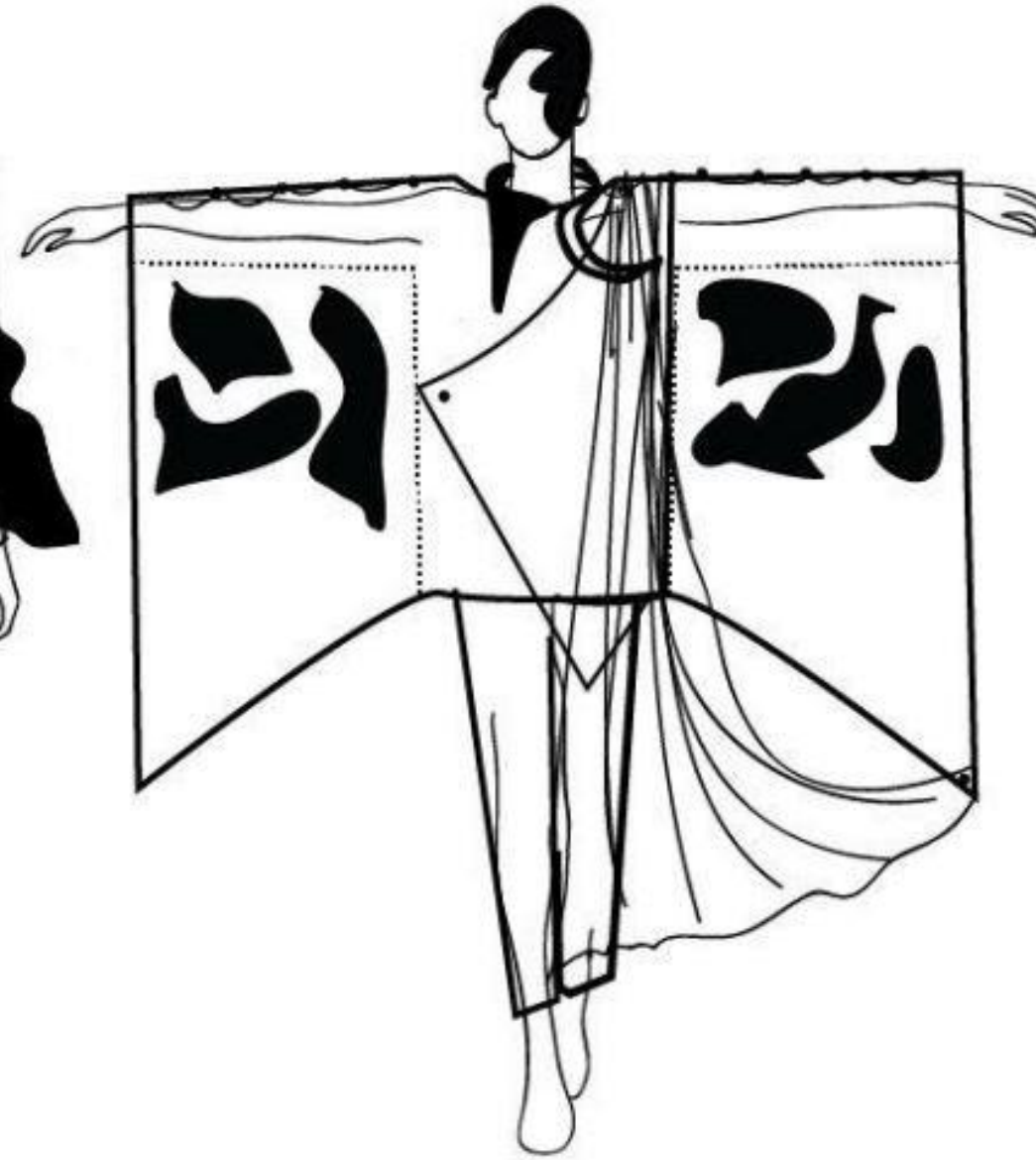
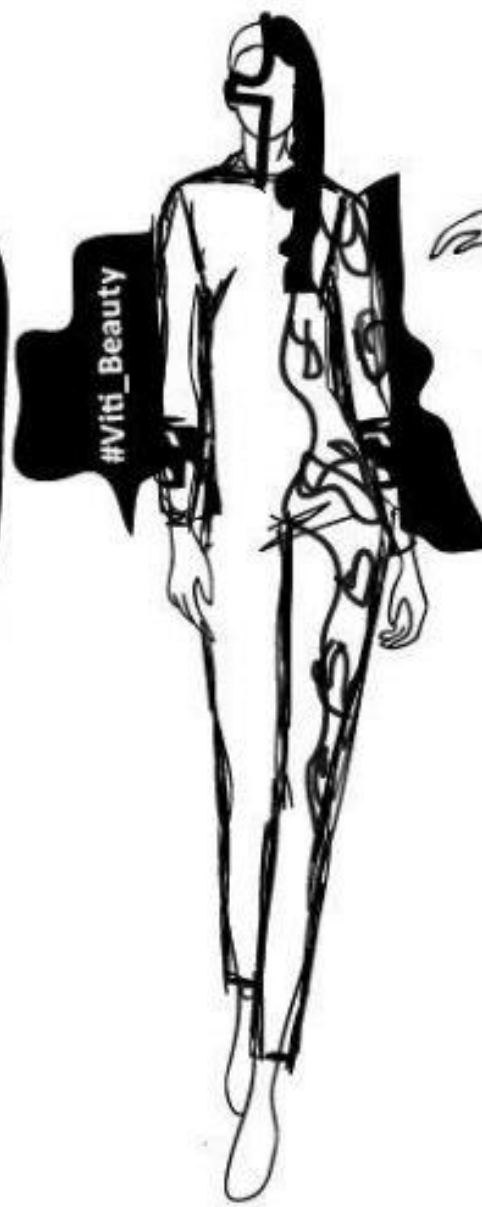
#a_work_of_art



Love
The
V
life

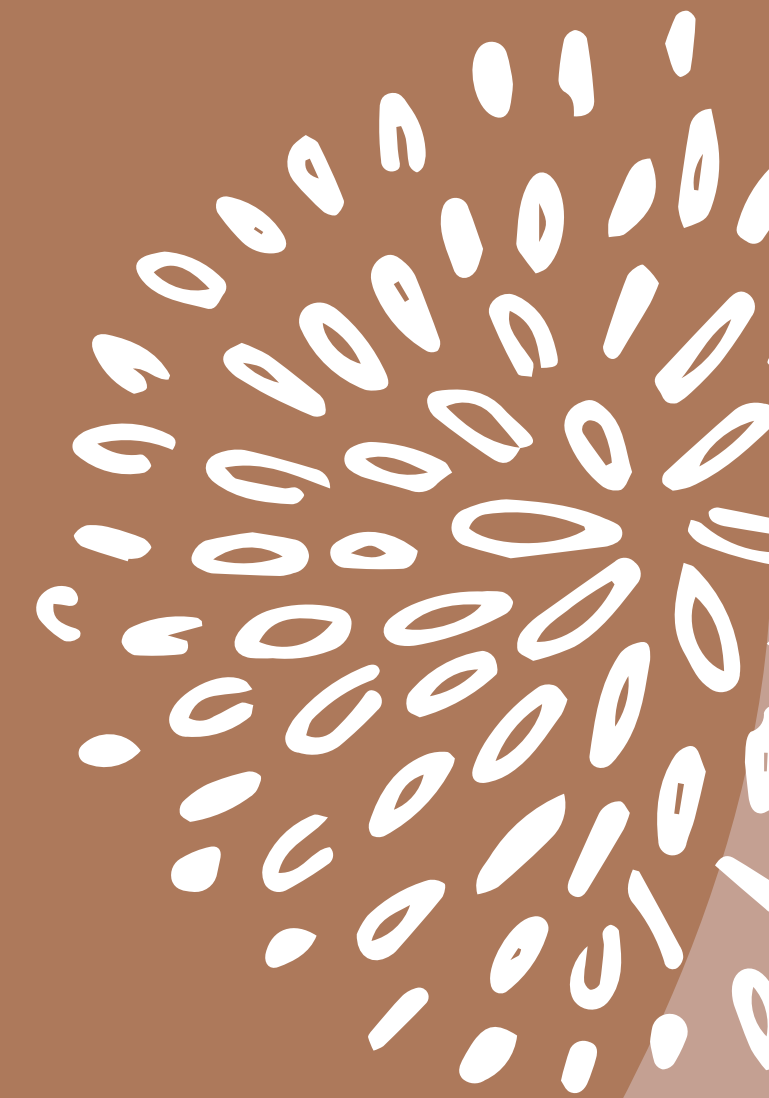


#Viti_Beauty

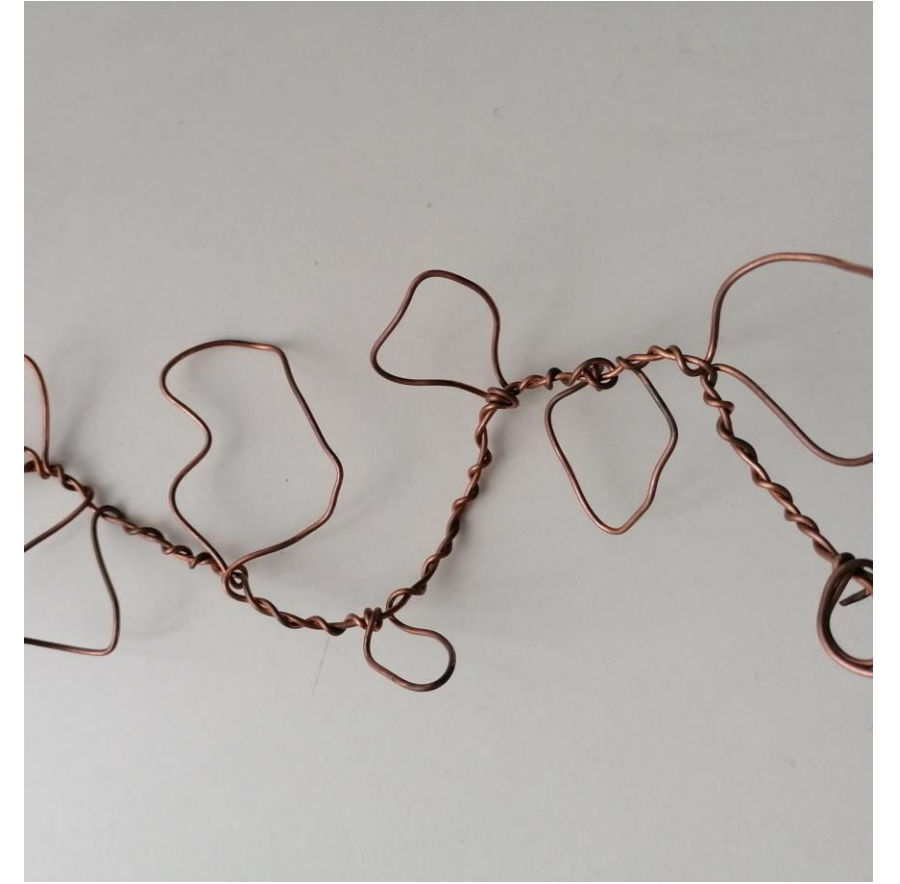
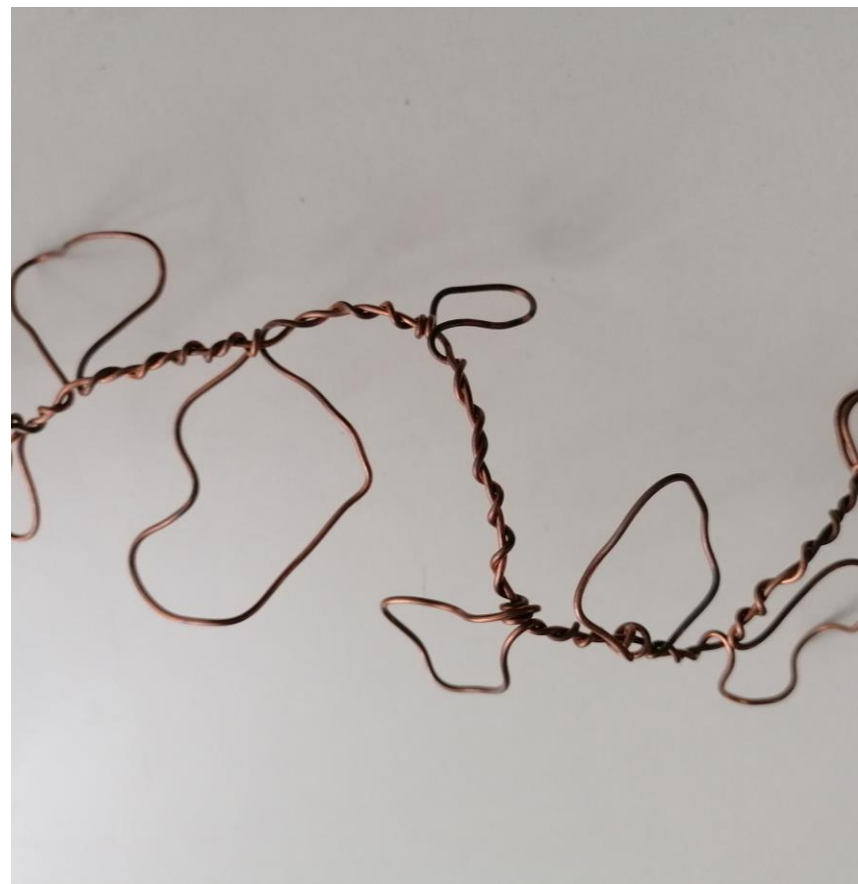


Miniature sample toile prototypes

ROUGH IDEA SAMPLE MOCK UPS



Other Sampling



HAESLOOP



As part of my experimentation and sampling process, I had initially desired to include a copper/rose gold flare to the collection for a sophisticated edge.

I went to Haesloop, where they had sponsored me samples I had requested and more. The samples received ranged from yellow gold to antique bronze. However, I was hoping for a rose gold which could only be electroplated in bulk for the process to be successful. I was then referred to the electroplating company called Qualgold Electroplating, where I travelled to thereafter, to achieve the desired colour.



QUALGOLD ELECTROPLATING

At Qualgold Electroplating, my arrival was expected with my special request. Since the pieces I had did not meet the required weighting, the manager was welcoming and allowed my Haesloop embellishments to be rose gold electroplated, along with a bucket of various other pieces. Therefore, as my luck once again Qualgold Electroplating sponsored my study, along with the help of progress images of the steps taken to electroplate.

The images and steps continue as follows:

- Step 1: Stripping off lacquer in sulphuric acid for +- 3mins.
- Step 2: Rinsing off sulphuric acid
- Step 3: Soaking in cyanide +-1min
- Step 4: Dip in steel stripper



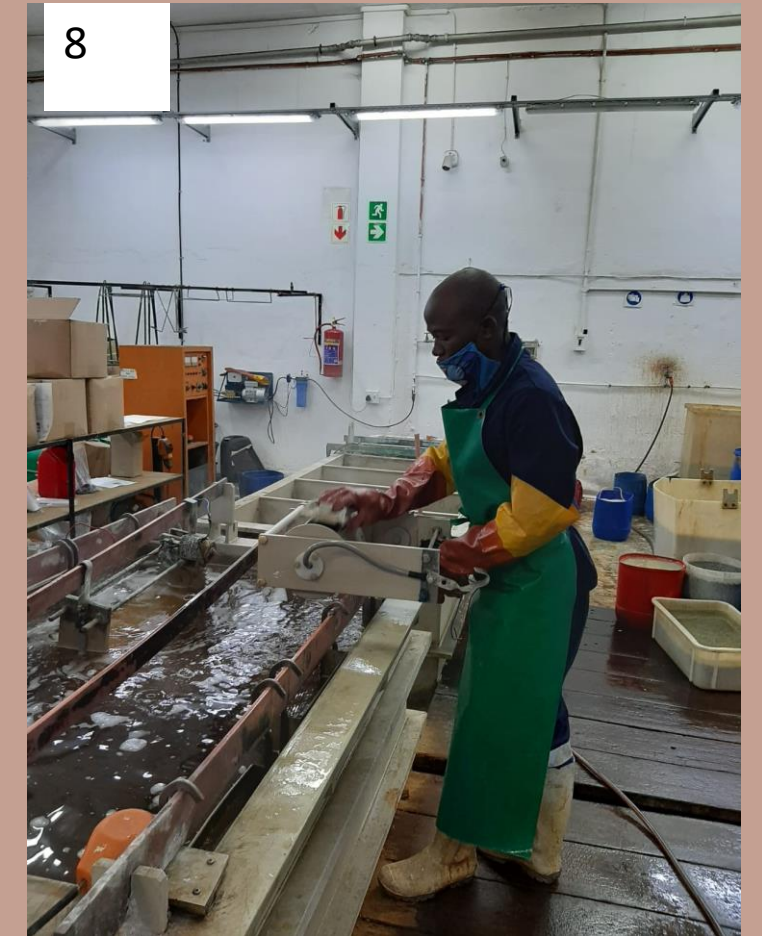
QUALGOLD ELECTROPLATING

- Step 5: Rinse in water
- Step 6: Dip in acid tank
- Step 7: Place in barrel for plating
- Step 8: In copper tank for +-30 mins



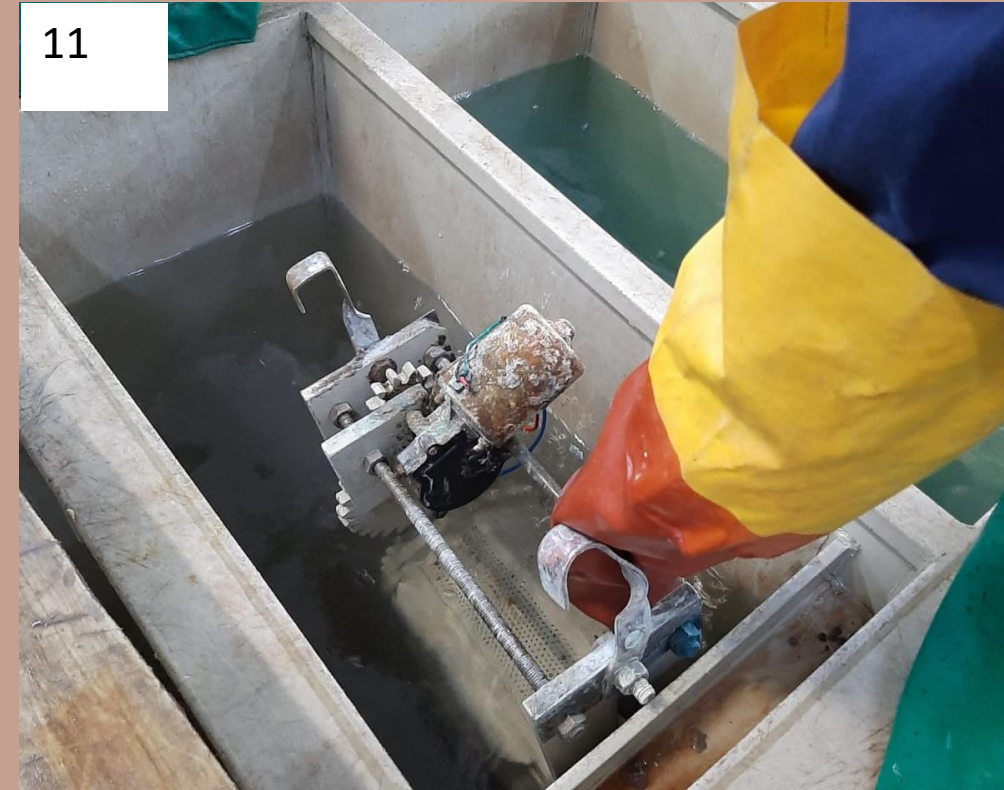
QUALGOLD ELECTROPLATING

- Step 8: Barrel in copper tank
- Step 8: Barrel out of copper tank
- Step 9: Rinse x2
- Step 10: Dip in acid tank



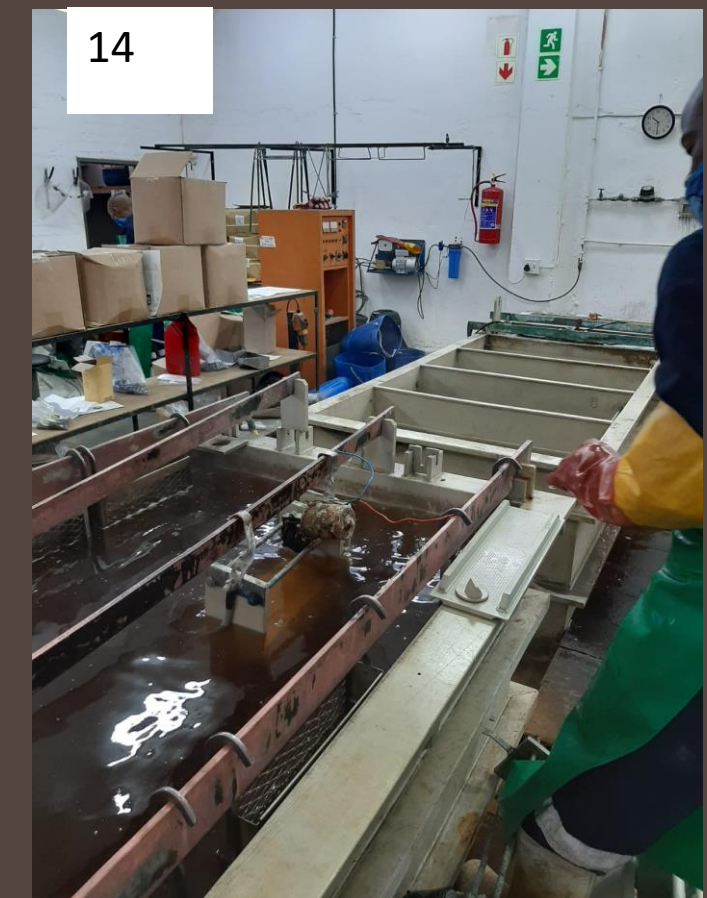
QUALGOLD ELECTROPLATING

- Step 11: Rinse
- Step 12: In Nickel tank for +- hour
- Step 12: In Nickel tank
- Step 12: Out of Nickel tank +- 1hour later



QUALGOLD ELECTROPLATING

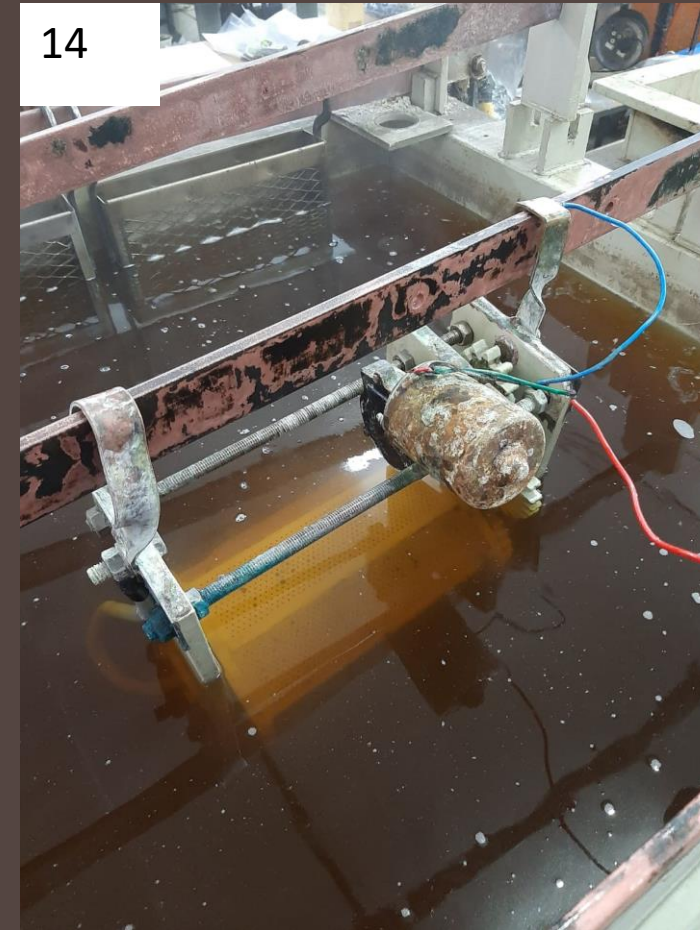
- Step 13: Rinse x3
- Step 14: Back in Copper tank for +-3mins



(Joelle 2021)

QUALGOLD ELECTROPLATING

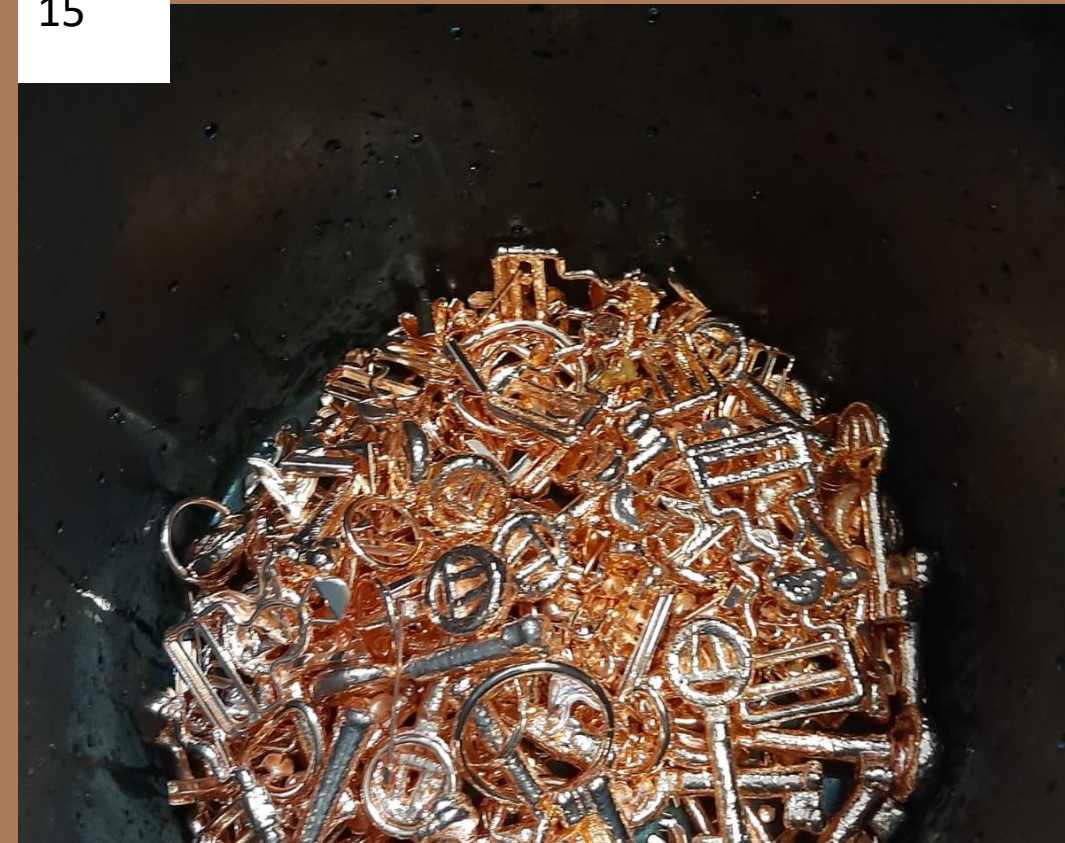
- Step 14: Ready to come out of copper tank
- Step 15: Rinse x2



QUALGOLD ELECTROPLATING

- Step 15: Ready to go in the dryer
- Step 16: In the dryer for +-2 minutes
- Step 16: Dry and ready to come out

15



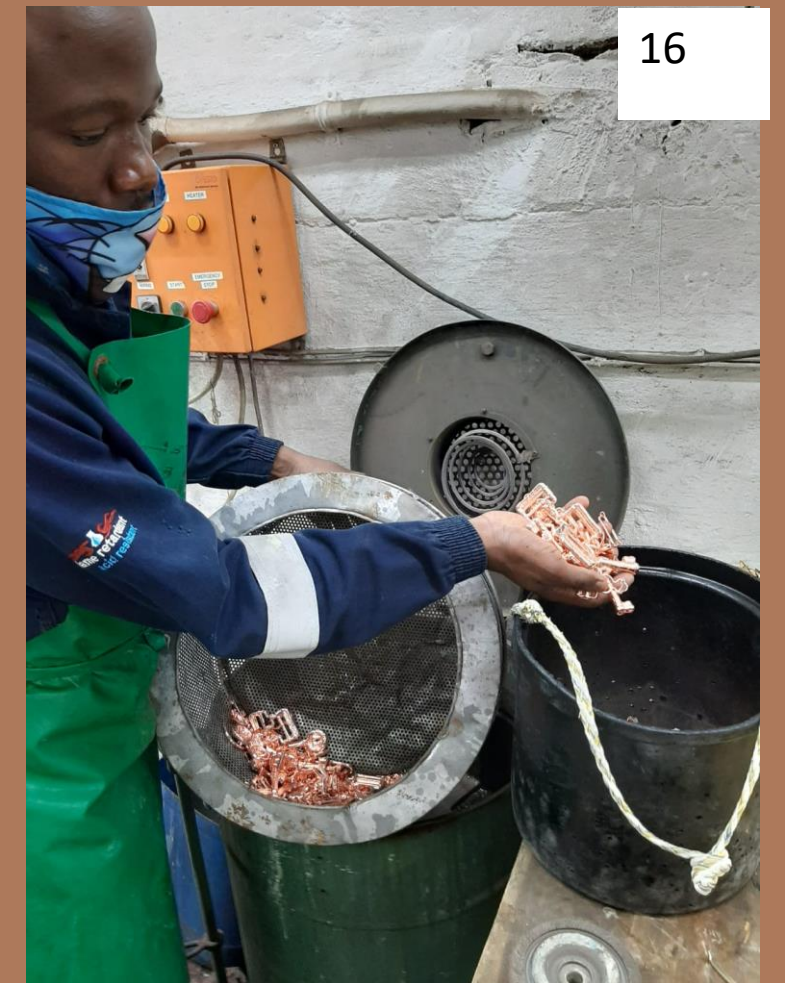
16



16



16



(Joelle 2021)

QUALGOLD ELECTROPLATING

- Step 17: Dipped in water -based lacquer
- Step 18: Back in the dryer for +-3mins
- Step 19: Final step is the cooling down on the sorting table.

17



18



(Joelle 2021)

19





The rose gold electroplated embellishments were meant to add clean sharp edges to the overall look as shown in the images. However, it was excluded from the final design. The reason for exclusion was that collar corners could possibly become a distracting element, decreasing the focus of the concept about vitiligo in these specific designs of artefacts, and therefore did not align aesthetically.

I, therefore, hope to create another artefact that includes all the electroplated embellishments, inspired by the study but not for the study, to thank the sponsors.



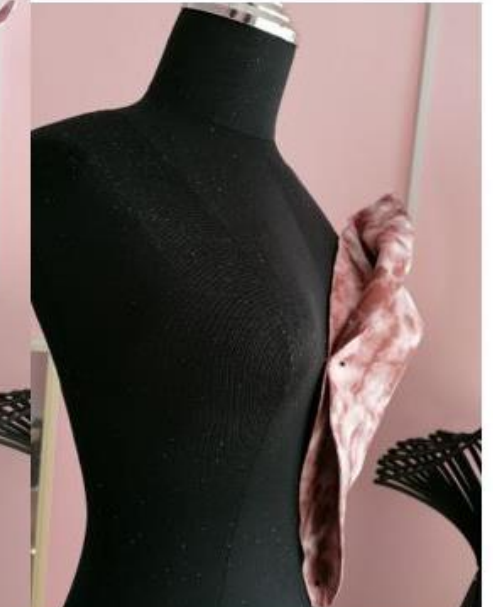
Building structure into the textile for the fashion artefact, sculptural pieces

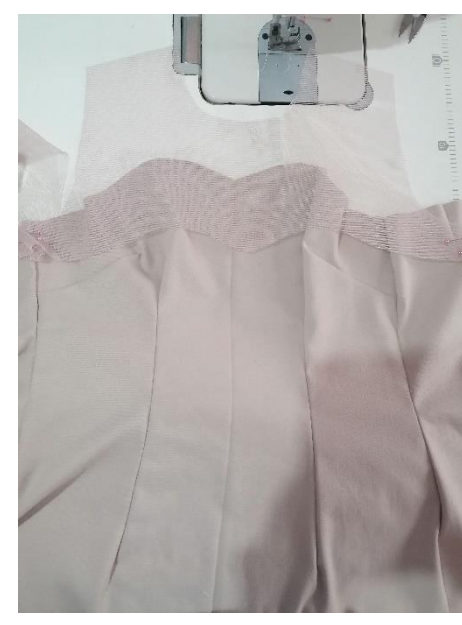


**TYE-DYE
GEOGETTE**



CANVAS





The created fashion artefacts



Artefact 1: #Viti_Beauties

Asymmetrical female jumpsuit and coat

The #Viti_Beauties depicts skin with subtle textures of embossed patches including layering of textiles to create unique fabrication techniques. The purpose of layering celebrates the anatomy of layered textures of the skin generally and specifically of vitiligo.



Figure 66: Asymmetrical woman's jumpsuit and coat. Embossed Scuba, Invisible zip, laser cut beige denim layering.

Designer: E. Sarupdeo

Photographer: S. Amedeo Nico (2022)

Artefact 2: #itscalled_Vitiligo
Symmetrical female dress

This symmetrical dress is constructed by using a sculptural design. The choice of shapes attached were personally selected at random. Whilst looking at my own skin I see that not all vitiligo lesions appear perfectly curved or rounded, there are also edges. Therefore, the pointed looking shapes were incorporated to create a balance and not make the collection too predictable based on the subject of vitiligo. This artefact is bold in design and therefore I named it #itscalled_Vitiligo to proudly emphasise the skin condition in this collection.



Figure 67: Symmetrical woman's sculptural dress. Tye-dye georgette, Tent canvas, Invisible zip, mesh and beige denim.

Designer: E. Sarupdeo

Photographer: S. Amedeo Nico (2022)

Artefact 3: #I_am_my_own_masterpiece

Asymmetrical female dress

Is designed to mimic a lesion shape into the appearance of silhouette. Transparent net was incorporated to symbolise transformation and evolution of lesions. The evolution of lesions was a point mentioned by Harlow and Esau; therefore, it was important to visually design to communicate this message in my work. Individuals such as models with vitiligo are unveiling themselves as they are seen to represent and express their true beauty.



Figure 68: Asymmetrical woman's sculptural dress. Tye-dye georgette, Tent canvas, Embossed scuba, Invisible zip, stiff net and beige denim.

Designer: E. Sarupdeo

Photographer: S. Amedeo Nico (2022)

Artefact 4: #LovetheVlife

Male jumpsuit with randomized lesion placement

Symbolizes vitiligo covering the full body. Laser cutting techniques adds dimension to this look creating shadows in between the lesions. The purpose of these variating patch placement and shades is to reflect vitiligo lesions which may visually appear at different levels of colourless to white coloured brightness intensities, this may also depend on the actual shade of skin tone.



Figure 69: Men's patchworked leotard with Laser cut Jumpsuit overlay. Mixture of embossed scuba, Tye-dye georgette, beige denim, silk and mesh for patchwork, Invisible zip and Thai silk.

Designer: E. Sarupdeo

Photographer: S. Amedeo Nico (2022)

Artefact 5: #Embrace_diversity

Male two-piece ensemble, consisting of a front opened coat and a draped elasticated short.

This fashion artefact slightly differs in the sense that a darker colour was incorporated, to represent darker skin tones. Creative fabric manipulation techniques were incorporated such as double-sided looping to replicate layering of the anatomy of skin. The front is symmetrical whilst the back is asymmetrical in design to capture segmental and non-segmental positioning of lesions. The back of the fashion artefact also has the illusion of the words “MARKED BEAUTY”. This fashioned artefact is lined and also creative in the sense that the side profile, in fact all directions have a different look and appearance to showcase the evolution of skin and to depict diversity as mentioned by the name of artefact 5 as #Embrace_diversity.



Figure 70: Men's fabric manipulated coat with draped dark brown short. Mixture of colour tones, embossed scuba, Tie-dye georgette, beige denim, silk, elastic and scuba.

Designer: E. Sarupdeo

Photographer: S. Amedeo Nico (2022)

Artefact 6: #B_You_Natural
The hand lamp shade

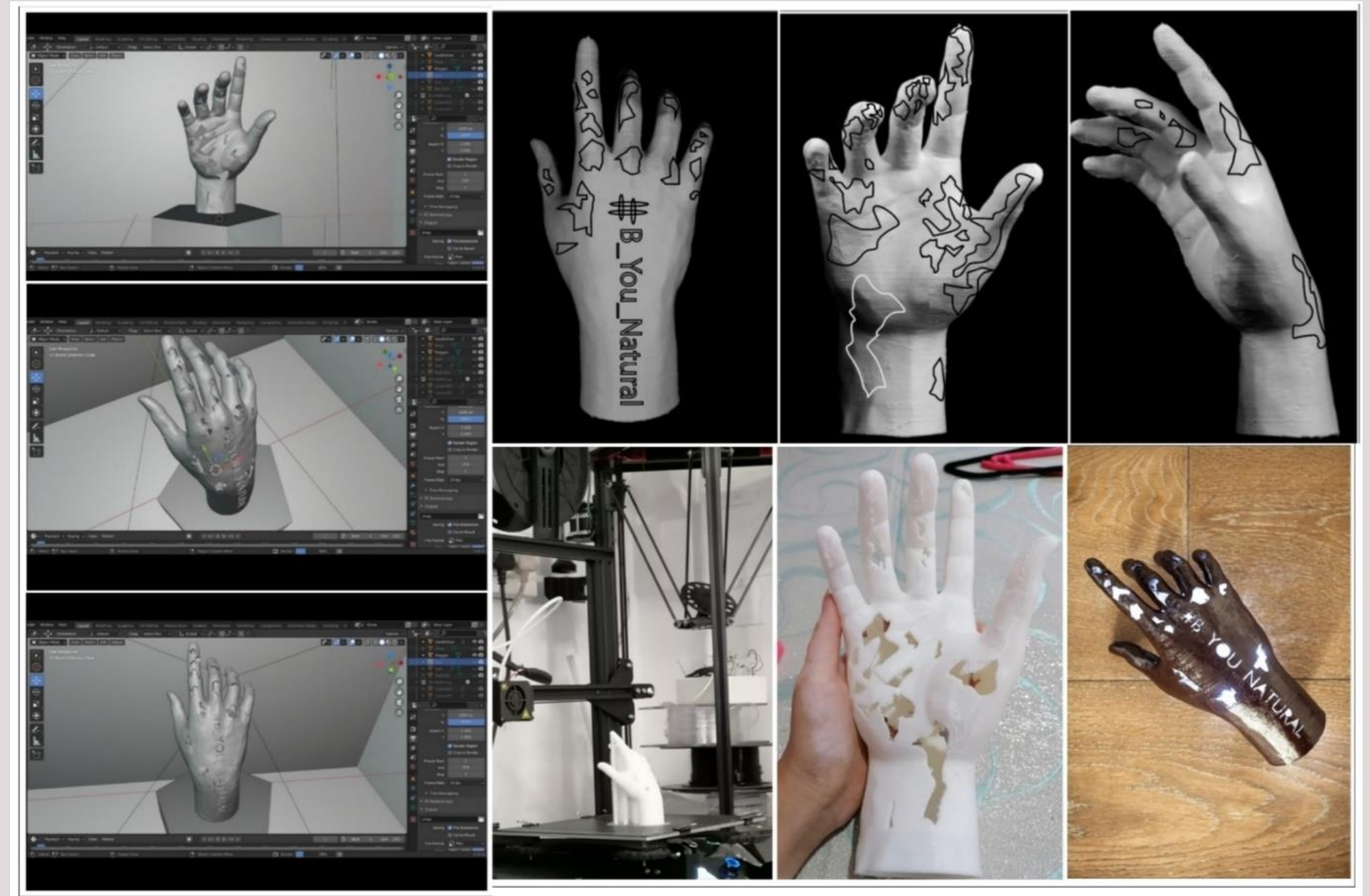
The hand lamp shade was another artefact idea as a more literal approach to the sculptural aesthetic by shedding light on vitiligo. It is 3D designed and 3D printed. I used the hand because as a fashion designer with vitiligo, the most exposed lesions of my body are my hands and just how Rametsi and Devos make reference to the product of vitiligo dolls, I showcase the product of my vitiligo hand as my unique and added form of representation. Using the hand instead of any other part of the body also symbolises the important role that my hands form part of making the fashion artefacts as a fashion designer.

Figure 71: Sculptural hand lampshade. 3D Printed with PLA filament

Designer: E. Sarupdeo

Printed: The MakerSpace

Photographer: S. Amedeo Nico (2022)





Hypomelanosis Beauties



My fashion photoshoot was a successful experience where all individuals involved were happy and delivered with great teamwork. Models expressed themselves freely through poses and body language and celebrated the day of photoshoot in their allocated fashion artefacts from my Hypomelanosis Beauties collection.



Thank you