



THE CREATION OF A MULTICULTURAL IDENTITY FOR WINDOW DISPLAYS IN DURBAN'S MAJOR FASHION RETAIL SHOP FRONTS

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This chapter consists of reflections on the practical aspect of the study. The overview is presented in the form of a printed, high resolution catalogue and includes a compact disc with digital imagery of the shop display installation.



6.1 PRACTICAL COMPONENT: IMPRESSION OF AN AFRICAN CITY, DURBAN

The aim of the practical was to “bring together” local symbols and imagery to construct a multi-cultural shop display. The research, interviews, observations and theories directed the practical component of this study.

The practical was developed from:

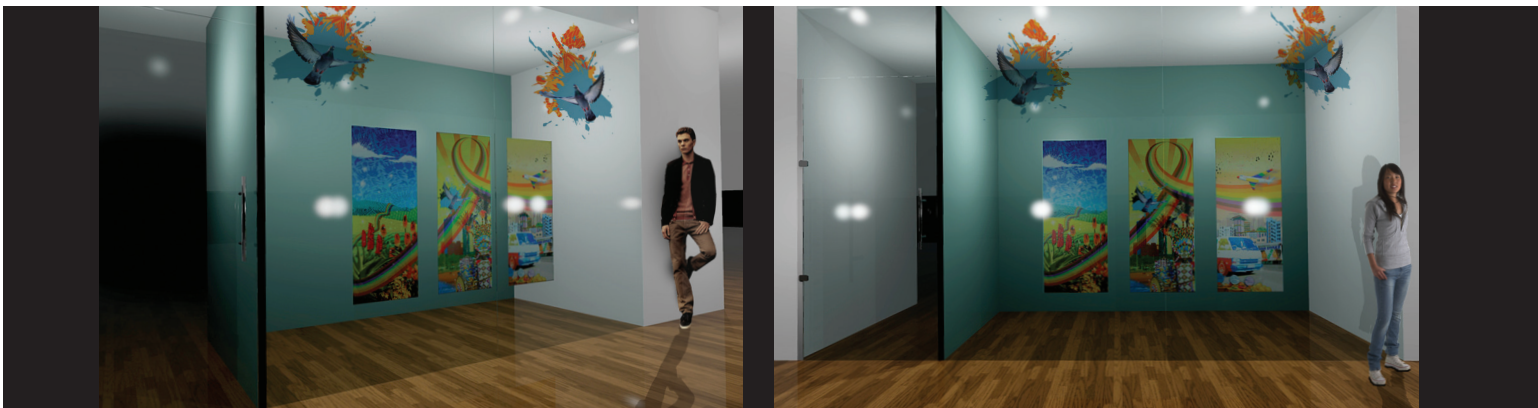
- Visual language which is graphically illustrated;
- The symbols that come into play when people communicate;
- The meanings people attach to objects; and
- Imagery of Durban

The study focuses on Durban and its immediate surroundings, including local architecture and culture. The practical component includes an installation and a catalogue which together aim to provide a platform to explore aspects of South African culture and the integration of art work and fashion trends. Global and local trends have been integrated in the installation ensuring that the designs can be widely enjoyed and understood by local people. The success of this practical is based on the premise that individual identities are a mixture of cultures and influences. The visual catalogue, expressed through graphic statements, will hopefully resonate with audiences which make up South Africa’s multi-cultural society. The practical process will encourage networking between established experts and up - and - coming designers.

Creative industries include: advertising, architecture, art, crafts, design, fashion, film and video, interactive software, software and computer services, television and radio. All these activities produce cultural products directly or indirectly which include commercial, artistic enterprises as well as public and non-profit organizations (Capone, 2008:341). All the aspects mentioned above have been considered and analysed in this study.



Using the clustering technique, three different themes were composed from the collected data and were constructed utilising digital programmes. The shop displays were completed using a stylistic approach and images that reflect both genders, different races and cultural South African symbols. The illustrations aim to be innovative and anthropological. A shop window display which is anthropological in theme is based on the belief that other cultures can be understood through visual symbols (Lichtman, 2006:64). The practical aims of the study are to create shop fronts which are multi-cultural in their conception in that they 'speak' to as wide an audience as possible.

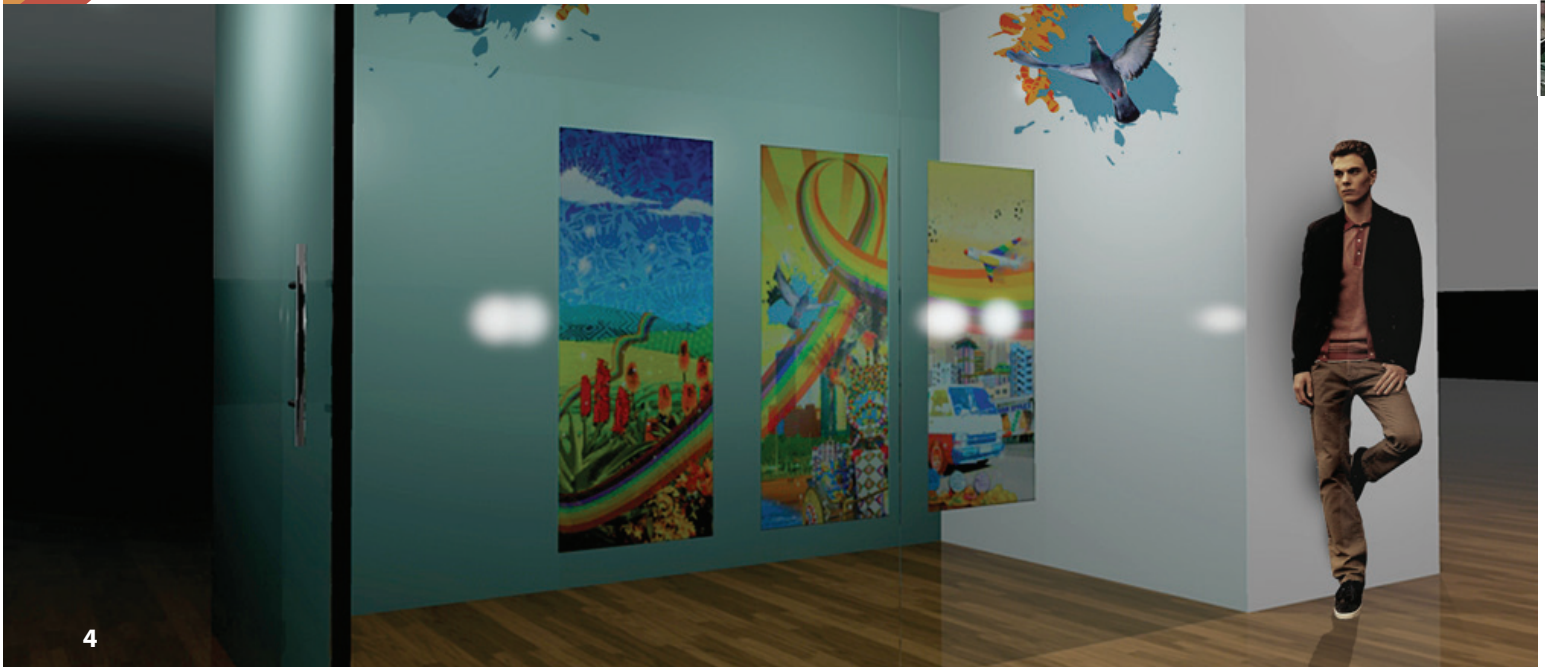


Symbols in all forms globally invite, inform, befriend and entertain the public. These signals and symbols are personalised through texts, images, screens, technology and objects that we use daily (Poethig, 2009). Shop displays are full of these signals, symbols and designs that any South African customer can translate and understand. The commercial world of design and fashion is one of the major users of signs and symbols. Graphic images facilitate communication and the translation of meaningful human gestures into visual structures (Hampshire and Stephenson,

2008:7). Technology has made it easier, but in South Africa, people are still learning how to design and use signs and symbols. The use of icons and pictograms creates greater clarity of information without the need for text. The display encourages the potential customer to pause and appreciate it. The associations and borrowing of cross cultural elements are aesthetically pleasing and even form part of basic art education, social interaction and knowledge. Since the exhibition spaces are small and intimate, this encourages the customer's personal contact and interaction.

6.2 **THEME ONE:** JOURNEYS THROUGH THE RAINBOW NATION

The innovative shop display is a metaphoric representation of a 'journey' through the picturesque South African countryside. 'Journeys' and the development of the 'rainbow nation' are two key metaphors associated with South Africa's history of the recent post apartheid era. The rainbow moving across the three panels symbolises freedom and joy of the 'rainbow nation' and a route from the green sugar cane fields and coastline, to the inner precincts of the Durban city centre. The rainbow shape represents the Aids symbol thereby creating a social awareness of this current issue which affects so many South Africans.





The multi-coloured 'taxi' image is a ubiquitous symbol as taxis play an important role in South African life. The taxi industry has its own rules and language and has a vibrancy that is palpable (Fox, 2000). Taxis provide inexpensive transport between urban and rural areas. Roads and transport systems encourage freedom and travel and are essential arteries of communication and commerce in South African society (Fox, 2000:459). Durban roads have been used as a source of artistic expression, and contain many colourful and bustling businesses and they contribute the means by which many of South Africans communicate and commute.



The visual concept of a map depicting well known routes and landmarks assists foreigners and local visitors with easy navigation when visiting Durban. The imagery stimulates important selling points of familiarity, everyday experiences, desires to belong and be proud of South African cultural heritage. According to Stuart Hall (1996:4) identities are about using the resources of history, language and culture in developing a South African identity. Identities contain elements of who we think we are, where we came from and they are also about where we are going. Hall (1996:4) concurs with this view and points out that identities are also about the 'routes' in our daily lives.

Instantly recognizable and memorable signs and symbols are fundamental to indicating identity and membership in our local society (Hampshire and Stephenson, 2008:34). The city, the urban and rural areas were adopted to represent our country and cultures. Famous inhabitants, iconic buildings and indigenous flora and fauna are featured in the artwork. The imagery of panel transitions is positioned in such a way as to forge the transition from a rural to urban cultural setting. This creates a link between the cultures associated with the different locations.





6.3 **THEME TWO:** **VODACOM DURBAN JULY**

This shop window was constructed in line with the Vodacom Durban July Fashion theme 2010: 'It's a Blooming, Great day'. The use of motifs derived from floral sources is combined with the silhouetted horse and jockey. The repeat pattern presents a trendy cosmopolitan interpretation of the Durban July. The mannequin placed within the setting represents urban sophistication and brings with it all the glitz and glamour associated with fashion at the races. The abundant indigenous bougainvillea and Barberton daisies are a source of natural beauty, bright colours and create the exotic subtropical world expressive of Durban. This prestigious event provides a perfect backdrop to showcase a local designer's style and talent.



It's a
Blooming
Great Day!

Durban July
2010



6.3.1 NATURE

The display evokes a 'return to nature' concept by drawing on natural and environmental elements. Nature is fundamental to our basic existence. Not only does it provide food and shelter, but it is also a source of visual beauty. Nature therefore can be viewed as a metaphor for a preferred quality of life. The display features signs, images and symbols from the environment to reflect its dynamic role in our interdependence on its nature and beauty. Nature is the essence around which we weave our human stories (Du Toit, 2009:8). The familiarity of nature that surrounds us in South Africa provides the consumer public with a sense of comfort and belonging.

The nature theme was inspired by the veld, savannah grasslands, mountains, coastline and abundant fauna and flora which are uniquely attractive and can evoke feelings of uniqueness and beauty in the viewer. The illustrations portray evergreen, lush vegetation scenes from life and the promise of the possibility of adventure. Our subtropical setting could be compared to a 'paradise' and a place of refuge that customers aspire to explore and admire. Visual surroundings become part of the fibre of our existence, history and memories: the more time we spend in a place, the more we see ourselves reminded of past experiences (Du Toit, 2009:71).



Birds and animals feature as illustrative forms and suggest a form of escapism. The Romantic Movement also dreamed of a return to the simple virtues of nature as a means to combat and overcome the artificiality of urban and industrial life. This is very clear in one of the key documents of English Romanticism, William Wordsworth Preface to Lyrical Ballads (1802). 'The principal object, which I proposed to myself in these poems was to choose incidents and situations from common life and relate to or describe them...to speak a plainer and more emphatic language; because in that condition of life our elementary feelings co-exist in a state of greater simplicity (598).'

Wordsworth's return to nature is relevant in its call to include culture and the roots of our local identity through shop displays. He was convinced that a culture which reconnected its origins with nature could work to refresh 'the discriminating powers of the mind.' Storey declares that culture is not something readymade which we 'consume'; culture is what we make in the varied practices of consumption (Storey, 2003:59).

The nature element could result in more responsible actions regarding the preservation and appreciation of our environment. This study proposes that shop displays should fulfill a dual function: one of creating an awareness to encourage the 'green movement' as well as promoting natural products. The display is rich in detail, design and textures. A combination of natural and urban settings gives the displays a contemporary feel.





6.4 **THEME TWO:** 2010 CELEBRATION

The 'celebration' concept helps us to commemorate the 2010 Soccer World Cup. The dynamic activity and implied action excites and motivates the viewer. The decorative silhouettes are bold and expressive of enjoyment, physical activity and the action of the soccer festivities. The layout is innovative in that it employs a range of patterns and prints which appeal to a broad target, while never straying from the value found in sport.



After years of minimalism, design has now become an eclectic mix of signs, symbols, icons and illustrations being used in applied pattern, textiles, graphics and art. The combination of symbols fits broadly within the 'maximalist' style identified in the book *Maximalism* by Charlotte Rivers. In her introduction she states, 'silhouettes and botanical motifs are taking over from rigorous, simple lines and muted tones. A profusion of colour, excess and a return to sensuality is a current trend (Rivers, 2007:8). This overall effect, applied in the visual graphics within the catalogue, creates an amusing, fantastical, eclectic and uniquely urban reflection.

Information and knowledge are inputs for creativity and the output is relevant, contemporary and appealing. The joint collaboration of technology and creativity becomes the driving force for economic growth and cities like Durban can become 'cauldron[s] of creativity' (Florida, 2005:214). The window display is important as Durban was chosen as one of the cities to host the 2010 Soccer World Cup. The city needs to reveal its 'creative cauldron' and display the warm hospitality to overseas visitors and sports fans.

Durban needs to form a 'creative cluster' which implies the following: (Florida, 2002:260)

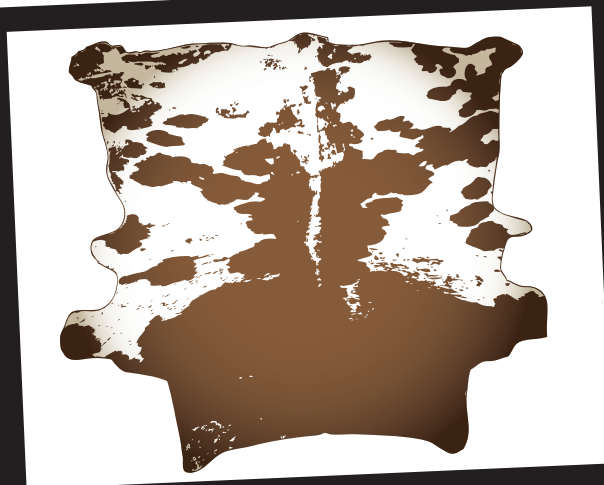
- A catalyzing place where people, relationships, ideas and talent can ignite pleasure;
- An environment that offers diversity, stimuli and freedom of expression; and
- An open and ever-changing network of interpersonal exchanges that nurture Durban's uniqueness and identity.

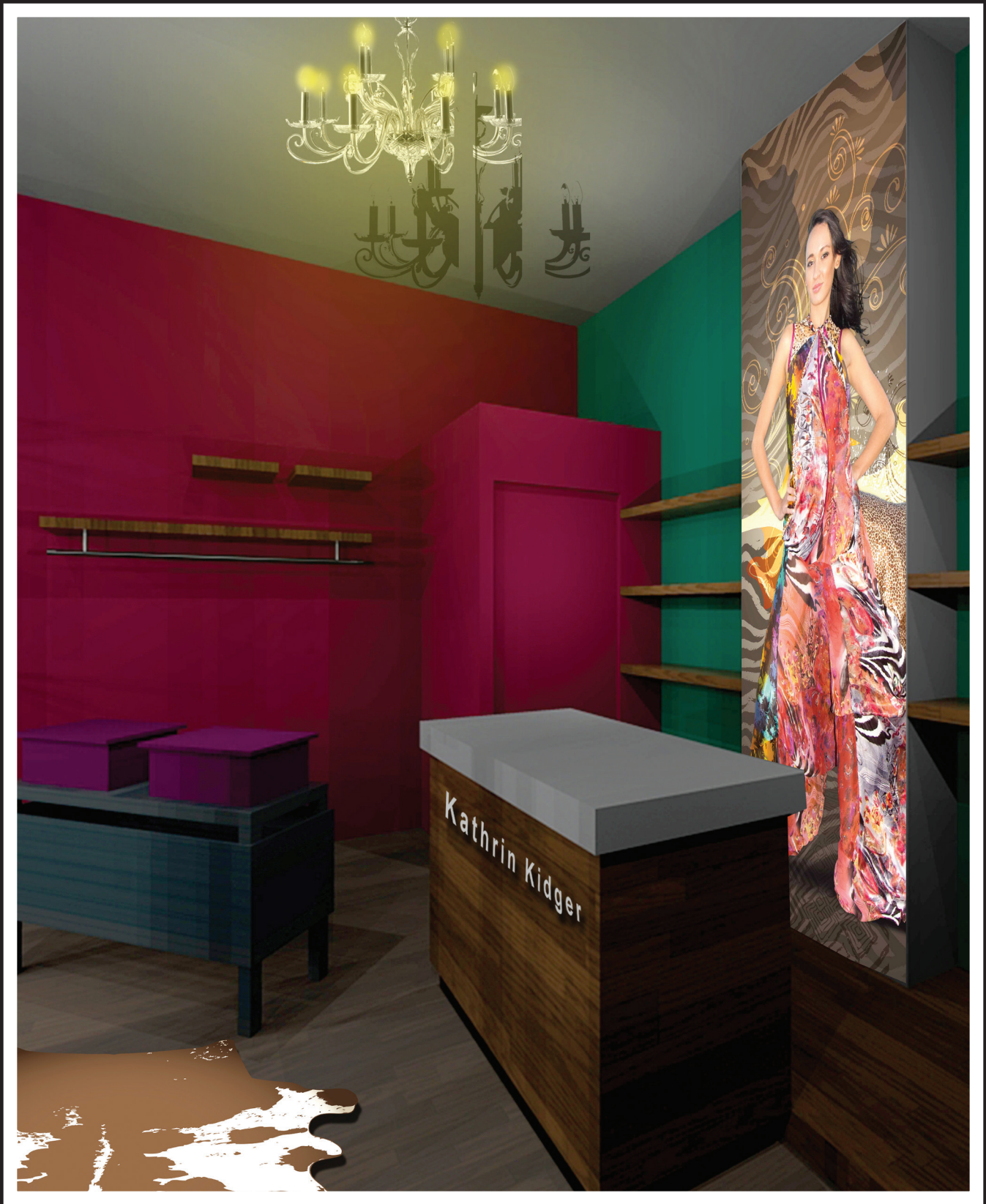
“This boutique shop with its inherently African flavour is rooted in our national pride”



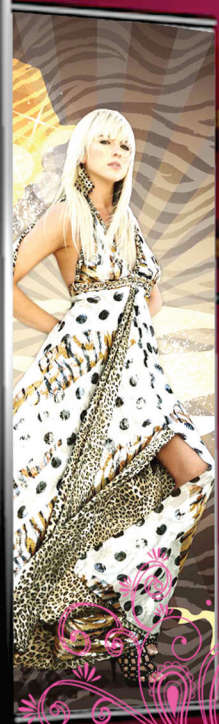
6.5 KATHRIN KIDGER RETAIL STORE, LA LUCIA MALL

The theme for the store was contemporary ethnic elegance. This was translated into a concept to suit Kathrin's target market of mothers and young career women from 25 to 45 years'. The two semi-transparent posters showcase her latest designs based on highly decorative ethnic motifs. An Nguni mat was created to simulate a real Nguni hide. Nguni skins are utilised in many interior design magazines and are seen as a signature 'African' accessory. Nguni cattle are celebrated by the Zulu people for their beauty and their multiple colours. The aim of this work is not only to record a part of this unique heritage for posterity, but also to celebrate the richness of Zulu versatility and the creative imagination of the Zulu people in Durban (Poland, 2003:1). The complimentary accessories were two ottomans with a bold silhouette of the African continent, paisley print and rays of light associated with African sunlight. The fuchsia pink feminine paisley vinyl stickers placed across the window panels match the fuchsia wall paint complimenting the interior decor. This interpretation of the paisley is light-hearted and romantically expressed with hearts and swirls in the repeated pattern. This boutique shop with its inherently African flavour is rooted in our national pride and provides a trendy and cosmopolitan shopping experience.





Kathrin Kidger



Kathrin Kidger



kathrin kidger

Closed





The Impact of Plastic Shopping Bags:

The average family of 4 accumulates 1460 plastic shopping bags a year and it can take up to 1000 years for a plastic bag to break down in the environment.





6.6

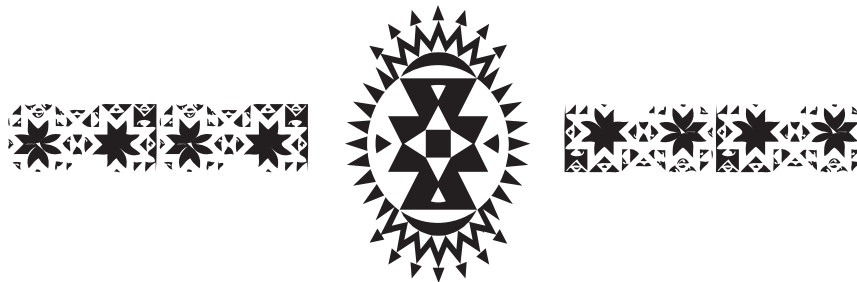
THE FOLLOWING IMPROVEMENTS ARE SUGGESTED FOR THE DURBAN REGION:

- Support different cultures;
- Enhance and encourage the artistic and cultural heritage;
- Support creativity and innovation; and
- Form and strengthen the local identity and a positive image of the city and surrounding areas.

6.7 CONCLUSION



The result is a visual collage of current imagery, signs and symbols across creative disciplines including art, interior design, architecture, communication and contemporary print and pattern. Current designs were developed which embraced the juxtaposition of craft and technology such as laser cutting, vinyl stickers and fabric design. The catalogue was designed utilising CAD programmes namely Illustrator, Photoshop and Sketch Up. A digital format of shop displays allows easy manipulation and customization according to the season or product range. Throughout the learning process, the researcher sought assistance and collaborated with a graphic and interior designer in the industry to develop and create a professional product. The panels of prints were printed commercially using an industrial process and the installation was constructed within Kathrin Kidger's retail boutique in La Lucia Mall, Durban North.





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