defsa Design Education Forum of Southern Africa 2025 CONFERENCE

NELSON MANDELA UNIVERSITY

[AFDA]

ENDLESS OPPORTUNITIES

CREATIVE COLLABORATION
IMAGINE THE POSSIBILITIES

A NEW HORIZON
FORGING NEW PATHS

UNCHARTED TERRITORY

EXPLORE & EVOLVE

DESIGN+

DISRUPTIONS, REALITIES, FUTURES

BE CURIOUS, BE EXCITED

LET'S CREATE THE FUTURE

Foreword from the DEFSA President – Kimberly Bediako

On behalf of DEFSA, it is truly an honour to welcome you to the 18th National DEFSA Conference, hosted by Nelson Mandela University in cooperation with AFDA in Gqeberha at their beautiful Ocean Science Campus in the futuristic Dome. This year's conference brings together design scholars, educators, practitioners, and researchers in a hybrid format, enabling broad participation from across South Africa, the African continent, and countries of both the Global North and South. The diverse voices and perspectives represented here embody a shared commitment to advancing design education and practice through dialogue, collaboration, and innovation.

Our theme, *Design+ Disruptions, Realities, Futures*, encourages us to explore the dynamic intersections of design, education, technology, culture, social change and realities. It challenges us to reflect on the tensions and aligned objectives between the physical and digital realms and supports a reimagining of the phygital multi-modal reality. Grounded in contextually relevant discourse, the papers celebrate Afrikan-centred and global perspectives, envisioning design's transformative role in shaping more sustainable, inclusive and impactful futures.

Throughout this two-day conference, we hope to foster sessions or spaces where ideas converge, where we critically examine the present, and where we imagine possibilities for the future of design education and practice. We are honoured to host contributions that span our three subthemes: Digital Disruptions and Technology Integration, Societal Realities and Cultural Preservation, and Sustainability and Future-Focused Design.

I extend my heartfelt thanks to our hosting university and key partners, keynote speakers, authors, peer reviewers, and delegates whose participation makes this scholarly exchange possible. Whether you are joining us in Gqeberha or online, let us immerse ourselves fully, engage and disrupt critically, imagine and connect meaningfully with colleagues across disciplines and geographies.

Sincerely,
Kimberly

THANK YOU TO THE FOLLOWING PARTNERS

NELSON MANDELA UNIVERSITY

sport, arts & culture
Department:
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[AFDA]
FILM | TELEVISION | PERFORMANCE | BUSINESS INNOVATION & ENTERPRISE

iStore EDUCATION

Welcome to our keynote speaker: Professor Lilac Osanjo

A specialist in design research, design management, and entrepreneurship, Prof. Osanjo began her career in advertising before transitioning to academia. She has taught at the Technical University of Kenya (TUK), Kenya Technical Teachers College (KTTC), and is currently Dean of the Faculty of the Built Environment and Design at the University of Nairobi.

Prof. Osanjo has been instrumental in promoting design in Afrika, earning recognition as a Simba Club member at the Pan African Design Institute (PADI), patron of Design Kenya Society (DKS), and board member at The Kenya Fashion Council. She has also received the Women in Real Estate (WIRE) Legends and Leaders Award (2024) and the Africa Interior Design Week Leadership, Innovative Spirit, and Dedication Award (2023).

Her expertise extends to design competitions, having served as a jurist for the German Design Awards (GDA), Turkey Design Week, and the Kshs 100 million for Artists in Nairobi. She is also a visiting Professor at the University of Johannesburg (UJ) and an adjunct faculty member at Wuhan University of Technology, China.

Holding a PhD in Design, MSc in Entrepreneurship, and BA in Design, Prof. Osanjo brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the conference.

Welcome to our keynote speaker: Roland Postma

Originally from Pretoria and now based in Cape Town, Roland holds a first-class honours degree in Urban and Regional Planning from RMIT University. He is the Managing Director at Young Urbanists South Africa, where he plays multiple roles in shaping urban South Africa into a more inclusive, people-first society. Through his work, he empowers civil society—especially young professionals in the built environment—to actively engage with urban policy and planning.

A strong advocate for youth-led urban development, Roland works at the intersection of urban planning, architecture, and design, fostering collaboration between communities and local governments to build cities that serve everyone.

At Young Urbanists, he contributes to the Active Mobility Forum, which promotes the reallocation of road space from private vehicles to active mobility and public transport users. He also co-founded the Safe Passage Programme, a public-private partnership dedicated to connecting informal and formal urban areas by transforming spaces to be greener, safer, and more affordable. Since 2024, the initiative has collaborated with two major municipalities, delivering projects valued at over R5 million.

Roland also serves on the committee of Friends of Liesbeek, where he advocates for green infrastructure—including Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) and the rehabilitation of urban waterways. Beyond Young Urbanists, he is a founding curator of Design Week South Africa, and believes in the power of design to democratise public space and confront pressing societal challenges—from inequality to climate change.

His contributions to the field have earned him recognition in the SCAPE Top 100 (2025) and the Mail & Guardian's Top 200 Young South Africans.

2025 DEFSA Conference Programme 18 – 19 September

	DAY ONE			
Time	Session 1, 5, 9 in Dome Main: Teaching Lab	Session 2, 6 10 in Dome Breakaway 1: Multi-Media Room	Session 3, 7, 11 in Ocean Science Building Breakaway 2: Boardroom 1	Session 4, 8. 12 in Ocean Science Building Breakaway 3: Boardroom 2
8:00 – 8:40	CONFERENCE REGISTRATION/TEA			
8:45 – 9:00	Welcome address: DEFSA president			
9:00 – 10:00	Keynote address: Professor Lilac Osanjo			
10:00 – 10:10	REFRESHMENTS			
10:15 – 11:45 *Welcome by session chair:10:15-10:20 | Q&A: 11:35-11:45*	Session 1: Design+ Digital Disruptions and Technology Integration	Session 2: Design+ Societal Realities, Impact and Cultural Preservation	Session 3: Design+ Sustainability and Future-Focused Design	Session 4: Design+ Societal Realities, Impact and Cultural Preservation
10:20-10:35	1 Interactive Narratives for Social Impact: A New Approach to Media Intervention Yumna Motala	1. Towards an MA in Design History Richard Haines	1. Students' attitudes towards change: Codesign in fashion education Neshane Harvey	1. From Observation to Interaction: Exploring the Impact of Lived Experiences in Design and Cultural Identity Celeste McKenzie
10:35-10:50	2. From Classroom to Code and Back Again: The Cyclical Knowledge Exchange Between Game Development and Teaching Jody Simpson, Henk Scheepers	2. Beyond Eviction: Reframing Housing Justice in inner-city Joburg Jhono Bennett, Beatrice De Carli, Jacqui Cuyler	2. The design brief: A phenomenological and decolonised approach to undergraduate architectural studies Kim Harmse, Jean-Pierre Basson, Riëtte Kotzé	2. Rethinking Design Education in India: A Contextual Approach Priyanka Sewhag Joshi, Vijai Singh Katiyar
10:50-11:05	3. AI in Education: Using Gardner's Five Minds for the Future to Understand the Effects of AI in Design Education Tlholo Modiba	3. Small, Local, Open, Connected: Cosmopolitan Localism as a Framework for Sustainable Fashion Design Siviwe Jack	3. Investigating the Role of Embedded Tactile and Sensory Technology as a Digital Disruption in Technology Integrated Design Education Sarel Havenga, Izak van Zyl, Bruce Snaddon	3. Speculative Interiors for Museum Artefacts: the Decontextualise to Decolonise (D2D) Project Zakkiya Khan, Terry Meade

11:05-11:20	4. Humanising online creative education: Exploring student engagement in a short course in copywriting Mandy Speechly	4. Emergent female gazes: Representations of women by selected women artists from the Sasol New Signatures Art Competition Anemarie Maboko Maganya	4. Sustainable knowledge in communities: Design for social good through fashion education Zanné de Meillon	4. Resonant Realms: Bridging Tradition and Transformation in Afrikan-Centered Design Reshma Maharajh
11:20-11:35	5. Reimagining Design Education for a New Generation of Designers Bianca Le Cornu	5. Autochthonous design and the mapping of Afrikanness Bruce Cadle	5. Design Play: Enhancing Ideation Skills Through Playful Strategies in Design Education Raksha Padaruth	5. Reimagining Cultural Heritage Archives Through motion-based digital narratives in Design Education Nthabiseng Mabale, Bongani Khoza
11:50 – 12:55	LUNCH			
13:00 – 14:30 *Welcome by session chair:13:00-13:05 / Q&A: 14:20-14:30*	Session 5 Design+ Digital Disruptions and Technology Integration	Session 6 Design+ Societal Realities, Impact and Cultural Preservation	Session 7 Design+ Sustainability, Future-Focused Design and Social realities	Session 8 Design+ Sustainability and Future-Focused Design
13:05-13:20	1. Fixed to Fluid: A Postdigital Framework for Responsive and Disruptive Assessment in Design Education Maretha Geyser	1. Translocal fashion subjectivities and the Afro fashion look: A Student Project at a South African comprehensive university Khaya Mchunu	1. African Abacus: Learning Design as Praxis for Inclusive and Sustainable Futures in Architecture Education Jolanda Morkel, Hermie Delport, Chelsea Horn, Marga de Vos, Zolani Gomb, Zana Ncube, Sandile Busuku	1. Future-Focused Design Education: Insights from a South African Industrial Design Project Presented on a Global Stage Pia McFindlay, Morgan Potgieter
13:20-13:35	2. Re-designing Honours: A Feminist Disruption in Graphic Design Education Judith Evans, Cheri Hugo	2. Documentary animation as a medium for public history Lukasz Pater	2. Feet on the ground, eyes on the design Gail Stock, Prof Izak van Zyl, Mrs Maretha Dreyer	2. Innovation by invitation? A hybrid developmental Design model for stirring cocreation in socio-technical continuums Natalia Tofas
13:35-13:50	3. XR and AI as Disruptors in South African Art and Design Education Anneke de Klerk, Sarel Havenga, Rene van Eck	3. Negotiating Interior Design's Contextual Relevance: Redefining the role of interior design in contemporary South African society Audrey Nanjala, Lethabo Xulu	3. Reimagining Fashion Education: Exploring Generative AI in Early-Stage Ideation Thulisani Pasiya	3. Telephone Wire Art in Exhibition Design Muziwandile Gigaba
13:50-14:05	4. Digital Convergence, Possessive Viewers, and Evolving Documentary Aesthetics Esmerelda Marx, Anneke de Klerk, Kate Chmela-Jones	4. Folding Memory: The Swahili Khanga as a Contemporary Design Language Juliet Mwase Kavishe	4. Pluriversal Design in Action: Collaborative Approaches to Education, Practice, and Community Building Nii Botchway, Amy De Raedt	4. Fostering Criticality through Transdisciplinary Collaboration Jean-Pierre Basson, Kim Harmse

14:05-14:20	5. Integrating AI in Interior Design Education: Developing Guidelines for Critical Engagement with Visual AI Models Esther Martins, Rene van der Merwe	5. Beyond Stone: Augmented Reality, Forensic Aesthetic and the Future of Cultural Preservation Limo Velapi	5. Using Visual Storytelling in Eco-Friendly and Socially Responsible Advertisements to Promote Sustainable Products Patrick Moremoholo	5. Cultural Continuity in Xhosa women's clothing Zandile Zamela
Comfort gap 5min				
14:35 – 15:35 *Welcome by session chair:14:35-14:40 / Q&A: 15:25-15:35*	Session 9 Design+ Sustainability, Future-Focused Design and Social realities	Session 10 Design+ Sustainability and Future-Focused Design	Session 11 Design+ Sustainability, Future-Focused Design and Social realities	Session 12 Design+ Sustainability, Future-Focused Design and Social realities
14:40-14:55	1. Lifelong Learning and Entrepreneurial Competencies: A Sustainable Future for Fashion Design Entrepreneurs in South Africa Tando Mbanga	1. Anticipatory Design Futures: Operationalising design fiction to strategically account for preferable futures Terence Fenn	1. A visual exploration of fashion brand communication on Instagram aimed at Generation Z Stephanie Brickman, Yolandi Burger	1. From Monologue to Dialogue: Developing An Opportunity Syntax Map and Livelihood Framework for the Urban Poor Ayanda Made
14:55-15:10	2. Design Audit Botswana — Part I: The Drivers and Barriers to establishing a GovernmentLed Design Innovation Policy for Industrial Development in the Republic of Botswana Gabriel Mothibedi	2. Earth Stewardship in Prepress: A Model for Graphic Design Educators Barry John Lottering	2. A Human-centred and collaborative approach to Curriculum Design for Higher Education Programmes in Creative Disciplines - Case Study Sunette Caplin	2. Integrating Small-Scale Fabrication Technologies in Design Education for Enhanced Studio-Based Learning Martin Bolton
15:10-15:25	3. Clothing Manufacturing Micro Enterprises (CMMEs): preserving cultural pride through fashion production Mariette Strydom	3. Educating Future-Focused Designers in South Africa: A conceptual exploration of the integration of Design and Futures Thinking Ria van Zyl, Michele O'Hara,	3.Human-Centred, Student-Led: Building Socially Sustainable Futures in Design Education Sonali Chetty, Xolisa Ndovela, Hlengiwe Khubisa, Fathima Mula	3. Many worlds, shared futures: DesignScience-Community engagement Shashi Cullinan Cook
Comfort gap 5min				
15:40 – 16:30	Main (Dome):			
	Key stakeholder engagement: Department of Sports and Arts and Culture *presenting the Creative Industries Master Plan*			
Welcome Cocktail Event @ Bird Street Gallery 18:00				

2025 DEFSA Conference Programme 18 – 19 September

DAY TWO			
Time	Session 1 in Dome Main: Teaching Lab	Session 2 in Dome Breakaway 1: Multi-Media Room	Session 3 in Dome Breakaway 2: Boardroom
8:00 – 8:35	TEA		
8:40 – 9:40	AGM: Open to all DEFSA members to attend		
9:50 – 10:50	Keynote address: Roland Postma		
10:50 – 12:00	*Screening of media and communication students (NMU & AFDA) in the Dome*		
	NMU CAMPUS TOUR		
12:00– 12:55	LUNCH		
13:00 – 14:30 *Welcome by session chair:13:00-13:05 | Q&A: 14:20-14:30*	Session 1 Design+ Societal Realities, Impact and Cultural Preservation	Session 2 CONCEPTUAL RESEARCH PAPER PRESENTATIONS *Welcome by session chair:13:00-13:05 | Q&A: 14:20-14:30* *Presentations are 10 minutes each*	Session 3 Design+ Sustainability and Future-Focused Design
13:05-13:20	1. DIY Not? The Value of Zines in Graphic Design Education Neil Badenhorst	1. Digital Defenders: Animation's Impact on Cybersecurity Education Nomfundo Zwane	1. Developing a Co-created Knowledge Hub Riette Kotze, Kim Harmse, Jean-Pierre Basson
13:20-13:35	2. Exploring how designing in their own language empowers students and supports academic freedom in communication design Christiaan Graaff	2. Reggio-Inspired Learning in Higher Education: Transforming Design Education Through Playful Engagement Martin Bolton	2. Future Earth: An Approach for Planet-Centred Interdisciplinary Design collaboration through STEAM(D) and Biodesign for Environmental Sustainability in Tertiary Arts, Design and Engineering Education in South Africa Kyle Smith

13:35-13:50	3. Caring about Cultural Competence: What South African Instructional Design can learn from nurses' training **Carmen Gunkel**	3. The Tale of an African Storybook: Fostering emotional interconnectedness through design **Tarryn Rennie**	3. Circularity and South African Design **Mohammed Jogie, Dr Herman Botes, Dr Selma Schiller**
13:50 14:05	4. Seeds of Freedom: The Watermelon in Palestine Posters **Ilhaam Khan, Deirdre Pretorius**	4. Analysis of jewellery Pieces manufactured using Afrikan-centred and Global Insights **Xolani Mayikana, Sipho Mbatha**	4. Transforming design education through an innovative humancentred design approach to game-based learning **Nozipho Zulu**
14:05-14:20	5. Visualising feminism **Angela Netshidzati, Cheri Hugo**		5. AI Business Model for Fashion **Liezel McDougall, Lorna Truter**
Comfort gap 5min			
14:40 – 15:45	Key stakeholder's Talking circle and Engagement: DCSA/ PADI/ iStore		
15:45- 16:00	CLOSING REMARKS		
Gala dinner @ Radisson Blu (by RSVP)			

ABSTRACTS | DAY ONE – 18 SEPTEMBER

SESSION 1: DESIGN+ DIGITAL DISRUPTIONS AND TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION

Interactive Narratives for Social Impact: A New Approach to Media Intervention

Ms Yumna Motala (In-person)

Mass intervention is crucial when tackling pressing social issues, such as gender-based violence. One method in approaching this is the use of the public service announcement (PSA). Traditional PSAs, such as posters and short films, are linear media forms. They rely on passive viewership and an assumption of audience behavioural change, following engagement with the artefact. This limits the PSA's potential to inspire long-term, sustained, societal change as the effectiveness is highly dependent on the cognitive engagement of the viewer with the content.

My research suggests that media employing the use of decision-based fictional narratives, such as interactive film, is more effective in enacting change. This type of 'interactive' media encourages the viewer to be an active participant in determining the outcome of a story by assigning them the responsibility of tailoring the fictional protagonist's journey. The intended outcome of this engagement is to foster ideological and behavioural change at a societal level by eliciting an empathetic response in the participant.

This paper proposes the development of a novel production method for interactive media designed to address social issues by combining narrative engagement and social impact. It centres around justifying the use of interactive film as an intervention method through an extensive literature review, that includes two case studies of existing interactive narrative media: The Boat (written by Nam Le adapted by Matt Huynh, 2015) and Bandersnatch (Brooker, 2018).

This study highlights the limitations of traditional PSAs in fostering long-term societal change and proposes interactive narrative media as a more effective alternative. Ultimately, this research evaluates the transformative power of interactive storytelling in generating meaningful social intervention and opens avenues for further exploration of media for change.

Keywords: interactive narrative media, transmedia engagement, social change, public service announcement (PSA), empathy & behavioural change.

From Classroom to Code and Back Again: The Cyclical Knowledge Exchange Between Game Development and Teaching

Mr Jody Simpson, Mr Henk Scheepers (In-person)

Game design education is often framed around theoretical frameworks or technical skill development, frequently separating academic knowledge from industry practice. This paper challenges that separation by exploring the cyclical knowledge exchange that occurs when a practitioner actively engages in both teaching and game development.

Through a co-authored autoethnographic reflection, the paper examines how the ongoing development of an independent digital game has shaped one educator's teaching approach, while classroom experiences have simultaneously refined his professional design practice. This reciprocal process—understood as a dynamic feedback loop—illustrates how practitioner-educators can integrate lived experience into curriculum design, creating a more adaptive and relevant pedagogical model. Revising the AI module, for example, freed space to introduce Procedural Generation—an area with far greater industry utility.

Drawing on a background in multimedia rather than formal game design, the educator's development journey served as a powerful learning tool, extending beyond technical proficiency to include problem-solving, user experience, and broader production challenges. Teaching did not occur in isolation; instead, classroom discussions, student feedback, and the act of explaining complex concepts became critical catalysts for re-evaluating and strengthening design decisions.

Key reflections highlight the value of reflective practice, iterative learning, and mutual inquiry in design education. The study highlights the importance of aligning curricula with real-world relevance, prompting a reassessment of which skills and knowledge are truly essential. For example, lived experience exposed misalignments in module content—such as an overemphasis on academically popular AI techniques and informed more common game development practices.

This paper argues for a design pedagogy that embraces ongoing professional practice as a central educational tool. Rather than viewing industry and academia as separate spheres, the model presented here positions practitioner-led teaching as a site of active knowledge generation. It demonstrates how design education can stay responsive and relevant as digital practice evolves.

Keywords: game design education, pedagogy and professional practice, practice-based learning, practitioner-educator, cyclical learning.

AI in Education: Using Gardner's Five Minds for the Future to Understand the Effects of AI in Design Education

Mr Tlholo Modiba (In-person)

In 2006, author Howard Gardner published a book titled Five Minds for the Future. The book considers how global trends in contemporary society, such as the increasing power of and reliance on technology, will affect the future of education and the development of human intelligence. The book goes on to outline a theoretical model of five different types of intelligences and the pertinent role each will play in the future. While the book was written and published two decades ago, many of Gardner's trends, forecasts, and analyses have proven useful over the progression of time, and continue to increase in global influence. As such, his cognitive "Five Minds" model warrants revisiting, particularly in the current design education landscape marked by rapid technological innovation and disruption, as well as in light of the rapid and widespread adoption of artificial intelligence.

Through qualitative desktop research and literature review, this article aims to describe and evaluate the current technological character of design practice and education in relation to the five various intelligences outlined by Gardner. The aim of this work is to provide a practical example of a framework through which we can begin to assess and even interpret some of the effects of artificial intelligence (AI) on education, and in particular, on the discipline of design. The effect of which will allow for a less alarmist and more structured approach to the future discourse on AI in design education. By using Gardner's Five Minds for the Future (2006) as a framework, this paper contributes to the discussions around AI's effect on design practice and education through a lens that is not strictly technical in nature, nor sentimental in its perspective. Gardner's framework allows educational discussions to concern themselves with the ends that matter most: the type of minds that the enterprise seeks to develop, as these are ultimately the minds that will occupy and shape society.

This paper concludes by cautioning that through the lens of Gardner's framework the widespread adoption of AI in design education, as well as in practice, runs counter to the educational journeys necessary for the development of the intelligences identified.

Keywords: design education, artificial intelligence, design futures.

Humanising online creative education: Exploring student engagement in a short course in copywriting

Ms Mandy Speechly (In-person)

Online synchronous learning presents unique challenges when teaching creative fields such as design and copywriting. Creative education characteristically involves individual expression, informal group collaboration, and praxis-driven experiential learning. However, the online environment dehumanises the experience, reducing opportunities for essential social interaction and community development, which impacts on engagement and the learning experience. This paper aims to build on previous research in the humanising of online education, by examining strategies for enhancing social presence in the classroom, specifically in fields of creative education.

Observations on student engagement were made by the author of this paper, as one of the instructors delivering an online short course in copywriting at a private institute of higher education in South Africa. A reflection of the course experience revealed that students were remarkably eager to share ideas, opinions and answers during online synchronous sessions. Despite the class numbers exceeding 300 students per session, a high level of engagement was experienced throughout the course. A quality assessment questionnaire reported positive feedback from the students who found the course to be rewarding and engaging, with notable value found in the practical examples shared.

Based on the theoretical framework of community of enquiry, a positive social presence was created that established a sense of belonging and trust. This environment effectively encouraged collaboration between participants to actively construct individual meaning. This paper reflects on the approach utilised by the instructors to help humanise the virtual learning environment.

This case study critically reflects on the success of this copywriting course by observing the dimensions of social presence in the online learning space, specifically in fields of creative study such as design and copywriting. The paper contributes to theory on humanising pedagogy and confirms the pivotal role of the online instructor in enhancing engagement, by acknowledging the student as a whole human, with consideration of emotional dimensions, and lived experiences. The humanising role of the instructor when teaching through technology makes a significant contribution to the student learning experience.

Keywords: creative education, online learning, social presence, humanising pedagogy, student engagement.

Reimagining Design Education for a New Generation of Designers

Ms Biance Le Cornu (In-person)

It is inevitable that with the rapid advancement of digital technologies, design education is being influenced greatly, particularly through the expansion of online learning and the integration of artificial intelligence (AI). Within a relatively short timeframe (which included the COVID-19 pandemic) there has been an accelerated transition to digital learning environments, exposing both opportunities and challenges in online graphic design education. While we are constantly shown that online tools offer potential for enhancing collaboration, participation, and feedback, it is important to remember that their effectiveness is dependent on accessibility, digital literacy, and educator preparedness.

This research, grounded in qualitative narrative inquiry, investigates graphic design students' experiences with online learning tools during emergency remote teaching (ERT). It examines key factors that influenced student success, including the pedagogical affordances of technology, psychosocial challenges, communication barriers, and disparities in digital access. While existing literature often highlights the potential benefits of technology in design education, the findings from this study emphasise that student experiences are deeply shaped by context - especially in regions facing economic and infrastructural limitations.

This research contributes to the discourse on digital disruptions in design education by examining how online learning tools influence contemporary pedagogy. It highlights the need for intentional, context-sensitive integration of digital technologies. Furthermore, it is imperative that while we explore strategies to effectively integrate these technologies, we should strive to preserve core design principles. A key question being, "How can educational institutions reimagine design education to balance technological advancements with foundational design education?"

Initial findings provide insights into the evolving relationship between digital learning tools and design education, as we emphasise the need for strategic implementation that will enhance learning without diminishing the essential human elements of creativity. By addressing some of these challenges, this study aims to inform future curriculum development and instructional design that align with industry advancements while nurturing creativity and critical thinking in the next generation of designers.

Keywords: design process, graphic design education, technology integration, technological affordance, creative education, digital pedagogy.

SESSION 2: DESIGN+ SOCIETAL REALITIES, IMPACT AND CULTURAL PRESERVATION

History and Policy in Design Education: The Proposed Development of an Interdisciplinary MA in Design History in South Africa.

Professor Richard Haines (In-person)

This paper examines the relative paucity of curriculum offerings in design history and design education programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate levels in South Africa. The neglect of design history suggests and a wholesale under-appreciation of the role of history and design development in industrial and economic production within the country in recent decades, as well as a concerning disconnect between the relevant policy makers and the tertiary institutions in the country. The surprising lack of realization of and response by business, state and society to the closure of the national Design Institute of South Africa in the early 2020s is an example of this disjunction.

It shows that this relative neglect is at odds with the nature, scope and thrust of national design promotion policies in advanced and higher performing economies globally and the accompanying integration of education programmes and institutions in the enhanced integration of design with industrial and economic strategies in such settings/contexts. This study is predominantly a literature-based review and ranges widely accessing publicly available reports, contemporary popular reports and formal academic articles. The study also draws methodologically from development and economic history, curriculum research and development perspectives, and practitioner theory in such research.

This paper explores the growing emphasis on history, place and culture in industrial and economic policy formulation internationally. It argues Higher Education Institutions should provide an explicit and substantive role for design education, the design disciplines, design thinking and the history of the applied arts in industrial and economic development policy in South Africa. The paper is also informed by the recommendation in a recent DSAC report on a National Design Council for South Africa (SACO 2025 forthcoming) of the need for an historically grounded approach to national design promotion and associated institution building.

Taking heed of new international developments in cultural policy; cultural and creative leadership; and the increased emphasis on inter-institutional partnerships, the rationale and model for a prestigious inter-disciplinary coursework Masters' Degree in Design History is outlined. The curriculum would reflect international trends in terms of the composition of such degrees; inculcate a historical and contemporary understanding of the multi-faceted nature of design and the design disciplines, and their role in national industrial, economic and social policy.

Such a programme is structured on a hybrid and inter-institutional university partnerships and would be operated on a part-time block release basis, using a broker assembly model for smart and cost-effectiv eutilization of national and international academics, and specialists. Select participating universities and associated smart partnerships are discussed. These are based on best practice South African case studies from the HEI sector and select international examples.

The paper is a contribution to the field of design education. It responds to a need to develop and offer design history courses and curricula in South African universities and to reinforce linkages with national design policy work and comparative international developments.

Keywords: design history, inter-institutional university partnerships, national design promotion policy, broker assembly model, design education, Masters in Design History.

Beyond Eviction: Reframing Housing Justice in inner-city Joburg

Dr Jhono Bennett, Ms Beatrice De Carli, Ms Jacqui Cuyler (Online)

This paper explores the application of Architecture Sans Frontières – UK's Change by Design methodology within the contested urban landscape of inner-city Johannesburg, focusing on housing justice and collective resilience. Through a multi-year, action-research initiative led by ASF-UK and 1to1 – Agency of Engagement, the project engages grassroots leaders, community organizations, and stakeholders to confront the imminent risks of displacement and advocate for equitable living conditions. This study critically examines the limitations and

opportunities presented by participatory design methods in addressing housing informality and marginalization in Johannesburg's high-rise urban fabric.

Drawing on data from co-productive workshops, symposiums, and community dialogues, the paper investigates how Change by Design has been adapted to navigate complex socio-political dynamics while supporting everyday practices of civic resilience. It identifies key actors, including grassroots leaders, civil society organizations, and academic institutions, highlighting their roles as initiators, mediators, and multipliers of emerging urban commons. The paper contextualizes these practices within post-apartheid spatial justice discourses, reflecting on the transformative potential of participatory design to redefine urban imaginaries and foster social sustainability.

The findings reveal that while Change by Design enhances community organizing capacity and collective action, it also faces challenges related to power asymmetries, policy advocacy limitations, and the risk of co-optation. The paper argues for a more nuanced understanding of participatory design as a tool for spatial justice, emphasizing the need for adaptive methodologies that resonate with local socio-cultural contexts. It concludes by proposing a strategic framework for scaling participatory action-research practices to support urban resilience and housing justice movements globally.

Keywords: 1to1, participation, occupied buildings

Small, Local, Open, Connected: Cosmopolitan Localism as a Framework for Sustainable Fashion Design

Ms Siviwe Jack (In-person)

This paper explores how the principles of Cosmopolitan Localism, specifically the Small, Local, Open, and Connected (SLOC) framework, can be operationalised within sustainability-focused fashion design education. Drawing on a practice-based, qualitative research study conducted within an undergraduate fashion design programme at a South African university, the paper analyses a pedagogical intervention aligned with the global Fashion Revolution movement. The intervention included a three-week experiential learning module, the Fashion Revolution Designathon, and a campus-wide clothing swap event to embed ethical awareness, material circularity, and critical design thinking into the student learning experience.

Rooted in the theoretical frameworks of transition design and post-growth sustainability discourse, Cosmopolitan Localism offers an alternative to globalised, extractive fashion systems by promoting small-scale, community-rooted innovation that remains open to global knowledge and networks. Through the SLOC lens, this project facilitated human-scaled, collaborative learning (Small), localised material engagement and cultural referencing (Local), open process documentation and public storytelling (Open), and alignment with international sustainability movements such as Fashion Revolution (Connected). The study draws from various qualitative data sources, including student reflections, visual artefacts, process journals, and lecturer observations. Findings indicate that students developed technical and conceptual competencies in sustainable design and demonstrated increased critical consciousness regarding fashion's socio-environmental impacts. By engaging in hands-on upcycling, cross-disciplinary collaboration, and public-facing presentation, students could situate their design practice within broader systemic conversations around justice, responsibility, and the future of fashion. This paper contributes to the field of design education by providing a replicable model for integrating SLOC principles into the curriculum through real-world, socially engaged projects. It also responds to the "Design of Social Change" conference theme by demonstrating how fashion education can be a powerful site for activism, ethical transformation, and community resilience. Ultimately, the research argues that embedding Cosmopolitan Localism into fashion pedagogy offers a meaningful pathway for cultivating the next generation of socially conscious, locally grounded, and globally connected designers.

Keywords: cosmopolitan localism, SLOC, fashion education, sustainability, fashion revolution, pedagogy, experiential learning.

Emergent female gazes: Representations of women by selected women artists from the Sasol New Signatures Art Competition

Ms Anemarie Maboko Maganya (Online)

In this paper, I investigate the evolving visualisations of the female form in selected South African art, particularly among emerging female artists. Drawing from feminist critiques that expose the historical sexualisation and patriarchal depictions of women in the canons of art history from around the world, I examine contemporary visual strategies used in representing the female body, seeking to determine if there has been any shift from traditional misogynistic depictions of women. Using the Sasol New Signatures Art Competition digital archives from 2013 to 2023, I conduct a qualitative content analysis of selected artworks that made it to the final round to identify emergent themes in the works of young South African female artists. This paper contributes to ongoing feminist critiques and activism over the misrepresentation of the female body by showing how the current generation of women artists create redemptive depictions of the female form.

Keywords: representation, female body, emerging South African artists, Sasol New Signatures.

Autochthonous design and the mapping of Afrikanness

Professor Bruce Cadle (In-person)

In the current milieu approaches to the design and creation of visual art and design artefacts by Afrikans, no longer follows the application of Euro-American ideologies and methods, stylised with Afrikan-inspired effects so that they are palatable to a Western audience. Colonial era atavism attempted to erase Afrikanness from Afrikans' cosmologies, citing the superiority of Western Enlightenment reasoning and their more 'sophisticated' society as preferable. Afrikan aetiologies now supersede in contemporary creative practice in Afrika, grounded in values, heritage, genealogy, mythology, prolepsis and systems that are intrinsically Afrikan, and favour that which is authentically representative of the continent.

A central idea here is that of autochthonous design, based on a theoretical framework informed by cultural hybridity and cultural significance, materiality, indigenous knowledge systems and Afronowism; a new ontology of authenticity. Chancy's (2020) model of inter-cultural diaspora resonates with autochthonous design as an ideology, impressing that cultural influences are fluid and that it is impossible to ignore the effects of diaspora in the quest for design authenticity. Consequently, this paper sets out to demonstrate, by exploring beaded artefacts, how this design form is a suitable means by which Afrikanness is expressed in contemporary Afrikan cultural production, whether fashion, interior, textile, or graphic design, and visual communication. Using beads and beading as aspects of materiality that have origins in the ancient cultural production of Afrika's colonial antecedent, examples of this phenomenon are discussed and the case for encouraging the use of the term "autochthonous design", to distinguish authenticity from pastiche, is put forward.

The methodology is informed by interpretivism and acknowledgement that the 'essence' of Afrikanness is a subjective space that requires complex visual analysis to decode. In previous research, the author proposed a four-step model, called "Mapping Afrikanness", to guide designers who desire to generate creative production that manifests Afrikanness. The model can also be used as a mechanism through which design can be read or evaluated to determine its quotient of Afrikanness. Collectively the contributions of Hall, Rose, Pauwels, and Twigger Holroyd, form the nexus of the analysis model. A simplified version is employed in this paper to interrogate the use of beads and beading in modern artefacts that reference ethnicity, hybridity and diaspora, and cultural significance. Evident in this research is the correlation between the cosmologies of the past and present, inventing new ways of considering them whilst maintaining the reverential connection to their former significance.

Keywords: autochthony, Afrikanness, cultural hybridity, authenticity, agonism, alterplinarity.

Students' attitudes towards change: Codesign in fashion education

Professor Neshane Harvey (In-person)

Co-design, under the broader scope of human-centred design, refers to an approach, attitude, alternative way of thinking, and engagement with design practice. In an educational context, although limited, scholarship exists around co-design pedagogy, which coincides with the need for future-focused design education, including fashion. However, a research gap exists in terms of student attitudes towards co-design practice. Also, a further gap exists regarding fashion education, in that conventional pedagogies that foster a culture of designer-centeredness and self-expressivity remain at the forefront, with educators reluctant to embrace a co-design pedagogy. Hence, the criticality of fashion education is questionable in terms of its future-focus. Considering the arguments offered, this paper is driven by a two-fold research question: how can co-design pedagogy be implemented in fashion education, and what are students' attitudes towards co-design practice? Aligned with the research question, this paper offers a two-fold aim. The first aim is to situate the implementation of co-design pedagogy with first-year fashion design students at a South African, urban higher education institution. The second aim is to draw on empirical research to explore students' attitudes towards co-design practice. This research was executed through the qualitative research lens rooted in a case study. The case relates to first-year fashion design students' attitudes towards co-design at a South African, urban higher education institution. Empirical data collection involved artefacts comprising 22 first-year fashion design students' written essays, which were analysed via content analysis. The findings reveal that when students are exposed to a future-focused co-design pedagogy and practice, transformation in student mindsets about fashion design practice is evident and yields positive attitudes. Notwithstanding, designer-centeredness and self-expressivity also emerged and generated negative student attitudes towards co-design practice. Considering the above, this paper contributes to the conference theme: DESIGN+ Disruptions, Realities, Futures, by disrupting conventional fashion design education to ensure effective scholarship of teaching and learning through innovative, co-design pedagogy and design practice that can shape futures.

Keywords: attitude, co-design pedagogy, future-focused, fashion education, scholarship of teaching and learning.

The design brief: A phenomenological and decolonised approach to undergraduate architectural studies

Ms Kim Harmse, Dr Jean-Pierre Basson, Ms Riëtte Kotzé (In-person)

As architectural education evolves, integrating sustainability demands more than technological solutions; it requires an experiential understanding of physical and spatial design qualities. However, Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in architecture has often been shaped by Global North-centric technical approaches, promoting one-size-fits-all solutions. A more holistic understanding, incorporating the cultural and environmental realities of the Global South, remains underexplored. This research investigates how sensory perception, informed by Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) and phenomenology, can enhance architectural ESD by fostering contextually grounded design approaches. What might a decolonised architectural design brief look like, and how can IKS and phenomenological pedagogy be meaningfully incorporated into design education beyond tokenism? The study adopts a reflective narrative approach to analyse a first-year architectural design brief that incorporates phenomenological and sustainable design principles within diverse natural contexts. The brief was analysed using a deductive coding method in two cycles: the first focused on attributes of phenomenology and decolonial pedagogy, the second explored themes through the lens of Habermas's validity claims (comprehensibility, sincerity, and truth). The resulting codes were compared using a cross-referencing method to triangulate findings and assess whether a phenomenological and decolonial approach enhances ESD in the Global South. Preliminary findings suggest that engaging with phenomenology and IKS fosters a deeper connection between students and their design decisions. Achieving more sustainable, context-sensitive outcomes depends not only on what is asked in the brief, but also on how it is stated. This study proposes a design brief quality matrix for integrating

phenomenology and IKS, to promote an ESD approach in architectural education that reflects comprehensibility, sincerity, and truth.

Keywords: architectural education, design brief, global south.

Investigating the Role of Embedded Tactile and Sensory Technology as a Digital Disruption in Technology Integrated Design

Mr Sarel Havenga, Professor Izak van Zyl, Dr Bruce Snaddon (In-person)

Integrating Embedded Tactile and Sensory Technologies (ETaSTs) in design education is transforming how students engage with learning materials. This study explored the affordances of additive manufacturing and tactile interfaces as digital disruptions that bridge theoretical concepts with experiential learning. By employing a Design-Based Research (DBR) methodology, the study developed and tested an educational design intervention aimed at enhancing engagement, inclusivity, and skill development in higher education.

The research is grounded in Experiential Learning Theory (ELT), which emphasises hands-on engagement through iterative design processes. This theoretical foundation aligns with contemporary pedagogical shifts towards active learning, problem-solving, and multi-sensory interaction in teaching environments. The study examines how ETaSTs enhance students' spatial reasoning and creative problem-solving abilities through iterative testing cycles, particularly in design disciplines.

The study further contextualised the South African higher education landscape, where limited access to digital fabrication tools, outdated curricula, and resource constraints present significant challenges. Case studies from a South African University of Technology demonstrate how these interventions facilitate inclusive education by providing students with hands-on exposure to tactile models, rapid prototyping, and interactive design.

Despite the transformative potential of ETaSTs, barriers such as high implementation costs, lack of formal curriculum integration, and educator training gaps hinder widespread adoption. The study identifies key institutional and pedagogical challenges, proposing an iterative framework to address these issues through structured curriculum development, interdisciplinary collaboration, and scalable implementation models.

By contributing empirical insights into the affordances, limitations, and pedagogical implications of ETaSTs, this paper informs the best practices for integrating emerging digital technologies in design education. The findings advocate for a shift towards future-focused, technology-enhanced learning environments that empower students with digital literacy, problem-solving competencies, and hands-on design thinking skills. This study presents a practical, evidence-based framework for embedding tactile learning into contemporary design curricula.

Keywords: embedded tactile and sensory technology, design-based research, experiential learning, digital disruptions.

Sustainable knowledge in communities: Design for social good through fashion education

Ms Zanné de Meillon (In-person)

Design for social good refers to the application of design knowledge and skills to solve problems to enable a better future. From a fashion perspective, design for social good could refer to the pursuit of environmental sustainability and to uplift communities.

Design education, at undergraduate-level aims to encourage students to apply design knowledge to improve the world and potentially introduce research methodology. However, literature concerning pedagogical strategies for design for social good in a South African fashion design higher education context is lacking. To fill this gap, a design for social good teaching and learning project was presented to 3rd year Fashion Diploma students at a South African fashion higher education institution. Students had to engage in a personal design for social good project which required them to teach five community members a sustainable fashion skill and record their experience.

Hence, this paper embeds itself in the research question: How can design for social good be used within the context of fashion education to enable sustainable knowledge and skills in communities? To align with the research question, this paper has a two-part aim. First, to contextualise the design for social good teaching and learning project and second, to present and discuss the students' recorded experiences of the project.

This paper applied qualitative data collection. This entailed artefacts, comprising fifteen students' written reports that documented their personal experiences about the design for social good teaching and learning project. These artefacts were analysed through content method of analysis.

The findings indicate that students were able to develop design for social good projects to teach respective community members sustainable fashion skills. These included skills for clothing longevity and upcycling. Also, the findings show that students acquired research skills to conduct ethical research, present research logically and reflect on experiences.

This paper aligns with the conference subtheme Design+ Sustainability and Future-Focused Design, by explicating how fashion education can nurture sustainability through teaching and learning, design for social good collaborative engagements and community building to foster critical change and future focused design. In the same light, the paper also contributes to the scholarship of teaching and learning.

Keywords: sustainability, fashion education, social good, scholarship of teaching and learning.

Design Play: Enhancing Ideation Skills Through Playful Strategies in Design Education

Ms Raksha Padaruth (In-person)

The ideation process is one of the most challenging components of the design process for students in Higher Education. Many students struggle with a lack of inspiration and confidence due to the need for perfection, which demotivates them to share or develop their ideas fully. Traditional ideation techniques often feel repetitive or restrictive, resulting in frustration and disengagement. This autoethnographic study draws from my personal experience as a design educator and ceramic artist to explore how play-based strategies can help reframe ideation as a joyful and exploratory process.

This research is based on reflective practice and classroom observation, drawing on my many years of teaching experience with first-year design students, rather than relying on data collection from students. Through imaginative activities like the 'What If' ideation challenge, impromptu sketching, printmaking and clay-based story-telling activities, I observed how students are inspired to take risks, try new things and solve problems. This data highlights the different ways in which playful approaches influence idea generation, creative exploration, and confidence in design thinking.

The findings show that incorporating play into the ideation process leads to more original and varied ideas. Students who engaged in play reported feeling less pressurised to come up with a "perfect" idea and enjoyed the freedom to explore. Play-based methods encouraged students to overcome planned thinking, resulting in new and unexpected results.

This research is framed through constructionist and experiential learning theories (Papert 1980) and supported by the reflective practitioner model (Schon 1983). The research also positions play as a mindset shift that values process over perfection and exploration over fixed results. As a Hindu female artist, majoring in ceramics, I also introduce nature and ritual inspired approaches that integrate cultural knowledge into the ideation process.

This study contributes to design education by offering a practical, inclusive and culturally responsive approach to the use of play in the classroom. This provides evidence that play is not just for children but can also be used as an important tool for unlocking creativity at any level. By shifting the focus from fixed outcomes to exploration and discovery, educators can help students develop creative confidence and problem-solving skills that will benefit them beyond the classroom. The findings encourage a rethinking of how ideation is taught, making it more interactive, inclusive, and engaging.

This research has a strong focus on the subtheme of Design and Societal Realities, Impact and Cultural Preservation. Many design students struggle with ideation due to societal pressures relating to the need for perfection and having to deal with rigid educational structures that emphasize results over process. Playful

ideation strategies can counteract these pressures by creating a more inclusive and exploratory learning environment that encourages risk-taking, collaboration, and creative confidence.

Keywords: autoethnography, ideation process, playful strategies, reflective practice, classroom observation.

SESSION 4: DESIGN+ SOCIETAL REALITIES, IMPACT AND CULTURAL PRESERVATION

From Observation to Interaction: Exploring the Impact of Lived Experiences in Design and Cultural Identity

Ms Celeste McKenzie (Online)

Lived experiences are central to the preservation of Indigenous cultural heritage; they shape identity and enable knowledge transmission. However, globalisation creates major challenges for Indigenous communities by putting pressure on them to conform to dominant cultures, which can lead to the loss of their distinct traditions and cultural practices. For the ≠Khomani San of Witdraai, Askham, in the Northern Cape of South Africa, roadside conversations are essential forms of informal knowledge exchange, allowing for storytelling, cultural adaptation, and identity assertion. These spontaneous and fluid interactions at roadside stalls provide a unique site for authentic, dynamic knowledge transfer that is distinct from formal museum narratives or scripted heritage tourism encounters. Nonetheless, their academic importance is not tracked in discussions about design education, cultural preservation, and social impact when related to social documentary photography and social changes.

This study examined how these roadside conversations function as a real-time knowledge-sharing instrument, illustrating how cultural knowledge is preserved and communicated outside institutionalised settings. Using ethnographic fieldwork, participant observation, and informal interviews, this study highlights how these lived experiences contribute to design methodologies, ethical storytelling, and cultural sustainability.

The findings reveal that lived experiences provide a flexible, community-centred model for preserving cultural knowledge that acts as a grassroots substitute for formal heritage documentation. These interactions provide realistic support for the importance of represented and participatory learning in sustainable design practices, highlighting their significance beyond mere stories. By linking informal knowledge with modern social documentary design processes, this study shows how designers, educators, and professionals in tourism can facilitate the transfer of Indigenous knowledge through ethical and participatory methods.

This study argues that knowledge transfer based on lived experiences should become part of social documentary photography and design approaches as an active and ongoing learning process, rather than being seen as static records. Ethical design practices, including acknowledging Indigenous councils and community introductions, can enhance these experiences while ensuring that Indigenous communities maintain control over the narrative of how researchers and tourists view their cultures. This paper contributes to design education, social documentary and ethnographic studies, and ethical storytelling practices, and calls for the recognition of Indigenous lived experiences as essential elements of cultural preservation and sustainable design.

Keywords: cultural preservation, lived experiences, knowledge transfer, indigenous storytelling, ethnographic design.

Rethinking Design Education in India: A Contextual Approach

Dr Priyanka Sewhag Joshi, Professor Vijai Singh Katiyar (Online)

Over the years, the standard Indian school curriculum has increasingly marginalised arts, crafts, and design education. This has led to the neglect of interdisciplinary approaches and creative problem-solving skills, which are essential not only in professional fields but also in everyday life. The influence of Western science and technology on design education, along with the shift from local to global perspectives, has also impacted the preservation of indigenous handcrafts, cultural diversity, traditional knowledge systems, identities, and natural resources in craft-rich communities. As a result, design programs in higher education institutions are forced to dedicate substantial time and resources to extensive foundation courses to bridge the gap between general and higher education. This paper proposes a contextualised approach to design education by integrating it with

regional handcrafting and material culture. The authors develop and critically examine a contextual design education framework through a practice-based study that explores the feasibility, implementation, and effectiveness of activity-based teaching methods within formal school education. The action research presents a way to cultivate basic design thinking skills in students, grounded in the Indian context, with a focus on indigenous and traditional crafts—whether or not they incorporate technology. The proposed teaching framework emphasises how design sensibility and awareness can be developed in children through hands-on learning, utilising indigenous resources, cultural strengths, and the rich heritage of art and craft. Integrating the cultural environment with design education in schools is crucial for fostering a sustainable and meaningful future, particularly in countries like India, where schools may have limited infrastructure but are rich in regional crafts, and natural and cultural resources. The value of this study lies in its flexibility—this framework can be adapted and expanded as new approaches and changing contexts arise over time. The insights gained from this intervention aim to shape future practices and research in design education, contributing to the development of a contextual design curriculum in general education at schools.

Keywords: design education, design pedagogy, curriculum, contextual studies, teaching framework.

Speculative Interiors for Museum Artefacts: the Decontextualise to Decolonise (D2D) Project

Dr Zakkiya Khan, Mr Terry Meade (Online)

Decolonisation in museums is an urgent and evolving discourse that challenges dominant historical narratives, interrogates Western authority over cultural artefacts, and seeks to return voice and visibility to historically marginalised communities. In Britain, museums continue to hold vast collections of objects acquired through imperial extraction. Their displays frequently obscure these colonial origins, reframing artefacts as universal heritage under a Eurocentric gaze. As Abungu (2019) argues, decolonisation requires structural change, rethinking display, interpretation, and who is authorised to tell these stories.

Ahamed-Barke (2024) sharpens this provocation by claiming that "to decolonise is to decontextualise." Decolonisation is not only about repatriation but about disrupting museological frameworks themselves: unsettling hierarchies, reconfiguring spatial strategies, and imagining new relationships between artefacts, communities, and institutions. Within this dialogue, interior architecture and design education emerges as a critical site of intervention. Museums are constituted not only by their collections but by their spatial strategies and narratives, all of which produce meaning. If space is socially produced (Lefebvre, 1991), then it can either reinforce colonial authority or open possibilities for plurality.

The Decontextualise to Decolonise (D2D) project, developed at the University of Brighton in collaboration with Brighton & Hove Museums, aimed to test these ideas pedagogically. Final-year students endeavoured to re-site and re-present artefacts from the museum collection through speculative design. These interventions were framed as provocations: imaginative acts of spatial and epistemic resistance. Students explored: If this artefact did not live in a glass case, where could it belong? What alternative rituals, landscapes, or communities might hold it? How might it be re-encountered?

The project culminated in live outputs that extended beyond the studio: a QR code trail installed in the museum, a Lightning Talk series, and a curated book of student work and reflections. Student proposals foregrounded themes of restoring cultural agency, reanimation, healing, access and inclusion, plurality, and critiques of commodification.

Pedagogically, D2D positions students as co-authors and world-builders, demonstrating the power of embedding education in live institutional collaborations. For museums, it redistributes curatorial authority opening space for plural authorship on artefact narratives. More broadly, D2D affirms interior architecture as a decolonial tool and positions decontextualisation as a transferable methodology, beyond museums to commercial, domestic, and civic spaces.

Further research asks, who holds the authority to re-situate displaced artefacts, and how can that authority be ethically shared between designers, institutions, and originating communities as part of an ongoing act of reworlding?

Keywords: decolonisation, interior architecture, design education; museums, speculative design, student partners.

Resonant Realms: Bridging Tradition and Transformation in Afrikan-Centered Design

Dr Reshma Maharajh (In-person)

While global platforms provide wider recognition for 'Afrikan' design, they present challenges such as cultural appropriation and the erosion of indigenous knowledge (Oguibe,2002). Through an Afrikan-centred and critical design approach, there is the potential to challenge the dominant narrative and foster cultural resilience by grounding creative practices in Rasa principles. Rasa theory is an aesthetic framework derived from classical Indian philosophy (Pandit, 2024). This paper addresses the challenge of preserving 'Afrikan' cultural identity and fostering societal engagement through design. It explores how emotional resonance in art and design can be leveraged to celebrate cultural heritage, support societal protest, and balance South African national identity with global influences. Emotional resonance in art to Afrikan-centred design strengthens cultural narratives and collective memories. Expanding on critical design broadens the approach to include not only cultural preservation but also social activism as a decolonial design. By integrating the Rasa framework, particularly bhava(emotion) and rasa (aesthetic flavour), designers can strategically evoke sentiments such as nostalgia(karuna-rasa), heroism(veer-rasa) or wonder(adbhuta-rasa), allowing for a deeper connection between audiences and cultural narratives. This approach is particularly relevant in a post-colonial context, where identity is continuously negotiated. Through an analysis of contemporary South African design practices, design can navigate the tension between local traditions, applying rasa to create artefacts that resonate emotionally and contextually (Mitra,2016). This synthesis aligns with the principles of rasa, which emphasise a holistic and immersive experience rather than mere aesthetic appreciation. Embracing cultural hybridity through an emotive and sensorial lens, one can assert its unique identity without succumbing to cultural dilution (Bhabha, 1994). By engaging disruptive aesthetics and counter narratives, unconventional design methodologies, such as speculative design, subversive typography and visual satire, one can challenge dominant ideologies and provoke critical engagement.

The impact of design extends beyond aesthetics, becoming an instrument of cultural preservation of African pride. The fusion of traditional African visual language with critical design in the South African context has the potential to challenge dominant narratives, foster cultural resilience, and drive social change (Ofosu-Asare, 2025). Through this process, one is able to examine how design activism and disruptive visual narratives serve as tools for decolonial discourse, emphasising the role of design in fostering dialogue, resistance, and collective empowerment (Bhabha, 1994). This paper contributes to the field by providing a nuanced understanding of how South African designers can harness both African and Indian aesthetic traditions to amplify cultural narratives and drive societal change.

Keywords: rasa, African design, cultural resilience, decolonial discourse, design activism.

Reimagining Cultural Heritage Archives Through motion-based digital narratives in Design Education

Mr Nthabiseng Mabale, Mr Bongani Khoza

The inaccessibility of global cultural heritage limits its potential to shape identities and inform design, a challenge compounded by historical power imbalances in knowledge production. This paper proposes a framework for design education, integrating Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS), Critical Theory, and Human-Centred Design (HCD). It addresses digital cultural heritage preservation in postcolonial contexts, using a South African case study. Drawing on a Title Sequence Design Module at a South African university, in a Digital Design department, we developed a project collaboration with a South African Art Museum, which explores motion-based digital narratives to democratise heritage access, preserve culture & traditions, disrupt colonial legacies, and cultivate ethical designers. The model anchors IKS for culturally embedded heritage preservation, Critical Theory to interrogate power structures in knowledge representation, and HCD for a cyclical process of empathising, defining, ideating, prototyping, and testing cultural narratives. It emphasises participatory engagement with cultural custodians to ensure ethical digital transformations, guiding students to navigate tensions between creative reinterpretation and historical authenticity while addressing cultural appropriation risks. The paper reviews literature, interrogates heritage, education, and design paradigms, reflects on teaching and learning

classroom experiences and offers insights and recommendations for curricular and institutional innovation. Key questions arise about balancing reinterpretation with authenticity, the ethics of digital narratives, and perceptions of original cultural communities. The paper highlights that engaging custodians mitigates reducing artefacts to aesthetics, fostering meaningful reinterpretations. This framework attempts to contribute to responsible design education, offering educators a methodology to guide students in ethically preserving and reinterpreting cultural heritage through digital narratives, ensuring socially responsible practice across diverse contexts.

Keywords: cultural heritage, motion-based digital narratives, human-centred design, design education, indigenous knowledge systems, decolonial practice.

SESSION 5: DESIGN+ DIGITAL DISRUPTIONS AND TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION

Fixed to Fluid: A Postdigital Framework for Responsive and Disruptive Assessment in Design Education

Ms Maretha Geyser (Online)

In many design education programmes, especially within multi-site higher education institutions, assessment development is centralised and standardised to ensure quality, consistency, and equitable delivery across campuses. While this approach maintains institutional coherence, it can constrain lecturers' ability to adapt assessments in response to emerging technologies such as AI-driven tools, local industry demands, and evolving design challenges. The rigidity of such fixed assessment practices limits lecturer autonomy and student agency, reducing opportunities to create contextually and culturally responsive assessments that address the unique needs of diverse learning environments.

In the postdigital era, where the boundaries between physical and digital learning are increasingly fluid, technology is seamlessly integrated into educational practice. Digital technologies are no longer external to education but are embedded into how knowledge is produced, shared and experienced. Consequently, traditional assessment practices, which rely on predetermined tasks and fixed grading rubrics, are misaligned with the dynamic, networked nature of contemporary learning. A postdigital perspective challenges these static assessment models by advocating for more flexible and culturally relevant assessment approaches that centres student voice and agency while maintaining rigour and authenticity in learning experiences. The challenge lies in balancing institutional quality assurance with greater lecturer autonomy and student agency while ensuring assessments remain relevant in an era of technological and industry disruptions.

Postdigital education, networked and cultural responsiveness provides a critical lens for reconceptualising standardised assessment practices, emphasising student-valued experiences, shared responsibility, collaborative dialogue and contextual relevance. This paper explores how a postdigital, networked learning approach, underpinned by culturally responsive assessment principles, enables the transformation of rigid assessment structures into fluid, flexible and co-constructed reflective frameworks within design education.

Through an integrative literature review, this study critically explores the theoretical foundations of postdigital education, networked learning, and culturally responsive assessment practices. Building on these insights, the paper presents a structured yet adaptable conceptual framework for design education that upholds quality assurance while enhancing responsiveness to technological and industry disruptions.

As the first phase of a larger study, this paper contributes to the field of design education by providing actionable insights for educators, policymakers, and institutions seeking to implement contextually responsive and future-ready assessment strategies. The proposed Postdigital Responsive Assessment Framework, which strategically balances institutional quality assurance with the need for fluidity, co-construction and cultural relevance, serves as a foundation for ongoing research into postdigital assessment strategies.

Keywords: postdigital education, networked learning, culturally responsive assessment, design education.

Re-designing Honours: A Feminist Disruption in Graphic Design Education

Ms Judith Evans, Ms Cheri Hugo (In-person)

This paper will provide a case study on co-creativity of an Honours Graphic Design programme at restructured Private Higher Education Institution (PHEI) in South Africa. The research project was initiated by restructuring the institutions which opened grounds to re-conceptualisation of pedagogical practices in more inclusive and responsive ways. The study was informed by feminist pedagogies, critical participatory action research (CPAR) and participatory design methodologies so as to bring student voice, learning as a practice of relations and ethics of care in the development of the curriculum. Established during the 2022, 2023, and 2024 academic school years, the project involved three study cohorts and a multidisciplinary teaching crew in the development of studio rituals, collaborative evaluation rubrics, reflective journeys, and affective pedagogies aimed at the formation of trust, belonging and academic agency. Not only were these interventions pedagogical aids, but also taking a role in the institutional reflection, provoking changes in the ways in which learning environment is built and excellence in teaching is rewarded. Data gathering involved weekly journals of students, intermediate and final survey, peer reviewers artefacts, staff debrief transcripts and the LMS data. Thematic analysis demonstrated robust gains on the engagement rates, emotional wellbeing, and self-efficacy of the students. Institutions reacted to this by issuing invitations to cross-departmental sharing and integrating practices of co-creation into wholesome quality assurance systems. This implies that the integration of care and co-creation in the study of design may generate more inert, reflective, and a teaming culture of learning. This paper builds on a developing literature, which aims to transform the design studio as a location of production, but one that offers an apprentice an opportunity to engage an ethical and relational change. It suggests care as a methodology and caring ethos through which one can engage with the intricacies that frame the current dimensions of higher education.

Keywords: design education, co-creation, feminist pedagogy, care ethics, action research, curriculum innovation

XR and AI as Disruptors in South African Art and Design Education

Professor Anneke de Klerk, Mr Sarel Havenga, Dr Rene van Eck (In-person)

This paper investigates the disruptive power of Extended Reality (XR) technologies, synergistically combined with Artificial Intelligence (AI), on creative art and design education in South Africa. Informed by an integrative literature review and insights derived from research conducted for the EU-funded Metaverse Academy Project with students and industry representatives, this study demonstrates how these technologies are altering established paradigms within artistic practice and design methodologies. Approached from an Actor-Network-Theory perspective and Social Disruptive Technologies framework, the analysis underscores the creation of new market opportunities for art and design professionals within the burgeoning XR industry, requiring the adaptation of traditional art and design curricula. Furthermore, the paper critically explores how virtual classrooms, powered by XR, are dismantling the spatial constraints of conventional educational settings, enabling innovative pedagogical approaches. The democratization of access to education, however, remains fraught. By focusing on the transformative convergence of XR and AI, this research highlights the shift these technologies represent for the future of creative education in South Africa, emphasising the imperative for educators and institutions to embrace these advancements, with full understanding of the possible advantages and dangers of this shift, to equip students with the necessary skills to navigate and shape a rapidly evolving creative economy.

Keywords: extended reality (XR), artificial intelligence (AI), creative education, social disruptive technologies.

Digital Convergence, Possessive Viewers, and Evolving Documentary Aesthetics

Ms Esmerelda Marx, Professor Anneke de Klerk, Dr Kate Chmela-Jones (Online)

Media consumers' behaviour is shifting due to increased digital activity, the ubiquity of digitally converged technologies, and the rise of on-demand platforms. This convergence democratises content production, allowing individuals and communities outside mainstream media to create and share their own narratives and transform how we consume and interact with digital content. This technological evolution interacts dynamically with aesthetic progressions and viewer expectations. In digital video production, applying media aesthetics involves analysing elements such as light, colour, space, time, motion, sound, and visual narratives.

Understanding this triadic interplay helps producers tailor content to emerging audiences, including digitally native generations like Millennials and Generation Z, who are becoming "possessive viewers" with control over their viewing experience and heightened expectations for emotionally captivating and visually engaging content. Researchers have explored the relationship among digital convergence, narrative structures, aesthetic components, and frameworks for analysing these elements within digital narratives, especially within South African contexts.

However, the specific influence of digitally convergent tools on the application of visual design in documentary media remains an area that requires further exploration. This conceptual study adopts a constructivist interpretive approach, informed by a critical literature review and guided by selected evaluative criteria across media platforms. Drawing on academic literature, online content, and South African documentaries, it proposes a framework for analysing how digital convergence influences the visual design of documentary media productions.

The aim is to support media educators in adapting to the evolving media landscape and to prepare students for future content creation. Additionally, it equips media producers with insights into crafting content that resonates with interactive, digital-native audiences. Integrating emerging technologies and aesthetic strategies into the curriculum prepares students for content creation in the evolving digital media landscape. The conceptual model paves the way for future empirical research, particularly on audience-centred testing in a posthumanist context.

Keywords: digital convergence, applied media aesthetics, South African documentary.

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Integrating AI in Interior Design Education: Developing Guidelines for Critical Engagement with Visual AI Models

Ms Esther Martins, Ms Rene van der Merwe (In-person)

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in design education presents both opportunities and challenges for developing future-ready graduates. This study investigates how final-year interior design students engaged with generative AI tools during a brief that required them to to improve a previous submission by working on rendering quality, refining project presentation layouts, with the option of incorporating AI-assisted tools. Students explored platforms such as Midjourney, Photoshop, and Revit, concluding with a written reflection on their process. (Yanhua, 2024) posits that “AI can transform interior design, addressing existing gaps and fostering a deeper understanding of the symbiotic relationship between advanced technologies and creative processes". While their use of tools demonstrated visual advancement and iteration, the reflections revealed a gap in reflective thinking.

This gap is significant given AI’s increasing role in creative disciplines and the need to cultivate reflective practitioners. Methodologically, the paper employs a qualitative approach which draws on Schön’s (1983, 1987) concepts of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action, the study applied a qualitative coding method to analyse student reflections using six criteria that looks at action description, rationale, outcome evaluation, insights gained, future improvements, and critical depth. Findings suggest that the students treat reflection as a task to complete rather than a means for iterative learning. This aligns with Laher’s (2025) caution against the uncritical use of AI-generated content, which can undermine student agency and ethical responsibility. The study argues for clearer reflective scaffolding that emphasises authorship, critical engagement, and long-term learning.

Recommendations include embedding structured prompts and recommendations for what the prompts should be. These strategies support curriculum development that encourages students to think critically about their tools, decisions, and design identity. In doing so, the study contributes to the evolving pedagogy of AI-integrated design education.

This paper contributes to the discourse on digital disruptions in design education by proposing strategies for leveraging reflective thinking when engaging with AI. As AI continues to reshape creative industries, this research underscores the importance of equipping design students with adaptive skills that merge technological proficiency with critical engagement.

Keywords: AI in design education, reflective practice, interior design education, design thinking, curriculum development, digital disruptions.

SESSION 6: DESIGN+ SOCIETAL REALITIES, IMPACT AND CULTURAL PRESERVATION

Translocal fashion subjectivities and the Afro fashion look: A Student Project at a South African comprehensive university

Professor Khaya Mchunu (Online)

Using the second phase of a two-year-long project called the Drum Magazine Project as a case study, this paper responds to how we can address cultural pride and preservation of uniqueness in a globalised world. Drawing inspiration from the landmark South African magazine, the project embarked on a process of teaching South African fashion history through archives from this magazine. Building on the first phase's focus on the 1950s and 1960s, the second phase included students working with theories of translocality (Hughes, 2022) and the 'Afro' fashion look (Ford, 2015) to study 1970s fashion in Johannesburg as an expression of translocal subjectivities.

Methodologically, the cohort of students that participated in the Drum Magazine Project analysed 1970s fashion worn on Drum magazine's archives, wrote an essay on their findings, and photographed a contemporary fashion look informed by their research and analysis of the magazine archives. Students were interviewed about the project to determine their experience exploring their version of translocal fashion subjectivities and the 'Afro' fashion look.

Through an analysis of the themes explored by students, such as the sartorial codes embedded in the covers, the paper's core argument is that for design education to inculcate notions of cultural pride and preservation of uniqueness in a globalised world requires carving out space for forgotten or less talked about histories. During its golden era, Drum magazine offered a methodology of positioning the uniqueness of South African subjectivities where notions of cosmopolitanism and translocality took centre stage. As demonstrated in the student project, this methodology provides lessons for contemporary society and future fashion designers, such as the students who participated in the Drum Magazine Project.

Keywords: 'afro' fashion look, analogue photography, drum magazine project, translocality.

Documentary animation as a medium for public history

Dr Lukasz Pater (In-person)

Animation is a medium that is increasingly being used in the documentary genre for its symbolic and metaphoric functions; the reenactment of events for which live action footage is missing or non-existent, the recreation of phenomena not accessible to normal human vision (such as those that were/are pre-photographic, cosmically distant or microscopic), as well as the portrayal of subjective psychological states. This paper proposes that in addition to these established functions of animation in a non-fiction context, we should also consider its potential as a form of public history, 'revivifying' (giving new life to) historical narrative by giving voice to individual perspectives in a novel and symbolically-rich medium. This concept is explored through the case study of Polonia, a practice-based PhD research project that entailed the use of animation and archival material to tell the story of Polish refugees who fled their homeland from political persecution in the early 1980s, ultimately arriving in South Africa. The visual and conceptual design processes of the film's environments and protagonists are unpacked and discussed, with consideration given to various self-reflexive strategies that highlight the subjectivity of individual historical accounts and animation's constructedness. The paper concludes that this type of considered and research-based approach to animation production in a documentary context advances it beyond just being a purely functional, visually attractive but arbitrary vehicle for motion and narrative, to become a means for the revivification, preservation and teaching of historical and cultural narrative through a meaningful and layered relationship between content and form.

Keywords: animation, public history, animated documentary, 4iR.

Negotiating Interior Design's Contextual Relevance: Redefining the role of interior design in contemporary South African society

Ms Audrey Nanjala, Ms Lethabo Xulu (Online)

Interior design in South Africa has largely been shaped by hegemonic trends from the global north, resulting in a practice that often prioritises aesthetics and function over cultural relevance. This approach neglects local spatial concerns and fails to incorporate cultural nuances, limiting the discipline's potential to address societal needs and contribute to cultural preservation within the African context. While "African" design has gained visibility, it remains largely superficial—defined by decorative cultural symbols rather than by meaningful cultural practices or spatial traditions. Frequently curated by non-African designers and driven by global visual cultures, these representations reinforce reductive and biased interpretations of African design. Consequently, interior design is often perceived locally as a practice centred on visual consumption, rather than as a medium for cultural expression and social engagement.

In response to these challenges, this study interrogates how South African educational institutions and professional bodies perpetuate Eurocentric design standards. It introduces decolonial and context-responsive frameworks as critical tools for reimagining interior design pedagogy and practice. These frameworks prioritise indigenous knowledge systems, participatory processes, and community agency, drawing inspiration from emerging non-institutional platforms such as the African Life-Centred Design (ALCD) manifesto, Interior Identities, the Research Collective for Decoloniality and Fashion (RCDF), and Andani Africa. Through literature reviews and case study analysis of design briefs from a Private Higher Education Institution (PHEI), this research highlights both the challenges and opportunities of incorporating culturally relevant pedagogies into interior design education.

The study reveals that while some educational institutions have begun integrating social design and active citizenship into their curricula, engagement with decolonial perspectives remains insufficient. By applying the principles of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL), the research advocates for curricula that prioritise cultural relevance, critical reflection, and inclusivity. It argues that meaningful transformation in practice must begin with education—through pedagogies that challenge dominant narratives and equip emerging designers to be socially responsive and culturally grounded. In this way, interior design can shift from producing globally influenced yet locally detached spaces to creating artefacts that celebrate, preserve, and generate contextually resonant design languages. Ultimately, the study calls for a redefinition of interior design as a socially embedded, culturally resonant practice capable of addressing South Africa's complex spatial and socio-political realities.

Keywords: interior design pedagogy, decoloniality, context-responsive design, cultural relevance.

Folding Memory: The Swahili Khanga as a Contemporary Design

Ms Juliet Mwase Kavishe (Online)

This design research explores the innovative intersection of traditional African textile heritage and contemporary design practice through the reinterpretation of the Swahili khanga. Using the khanga's standard dimensions (3000mm x 1100mm) as a template, this paper investigates how traditional cultural artefacts can be transformed into modern design elements while maintaining their cultural significance and storytelling.

The research uses a critical design methodology that translates the khanga's communication qualities, traditionally expressed through written proverbs and visual motifs, into a new design language that utilises Morse code patterns. This transformation acts as a cultural protest against the erasure of African design systems and principles, demonstrating how traditional communication methods can be preserved and reimagined through contemporary design interventions. The resulting product, a screen/cupboard, functions both as a practical object and a cultural narrative device, embodying the principle of "mtu ni watu" (a person is a people), emphasising the interconnectedness of community and design.

The project challenges the traditional view that globalisation erases cultural differences by showing how cultural identity can be preserved while engaging with modern design practices. By drawing on influences from East African textiles, the screen/cupboard acknowledges the complexity of contemporary African identity and respects

cultural traditions. The design process demonstrates how African-centred design can be rooted locally and remain globally relevant without sacrificing cultural integrity.

This research contributes to the broader discourse on cultural preservation in design by introducing a novel methodology in tandem with the critical design methodology. This methodology treats traditional artefacts not as static historical objects but as living design languages that can be reinterpreted and revitalised. The transformation of textile-based communication into architectural spatial elements demonstrates how African design principles can inform contemporary spatial practices while preserving indigenous knowledge systems.

The project suggests that celebrating African-centred design requires preservation and active reinterpretation, allowing traditional design elements to evolve while maintaining their cultural significance. This offers a model for how designers can address cultural pride and preservation globally, transforming inherited knowledge into future heirlooms that bridge generational and cultural gaps.

Keywords: khanga, cultural artefacts, morse code patterns, contemporary spatial practices.

Beyond Stone: Augmented Reality, Forensic Aesthetic and the Future of Cultural Preservation

Mr Limo Velapi (In-person)

Traditional Memorialisations, stone, oral and written histories, have been a key part of cultural heritage, remembrance and identity. However, with the rise of technology, we are presented with new opportunities and means to challenge our thinking in preserving and interpreting memory. This paper examines how digital design can be used to create ethical documentation and cultural preservation through the use of augmented reality (AR) and forensic aesthetics with a focus on Afrocentric cultural preservation. The artwork discussed in this paper serves as a case study as it represents a digital reimagining of the deceased using forensic facial reconstruction techniques, digital sculpting techniques, and augmented reality (AR), challenging the boundaries between physical and digital remembrance while presenting an ethical solution to documentation and preservation of deceased figures.

This paper critically examines the potential impact of digital memorials in a globalised world, considering traditional remembrance and its role in culture, preservation and identity as well as the ethical implications behind digitally reconstructing the dead. While digital design and technological advancements offer new immersive and interactive ways of engaging with history, this paper brings into question romanticised representation, contemporary artistic interpretation and its place within historical accuracy and documentation. Forensic aesthetics is a tool in this study that supports and builds a bridge between historical accuracy and romanticised representation. It also bring into question the role of technology in cultural practices and how African centred design in digital memorials fit in or stands apart from Western, globalised, narratives of preservation and historical documentation By examining the relationship between forensic science, digital art and African memorialisation, this paper highlights the evolution of technology and how it further bleeds into cultural heritage and memory in an increasingly digital world. It also calls for critical reflection on the ethics and role of digital design in documentation and remembrance.

Keywords: augmented reality (AR), forensic aesthetics, digital design, African-centred/Afrocentric design, digital sculpture, ethics of representation.

African Abacus: Learning Design as Praxis for Inclusive and Sustainable Futures in Architecture Education

Dr Jolanda Morkel, Dr Hermie Delport, Ms Chelsea Horn, Ms Marga de Vos, Mr Zolani Gomba, Ms Zana Ncube, Mr Sandile Busuku (In-person)

This paper reports on the development of inclusive online short courses in architecture, situated within the establishment of a new School of Architecture at a private higher education institution in South Africa. In its formative years, the School pursued a layered strategy that combined the design of formal qualifications, Continuing Professional Development (CPD) activities, and online short courses. This ecosystemic approach aimed to expand access to the architectural profession, address urgent transformation needs in the built environment, and establish flexible, context-responsive pathways for learners from diverse backgrounds. Against this backdrop, the study introduces the African Abacus, a reflective taxonomy and visual mapping tool that enables design teams to interrogate and align inclusive intentions across spatial, social, and temporal dimensions of learning experience design.

Grounded in a praxis-oriented framework that integrates theory and action, the research adopts a qualitative, interpretivist methodology informed by autoethnographic principles. A multidisciplinary team of seven contributors, including academic staff, graduates, and practitioners, documented their experiences through reflective writing and iterative mapping exercises. The African Abacus positioned design choices along continua (e.g., fixed–flexible, human–non-human, synchronous–asynchronous), allowing contributors to visualise their own roles as designers while also projecting anticipated student experiences across three types of short courses: foundational, inquiry-based, and skills-focused professional development.

Findings reveal both convergences and divergences in contributors' interpretations of inclusive design. While flexibility, informality, and personalisation were commonly valued, differences emerged in how centralisation, synchronicity, or collaboration were understood and mapped. These variations highlight the African Abacus's use not only as a diagnostic tool for revealing assumptions but also as a generative framework that promotes shared vocabulary, critical dialogue, and alignment within design teams. The study demonstrates that inclusive learning design is often characterised by dynamic, negotiated practices shaped by identities, contexts, and institutional constraints.

By foregrounding non-formal, online short courses as immediate entry points into architectural education, this work expands existing literature on inclusive learning design in the Global South. It offers both a conceptual tool and a practical example of how collaborative praxis can support equitable, adaptive, and future-oriented models of architectural pedagogy.

Keywords: learning experience design, inclusive learning, architectural education, reflective praxis, designer identities.

Feet on the ground, eyes on the design

Ms Gail Stock, Professor Izak van Zyl, Mrs Maretha Dreyer (Online)

This research investigates the transformation of studio-based learning environments within spatial design education, focusing on the increasing need for adaptability, immersion, and sustainability. With roots in Interior Design and Architectural Education, traditional studio models have historically centered on fixed, institution-bound environments. However, shifts in ecological consciousness, technological advancement, and pedagogical priorities demand a rethinking of the studio typology. This paper proposes an alternative: the immersive nomadic studio. The nomadic studio is an evolution of the structured hot-desking model. It draws on place-based, real world, and multisensory learning experiences, bridging the gap between virtual flexibility and the embodied value of physical presence. Grounded in Participatory Action Research (PAR), this study collected data from spatial design students and educators at a South African design institution. Through iterative design cycles, immersive field sessions, and student-led spatial adaptations, the research revealed five thematic outcomes: empathic

immersion, tacit knowledge, spatial agency, sustainable awareness, and community engagement. Each theme highlights how real-world immersion and flexible spatial engagement foster deeper design thinking, stronger ethical awareness, and more resilient learner identities. Students who participated in nomadic studio learning experiences demonstrated increased sensitivity to user needs, contextual complexity, and inclusive design thinking. Rather than disconnecting learning from the material world, the nomadic model roots design education firmly in context, ethics, and human experience. This paper contributes a framework for future-focused, sustainability-driven design education one that is inherently adaptive, collaborative, and embodied. The immersive nomadic studio is positioned not merely as a pedagogical tool, but as a philosophical reorientation: a shift toward design learning that is mobile, empathic, and socially engaged.

Keywords: spatial design education, nomadic studio, empathic learning, sustainability, tacit knowledge, adaptive pedagogy, future-focused design.

Reimagining Fashion Education: Exploring Generative AI in Early-Stage Ideation

Ms Thulisani Pasiya (In-person)

Technological change, including artificial intelligence and wider digital disruptions, is reshaping design practices and education. Within the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, fashion design faces a dual challenge: adapting to rapidly evolving digital tools while preserving creative integrity. Innovations in generative design, predictive analytics, and automation are transforming processes by expanding creative possibility, improving efficiency, and opening avenues for more sustainable practice. This paper studies how these technologies influence creative methodologies in fashion design and how they can be mobilised to redefine design education for future readiness.

A central concern is the widening gap between industry expectations and academic training. The pace of digital change requires a reassessment of curricula so that students acquire the digital fluency needed for a technology-mediated profession. Despite increasing reliance on new tools across the sector, many institutions remain anchored in traditional studio models that do not reflect contemporary practice. The paper considers how work-integrated learning, industry partnerships, and cross-disciplinary collaboration can bridge this divide, equipping emerging designers with both technical capability and the interpersonal competencies required to navigate complex professional contexts.

Beyond the industry-academy gap, the paper explores how emerging technologies can enhance teaching through innovative pedagogies. Tools such as artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and immersive platforms support adaptive learning experiences that simulate real-world design conditions. These approaches allow educators to integrate theoretical frameworks with experiential learning and thereby foster adaptability, critical thinking, and innovation.

The study adopts a conceptual approach informed by a comprehensive desk analysis of literature, industry reports, and case studies, and it is further oriented by qualitative insights from semi-structured interviews and surveys with fashion educators, industry professionals, and students. Content analysis identifies key themes in technology adoption and in the evolving needs of the sector, offering a holistic perspective on how educational frameworks must adapt.

The paper contributes to design education by advocating adaptive pedagogies and industry-aligned learning. It argues for reimagined curricula that incorporate contemporary digital tools while cultivating critical, creative, and technical competencies. Situated within debates on the Fourth Industrial Revolution and African scholarship, it underscores the importance of local knowledge production and equitable access to technological resources. By addressing the interplay between technological innovation, educational frameworks, and industry collaboration, the paper proposes a foundation for reshaping fashion design education in a rapidly evolving digital age.

Keywords: fashion design education, generative AI, early stage ideation, curriculum reform.

Pluriversal Design in Action: Collaborative Approaches to Education, Practice, and Community Building

Mr Nii Botchway, Mrs Nicole Collier-Naidoo, Ms Amy De Raedt (In-Person)

This paper reflects on multidisciplinary, collaborative engagement projects conducted over the past five years, initiated in 2021 during the global COVID-19 lockdowns. These projects – primarily facilitated between our University's School of Visual and Performing Arts and Engagement Office (VAPA) – saw collaborations between Graphic Design students, Photography students, faculty members, Engagement Office staff, and community partners. These collaborative engagement projects provided unique challenges and opportunities, allowing for the emergence of meaningful lessons in response to the question "how are we designing for engagement through collaborative, dialogical, or multidisciplinary approaches to design education, practice, and community building?"

In this paper, we argue that a pluriversal approach to design education—rather than a traditional, universalist model—offers one response. A pluriversal approach challenges the traditional view of design as a transactional practice, instead focusing on relationality (Noel, Ruiz, van Amstel, Udoewa, Verma, Botchway, Lodaya and Agrawal 2023). This approach allows for the coexistence of diverse design practices rather than attempting to replace one with another. In 2021, The Future of Design Education Initiative formed a working group comprised of a diverse team of educators and professionals from around the world to make recommendations around various themes, with Pluriversal Design Education (PDE) being one. This paper draws on four of the 'Ten Big Ideas' the PDE working group proposed:

Big Idea 1: Every community is capable of designing for itself, independent of expert knowledge.

Big Idea 2: Relational approaches to design embrace connections across nature and culture, mind and body, and us and them.

Big Idea 3: Design should be done with and by people, not for people.

Big Idea 6: Design happens beyond the studio, within the community.

In this paper, each idea will be expanded upon, followed by examples that demonstrate how they were embodied in praxis, along with the lessons learned through these experiences.

By critically reflecting on our experiences over the past five years, we engage with scholarship on engagement and PDE to draw insights that deepen our processes of designing for meaningful engagement. In response to the subtheme, we explore how collaborative, dialogical, and multidisciplinary approaches can foster sustainable and future-focused design practices, in a way that embodies "a coherent and mutually respectful relationship between the university and its communities" (Motala and Vally, 2022) and produce multiple, mutually-beneficial outcomes and transformative experiences for all collaborating participants.

Keywords: design, education, pluriversality, community engagement.

Using Visual Storytelling in Eco-Friendly and Socially Responsible Advertisements to Promote Sustainable Products

Dr Tsekelo Patrick Moremoholo (In-person)

In an era marked by intensifying environmental and social challenges, sustainability has become a defining imperative for brands and consumers alike. Increasingly, organisations are turning to visual storytelling as a strategic communication tool to foster environmental consciousness, drive behavioural change, and shape public perception. This paper investigates the role of visual storytelling in advancing sustainable advertising practices and explores how such techniques can be integrated into design education to prepare emerging creatives for purpose-driven communication.

Grounded in a dual focus on environmental and social responsibility, this study responds to two central questions: (1) How can visual storytelling techniques influence consumer engagement and action toward sustainability? and

(2) How can educators incorporate these techniques into design curricula to enhance student creativity and awareness of social and environmental issues?

To address these questions, a qualitative, interpretive methodology was employed, involving the critical analysis of these purposefully selected case studies:

1. Nando's "More South African Flavour" campaign (South Africa)
2. Patagonia's New York Times "Don't Buy This Jacket" Black Friday Ad (United States)
3. Woolworths' Good Business Journey initiative (South Africa)
4. Ben and Jerry's - Flavors We Could Lose to Climate Change (United States)
5. IKEA "Trash Collection" campaign (Norway)

These campaigns were chosen for their strong visual narratives and emphasis on environmental or social responsibility. Each case was examined using semiotic and discourse analysis to uncover the rhetorical, emotional, and cultural mechanisms underpinning their messaging. Key tools included Barthes' visual semiotics, narrative persuasion theory, and eco-visual communication frameworks.

Preliminary findings suggest that effective campaigns combine emotionally resonant imagery, culturally relevant storytelling, and coherent brand values to build trust and inspire action. However, selective engagement with values may weaken the authenticity of sustainability claims.

The study concludes that visual storytelling should be taught as both a creative and critical practice within design education, encouraging students to consider ethical and social dimensions in their work. This is particularly relevant in contexts like South Africa, where visual culture, identity, and sustainability intersect in complex and meaningful ways.

Keywords: visual storytelling; sustainability; social responsibility; consumer engagement; design education; circular economy.

SESSION 8: DESIGN+ SUSTAINABILITY AND FUTURE-FOCUSED DESIGN

Future-Focused Design Education: Insights from a South African Industrial Design Project Presented on a Global Stage

Ms Pia McFindlay, Ms Morgan Potgieter (In-person)

This paper examines how sustainability and future-focused design can be effectively integrated into design education through a case study of a third-year Industrial Design project in South Africa. As part of an international design competition, students were challenged to critically engage with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by identifying and addressing actionable problems. Working in teams, they developed technically refined product solutions within a Computer-Aided Design (CAD) environment, applying human-centred and sustainability-driven design principles. The project outcome analysed in this study tackled organic waste management in lower-income urban areas under the competition theme of "sustainable habitat/city infrastructure." The result was a vertical composter designed to promote self-sustaining communities and uplift urban environments. This project was selected as a competition finalist and the student group presented their outcome on an international stage in Pune, India, demonstrating the global relevance of project approach and outcome. This study employs a reflective teaching practice approach, co-authored by the project lecturer and a student from the finalist group, to critically examine the pedagogical strategies that supported the project's success, as well as areas for improvement in design education. Key findings highlight the importance of engaging students in the full design process and developing communication and storytelling skills, which were relevant for effectively conveying the design solution on a global stage. The paper also identifies challenges that were faced during the project, including navigating group collaboration dynamics and managing steep learning curves within constrained timeframes. The study also examines how design briefs could be refined to better support the design process and project outcomes. By connecting these insights to broader discussions on design pedagogy, this paper proposes strategies to enhance sustainability-oriented and future-focused design education. It contributes

to the ongoing discourse on equipping students with the critical skills needed to address evolving global challenges, reinforcing the role of human-centred, impact-driven design in shaping sustainable futures.

Keywords: sustainability, design education, reflective teaching practice, future-focused design skills.

Innovation by invitation? A hybrid developmental Design model for stirring cocreation in socio-technical continuums

Ms Natalia Tofas (In-person)

This paper proposes a hybrid developmental Design model for innovative research, practice and learning in complex socio-technical systems by combining topical theories and methods. It begins by challenging the problem of exclusive Design approaches and typical Design models which use centralised development and beneficiation. The model asks Designers to rethink their future role and relinquish control via a Participatory Design approach where Designers are responsible for demystifying the value impact of Design through a process of ongoing engagement (Lasky, 2013: 24). The model's framework combines three Design theories: 'Socio-Technical Systems Design', 'Appropriate Technology' and 'Design for Sustainability'. Each theory is briefly explained for what it offers and where it is deficient. The theories are linked by common themes. The framework is then reinforced where each weakness is supported by the strength of another theory.

This application outputs a series of developmental socio-technical maps across the social levels; micro (individual, tacit knowledge), meso (organisational, embedded knowledge) and macro (social-systems, explicit knowledge) through identifying and connecting relevant values/capitals that are not usually or thoroughly considered (natural, social, financial, manufactured, cultural, political, human, digital). This mapping is based on a Participatory Action Research Framework developed by Nogueira et al (2019). It offers a starting point for innovative engagements and a means to guide and track development throughout a continuum of integrated Socio-Technical Systems Design (Hussain et al, 2012: 91, Bellon, 2001: 9). This model renders a way for Design research and practice through a transparent lens of open evaluation which simultaneously provides an educational platform for knowledge and technology transfer. All three theories point towards the need for a deeply empathic understanding of ecological contexts and their constituents and the need for cross-sectorial, trans-disciplinary integration.

The paper concludes by pointing a spotlight to the writing on the wall; that the path of inclusive Design offers profound understandings of the ecologies that Design aspires to function within. The model is positioned at the intersection of Design Research, practice and education. It not only motivates that sustainable innovation is driven by Design as a change agent but is fuelled by knowledge transfer within its context (Mumford, 2006: 336). This model was generated from an Industrial Design MA level study. Recommendations for its needed longitudinal practice are briefly explained in the conclusion.

Keywords: socio-technical systems, sustainability, appropriate technology, participatory design, design research.

Telephone Wire Art in Exhibition Design

Mr Muziwandile Gigaba (In-person)

This paper analyzes the co-curatorial role in iNgqikithi yokuPhica/Weaving Meanings: Telephone Wire Art from South Africa, an exhibition launched at the Museum of International Folk Art (MOIFA) in Santa Fe in November 2024. It examines how collaborative, dialogical, and multidisciplinary approaches can foster engagement in exhibition design. Focused on South African telephone wire art from KwaMashu and Siyanda, the exhibition exemplifies New Museology by embracing collaborative curation and shifting authority to community participation. The exhibition's narrative is deeply rooted in Siyanda's artistic legacy, tracing the evolution of telephone wire art from traditional forms to contemporary creations like izimbenge (wire baskets). New Museology and the ecomuseum model serve as foundational theoretical frameworks, emphasizing shared authority and community empowerment in the exhibition's design. A multimodal, participatory research methodology, incorporating auto-ethnographic reflections, observation, interviews, and documentary film

analysis, underpinned this collaborative curatorial approach, reinforced by rigorous ethical considerations and ongoing community consultations. A central aspect of the exhibition is its innovative use of "museum atmospherics." The physical environment was meticulously designed, directly influenced by the artworks, to create an immersive visitor experience. Key zones, such as "Isibaya" (honoring elders), "iNingizimu Afrika Entsha" (reflecting post-apartheid identity), and "Making hard-wire and soft-wire" (featuring interactive and tactile elements), alongside augmented reality integration, significantly enhanced visitor engagement. The paper evaluates the exhibition's impact, highlighting MOIFA's cultural sensitivity in applying the ecomuseum paradigm. Ultimately, this exhibition stands as a significant model for future inclusive initiatives, demonstrating how a community engagement project can inspire culturally sensitive museum practices in South Africa and prompt a rethinking of the museum's public role. MOIFA's ongoing plans to expand its documentary's international reach and develop an educational component for South African schools further reinforce this claim, illustrating how exhibition design and artifacts can effectively educate and build communities.

Keywords: design, new museology, ecomuseum, museum atmospherics, wire-art, co-curatorship.

Fostering Criticality through Transdisciplinary Collaboration

Dr Jean-Pierre Basson, Ms Kim Harmse, Ms Riëtte Kotzé (In-person)

The study investigates how discipline-specific, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary collaboration fosters criticality in architectural students, drawing on Barnett's (2015) framework of critical reasoning, self-reflection, and action. It identifies a gap in understanding what role the different collaboration methods play in promoting criticality and not just promoting technically sound graduates, but socially just, critically aware graduates in the built environment. A comparative case study design was used to collect data across three architecture cohorts, each engaging with a different collaboration mode. Data were collected through student self-reflection narratives and analysed through a deductive process using Barnett's framework. Findings include that discipline-specific collaboration promotes technical reasoning and critical skills in self-reflection and action. Interdisciplinary collaboration promoted critical self-reflection and broadened students' perspectives but lacked consistent critical action. Lastly, transdisciplinary collaboration achieved Barnett's highest level of transformative critique by integrating empathy and purposeful action into the design process. The study extended Barnett's framework into architectural education, which indicates its importance as a tool to measure collaborative pedagogies to shape graduate attributes. The findings indicate that the collaboration should not be a supplementary practice for students but should be incorporated into the architectural design pedagogy.

Keywords: architectural design, interdisciplinary collaboration, universal access, critical thinking, problem-solving

Cultural Continuity in Xhosa women's clothing

Ms Zandile Zamela (In-person)

Cultural evolution is an integral part of cultural preservation especially in relation to fashion because, culture interlaces the survival, representation and everyday practices of a specific collective of people. As clothing forms part of everyday practices and is viewed simultaneously with the body, it serves as a visual tool for the expression of individual and social identities. Without adaptation, cultures disappear and with the emergence of new generations and changes in the clothing needs of individuals within cultural groups, a need arises for clothing design that meets the cultural and everyday clothing needs of younger generations who have different clothing requirements to those of previous generations.

In South Africa, where a plethora of cultures have existed and evolved, clothing practices are mostly representative of non-South African cultures. In a globalised world, where cultural exchange occurs without direct contact with other cultural groups, it is important to have a gauge on how the cultural needs of different generations within a cultural group, at a specific point in time, change. This helps design products that better suit the needs of current generations and maintain cultural continuity. As different generations develop their own interpretation of their traditional cultures, designing clothing that caters to their cultural needs caters to their social inclusion (SDG 10) and representation, prolonging the life of traditional clothing as reference for new styles (SDG 11). This research explored the general clothing preferences of three generations of Xhosa women in

relation to their culture and mainstream fashion. This research serves as an indicator of how to better cater to the clothing cultural needs of different generations of Xhosa women living in South Africa using images generated through AI.

This paper used primary data from a study that followed a quantitative approach using a survey research design. An online questionnaire developed using Qualtrics was circulated through various social media platforms. A sample of 295 Xhosa women living in South Africa and between 18 and 55 years old, completed the questionnaire. Data was analysed through Descriptive Statistics. The research found that this group of Xhosa women preferred clothing that combined aspects of Westernised and Xhosa culture but that the three included generations (Generation X, Y and Z) had varying preferences depending on the clothing categories given to them: indicating the need for diversified cultural clothing designs for different clothing categories for different generations within the same cultural group.

Keywords: cultural continuity, clothing, Xhosa women, generational cohorts.

SESSION 9: DESIGN+ SUSTAINABILITY, FUTURE-FOCUSED DESIGN AND SOCIAL REALITIES

Lifelong Learning and Entrepreneurial Competencies: A Sustainable Future for Fashion Design Entrepreneurs in South Africa

Ms Tando Mbanga (Online)

The South African fashion industry faces complex sustainability challenges, including environmental degradation, unfair labour practices, and limited economic viability. Fashion entrepreneurs are under increasing pressure to adopt ethical and resource-efficient business models that align with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 12, responsible consumption and production. However, many fashion design alumni in South Africa enter the entrepreneurial space without adequate preparation. This concept paper proposes how lifelong learning initiatives may develop entrepreneurial competencies that support sustainable local economic development (LED) and contribute to SDGs such as SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure).

A mixed-methods approach underpins the proposed research design. Qualitative analysis will be conducted through thematic content review of academic literature, industry reports, and policy documents. Quantitative insights will be drawn from secondary datasets on entrepreneurship and sustainability trends. The research will be framed within contemporary frameworks such as lifelong learning theory and sustainability education. Inclusion criteria for sources will include relevance to fashion entrepreneurship, sustainability practices, and recent publication within the past five years.

Sampling for case study references is intended to draw on documented South African enterprises implementing circular models aiming to minimize waste and pollution. Trustworthiness will be ensured through data triangulation, peer-reviewed sourcing, and transparency of analytical procedures. The study will propose a framework integrating lifelong learning with LED principles to address skill gaps and enable environmentally and economically sustainable practices.

Preliminary insights suggest that lifelong learning, through short courses, digital platforms, and industry-academia partnerships may address knowledge deficits and help entrepreneurs adapt to shifting regulatory and consumer demands. The paper will conclude by providing actionable recommendations for stakeholders in education, government, and industry to support a resilient and sustainable fashion ecosystem.

Keywords: lifelong learning, sustainable fashion, entrepreneurship, local economic development, circular economy, sustainable development goals.

Design Audit Botswana — Part I: The Drivers and Barriers to establishing a Government-Led Design Innovation Policy for Industrial Development in the Republic of Botswana

Mr Gabriel Mothibedi (In-person)

Government-led policies are implemented within 'National Contexts', with direct and indirect impacts from other policies and national contexts are very critical in the shaping of innovation policies for design support. They preserve unique characteristics — cultural-heritage, ingenious knowledge, and work within the socio-economic, political-parameters and stability — as well the market dynamics and bespoke infrastructure for design innovation support and promotion of the nation to which the policy is being applied. Moreover, the development and implementation of innovation policies for design support require an integrated approach from a variety of stakeholders such as government, design communities, industry, and academia: a diverse community, which appreciates and understands the complexity, and dynamic nature of design activities; a 'National Design System.' The aim of the study is to discuss empirical research findings of a 5-year study on Botswana's 'National Design System' and 'National Context' — in an effort to seek, in-depth understanding of the relationship between design innovation, industrial development and public policy, through a detailed analysis of the measure of adoption of design — by local organizations, to achieve business, and economic objectives — by seeking in-depth understanding of the business of design and its sustainability in Botswana, auditing the scale of adoption of design, per the macro-areas of design practice, and analysis of the current government efforts, on design promotion. The study further seeks to investigate the necessity of a national design policy, and to determine the drivers for, & barriers to introducing a national design innovation policy for industrial development, in Botswana. In order to describe the characteristics of a large population, and in effort to allow for diversity in enquiry and reliability through standardisation — quantitative studies: self-administered survey questionnaires were employed, balanced scales & clear unambiguous questions were adopted, to reduce biased responses. A sample of 300 employees, across varied-companies, were selected and divided into three (3) main categories: design firms, organizations-with-inhouse design departments & conventional enterprises which buy design services. The questionnaire survey was further divided into four stages: sampling, user-testing, distribution & data analysis. Conclusions were drawn, on drivers and barriers to integrating design more holistically into Botswana's innovation ecosystem and recommendations for the development of a design policy for industrial development & through the support of SMEs, were presented.

Keywords: governance, public policy, design innovation, competitive strategy, industrial development.

Clothing Manufacturing Micro Enterprises (CMMEs): preserving cultural pride through fashion production

Dr Mariette Strydom (In-person)

Traditional garments are more than just clothes; they are objects transmitting our stories and expertise of skilled artisans. Tradition is also passed down in the creation and construction of our clothes. The way artefacts including clothes are made -the materials, and the process - are all embedded into our communities and cultures. South African consumers obtain personalised garments such as traditional dress from informal Clothing Manufacturing Micro Enterprises (CMMEs). These CMMEs cater for local customer needs to provide individual and exclusive garments for individual customers. However, little is known about how informal CMMEs design and develop apparel for their customers

The study followed a qualitative approach to explore the operations of informal CMMEs and how CMMEs can contribute to cultural preservation. A business incubation hub provided an intrinsic case study location from which the study was conducted. Participants included 13 purposefully selected, informal (unregistered) clothing design or manufacturing micro businesses. Data collection included personal interviews with the CMME owners, as well as observations at workshops, garment analysis and document analysis. A systematic approach applying a thematic content analysis was followed to analyse the data.

The findings indicated that CMMEs mostly custom-make traditional or culture-inspired garments for individual clients. The complex and challenging product development process of CMMEs illustrated that knowledge about

traditional styles and fabrics are especially important during the idea generation and sourcing stages of the product development process. Social and cultural capital are used in their apparel product development process to provide unique, personalised, traditional or culture-inspired garments. Customer engagement is a prominent feature. The findings also reveal that various strategies are implemented to accommodate customers' needs. Therefore, when developing custom-made traditional garments, knowledge, skills and experience are the tools through which creativity and innovativeness manifest.

Future fashion designers should develop an understanding and appreciation of the symbolic meanings of traditional dress as an important and necessary skill. Fashion design education should include knowledge about each of the local cultures and their dress styles. Furthermore, the study highlights the role of CMMEs in preserving cultural heritage through custom-made garments.

The study contributes to literature about survivalist enterprises in an emerging economy and specifically the informal economy. In the absence of financial capital, these informal CMMEs make use of cultural and social capital to survive. The contribution of this study therefore adds to the literature about the township economy and the operations of informal apparel enterprises.

Keywords: cultural preservation; traditional dress; fashion entrepreneur; SMME; custom-made apparel.

SESSION 10: DESIGN+ SUSTAINABILITY AND FUTURE-FOCUSED DESIGN

Anticipatory Design Futures: Operationalising design fiction to strategically account for preferable futures

Dr Terence Fenn (In-person)

The integration of 4IR technologies into the human world provides an opportunity for meaningful social transformation to occur. Paradoxically, 4IR technologies also pose a detrimental threat to society. Hence, there has never been a more important time to ensure that considerations of their deployment into the social world are based on ethical principles. However, engaging with the internal dynamics of 4IR technologies and their dispersed, systemic nature requires specific technical knowledge that typically falls outside the remit of human-centred design. Broadly, this paper is concerned with exploring a new direction for Design and design education as 'more-then-human-centred design' (HCD+) practices in light of the growing need to ethically account for emerging technologies associated with the 4IR. Towards this concern, Design Futuring practices, such as Speculative Design and Design Fiction, have much to offer by providing alternative considerations that can help define our preferences for the type of futures we would collectively aspire towards. However, currently, many discursive practices fall short in intention or rigour or simply do not engage with needs-based responses to problematic situations.

Responding to these issues, this paper presents a brief overview of Design Futuring across Design, Design Anthropology and Critical Futures, highlighting both the contributions these fields make towards operationalising design fictions to strategically account for preferable futures and their limitations. Thereafter, under the novel descriptor of ADF, the paper highlights a set of emerging practices that utilise design futuring to anticipate and suggest transformative actions for achieving a future worth having. Lastly, a set of seven guiding principles that outline fundamentals for practising ADF presented and briefly explicated.

Keywords: anticipatory design futures, design futuring, 4IR, SDGs, HCD.

Earth Stewardship in Prepress: A Model for Graphic Design Educators

Mr Barry John Lottering (In-Person)

This paper deals with the gap of prepress knowledge and practice at undergraduate level in graphic design, and how addressing the shortfalls will reduce waste and ultimately foster more sustainable design-for-print practices for the local design and print industries.

The research aim was to identify prepress best practice topics for inclusion in a graphic design syllabus that factors in earth stewardship and sustainable design-for-print. Objectives included establishing a link between good prepress practice and sustainability; identifying prepress best practices for sustainable design-for-print; comparing syllabus content of South African and European institutions; assessing the transfer of syllabus content to the professional environment and compiling a list of required prepress syllabus topics.

The term 'prepress' encompasses a wide range of design activities, and this poses difficulties for graphic design educators aiming to equip students with necessary prepress skills. Educators must consider the environmental impact of sending graduates into the industry without adequate prepress knowledge. Responding to this consideration, this research provides a list of prepress best practice topics for inclusion in a local higher education graphic design syllabus, emphasizing earth stewardship and sustainable design-for-print. The list, compiled with input from local industry experts, specifies how each topic should be integrated into a second-year syllabus. The study also benchmarked three higher education institutions, two South African and one European, and examined how each topic is addressed in each institutions' syllabi against industry-required competencies. Findings indicate a need for holistic prepress education that benefits South African institutions, students, the local industry, and the future of our environment.

A seven-step action research process was used, employing valid and reliable methods to achieve the study's aims and objectives. The selection of participants and the collaborative nature of the research process was constructed to bring about improvements in prepress teaching, meeting the needs of local design and print industries. Blended research methods, including qualitative and quantitative approaches were used, and data from interviews and questionnaires were analyzed and reported. The continuous action research cycle also allows for ongoing improvements so that the list of recommended prepress topics will continue to advance and challenge current prepress syllabi content, align with local industry needs, equip graduates to reduce wasted resources through prepress best practices, promote an earth stewardship mindset in students and the local industry, and provide a comprehensive resource for teaching prepress in graphic design.

Keywords: best practices, graphic design syllabus, sustainability, earth stewardship.

Educating Future-Focused Designers in South Africa: A conceptual exploration of the integration of Design and Futures Thinking

Dr Ria van Zyl , Ms Michele O'Hara, (In-person)

Design education within the Education sector must recognise its critical role in preparing students to design solutions for the challenges of the future. This paper explores the theoretical and conceptual similarities and differences between design and futures thinking that can be integrated for more socially and economically impactful design practice that shapes the future. The role of future-focused design can also play a significant role in the teaching of disciplines and subjects outside of the design field.

The study is grounded in the theoretical frameworks of design and futures thinking and the paradigm shift towards integrated and flexible future-proof design mindsets and outputs founded in foresight and backcasting. The applications of both frameworks have been widely debated, and the benefits of scalability, resilience and sustainable design and business practice have been demonstrated both commercially and in the realm of social impact.

Futures thinking is implicit in many design models and frameworks, such as Afrofuturism, speculative design and critical design. The shift to integrating design and futures thinking in design education may challenge traditional approaches. It will also contribute towards an understanding of strategic foresight processes and outcomes in design, an opportunity identified in publications. Through a systematic review of literature, this study analyses the points of convergence and divergence between the two fields, advancing a theoretical and conceptual contribution that informs the development of future-focused design curricula in South Africa.

Keywords: future-focused design, design thinking, futures thinking, design education.

SESSION 11: DESIGN+ SUSTAINABILITY, FUTURE-FOCUSED DESIGN AND SOCIETAL REALITIES

A visual exploration of fashion brand communication on Instagram aimed at Generation Z

Ms Stephanie Brickman, Dr Yolandi Burger (Online)

Fashion brand communication on Instagram is critical in shaping Generation Z's (Gen Z) perceptions of identity, self-expression, and beauty. However, concerns persist about the continued use of objectifying imagery in digital marketing, even as overt sexism declines. This paper explores how specific fashion brands engage Gen Z through visual strategies on Instagram, revealing that Adidas aligns with Gen Z values through empowerment-centric, low-objectification imagery; Diesel employs playful provocation and stylised objectification to tap into Gen Z's appetite for rebellion; and Zara, while aesthetically aspirational, lacks the diversity needed to resonate with South African audiences. As this generation matures into a dominant consumer group, brands must adapt to their increasing interest in inclusivity, authenticity, and social consciousness. Instagram for Gen Z emerges as more than just a platform; it has become a cultural interface where design choices carry lasting societal weight. A qualitative methodology, grounded in multimodal analysis, aided exploration into this phenomenon using Barthes' semiotic theory and Kress and van Leeuwen's visual grammar to unpack high-engagement Instagram posts from Adidas, Diesel, and Zara between August 2023 and July 2024. Purposive sampling focused on brands across affordability tiers, targeting South African Gen Z consumers. Each post's denotative and connotative meaning was explored using a bespoke analysis tool to guide the analysis. Findings indicate that Adidas produces empowerment-focused visuals with low objectification, aligning with Gen Z's values of inclusion and authenticity. Conversely, Diesel uses greater objectification than Adidas, but visually appeals to Gen Z's desire for rebellion and self-expression. Zara's visual identity presents an engaging yet ambiguous blend of aspirational and accessible aesthetics. However, Zara's notable lack of diversity significantly limits its relevance to the South African Gen Z population. The findings uncover how these brands navigate, and occasionally exploit, Gen Z's complex relationship with image, identity, and ideology. The paper contributes to design education by offering a framework for critically exploring fashion brand communication online, and seeks to cultivate visual literacy and ethical decision-making. Ultimately, this research champions intentional, ethical design in digital brand communication and offers a model for how brand leaders can meaningfully connect with Gen Z while fostering more responsible visual cultures in digital spaces.

Keywords: objectification, fashion brand communication, Instagram, Generation Z, ethical design education.

A Human-centred and collaborative approach to Curriculum Design for Higher Education Programmes in Creative Disciplines - Case Study

Mrs Sunette Caplin (Online)

Higher Certificate programmes serve as a bridge for students who do not meet the entry requirements for degree programmes, providing an opportunity to acquire the essential skills they may be lacking to complete or gain access to undergraduate studies of their choice. For these programmes to be effective, curriculum design must fully consider the Higher Certificate students as individuals with specific and unique learning needs, who often enter with varying levels of academic preparedness. Curriculum designers often assume that students already possess certain skills, including digital competencies and soft skills such as planning and time management. However, a lack of these skills might contribute to poor academic performance.

Curriculum designers structure a framework that outlines the content to be taught where they define who will teach, who will learn, the tools and resources to be used, the learning context and the intended outcomes and assessment criteria.

At a Private Higher Education (PHE) institution, the curriculum design of a Higher Certificate software module required critical re-evaluation due to poor throughput rates. This raised key questions: Should we redesign the

curriculum? And how can we redesign the curriculum to support inclusivity, engagement, and academic performance?

This case study reflects on the design process and the collaborative efforts among key stakeholders, including the head of the programme, lecturers, curriculum developers, and students, to improve the curriculum and assessment strategies. Drawing on Elizabeth Sanders' research on co-design, this study emphasises the importance of stakeholder involvement in shaping meaningful, human-centred solutions. This study looked at students' and lecturers' roles as active contributors to curriculum design.

Using the Double Diamond design process as a theoretical framework, the research explores how human-centred and collaborative design principles can be applied to address curriculum challenges. The study highlights the value of collaborative engagement through multiple iterations, real-time testing, and structured feedback loops. Ultimately, this research contributes insights into the benefits, challenges, and lessons learned in curriculum design while demonstrating how Human-centered, collaborative engagement fosters a sustainable learning community where stakeholders can co-create meaningful learning experiences.

Keywords: curriculum design, human-centred design, double diamond process, collaborative design.

Human-Centred, Student-Led: Building Socially Sustainable Futures in Design Education

Ms Sonali Chetty, Ms Xolisa Ndovela, Ms Hlengiwe Khubisa, Ms Fathima Mula (In-person)

As the built environment continues to evolve in response to global and local challenges, design education must prepare students to envision and shape inclusive futures. This paper explores how student-centred, project-based learning (PBL) can connect curriculum to students' lived experiences and cultural knowledge. We reflect on a series of pedagogical projects implemented at various levels of an interior design programme at a South African University of Technology. These projects positioned students' own spatial histories and community contexts as central design drivers, rather than relying solely on imported precedents.

For example, while some explored identity and heritage through Afrofuturism-inspired murals, others designed a context-specific healthcare facility that offered both indigenous and western medicine treatments. Housing designs focused on multigenerational living, promoting a growing family-oriented approach and adaptable spatial solutions. Additionally, projects addressing self-care led to the design of natural hair care spaces, advocating for inclusivity in the beauty industry. These topics allowed students to tap into their lived experience and respond accordingly.

By prioritising student-centred learning, the projects further challenged traditional hierarchies in design education and promoted more inclusive, participatory, and contextually relevant design solutions. Recognising how these factors shape sustainable urban and interior environments, students began to grapple with notions of place, identity, community, and well-being. This paper argues that when students critically engage with their own spatial experiences, they develop a heightened awareness of the long-term social impact of design – ensuring that future built environments are more inclusive, culturally responsive, and socially sustainable.

Ultimately, this research asks: How do we shape impactful futures through innovative human-centred design education? By demonstrating how student-led design approaches foster long-term social sustainability, we position student-centred learning as a key strategy for future-focused design education that meaningfully addresses lived experiences and evolving societal needs.

Keywords: student-centred; lived experience; participation; project-based learning.

SESSION 12: DESIGN+ SUSTAINABILITY, FUTURE-FOCUSED DESIGN AND SOCIETAL REALITIES

From Monologue to Dialogue: Developing An Opportunity Syntax Map and Livelihood Framework for the Urban Poor

Mr Ayanda Made (In-person)

As rural-urban migration continues, much of the population finds itself in urban areas, which, in most contexts, offer significantly greater opportunities with fewer social restrictions on the livelihood possibilities available to the urban poor. However, these opportunities are increasingly mediated by digital platforms and will be realised only if such platform-based urban development is tailored to the livelihood aspirations of the poor.

Currently, there is a focus on place-based economic investments in the built environment that prioritise brick-and-mortar businesses. These businesses rely on sophisticated supply chains to provide and service retail activity. The benefits behind these place-based developments could be argued to accrue largely to the formal economy.

Migratory patterns, on the other hand, indicate that the urban poor tend to concentrate in areas of low rent or vacant urban land. In addition, the higher reliance on access to financial assets for their livelihoods creates an added dependence on a rich and accessible informal-formal economy, which is equally dependent on a socio-economically diverse and accessible public realm to achieve desired livelihood outcomes.

As a result, the urban poor make a trade-off between the quality and location of their living spaces to be in preferred locations with access to livelihood-generating assets, indicating the importance of a public realm with an informal and formal sector mix that supports the reliance and access to social assets that facilitate financial asset accumulation and transactions (DAG CoCT Urban Poor, 2003).

This demands the need for a medium bridging the informal and formal economy divide. Affording informal economy users, of which are largely the urban poor the ability to tap into opportunities provided by the interplay of formal and informal activity in urban neighbourhoods.

In this context, the concept of a “Livelihood Framework” warrants exploration. Based on the network effect of crowdsourcing, obtaining information or input through contributions from large numbers of people to achieve a collective outcome, it would allow users to create detailed visual maps of their neighbourhoods, highlighting points of interest, attention, engagement, and interaction.

The proposition in this paper is that democratising and granting citizens agency over social and financial activities to achieve desired livelihood outcomes allows public spaces to appear and disappear through the two-way dialogue, Shifting public activities from place-based to people-based through collective contributions to the accumulation of livelihood assets.

Keywords: platform urbanism, livelihood, framework, urban design, southern urbanism, global south.

Integrating Small-Scale Fabrication Technologies in Design Education for Enhanced Studio-Based Learning

Mr Martin Bolton (Online)

The evolving landscape of Industrial Design education requires a balance between theoretical instruction and hands-on experience with manufacturing processes and relevant materials. However, many traditional teaching methods do not provide sufficient opportunities for students to engage directly with fabrication and material manipulation, limiting their ability to develop practical skills essential for the industry. The lack of integration between conceptual design and real-world manufacturing techniques creates a gap in industry readiness.

To address this challenge, this study explores the integration of small-scale countertop sized fabrication tools and machines within the lecture venues to create an immersive Studio-Based Learning (SBL) environment. By embedding these tools directly into the educational space, students gain hands-on experience with material

manipulation, prototyping, and iterative problem-solving. This approach bridges the gap between theoretical design concepts and the realities of production, drawing on principles of Embodied Cognition that emphasise learning through physical interaction.

Through engaging with a specific group of students over multiple projects, this study has demonstrated that students who engage with small-scale fabrication tools exhibit improved proficiency in traditional manufacturing methods, greater confidence in hands-on material manipulation using larger more intimidating machines, and an increased ability to apply practical skills to their own design processes. The opportunity to physically prototype and refine their designs fosters a deeper understanding of materials, production techniques, and product feasibility.

Embedding traditional manufacturing approaches into Industrial Design lecturing studios not only enhances students' technical competencies but also cultivates an innovation-driven and practice-oriented mindset, where students are not afraid to take action to initiate the process. This approach ensures that graduates are well-equipped to navigate the complexities of modern design and manufacturing industries. By emphasizing hands-on learning through small-scale fabrication, this study provides insights into best practices for integrating traditional manufacturing techniques into Studio-Based Learning, ultimately contributing to a more effective and industry-aligned design education model.

Keywords: industrial design education, studio-based learning, traditional manufacture, fabrication techniques, hands-on learning, embodied cognition.

Many worlds, shared futures: DesignScience-Community engagement

Dr Shashi Cullinan Cook (In-person)

In this paper, I discuss opportunities for creative collaboration in sustainability science and transformation, more specifically Social-Ecological Systems (SES) – in which social and ecological concerns are treated as having the same weight. These transdisciplinary fields involve 'non-scientists' in solution-oriented approaches to sustainability challenges.

The contribution of this research is to highlight for design educators the potential of building stronger networks and partnerships in sustainability science contexts. The deep and attentive focus on nature, systems and communities in sustainability science offers a well of inspiration and purpose for creative practitioners, and different pathways for scientists to imagine and share their work.

Preferences for future-visioning methods in SES work well in combination with creative methods and media, and well-integrated collaborations between creatives and scientists may lead to more stimulating collaborative contexts and useful output with (and for) non-academic partners such as communities, NGOs and other knowledge-holders. I argue that design education that fosters respectful and responsible Design-Science-Community engagement can contribute to impactful regenerative work that is 'radically soft' and powerful.

Keywords: design, future visioning, art-science, sustainability, transformation, social-ecological systems.

ABSTRACTS | DAY TWO – 19 SEPTEMBER

SESSION 1: DESIGN+ SOCIETAL REALITIES, IMPACT AND CULTURAL PRESERVATION

DIY Not? The Value of Zines in Graphic Design Education

Mr Neil Badenhorst (Online)

As the design industry is impacted by rapidly evolving technologies, tertiary graphic design curriculums must be continuously updated to ensure that students, specifically exit-level students, are prepared for the rigours of industry. Zines and DIY alternative publications have limited commercial balue, and so may be regarded as less important than learning units that respond to the commercial (and increasingly digital) nature of industry. This paper argues that not only do zines remain relevant, but that the inclusion of a zine project in an undergraduate design curriculum is a valuable addition to the programme. While the programme suitably prioritises employability, and the majority of our departmental final year curriculum is set up with this purpose in mind, the zine unit presents an opportunity for students to engage with creative work that is self-directed and serves as a valuable addition to their portfolios, allows the opportunity to bridge theory and practice and receive unique tangible industry recognition. I substantiate this argument by making use of reflective practitioner research in a discussion and analysis of the brief that I set up for our zine unit, how this was informed by my own creative research and practice concerned with zines, as well as the external impact of this project in the form of exhibitions, panel discussions, and collaborations with external institutions and platforms.

Keywords: zines, graphic design education, pedagogy.

Exploring how designing in their own language empowers students and supports academic freedom in Communication Design

Mr Christiaan Graaff (In-person)

Language plays a crucial role in a person's daily life, from communicating with friends, family, and peers to shaping how individuals think and critically engage with the world around them. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, English has emerged as the dominant and widely accepted language for communication. This trend is also evident in student award competitions, such as the Loeries, where the vast majority of finalists and winning entries are in English, with very few submissions in native languages. This observation suggests that tertiary institutions offering design degrees may not actively encourage students to complete their projects in their mother tongues.

Language is deeply tied to an individual's identity, heritage, and culture, influencing their worldview and approach to problem-solving. South Africa is a country rich in cultural diversity, with 12 official languages. By encouraging students to solve design problems in their own language, institutions enable them to approach challenges from their cultural perspectives, fostering innovative and nuanced solutions that are rich in cultural significance. Allowing students to explore and incorporate their native languages in design projects also promotes greater academic freedom.

The Department of Higher Education recognises academic freedom as a fundamental principle in the transformation of higher education, defining it as the absence of external interference, censorship, or obstacles in the pursuit of academic work. Furthermore, academic freedom is considered a prerequisite for critical, experimental, and creative thought, as well as for the advancement of intellectual inquiry and knowledge (Department of Education 1997).

This paper explores the academic freedom students may experience when designing their communication design projects in their home languages. Engaging with a design brief in their first language enables students to integrate their cultural perspectives and lived experiences into their creative process, potentially leading to more diverse and innovative design solutions. Additionally, thinking and designing in their language empower students to express their unique identities and creative styles more authentically in their work. This study adopts a qualitative

research methodology, drawing on existing literature and employing a textual analysis. From a contribution perspective, this research provides valuable insights into how a student's home language influences the quality and depth of their design work. It may also highlight the importance of institutions encouraging students to undertake more projects in their native languages.

While the topic of students studying in their native languages has been extensively researched in education, the specific role that a student's first language plays in their communication design work remains largely unexplored. This study seeks to address this gap by examining how linguistic and cultural contexts shape creative processes, design thinking and academic freedom.

Keywords: native language, identity, cultural expression, academic freedom.

Caring about Cultural Competence: What South African Instructional Design can learn from nurses' training

Ms Carmen Gunkel (In-person)

The South African higher education landscape has become progressively diverse since the onset of democracy, with students emanating from different racial, cultural, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds. A regard for this multicultural context highlights the need to focus on pedagogical approaches that promote inclusivity when designing learning for diverse learner needs and backgrounds.

Cross-cultural interactions exist between educators, learners, and instructional designers. Both implicit and explicit awareness is said to have the potential to impact learning. Therefore, developing cultural competence affects the way learning is designed and experienced. Integral to the design thinking process is developing a deepened understanding of the human experience. Researching, defining, and developing an empathetic understanding of a targeted audience is core to strategising design of learning solutions that effectively meet user needs. However, little consideration has been given to positioning culture as a core construct in this process, specifically within the domain of instructional design.

Instructional design as an emerging field in both design and education draws from a plethora of models and frameworks which guide the design of effective learning experiences. There appears to be an underrepresentation of models and frameworks that guide cultural inclusion and diversity in instructional design. The hegemonic adoption of universal models does not offer a feasible approach to guiding cultural integration and building cultural competence amongst designers, educators, and learners. In contrast, culturally sensitive and inclusive frameworks and models prevail within the healthcare sector - a sector deeply concerned with the notion of holistic care for patients. This can be attributed to a standard measure for cultural competence in healthcare being formalised in 2001. Framing both fields - healthcare and instructional design in higher education - as care professions, it becomes evident that developing cross-cultural competencies is paramount to delivering inclusive and holistic education.

This paper employs Giger and Davidhizar's Transcultural Model (1988) which emphasises cultural diversity and postulates that individuals can be assessed according to six cultural domains: communication, space, social organisation, time, environmental control, and biological variations. The model guides the effective design of healthcare solutions to meet the needs of a multicultural population and this paper attempts to reframe this benefit within the context of instructional design. This exploratory paper qualitatively unpacks each of the six domains, considering their relevance, application, and potential adaptation to Instructional Design within South African design education.

Keywords: cultural competence; design thinking, instructional design, transcultural model, inclusive education.

Seeds of Freedom: The Watermelon in Palestine Posters

Ms Ilhaam Khan, Professor Deirdre Pretorius (Online)

The visibility of the watermelon as a representation of the Palestinian cause has exponentially increased in recent years, particularly on social media. Given the popularity of the watermelon, its use in poster design warrants in-

depth investigation. This paper presents the results of an analysis of Palestine posters that have incorporated the watermelon from 2023 to 2025. The study provides insight into the way the watermelon is used in contemporary Palestine posters and adds to the literature on Palestine posters specifically and liberation graphics more broadly. A sample of 408 posters was drawn from the web-based Palestine Poster Project Archives (PPPA) and subjected to content and semiotic analyses. The analysis of the posters' metadata provides a contextual understanding of the posters with regards to the producers and distributors of the posters, indicating that most of the posters are in English, originate from international artists or agencies and was distributed online. An analysis of the metadata on iconography shows the prevalence, alongside the watermelon, of the Palestinian flag or colours, plants, signs related to Palestinian resistance, international solidarity and peace, as well as women. The watermelon icon, we argue, is used in various ways to express multiple meanings. We identify and discuss, by referring to poster examples, five broad ways in which the watermelon functions: namely as a metaphor for the Palestinian flag, land and the human body, as a weapon and as word.

Keywords: watermelon, resistance, national identity, Palestine poster design, Palestinian iconography, digital activism.

Visualising feminism

Ms Angela Netshidzati, Ms Cheri Hugo (In-person)

Graphic design has long been a powerful tool for feminist advocacy, shaping public discourse and challenging societal norms around gender and equality. This research explores how graphic design has amplified feminist narratives, influenced public perceptions, and contributed to social transformation. By examining feminist design movements, campaigns, and the work of influential designers, this study investigates how visual communication functions as a catalyst for activism. Using a qualitative approach, the research analyses advertisements, print media, and illustrations to assess how design elements have been employed to promote inclusivity and female empowerment. Case studies, including the Dove Real Beauty campaign, demonstrate how design has disrupted conventional beauty standards and sparked conversations around representation. Ultimately, this study highlights the vital role of graphic design in advancing feminist discourse and fostering a more equitable and inclusive visual culture.

Keywords: feminism, case studies, inclusivity, qualitative, advocacy.

SESSION 2: CONCEPTUAL RESEARCH PAPER PRESENTATIONS

Digital Defenders: Animation's Impact on Cybersecurity Education

Mrs Nomfundo Zwane (In-person)

As digital technology becomes increasingly integrated into daily life, concerns about the safety of young children are rising. In recent years, internet access in South African homes has grown significantly, offering greater opportunities for learning while also increasing exposure to online risks. Despite a growing awareness of digital threats, young children continue to be vulnerable to harmful content and unsafe online behaviours. To tackle this challenge, age-appropriate educational interventions are essential to equip children with crucial digital literacy skills to navigate safely online.

This ongoing master's study investigates the use of animation as an educational tool for teaching online safety and digital etiquette to young learners. The research centres on the creative development of an animated educational project aimed at introducing cybersecurity concepts in an accessible and engaging way for children. The study explores how animation enhances learning, outlines the advantages and limitations of this medium in education, and discusses how a documentary film can serve as a reflective tool for understanding the interdisciplinary synergy of animation and information technology.

A practice-based qualitative research approach is employed, consisting of both a thesis and the creation of a creative output. The study incorporates a literature review, semiotic case study analysis, and creative elements.

The literature review provides background on the technological landscape in South African public schools and the role of animation in learning. At the same time, Cognitive Load Theory highlights how people learn and understand information. Crystallization serves as a framework for the documentary component, capturing multiple perspectives on the creative and educational aspects of the project. Semi-structured interviews with experts in animation and cyber security will contribute additional insights into the opportunities and challenges of using animation for learning education.

This study contributes to ongoing discussions on multimedia learning by highlighting how animation can be leveraged to enhance cybersecurity education for young children. By integrating design principles with learning frameworks, the findings aim to inform strategies for incorporating animated content into early learning curricula, fostering a safer and more informed digital experience for the next generation.

Keywords: animation, multimedia learning, cybersecurity, interdisciplinary design, early childhood education.

Reggio-Inspired Learning in Higher Education: Transforming Design Education Through Playful Engagement

Mr Martin Bolton (Online)

Traditional higher education, particularly in design, often relies on rigid frameworks that risk dampening creativity and limiting student engagement. In contrast, Reggio-inspired early childhood education thrives on curiosity, exploration, and hands-on discovery. This raises a key question: could Reggio-inspired principles be meaningfully adapted to university-level design education?

This concept presentation proposes the application of Reggio-inspired approaches within higher education as a way of enriching student engagement and creative development. Drawing on my own teaching experiences, I have observed that university students respond positively to messy, material-driven, and hands-on engagements. These observations suggest that adopting playful and inquiry-led methods could help foster ownership of learning, strengthen creative confidence, and support deeper connections with design processes.

The proposed work will position Reggio-inspired principles alongside studio-based learning and experiential learning, exploring synergies and points of divergence. By sharing this proposition, I seek to spark dialogue with conference participants, inviting their perspectives on the potential value and challenges of bringing Reggio into the university classroom. The aim is to test and refine a framework to be piloted in the coming academic year.

Keywords: Reggio-inspired education, playful learning, design education, student engagement, experiential learning, studio-based learning.

The Tale of an African Storybook: Fostering emotional interconnectedness through design

Ms Tarryn Rennie (In-person)

Children's mental health and wellbeing is dependent on how they think and feel about themselves in the environment in which they live, and being educated on how to cope with different emotions is fundamental to a child's character. Cohen (1999:1) mentions that "social emotional literacy reduces violence, enhances adaptive capacities, and provide[s] the foundation for learning and healthy development". To achieve these educational goals, social emotional literacy needs to be developed at school level. However, it should also be developed even before children attend school by those who look after children. If children are nurtured in loving, warm and caring family environments, they are more likely to complete school and develop successful working skills into adulthood (saferspaces.org 2022). But, what if many of these homes do not have the nurturing, loving support that all children deserve? What if these children or even parents and caregivers do not have access to educational materials and call centres for assistance? It is through this level of enquiry that I aim to investigate a sustainable solution to develop a cost-effective device that has the potential to 'speak' to children and to those who care for children through a multisensory, printed storybook. Meumann, Hyde, Neumann, Hood and Ford (2012) suggest that visual, auditory, kinaesthetic and tactile experiences can be used as a powerful multisensory tool for teaching and learning. These methods may increase knowledge retention and skill development, even if only through two senses, such as visual and auditory stimulation.

Consequently, the key focus of this study is: firstly, to examine the importance of emotional storytelling aimed at children; secondly, to analyse some existing African children's book illustrations and styles. For example, South African author Gcina Mhlophe's Stories of Africa (2004), will be examined through the lens of visual rhetoric to ascertain what types of visuals will mostly be applicable when writing and illustrating stories based on emotional interconnectedness; and thirdly, to explore which cost-effective audio device (sound module) could be applied to the newly developed multisensory storybook series.

This projected study forms the basis of my PhD, a work in progress that will begin locally, in South Africa. However, the intention is to eventually reach beyond the South African borders into the rest of Africa since, as outlined by Durbin (2023) similar issues regarding literacy, or the lack thereof, are shared as "eight out of ten South African school children struggle to read by the age of ten" and sub-Saharan Africa "holds the highest number of illiterate youths" (africanlibraryproject.org).

Keywords: illustration, emotional connection, multisensory, culture, education

Analysis of jewellery Pieces manufactured using Afrikan-centred and Global Insights

Mr Xolani Mayikana, Dr Sipho Mbatha (In-person)

The Afrikan-centred jewellery manufacturing (handmade) is well-known for its artisanal craftsmanship, emotional quality, and rich cultural heritage, and continues to fascinate consumers in an era dominated by forth industrial revolution (4IR) DESIGN+Disruption, argumented realities (Additive manufacturing). The value of Afrikan-centred manufactured jewellery pieces lies in their uniqueness and the personal connections it nurtures, with characteristics often absent in 4IR produced pieces. On the other hand, global insights strategies used in the jewellery manufacturing process like additive manufacturing, encompassing Computer-Aided Design (CAD) and Computer-Aided Manufacturing (CAM) technologies, has redefined jewellery production by offering unparalleled precision, design possibilities, and efficiency. However, AM has sparked debates about authenticity and emotional engagement, particularly in how machine-made items compare to the imperfections of handmade artefacts.

The Afrikan-centred jewellery manufacturing insights are documented even from the global South content. The introduction of global insights into the jewellery manufacturing discipline resulting from the evolution of technology is also well documented from the global South context. The jewellery industry has undergone transformative changes with the launch of the technology, motivating an examination of the differences between handmade and technologically produced items. While research is still being carried out in this discipline, little research exists focusing on the practitioner's experiences using both mediums (Afrikan-centred and global manufacturing insights). This underscores the focus of this paper which is argued to be crucial for the literature on design education and practice in the South African jewellery industry.

Through qualitative methodology procedures (thick description), the practitioner compares the jewellery pieces produced using Afrika-centred and global insights manufacturing processes and draws implications for design education and practitioners. The manuscript employs a conceptual framework developed from the triangulation of numerous theories to aid the comparisons. The findings highlight the differences in material usage, design precision, and production time between the jewellery production methods. The findings further show that material shrinkage and lack of resources are some of the challenges between jewellery production. It is concluded that the integration of the Afrikan-centred and global insights which takes advantages of both sides of the coin could be more transformative to the Design education, practitioners and affected stakeholders in the jewellery industry of South Africa.

Keywords: Afrikan-centred insights, jewellery, artisanal craftsmanship, jewellery production, technological innovation, sustainability.

SESSION 3: DESIGN+ SUSTAINABILITY AND FUTURE-FOCUSED DESIGN

Developing a Co-created Knowledge Hub

Ms Riëtté Kotze, Ms Kim Harmse, Dr Jean-Pierre Basson (In-person)

Architectural education must evolve to equip students with the sustainability literacy and critical thinking needed to translate global goals into locally relevant design strategies. However, Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) frameworks often originate in Global North contexts, overlooking Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) and the specific learning needs of students in South Africa and the broader Global South. At the same time, current architectural cohorts seek digitally mediated, socially meaningful learning experiences that many studio pedagogies fail to provide.

This study documents the pre-implementation design process of a proof-of-concept digital knowledge hub for the third-year Bachelor of Architectural Studies (BAS) studio. The hub is grounded in a three-tier conceptual framework: IKS as the knowledge base, ESD as the mediating pedagogy, and the documented contemporary learning preferences (CLPs) of architectural cohorts as the delivery layer. Using the first four stages of Easterday et al.'s (2014) Design-Based Research (DBR) process - focusing the problem, understanding the problem, defining goals, and conceiving an outline of a solution - the study identifies curricular gaps, translates co-production principles into measurable design objectives, and develops low-fidelity wireframes and a storyboard.

Design evaluation was conducted through a comparison matrix, assessing alignment with learner preferences, navigation and user experience, ESD competencies, and Norström et al.'s (2020) sustainability knowledge co-production principles. While the prototype met these criteria in conceptual form, no empirical classroom testing was undertaken at this stage.

The findings demonstrate how theoretical principles can be operationalised into a coherent, culturally grounded digital tool for sustainability education in architecture. By clearly documenting the design rationale and evaluation process, the study provides a replicable pathway for developing equitable, learner-centred digital spaces that embed Indigenous knowledge and sustainability principles which establishes a readiness baseline for future implementation and empirical validation.

Keywords: education for sustainable development, contemporary learning preferences, indigenous knowledge systems, architectural pedagogy, digital learning, global south.

Future Earth: An Approach for Planet-Centred Interdisciplinary-Design collaboration through STEAM(D) and Biodesign for Environmental Sustainability in Tertiary Arts, Design and Engineering Education in South Africa

Mr Kyle Smith (Online)

South Africa's escalating environmental crises, exacerbated by the Anthropocene, demand a radical rethinking of design education. While science and engineering have developed mechanisms to address ecological degradation, design education remains largely rooted in Human-Centred Design, which prioritises human needs while often neglecting planetary systems.

This paper argues for a paradigm shift toward Planet-Centred Design, supported by interdisciplinary collaboration through STEAM(D) (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Mathematics + Design) and Biodesign, as a transformative approach for South African tertiary arts, design, and engineering education.

Employing a qualitative, interpretivist methodology, comprising conceptual analysis, case studies, and literature-based theoretical synthesis, this study explores how arts, design and engineering curricula can evolve to address the planetary consequences of human impact. The research is grounded in a comprehensive literature review that contextualises the ecological urgency of the Anthropocene and identifies opportunities for curricular innovation. Key themes include interdisciplinary collaboration, transformative change, and the integration of speculative and futures thinking into design pedagogy.

The paper draws on global frameworks such as Planet-Centred Design and the Engineering for One Planet to propose a multi-approach model that aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. It highlights the potential of Planet-Centred Design to foster ecological empathy, systems thinking, and long-term sustainability by recognising nonhuman stakeholders and reframing design challenges within broader temporal and spatial contexts. STEAM(D) education is positioned as a vehicle for cultivating critical, creative, and collaborative competencies, while Biodesign offers regenerative, biology-informed solutions that bridge science, design, and sustainability.

The research contributes to the growing discourse on reimagining design education. It invites South African higher education institutions to lead in embedding sustainability into curricula by adopting interdisciplinary, future-oriented design practices. The paper concludes by calling for further research into practical frameworks and mechanisms for integrating Planet-Centred Design, STEAM(D), and Biodesign into tertiary education, ensuring that future designers are equipped to co-create a more sustainable and equitable world.

Keywords: sustainability, biodesign, design education, planet-centred design, sustainable design, human-centred design.

Circularity and South African Design

Mr Mohammed Jogie, Dr Herman Botes, Dr Selma Schiller (In-person)

In the Anthropocene, there is evidence that humans are depleting Earth's resources at an unsustainable rate. Designers unwittingly contribute to resource depletion through traditional design approaches. As a lifelong designer-researcher, like many of my peers, our collective aim is to effect positive societal, environmental, and stakeholder impact through design. While global design frameworks often rely on purpose-driven foundations, their applicability within the South African visual communication design context is underexplored. This paper reports on a Master of Arts and Design, specialising in Communication Design study. The research presented discusses how such frameworks and their embedded teleologies could be adapted by introducing relevant circular design methodologies for consideration by South African designers. The researchers report on qualitative, practice-based research that investigated design practice as a method of inquiry and knowledge generation. Purposive sampling was used for its appropriateness in meeting epistemological requirements. This approach is meant to align with practice-based inquiry, where knowledge transfer validity is important. The research framework used for the study includes circular design processes, material value retention, and the analysis of iterative, user-centric, and systems design by employing deductive thematic content analysis. Data from the Institute of Media, Strategy and Design (iMSD), the Use2Use Design Toolkit, and the Ellen MacArthur Foundation

(EMF) Adaptive Strategy for Circular Design were thematically coded in Atlas.ti. The study used purposive sampling to select a neutral, integrity-driven project brief. Data was gathered through screen and camera recordings of the design process, then transcribed for analysis. Using Atlas.ti, deductive thematic analysis identified themes that showed teleological consistencies and divergences across the design processes. The results of this teleological study, by cross-referencing these three design methodologies through the creation and assessment of design artefacts, present embodied purposive data in alignment with circular design outcomes. Conclusions exhibit the potential for the amalgamation of components of these design processes to enhance design output through user-centric, circular, and systemic design thinking through a multi-modal design model. Future research to validate the multi-modal circular design model developed in the study would be beneficial. Possibilities include industry pilot studies, materials innovation, emerging technologies, artificial intelligence, and comparative design models across various geographic and economic contexts.

Keywords: circular design, use2use design toolkit, emf adaptive strategy for circular design, iMSD design process, South Africa, sustainability.

Transforming design education through an innovative human-centred design approach to game-based learning

Ms Nozipho Zulu (In-person)

Global society demands continuous modification and enhancements to traditional teaching and learning to prepare students for the complex 21st century world. Higher education (HE) instructors in South African institutions are faced with unique challenges as the student populace is often culturally, socially, and linguistically diverse and also comes from varying socioeconomic backgrounds. To ensure student success, HE instructors should employ innovative human-centred design (Human-Vogel and Du Plessis 2024) strategies to respond to diverse student needs, improve performance and knowledge retention, and to increase motivation levels.

Problem statement – How can game-based learning (GBL) be applied through human-centred design to shape impactful futures for Extended Programme South African art and design students?

The Extended Curriculum Programme (ECP) accepts students who are inadequately prepared for HE, providing them with the necessary disciplinary knowledge and skills to prepare them for the mainstream Design and Studio Art course. However, South Africa's education inequalities contribute to this under-preparedness, making it crucial to provide additional support and innovative teaching methods to improve the academic success of ECP students (Khumalo & Sibanda 2023 and Human-Vogel & Du Plessis 2024). Guided by a human-centred design approach, a History of Art and Design analogue GBL (Maratou et al 2023 and Rye 2023) activity was created for ECP students at a South African University of Technology.

Human-centred design approach emphasises the prioritisation of the students' needs (Human-Vogel & Du Plessis 2024 and Landry 2020), hence the GBL activity was created with an empathetic understanding of our student's learning challenges, with a priority on student centredness. Students' performance in the History of Art and Design tests was assessed, revealing challenges with discipline knowledge, terminology, and language barriers. The GBL exercise aimed to address these learning barriers through tangible analogue game elements. Prior learning was considered to enable an inclusive learning environment. Therefore, students did not require prior competency in computer literacy. To make the workload manageable, game cards consisted of cognitive memory questions and convergent questions (Festo 2016 and Asking good questions 2008). This also reduced the cognitive load while facilitating the retention of knowledge (Rye 2023). Ethical considerations included student anonymity and the agreement by students to participate in the activity. This research study explored the impact of this GBL activity as an active learning tool on ECP Design and Studio Art students guided by human-centred design principles. In this study, Human-centred design was employed as a theoretical framework merged with a social structuralist lens.

Findings indicate that engaging with analogue game elements promotes active learning, allowing art and design students to relate theoretical knowledge to real-world contexts. The outcomes of the test written post the deployment of the History of Art and Design GBL activity showed improved student performance, knowledge retention, and increased motivation level.

Therefore, this paper contributes to the larger discourse on the use of innovative pedagogical methods to enhance teaching and learning in design education. By employing a human-centred design approach to game-based learning, this study demonstrates that GBL could shape impactful futures by effectively transforming traditional pedagogical strategies to enable active learning for ECP art and design students.

Keywords: human-centred design, game-based learning, analogue games, extended curriculum programme, active learning, innovative pedagogical methods.

AI Business Model for Fashion

Ms Liezel McDougall, Dr Lorna Truter (In-person)

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated technology adoption globally, laying the foundation for Artificial Intelligence-driven (AI) transformation. However, South African small and medium enterprises (SME) in the clothing and textile sector have not fully leveraged this shift to enhance business model (BM) innovation. Despite AI's potential to improve operational efficiency, adoption remains low due to implementation uncertainty and a lack of strategic frameworks (Hansen & Bogh, 2021; Park et al., 2019; Varaniūtė et al., 2018; PwC, 2017; Ponnapalli, 2022). A critical post-COVID research gap exists around AI and Internet of Things (IoT) integration in SME BMs, particularly in developing economies. This study addresses this gap by designing a theoretical AI-based BM strategy for clothing and textile industry SMEs. A qualitative, exploratory methodology was adopted to examine how AI can enhance decision-making and improve core business functions when combined with key performance indicators (KPIs) and IoT capabilities. The research builds on the work of Serumaga-Zake and van der Poll (2021), emphasising the role of strategic innovation and institutional support in enabling SME participation in the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR). Sampling included SME case profiles and industry literature to inform three key BM components: Value Creation, Value Delivery, and Value Capture. The model was developed using interpretive synthesis and thematic analysis. Tools such as AI process mapping, KPI frameworks, and IoT value-chain touchpoints were employed to identify areas where digital solutions could maximise customer reach, communication, satisfaction, and financial sustainability.

Findings reveal that AI-integrated BMs can help SMEs adapt to evolving consumer demands and strengthen market resilience. Value Creation focused on brand reputation and customer segmentation; Value Delivery explored AI tools for improved information sharing and client communication; and Value Capture addressed sustainable revenue and relationship management. These factors were structured to support agility in adapting to digital platforms, technologies, and trends.

The study concludes that AI and IoT offer significant potential to reconfigure SME BMs in South Africa. However, affordable AI solutions remain underutilised. The proposed framework provides actionable recommendations for SME adoption and scalability, offering transferable principles across sectors. Practically, it serves as a guide for SMEs seeking to implement AI in their operations. Theoretically, it lays a foundation for future research on digital transformation in fashion and other creative industries within developing economies.

Keywords: artificial intelligence (AI), internet of things (IoT), business model (BM), South African clothing and textile industry, fourth industrial revolution (4IR).

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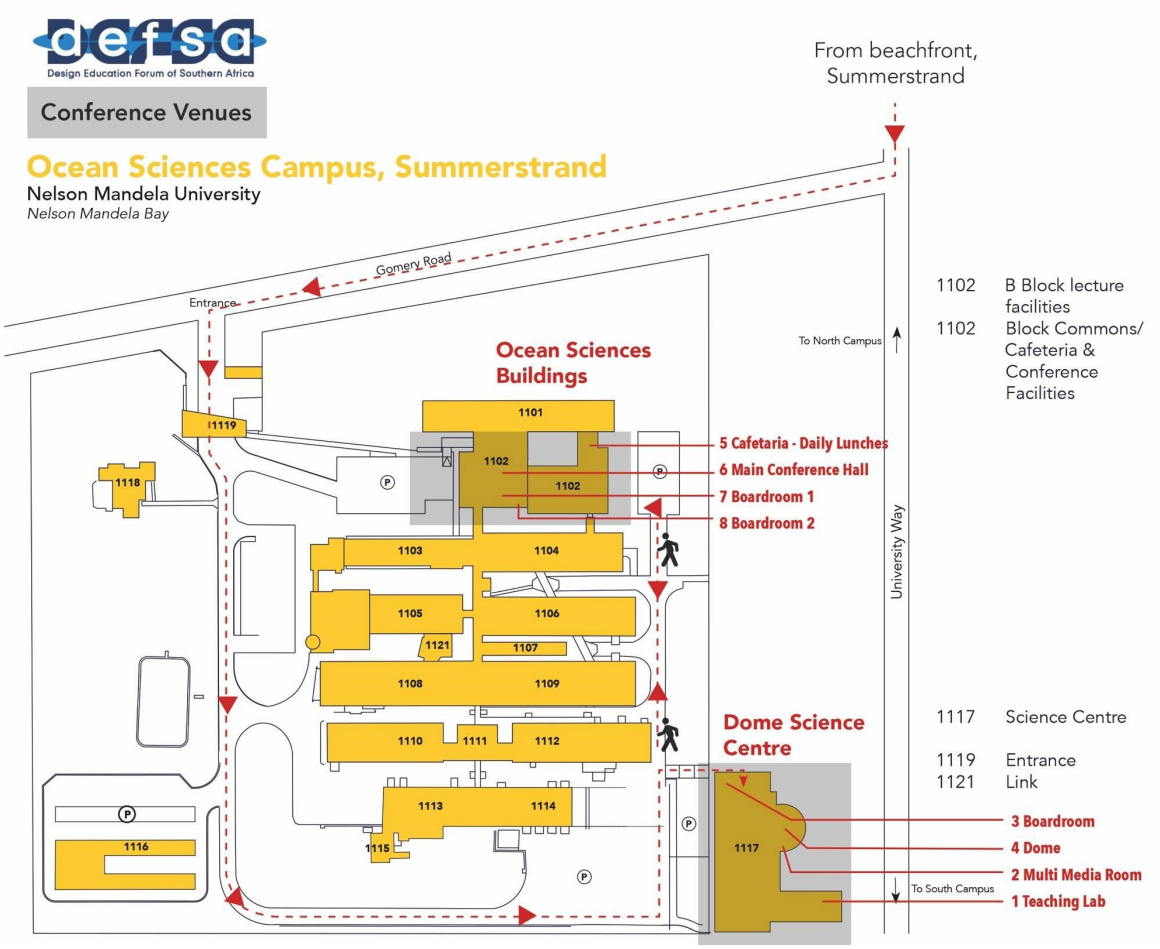
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