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Creating Diversity in Representation for Southern Africans in Character Design in Digital Art:
A Case of How to Draw Guides

By Nolwazi Waugh

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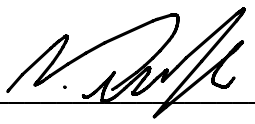
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Glossary

Black - in this paper, this term is used to refer to an ethnic group composed primarily of people who exhibit phenotypes of African origin.

Black African - in this paper, this term is used to refer to an ethnic group composed primarily of people who have deeply linked African ancestry.

Phenotype – in this paper, this term is used to describe the distinct physical attributes of Black and Black African people – hair, nose, mouth, skin tone, cheek bones – across the African diaspora (Shabazz 57).

Motswana – the official name of the nationality for people from Botswana. This term is patriotic and can be considered exclusionary as it is mainly reserved for people born and raised in the country, who also partake in traditional and cultural practices exclusively. Thus, in this research I use it as an umbrella term to refer to people who were born and raised here, lived here for most of their life, and may have foreign lineage and ancestors that engaged with Botswana's history at some point in time. Which contributed to Botswana's multiculturalism.

Abstract

There is a knowledge gap within the established lessons of art fundamental application regarding Black African character designs and their phenotypes due to historical depictions and opinions of Black people. This has led to portrayals in contemporary digital art media – video games, comics, animations – that lack thoughtful and diverse representations of Black Africans that show visual cultural elements that represent that character's culture and ethnic background, and do not carry maliciously ingrained racial stereotypes in their designs. This research aims to investigate what mechanisms can be used by artists to better represent Black Africans in digital character design art, both visually and contextually.

I used literary analysis to understand both the formation of popular drawing guides used by digital artists, and the histories that could have influenced the art fundamental lessons of these drawing guides. The histories of Black Africans both colonial, and post-colonial, were investigated to understand what links they have with the representation of Black African character design art. I created an art book to address African-specific features and signifiers that aimed to suggest how such elements could be used in character design.

Online drawing guides that represent Black people are less impactful to artists aiming draw them, as they are restricted through specific key words that may not be known to the user, thus widening the knowledge gap.

This research indicates that art fundamental guidebooks need to be more diverse, as their origins were miscommunicated and misunderstood throughout the years past. The standards used in the fundamentals of art have connections with colonial and post-colonial histories that misrepresented and did not include Black people, based on the opinions of white people from those periods. It is recommended that in order for people's mindsets on what is considered the standard of the fundamentals of art to change.

Keywords: Fundamentals of Art, Character Design Art, Black African, Phenotypes, Ethnicities, Culture, Representation, Digital Art

Chapter 1: Introduction to The Research and Creative Practice

It is established by experienced professional industry artists that the fundamentals of art, are very important to art learning. They are considered by many artists as essential knowledge that should not be ignored when depicting three-dimensional figures and the environments accurately. It is paramount that an artist turns to them when they want to improve their draftsmanship skills in understanding the structure and anatomy of the human figure. Many of the depictions of humans within these guidebooks share similarities such as the ideal proportions with the Renaissance artist, Leonardo Da Vinci's scientific anatomical drawings. Scholars consider that Leonardo da Vinci's anatomy notes are the most legitimate depiction of human anatomy for art. The similarities that modern or well-established 'How to Draw' books share with his notes may be proof that these guides directly reference his works in depicting human bodies in art. Additionally, older drawing guidebooks carry fundamental lessons that are detailed in their demonstration and were made by people who were highly skilled in their technical application. I acknowledge that many of these established guides are available for free online, and there are different medias one can obtain technical drawing lessons from. YouTube for example, has a vast catalogue of knowledge with high technical capability to cater to all skill levels. Artists aiming to work in industry fields that require hand drawn skills – hand-drawn animation, character design, concept art – still fall back to older written and illustrative guides in addition to using newer material. They are considered by professional artists, to be the foundation of cultivating one's technical and drawing ability. Furthermore, many online guides reference the lessons from these older guides, so even if an artist does not directly use an older guide, its lessons are still being perpetuated through the newer media.

Currently the most established and proliferated guidebooks mainly represent people of Caucasian Euro-American descent and their figures. Facial and bodily features, proportions, lighting application, and many others, all exist in relation to applying such fundamentals onto fairer skin and white Eurocentric figures. Many guidebooks do not exhibit Black African facial and bodily features, proportions, and other applications of fundamentals onto them such as lighting. This knowledge, or learning material may exist, but it is not as widely distributed as those by European or Western authors.

Chapter 2 provides an in-depth discussion on why this is the case, by elaborating on inequalities of racial representation in art. This knowledge is also assumed to be the best way of learning to draw people and is often referred to other learners as good resources. While there are many depictions of Black characters that are redeemable, and iconic within popular media, some are used in fundamental of art learning material like the characters depicted in *How to Draw Black People* (2022) by Malik Shabazz. The role of Black characters in media in most cases carry negative racial stereotypes and connotations, some even dating back to the Jim Crow era. For example, being in a servitude role compared to the white counter parts of the other characters, playing a comical tension relief character, having an exaggerated sex appeal or being overly aggressive, the list goes on. Visual elements of these negative racial stereotypes can and are carried into the visual design which further dehumanises the character, despite the art looking appealing.

These elements are then picked up by other artists who see these characters as inspiration, unconsciously spreading the misrepresentation and hindering their own ability to create diverse Black character designs.

Many Black artists have made a plethora of painting, drawings, and photographs of showcasing black bodies. For example, *When We See Us: A Century of Black Figuration in Painting* (2023) edited by Koyo Kouoh, was a major exhibition that explored self-representation and celebrates global Black subjectivities and Black consciousness from pan-African and pan-diasporic perspectives (Kouoh). It showcased images of Blackness that have been created over the past century by Black artists. Still, as an artist, I often struggle to find information I need to draw the characters I want. In my experience this means relying on the internet and general drawing books, many of which were catered to specific drawing styles such as manga, or anime. These books have a different variation of an artists' creative style. There were also books that did not showcase realistic human proportions and depicted the guiding illustrations in a stylised manner, both of which made it a challenging as they did not showcase Black people in their tutorials. In an interview conducted for this research, Bill Masuku, a Zimbabwean comic artist and writer, who has created titles such as *Razor Man* (2019) and *Captain South Africa* (2018), expressed that he found it difficult to navigate the variety of art styles, and the lack of Black people within them was discouraging (Masuku 00:02:17) .

Even with the vast internet and drawing book databases about learning to draw people, much of the process is still self-taught and requires a lot of trial and error. This lengthens the learning process and makes the desire of drawing Black people more arduous.

Drawing guidebooks are from Europe and North America mainly. There are guides such as *How to Draw Black People* (2022) by Malik Shabazz, a Black artist. However, representation is still bent towards the West and Europe, which is a problem that Dipti Desia points out in their journal article *Imaging Difference: The Politics of Representation in Multicultural Art* Education (2000). They conclude that multiculturalism has shaped our understanding of art from cultures other than our own in stereotypic ways. It has reduced non-Western cultures to some constructed ideas of their essential characteristics that supposedly can be represented authentically (Desai 14). Additionally, drawn guide material and knowledge presenting Black people are not as proliferated because the imagery does not match the pedagogical norms found in conventional drawing guidebooks.

This creates an even larger gap when creating characters of African ethnicities, as an artist may not be able to apply the fundamentals of art accurately to other figures of people, or only be capable of drawing African characters through the lens and practices of Euro-American drawing guides or unnoticeable racial stereotypes from Black characters in media. These gaps in knowledge further contribute to the limited representations of Black characters and culturally inspired Black characters in digital art. The more misrepresentation exists of Black characters, the harder it is for people to get a good understanding of what positive or meaningful Black character design looks like.

However, now, as a Black digital artist trying to paint or draw Black African characters in their various figures, skin tones, facial structures, and ethnicities, I sometimes fail to understand how to build form, structure and colour to accurately capture various Black African features. Using references is important, as it helps give visual aid on how to draw something, but it does not give insights on the structural techniques or fundamental application when drawing Black African characters with African phenotypes, body types and hair textures. This has always been quite difficult as sources on drawing or painting of Black skin or Black features are scarce. I was so used to seeing Euro-Americans being the main people represented in digital art, artistic learning resources, and the subjects of art productions. As a result, I've felt that not knowing how to represent Black people was normal, because if there are so little sources on how an artist can draw them, why would I

need to know at all? This is an example of Black erasure, a concept discussed in *Where's the Representation?: The Impact of White Washing on Black Children* (2016) by Kai Nelson serves to highlight the need to represent Black people with as much accuracy in their features, culture and ethnicities without prejudice, fetishism and racial discrimination, as is the case for other groups of humanity.

Therefore, the primary question of this research is:

How can we improve representation for Black Southern Africans in comic, animation, and game character design art?

Sub questions:

How do how-to-draw books produced in the West impact this representation?

How can this research be applied to the creation of an artbook of Motswana characters?

To investigate these questions, the following are my research aims:

1. To examine how the stylistic and pedagogical norms presented in mainstream drawing guidebooks affect artists' ability to engage with and incorporate Black characters in their practice.
2. To investigate how racial bias within the digital art industry effects the visibility and accessibility of content created by Black artists.
3. To conduct interviews with practicing Southern African digital artists about how they learned drawing Black characters.
4. To create an artbook of characters using culture from Botswana utilising the information gathered while this study was being conducted.

However, the research does not claim to show the singular way to draw Black people, and it does not claim to condense what a Black person is or can be in character design. It is not proposing that current drawing guidebooks serve no purpose, it as critical analyse on how the learning material is presented and its exclusionary ways of presenting that knowledge. The origins of my motivations for writing the research comes from personal experience of dissatisfaction with the ongoing ways Black Africans are represented in digital art character design and how these representations are perpetuated through the absence of their images in mainstream drawing guidebooks.

Methodology

I conducted this research through literary analysis and accompanying case studies to investigate the possible origins of the depictions of Black people in art. I investigate how the pedagogical norms of drawing guides may have originated from Renaissance artists, and the exclusionary ways in which Black people were depicted in paintings. Leading those same opinions to carry on into modern day drawing books and Black character art.

I conducted interviews with currently practicing southern African digital character artists, to gain an understanding of how they manage and navigate drawing African characters, what their inspirations were and if they used mainstream drawing guides or other means to do so. The interviews method used was semi-structured, as I wanted to keep on topic and allow for more flexibility in how the participant responded to the questions. Having the atmosphere of the call be semi-formal also allowed the participant to be more comfortable in sharing more personal insights related to their practice, which in turn gave me more data I could use in the research.

I interviewed five participants whose ages arranged from mid 20s to 40s. I conducted the interviews on the online video calling platform Zoom, where I recorded the calls. Ideally having in-person meetings would have made for a more organic interaction, but ultimately online calls made it more convenient and less expensive to conduct these interviews. I asked for consent to not have the participants be anonymous in the interviews. These experts were already known within the professional digital arts communities, and it was important to get their voices heard as professional artists who dealt with this lack of representation in their field.

Art Book Methodology

Relying on word-of-mouth knowledge of Botswana culture and traditions would not have been sufficient as I knew many people within Botswana did not extensively know about histories and ancient traditions before European influence.

Through my search to find written accounts of Botswana's culture and traditions, I found a book that was lent to me by a University of Botswana Professor titled *Culture and Customs of Botswana* (2006) by James Denbow and Phenyo C. Thebe, and a book titled *The Tswana* (1984) a by Schapera et al. that I read at Botswana's National Library. These books were key

resources as they offered detailed accounts of Botswana's historical and spiritual culture before and after European influence.

Reading through these rituals and traditions sparked potential character stories I could use for my art book. One excerpt that stood out to me was a ritual that took place throughout the entire rainy season. The newly bereaved people were reported to the chief, on whose instructions they were smeared with juice of irritant bulbs used as rainmaking medicines; this treatment was intended to "cool (Schapera et al. 60)" their bodies and prevent them from scorching the land wherever they went (Schapera et al.). I felt this would make a good story to represent Botswana in that the accuracy of how communities are still involved with each other's lives and are supportive of the life changing events that take place. I kept to making it in a traditional perspective (visuals and setting) as I wanted to visually depict the religious magic that these rituals believed to possess.

As one interview participant stated, "going to villages and speaking to elders can give unique perspectives we are not exposed to from the mainstream media. Which is essential when it comes to creating characters from your culture" (Malakaila 00:06:26). Hearing this reassured me in that the methods I was using were a good approach when creating local stories in local perspectives. Botswana's culture does not only stem from one source; Namibia, Zimbabwe, and South Africa all have moments in history that contributed to Botswana's diverse culture. I felt this necessary to showcase as I wanted to show my acknowledgements of these histories.

The dissertation is structured as follows to investigate these aims:

Chapter 1 which is this current chapter, focused on introducing the context of the research of the importance of Black African representation in character design art, and explained the aims and the methods of the research that will be conducted. This chapter briefly also mentioned some key theorists that will be used to explain the various positive and negative effects of misrepresenting Black people in art.

Chapter 2 is the literature review that discusses the histories of figure and anatomical drawing and contemporary practices in character design drawing. I formatted the section into a timeline of events revolving around the history and practices of anatomical drawings and dissection, and how these practices set the standard for the fundamentals of art used today in human figure drawing guidebooks. The second section discusses historical events regarding

Black Africans and Black people in the colonial and post-colonial periods. These events are what shaped the how artworks created in these eras reflected the opinions of Black people. The influence it had on future artistic expressions of Black Africans, and the negative effects these influences had on the minds of Black people. It then discusses the stereotypes in digital communication systems such as social media and other digital art viewing platforms and how the effects of these histories have shaped the digital media landscape. The section discusses Black and Whitewashing, Black erasure and colourism in the context of digital design art. Leading to the last section that discusses and gives examples on representations of Black Africans and dark-skinned people in contemporary digital art media.

Chapter 3 critiques and discusses several key drawing guidebooks. This section describes the books' merits in demonstrating their technical art drawing skills and critiques whether they are helpful or not in guiding the artist on drawing Black people. Suggestions on what could have been added to the books to make them more accommodating to covering different techniques of drawing are also given.

Chapter 4 will be presenting my arguments in focus points, on how some fundamentals of art are not commonly known or do not have a physical origin to where applications of certain foundational knowledge may be found. The interview data – applicant's answers – will be used to back up my arguments and offer insight of what obstacles they went through in drawing Black African characters and what it takes to break into the digital art industry. The misrepresentation, miscommunication, and misunderstandings of how the fundamentals of art of human anatomy are perceived and applied are also discussed.

Chapter 5 focuses on the process, changes and outcomes of the creative component, which is the art book I created with hand drawn Black African characters that I designed. The characters are designed using cultural inspiration from Botswana's culture, and with the insights I gained from the interviews, which all align with my aim. Chapter 6 concludes the research paper, with my final thoughts and suggestions for future research. Appendix A presents Renaissance paintings discussed in Chapter 2, Appendix B presents video game images from discussions made in Chapter 2, and Appendix C is a character prompt guide from *How to Draw Black People* (2022) by Malik Shabazz that is discussed in Chapter 3.

1.1 Drawing Guides and their Impact on Black (Mis)representation

Some well-known established drawing guides such are *Figure Drawing For All Its Worth* (1943) by Andrew Loomis and *The Human Figure* (Vanderpoel), which are commonly referred to by artists for learning because both books contain fundamental and technical lessons on drawing human proportions and anatomy, and shows different variations of facial features. There are anatomical sections of the book that demonstrate the construction of bones, and muscles, drawing people in different perspectives and poses. It also displays people with different facial structures in different angles and drawing styles, such as portrait sketches and life drawings of men, women and children (see fig. 1).



Fig. 1. *Figure Drawing for all Its Worth* (Loomis 179–183)

While these existing guides are a good starting point for learning how to draw the human body and the complexities of bone and muscle structure within the body and its actions, they mostly focus on drawing the 'ideal' body type. This approach does not allow for a variety of human bodies that an artist may use for a character design and may still be harmful to the perception of people's bodies and could stunt one's ability to draw other body types further in their career.

For example, in Loomis' book men are drawn with very muscular physiques and women are drawn with very slender figures. While this is good to show the direct muscular structure

underneath the skin, figure and curves, it still hinders an artist's ability to draw other body types, if their gained knowledge is only of muscular men and slender women.

These issues would be less common if there were more resources that catered to drawing and designing Black people and were as well known and distributed as their Euro-American counterparts. While resources such as *How to Draw Black People* (2022) by Malik Shabazz do focus on the more accurate representation of Black people in character design, they are still lesser known because they are fewer in numbers, and access and distribution is limited.

The preprint by Kim et al. *Countering Racial Bias in Computer Graphics Research* (2022) is an insightful text as it details how racial bias pervades the technical language and numerical measures we use in research and computer graphics (Kim et al.). Kim et al. states that translucency and the corresponding physical mechanism of subsurface scattering[1] has become synonymous with "human skin" in rendering. However, translucency is only the dominant visual feature of young, white Europeans and fair-skinned East Asians (Kim et al.). As Kim et al. found 19 graphics publications solely present renderings of white humans as evidence that subsurface scattering algorithms can faithfully depict "skin", "human skin" and "human faces" (1)" . An online guide from a plug-in *Autodesk Arnold* (2024) (see fig. 2) includes darker skin but presents it as a deviation from the white baseline, describing it as "incorrect" (Fajardo et al.) because the algorithm cannot render dark skin making it look artificial, which reinforces the supremacy of whiteness (Kim et al.).

[1] Subsurface scattering is used for achieving photorealism in 3D rendering by simulating how light interacts with translucent materials like skin, wax, and leaves (Iontcheva). It is often used by digital artists to make the process of creating human models for video games, animations, and 3d renders more efficient.

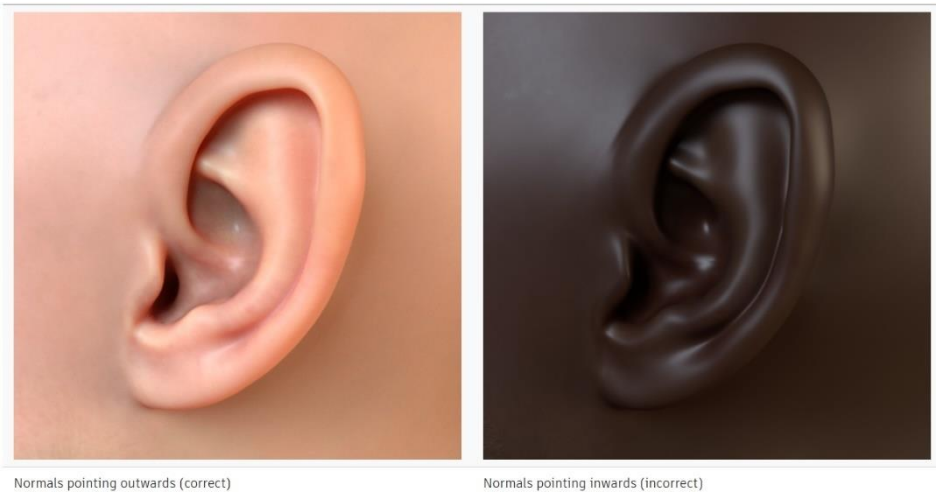


Fig. 2. Autodesk Arnold. Subscattering Surface guide for skin displaying correct and incorrect results. Autodesk Arnold, July 2024, https://help.autodesk.com/view/ARNOL/ENU/?guid=arnold_user_guide_ac_legacy_standard_ac_subsurface_scattering_html

Many drawing guides for character design or human body guides such as ones from Loomis, follow a similar pattern of how people are drawn, that focuses on the fundamentals of art and human anatomy. *Force Character Design from Life Drawing* by Michael D. Mattesi (2008), which is dedicated to life drawing, shows how the artist can show personality through various kinds of body shape and language. Both books contain very useful and insightful information and with their expertise and skill enhancing the material makes the content of their guides valuable. Loomis' book follows a dictatorial approach of teaching whereas Mattesi gives out exercises that use his example as a guide for the artist. Mattesi shows a lot of variety of bodies in his guide which I would argue gives a positive representation to the reader as there are not just one type or an "ideal" type of body shown. Even if there are not many Black people shown in the book, the variety of human body types could contribute to various Black characters if the artist chose. The same can be said for *How to Draw Black People* by Malik Shabazz (2022), it does not only focus on how one can draw a Black person, but how one can avoid falling into racial stereotypes and the variation of human bodies when designing Black characters. Both books are not perfect and do not claim to be, but the positive feedback loop the reader experiences by seeing variations of people's figures and the inspiration taken from the depiction of those figures can lead the artist to create more nuanced representations of people in character art drawing.

Additionally, the knowledge that is missing from many established guides is, the significance of cultural clothing, hairstyles, and accessories relating to a specific role a person may have within the culture, and to the character. Attention to these features can further enhance the

design and show appreciation and acknowledgement of an African culture. While the knowledge gap is still large, some books do try to close this gap of knowledge through showing variety of people and bodies within their guides such as the previously mentioned author Malik Shabazz.

Character designs exhibiting cultures and traditions are a form of digital preservation for countries that are not well known within the contemporary art space. By designing characters that acknowledge African descents and ethnicities, the contribution of preserving countries and their heritage, cultures is amplified. Ethnicities may directly influence how an artist chooses to depict that character from said country. The artist, Lesego Vorster, has chosen to represent running athlete characters from different African countries for the South African short film Naledi, currently in production. The character designs simple identifiers such as country flag colours on their clothes and their body types and skin tone are typical of the country they are from. Successfully representing the ethnicities of their countries (*NALEDI*) (see fig. 3).



Fig. 3. “Naledi Character Line Up” (“NALEDI on Instagram,” 2021)

1.2 Representation of Black Characters in Digital Media

Digital creative industries are becoming important components of modern post-industrial knowledge-based economies. They account for higher-than-average growth and job creation and play an important role in fostering cultural diversity (Hani et al.). They also play a role in the continuation of how people in regions and their cultures can be perceived by the masses. Knowledge about different people and cultures can allow more people to be aware of them and see how they are meant to be represented, if the content created is being made by the people from that region.

Disney is one of the most successful producers and providers of entertainment in the form of movies, television and other media. Many of which depicted Black people and Black Africans as racial stereotypes. *Fantasia* (1941) is a collection musical productions, exhibiting an array of different characters and stories. One of these stories takes place in a fantasy setting where female centaurs reside. All the female centaurs are depicted with dainty facial features, carefree personalities, with light technicoloured fur. Except for one female named Sunflower, who is depicted with a shorter height, darker fur, who's main purpose is to serve the other creatures. Sunflower's character design is based on harmful racial stereotypes that depict Black women as servants and savages (see fig. 4).



Fig. 4. Sunflower's character design in the 1941 and 1969 Fantasia films (Fantasia)

I argue it is important for artists in local creative industries to diversify representations of their experiences and cultures through character design. However small the spread is, it is important for Black African perspectives to be shared and proper representation to be known and viewed.

To gain the skill of drawing human characters, the fundamentals of art need to be understood and applied. These are foundational skills for all visual artistic practices that requires illustrating human anatomy. The lessons that guide these skills are only meant to inform one's technical drawing abilities; not control the way the art will be artistically portrayed. Character designs are a medium for storytelling, whether the art is stylised or realistic, it can still hold value and influence the person viewing that content. "Art is a Language and character designs are stories told in that language" (Shabazz 12).

Stylised forms of art media can be more engaging to the audience and allows the story or information being broadcasted to be absorbed more easily (McCloud). A person can create very simplistic drawing or very detailed drawings, and both can succeed in representing African ethnicities or culture.

Representation through stylisation is important. As a Black African woman artist, I struggled with depicting Black African human figures through stylisation as many of the art resources I learned from were in the perspective and lens of Euro-American human figures. If more resources that demonstrated how to construct Black African bodies through fundamental structure and stylisation were plentiful, I would not have had to feel unsure if the drawings I created were "correct" based on what the resources claimed about human anatomy being ideal.

My research is not intended to show why people are different but to acknowledge that there is a difference, and the importance of showing that difference in character design. It aims to suggest ways a person can design more diverse Black Southern Africans and by extension, African characters, that exhibit a variety of cultural elements that can be used to enhance their character visual designs.

I aim to understand which mechanisms can be used by artists to better represent Black Southern Africans in digital art media such as comics, animation and games. In digital art medias, characters are an important aspect of these media because they are used to tell a story. They are used to share a viewpoint, a perspective, and a way to have the audience empathise and relate to the character. Characters are icons that are used vehicles to experience the story without the viewers needing to be directly a part of it.

1.3 Using Icons and Visual Language in Black Character Representation

In *Understanding Comics The Invisible Art* (1993), Scott Mcloud defines the word "icon" as a means to represent a person, a place, a thing or an idea. Non-pictoral icon meanings are fixed and absolute, like the icon for numbers and letters. In pictures, meaning is fluid and variable, like the icons for faces. He puts icons into perspective by starting from a most realistic-looking face to very cartoony and simplified with each change being more simplified and argues why the most simplified face of a person is more universal in appeal than a real photograph does (see fig. 5).

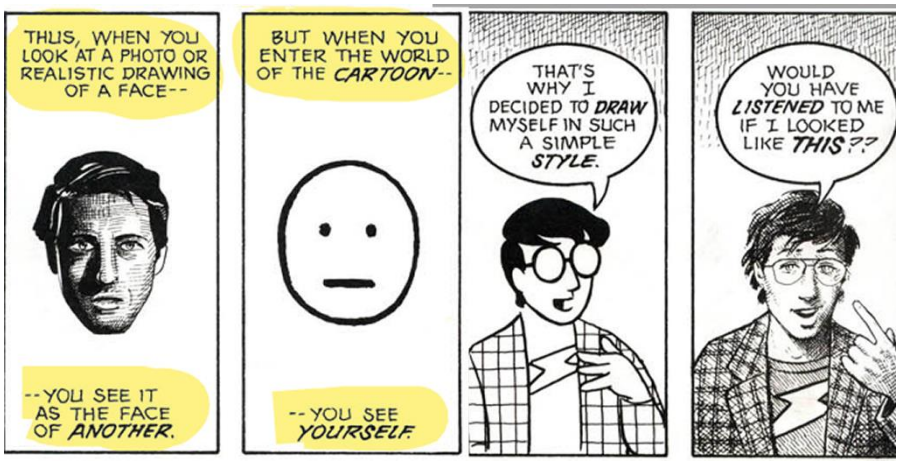


Fig. 5. Icon compared to a realistic portrayal of a face. (McCloud 38)

By simplifying a face, artists are not eliminating features but are emphasising on specific details. Simplifying characters and images toward a purpose can be an effective tool for storytelling in any medium. "Cartooning isn't just a way of drawing, it's a way of seeing. The ability of a cartoon to have us focus our attention on an idea is important. When you look at a photo or realistic drawing of a face, you see it as the face of another, but when you enter the world of a cartoon, you see yourself" (McCloud 31). This is because by stripping down an image to its essential "meaning" an artist can amplify that meaning in a way that realistic art cannot (McCloud).

In Neil Cohn's book *The Visual Language of Comics: Introduction to the Structures and Cognition of Sequential Images* (2013). Cohn emphasises that comics are not a visual language, rather the comics are *written* in a visual language. Visual Languages can be understood as 'dialects' in the same way novels are written in English (Cohn).

Cohn describes visual languages as the three modalities of humans in expressing concepts; creating sounds, moving bodies and creative graphic representations (Cohn). He further elaborates that when these modalities are put into a structure it yields a type of language. Many parts of the world have their own visual language. For example, the mainstream American visual language is what Cohn calls “Kirbyan” (139) – a reference to comic artist Jack Kirby – which can be found in how to draw books, and is commonly found in American comic styles such as Marvel Comics.

This doesn’t necessarily mean the art has to be a cartoon to carry meaning. If an artist wants to create a brave character, one could showcase the symbols of bravery in a personified form of a character. Therefore, the character design would be impressionable and thus would carry meaning. The emotions and impressions a person feels after meeting certain people or having lived through certain experiences form impressions in one’s mind, and manifest themselves into the character designs one makes. A successful impression on an audience is determined if the character design can tell a story from just looking at it. A failed impression equates to if it does not give an impression at all, or is mistaken for an impression that gives ill intent (Shabazz).

Creating characters that are relatable to viewers, as well as being a representation or inspiration of a culture, would allow for more thoughtful design and make the artist think more of the story through the character rather than the character within a story. The character acts as a vehicle for storytelling that allows the viewer to connect with them more and the viewer to feel seen and validated when that culture is something they recognise. Even more so if the character shares similar traits to the audience such as hair texture, skin colour, mannerisms, language, bone structure, et cetera. You may see yourself in that character, and if not culturally, you are able to acknowledge that character and their culture that they share with millions of people. The character needs to create an effective impression to tell an impactful story, the audience would be appreciative of the character and its thoughtful design. It would make the story more compelling and make the audience feel connected to the character. This research suggests that a stronger impression could be felt if the audience and the character share cultural or ethnic similarities.

When characters designs take inspiration from an African culture and are represented in a stereotypical, racist, or fetishised manner, it creates a harmful and false representation of that culture and people. Those negative stereotype may be accepted as factual. Racist depictions of Black people are not factual, but because stereotypes are so easily spread and accepted they further contribute to the misrepresentation and generalisation of the African continent (Hall et al.). Such depictions can cause negative psychological impacts on the people those pictures are made to represent. The journal article *Highlighting Racial Demonization in 3D Animated Films and Its Implications: A Semiotic Analysis of Frankenweenie* (2018) by Chikezie Uzuegbunam and Chinedu Richard Ononiwu is framed within the psychoanalytic film theory aims to highlight how animated films, as colourful and comical as they are, can demonize a certain group of people.

These ideologies can manifest themselves onto children more often as they are the targeted audience of many animated productions (Uzuegbunam and Ononiwu). With repeated exposure to characters and media that showcase negative stereotypes, children can overtime develop cynical attitudes towards their peers. Since the media they watched had already set a precedent on what race would be more favoured, this causes them to lash out or feel inferior of their own race. "They learn demonizing labels such as 'devil', 'wicked', 'evil', and acquire negative emotions, such as fear and anxiety, along with some behaviours, such as retaliation and passivity" (6). Scholars also argue that demonising certain groups of people in animated films can incur negative consequences associated with stereotypical beliefs and the labelling of others, such as alienation and segregation.

The exposure to such media over an extended period may instil biased and prejudiced views in those who consume this media, whether this be an audience of children, or perhaps even adults. Negative racial portrayals as seen in some animated films may therefore be viewed as an objective fact by children. These kinds of outlooks can cause effects such as internalised oppression, low self-esteem, and reinforce stereotypes within individuals. This harmful exposure can be reversed if more people create and consume media that doesn't have these established stereotypes.

The impacts this research could have is to bring into focus the importance of accurate representation of Black African characters in the digital art space and hopefully lead to more people drawing Black people in their art and not avoid them. The inclusion of more diversly

represented African characters and African centred stories in digital art productions would be a gratifying development.

The key theorist I will be using are *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (2013) by Stuart Hall et al. specifically focusing on the chapter *The Spectacle of the Other*. Hall et al. writes about the impact of classifying and stereotyping various bodies of difference in society. The title is of its own significance because it shows who the spectators are, and their influence and power in changing the meaning of Black bodies in media, art, and society.

Alyssa M. Smith's research thesis titled *Whitewashing v. Blackwashing Structural Racism and Anti-Racist Praxis in Hollywood Cinema* (2021), in which Smith discusses defines the terms whitewashing and Blackwashing. She explains the damage whitewashing can cause for original stories and why Blackwashing falls into the racist history of the Hollywood film industry which makes the Black washed character a tool for negative Black stereotypes. Despite Blackwashing originally existing within the film industry space in Hollywood, the practices of Blackwashing have migrated into online digital spaces as well.

Marika Neimimen's *Psychology in Character Design Creation of a Character Design tool* (2017) and *Cultural Inspirations towards Malaysian Animation Character Design* by Normah Mustaffa and Faryna Mohd Khalis (2017) are both helpful in my research because they focus on similar aspects and elements of character design and show how these elements determine the personality and perception of the character.

In animation, comics and games, the existence of characters is an important aspect of this media because they fill a need. Story-wise, the need is to have a viewpoint, a perspective, and a way to have the audience empathise and relate to the character. The way the character is presented can also have a psychological impact on the viewer. Characters are a vehicle to experience the story without the viewers needing to be directly a part of it. Nieminen's thesis describes the different psychological parts of a character to be motivation, flaws, backstory, and emotions which all help and hinder the character in different parts of their story (Nieminen). This also links to what I mentioned earlier about Scott McCloud's discussion on character's being a vehicle for the audience to experience the story.

In pursuing this research, I will showcase the parts of the multifaceted culture within Botswana. Using cultures and traditional elements such as spiritual rituals and beliefs I will create character designs that aim to suggest how artists could bring new ideas and stories when creating Black African characters using Botswana's culture. Focusing on one country prevents me from over-scoping and solidifies my argument that the generalisation of the African continent should not be normalised as one can find nuanced variety of people within an individual region, especially relating to character design art.

My research is not intended to show why people are different but to acknowledge that there are differences, and the importance of showing those differences in character design. It aims to suggest ways an artist can design more diverse Black African characters that exhibit true to life cultural elements which can be used to enhance the character's traits.

Chapter 2:

Literature Review: Histories of Figure and Anatomical Drawing and Contemporary Practices in Character Design Drawing

This chapter is broken up into four major areas of discussion. The first one will be the discussion of human anatomy and dissection. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Leonardo Da Vinci is considered the progenitor of our modern understanding of anatomy in drawing, therefor it is not surprising that established drawing guides that teach technical principles of the human body also reference his works.

The second section of this chapter will discuss the racist anthropologic history. It will discuss how the Black 'other' pushes the normalisation of fetishising and stereotyping of Black Africans and of dark-skinned people. This kind of normalisation occurs both in real life and in character design art within the video game, animation, and comic spaces, which further perpetuates the kinds of negative influences artists use when creating Black characters.

The third section of this chapter will illustrate how this historic overview impacts contemporary examples of character design in digital art. The discussion will include topics such as Whitewashing, Black washing, Black erasure and the psychological effects that character design art can have on representing a person of colour. The fourth section will demonstrate and discuss the ways in which Black Africans and dark-skinned people are represented and have represented themselves in contemporary media.

2.1: Anatomical Dissection and Representation in Renaissance and Old Era Artworks

The Renaissance era made many great artists known, some of whom were Donato di Niccolò di Betto Bardi (hereafter Donatello), Michelangelo di Lodovico Buonarroti Simoni (hereafter Michelangelo), and Raffaello Sanzio (hereafter Raphael). However, the most influential and impactful of them was Leonardo Da Vinci. He was a phenomenal painter, sculptor, engineer, theorist, draughtsman, and architect. He is considered one of the fathers of human anatomy. His efforts to understand the human body and its inner workings made a great impact on Renaissance art and human anatomy learning. Da Vinci believed that the purpose of art was to paint 'man and the intention of his soul' with the 'attitudes and movements of the limbs' (Keele). One could not hope to learn the inner workings of a human body without knowing what it looked like on the inside. Anatomy originates from the Greek word 'anatom' which means to cut up or cut repeatedly (Malomo et al.). Human dissection was greatly frowned upon as the church believed dead human bodies were sacred and had the right to be undisturbed and kept intact. This law was not completely enforced, but it did hinder anatomical studies for some time. During the arrival of the Renaissance, the development of dissection made a comeback (Malomo et al.).

Da Vinci combined anatomical with physiological research. His earlier anatomical developments focused specifically on the skeleton and muscles and how the muscles would trace back and connect to the spinal cord and brain. He would analyse the postures and gestures of men's bodies in terms of their mathematical and mechanical frameworks.

Amanda M. Cothern's journal article titled *The Perfect Machine: The Reason behind the Anatomical Studies of Leonardo da Vinci* presents the argument that Da Vinci's extraordinary anatomical drawings should be viewed as primarily scientific and engineering studies rather than introductory drawings for his paintings (Cothern).

It has been long assumed by scholars like Edward MacCurdy, E.H. Gombrich, and several others that Da Vinci's motivation for performing his studies of anatomy was directly related to his painting (Cothern). Leonardo, while an extraordinary painter, lacked the enthusiasm for it as many of his commissions would remain unfinished for many days. One major example of his apathy to make art was a commission of *The Madonna of the Rocks* in 1508 from the Confraternity of the Immaculate Conception, who had to take legal action against Da Vinci to

finish it. His impact of his human anatomical studies did not go unnoticed, as many renaissance artists began to study human anatomy to improve their artistic abilities. One such artist was Michelangelo. He was so determined to understand the secrets of anatomy that he would constantly skin bodies, in which he obtained perfection to the great knowledge of design the human figure (Cothern). Michelangelo's anatomy studies consisted mainly of the skeleton and muscles. His studies were solely used in his depiction of the human figure. Artists at the time, including Michelangelo and the ancient Greeks where this convention started, used exaggeration of the musculature in rendering the human figure. Da Vinci disapproved of this convention as he expressed that the muscles should not be made so obvious, even if they are in the correct places. Only if the body is under intense labour or force should those muscles be shown, otherwise one would have created "a sack of nuts rather than a human figure" (23).

The article goes on to explain Da Vinci's many scientific and engineering achievements such as when he developed the concept of velocity and other physical concepts that Isaac Newton would later take credit for (Cothern). Da Vinci would use physics vocabulary for the body's functions, the brain was the "motor" (25), and the jaw was a "lever" (25). He would often compare human body systems with different kinds of mechanical developments. One example was a drawing he made of the neck muscles that he would compare to the functions of a ship. Where he reasoned that the weight of the head was spread out among the supporting neck muscles, just as how the weight of a ship's mast was distributed among the ropes of rigging. He also made considerable studies and theories of how the heart pumped blood into the body, which was proven to be correct 500 years later after his dissections were conducted (Cothern). All this evidence proves that Da Vinci was a scientist who loved to expand his understanding of the perfect machine – the human body, so much so that he painstakingly spent more than ten years studying the structure and function of it, not to perfectly replicate it within his art.

I argue that with the assumptions made by scholars as stated previously, whereby they claim his anatomical studies were for his artistic paintings and Da Vinci's labelling of the human body as the perfect machine led people to assume that his drawings were referring to a perfect image of what a human body should look like. Rather than what Leonardo himself thought, which was a perfectly functioning machine that he wanted to study and understand, and not as a reference to determine the ideal proportions for his own art.

While the meaning behind Da Vinci's anatomical studies have been misconstrued, they still hold much value and insight of improving one's art when drawing human beings. Which is what my research highlights: the issues of miscommunication, misrepresentation, and misunderstanding of the fundamentals in art when drawing Black Africans. The system of beliefs around Leonardo Da Vinci's anatomy studies is a prime example of those miscommunications. While he may have not believed in the perfect proportions, there is a mechanical framework that he improved on that is commonly used in art learning for human proportions today.

The image below is an example of this mechanical framework – the *Vitruvian Man* (1490) – drawn by Leonardo Da Vinci (see fig. 6). Da Vinci was influenced by Marcus Vitruvius Pollio who was a Roman architect and engineer. The purpose of the *Vitruvian Man* was to show how a human man's proportions would match other parts of their body in length. It was proposed by Vitruvian that if a man lay flat on his back with outstretched limbs, his feet would touch the bottom edges of the square and circle, and his hands would touch the edges of the square (Baugh).

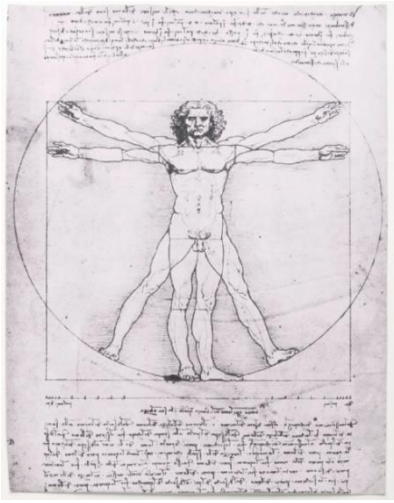


Fig. 6. Da Vinci, Leonardo. "The Vitruvian Man". Britannica, https://www.britannica.com/art/Renaissance-art.

These same principles are used in figure drawing and technical drawing guides today, using the measurements of where the limbs end in proportion to the rest of the body, guides artists on constructing human in the most anatomically accurate proportions. For example, the face and its focal points – eyes, mouth, nose, ears – have relative distances from each other.

When an artist is learning the measurements of the face and does not know the full complexities of facial anatomy, they can use simple guidelines which makes it easier to breakdown complex concepts of facial construction:

> The eyes can be drawn halfway up the head. The space between the eyes is about the same as the width of an eye. The ears are at the same level as the nose. The base of the nose coincides with the depressions underneath the cheekbones. The height of the nose can be equal to the measurement from the bottom of the nose to the chin (Lauricella 23) (see fig. 7).

These simplified guidelines apply to full length human measurements, the most well-known of these are a man being 8 heads tall or the elbows stopping at the bottom of the ribcage (Loomis 28). These guidelines may not apply to all human bodies and proportions; however, they are still a good starting point to learning human anatomy and is evidence of Da Vinci's influence.



Fig. 7. Lauricella, Michel. *Morpho Anatomy for Artists: Simplified Forms*. Rocky Nook, 2019, (22)

Typically, human arms can also be used for measuring accurate proportions on your torso. If one were to stand with arms on the sides, the elbows would stop just below the bottom of the ribcage, and the fingers stop at the middle of the thigh. These tips can not only make it easier to remember proportions when drawing figures, but it also makes the process of learning anatomy more enjoyable. This is not completely true with every single human being, but it

gives a base understanding of human proportions that can be later modified for other body types.

My project intentionally opposes this approach to constructing a body, as I am trying to draw real and imperfect figures as they are, whilst using the anatomical references from these perfect or idealised guides. I am also focusing on drawing the figures of Black Africans as they are not depicted in early or established art guides, and even when they are, the ideal body type is still the main blueprint used in depicting them. The idealised guides, whilst they do show a great amount of anatomical accuracy of the human body, they only show one type of body. As discussed in chapter 1, this "ideal body" appears very frequently in almost all the established drawing guides. Examples are, Andrew Loomis's *Figure Drawing for all its Worth* (1943) where he often illustrates the "ideal proportions" (Loomis 27) of the female figure whilst using proportional measurements like the Vitruvian Man.

The Mechanics of Man (1490), is a translated manuscript of all Da Vinci's anatomical drawings and notes he took from his various dissections of the male human body. In all his drawings, he illustrates every aspect of the body part in great detail, showing bones, muscles and nerves and how they all connect to each other in different positions and poses of the body part. The vast amount of his notebooks containing his hundreds of studies and dissections drawings could be considered as an early form of a human anatomy guide. Many of the images within *The Mechanics of Man* are referenced by artists today and the established how to draw guides such as *Figure Drawing for all its Worth* (Loomis) also take reference from the proportional studies Da Vinci developed. Da Vinci recorded many notes containing hundreds of his studies and dissection drawings which he compiled into a collection called Treatise on *Painting and the Human Figure* (Keele).

I will be focusing on a few examples in *Leonardo da Vinci: The Mechanics of Man* (2013) by Martin Clayton, to show that Da Vinci's earlier anatomical works were "a blend of received wisdom, animal dissection and speculation" (10). He was able to dissect many animals and found similarities between animal anatomy and human anatomy. – "He was struck by the interpenetration of the flexor tendons of its toes, and twenty years later, when he found the same structure in the hands and feet of man, he recalled his studies of the bear" (12). Below is a comparison of an anatomical drawing of a bear's foot and a human foot (see fig. 8).

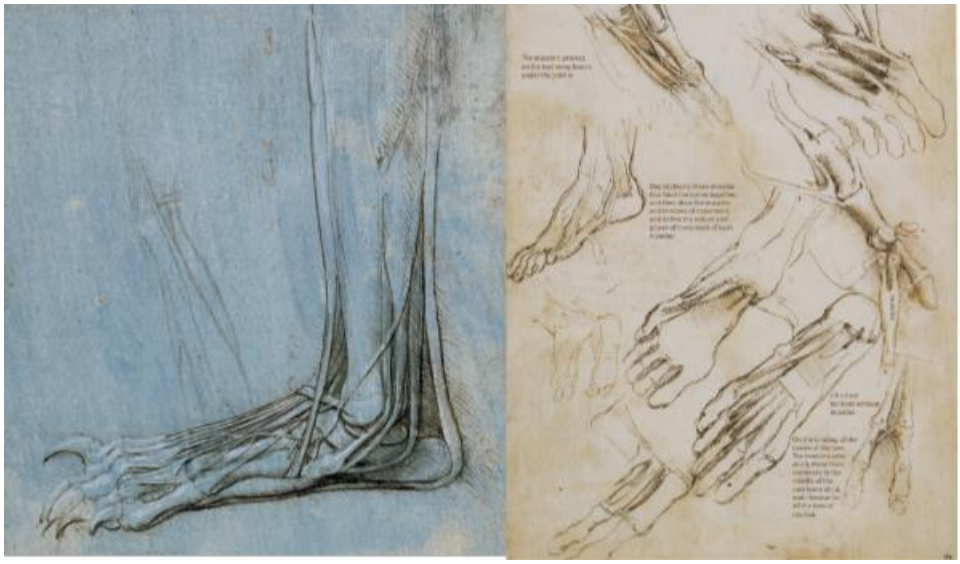


Fig. 8. Da Vinci, Leonardo. from left to right 'Anatomy of a bear's foot', 1488-1490 and a 'Human foot'

Da Vinci was most concerned with proportion as it was a major aspect in his anatomical studies as seen from what is presumably from the leg of studio assistant (Clayton) shown in *Figure 8*.

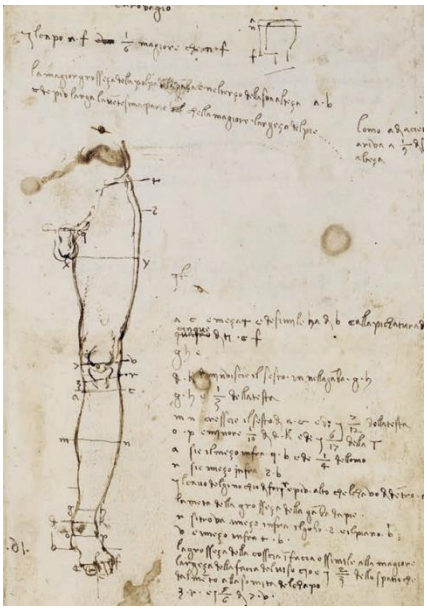


Fig. 9. Leonardo da Vinci, 'Proportions of human leg'. The Mechanics of Man, 1490

Da Vinci intended to publish this material as an illustrated treatise, and had he done so he would have transformed the study of human anatomy in Europe, but when he died in 1519 his notes were kept private until the "modern era" where they were fully published and understood (Clayton, 2013). Da Vinci has greatly contributed to the study of anatomy, even

though women rarely appear in his studies or anatomical drawings. Da Vinci could not get hold of female bodies to dissect, so his illustrations of them – their internal organs structure – was made from speculation of what he thought it looked like. *Figure 9* shows an example of his early anatomical speculation of what a female's sexual organs looked like during penetrative intercourse.



Fig. 10. Leonardo da Vinci, 'Hemisection of a man and woman in the act of coition, 1490-1495

Despite women not being present in anatomical drawings, they still made an appearance in other paintings, although woman of colour, specifically Black women were not given the same treatment as fair-skinned woman of that time. If Black women appeared at all in Renaissance art, they were usually pushed to the sides of the artwork composition or not included at all. Within Europe, not much information was kept of them aside from the fact they were used as an accessory to flaunt the wealth of their masters(Frazier). For Da Vinci idealisation and selection of what looked best in nature were necessary for the painter to eliminate the imperfections of reality. (Tinagli).

The journal article *Representations of Blacks and Blackness in the Renaissance* (1993) by Peter Erickson states that literary representations of Black people in the English Renaissance are well established (Erickson 2). By using Peter Paul Ruben's paintings as a case study – Erickson presents that the arrangement of images of Black people occurred within the

Renaissance as it was happening, and to show that this imagery is capable of considerable complexity, even though it does not involve explicit opposition to racist practices (18).

Erickson sates that using the term "exotic other" would be a better way to describe the European attitudes towards Black people in the Renaissance, as our modern senses of "race" and other related words would be found in the latter of the contrast between the 16th and 19th century usages, stated from Raymond William's linguistic history survey (Erickson). This change does not remove the issue, instead it relocates the questions: How is "exotic" defined? Why an "exotic touch" is desired? What is meant by "other", and what cultural purposes it serves (3)?

Erickson discusses and lists developments and conventions of the Black male and female figure in visual art, mainly using an abundance of Peter Paul Ruben's paintings. Erickson describes these developments for the Black male, which there are five of, as genres with accompanying examples of paintings that depict them. The first is the Black Magus[2] in *Adoration of the Magi* (1609), next is the Black face in a white crowd where worship is directed to a classical figure of the Saturnalian order found in *Drunken Silenus* (1620).

The third of these genres is Black people being treated as an independent artistic subject, as seen in *Studies of the Head of a Negro* (1613-1615). As the name suggests, these kinds of images are created as studies or sketches and do not carry the high artistic status of full-scale finished works. It is important to be aware that while a Black man is the main subject of this painting, his image is not entirely free or self-sufficient because the larger context of Black-white interdependence tends to reassert itself in the form of power relations that enact unquestioned white domination (Erickson). The fourth genre depicts Black men in a servant role and present the submissive posture of gift-giver, who are often demoted from adult to boy, unmistakable and highly confined, as seen in *Bathsheba at the Fountain* (1635).

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[2] The Roman theologian Tertullian was the first to suggest that the Magi were kings basing his idea on an interpretation of Psalms 72:10-11 "...All kings will bow down to him and all nations will serve him (IBLG)". *The Adoration of the Magi* (Vinci) - the three Kings brining gifts to baby Jesus - is originally an unfinished painting by Leonardo Da Vinci, which there have been numerous adaptations of. Early depictions of the three wise men changed from the 14th century. In the Old Testament, the Three Kings were made to represent the three continents of Europe, Asia and Africa, sometimes depicted as the three stages of life. The Magi, painted with dark skin is depicted to be the youngest, as he represents the Europeans notions of Africans as the youngest civilisation to search for Christianity. The inclusion of the Black Magus in variations of the Adoration of the Magi is not a response to slavery as it predates the transatlantic slave trade of Africans. (Aiello; IBLG)

Finally, the fifth genre involves Black people who are not exactly in a servant role but still given the obedient posture of gift-giver, as seen in *A* Moor *Presenting a Parrot to a Lady* (1660-1670) by Nicolaes Berchem. See all listed paintings in (see Appendix A).

Erickson then goes on to discuss the representations of Black women's figures, specifically looking at the Black female attendant, to consider the possible gender differences in the portrayal of Black people.

The convention of the Black female attendant permits a greater degree of interaction between a Black and a white woman than can generally be found in representations of the social relations of Black men(Erickson). Even in a relatively rigid instances such as Cornelis van Haarlem's *Bathsheba in her Bath* (1635) , the closeness of the naked bodies of the Black and white women is emphasized by their overlapping arms and legs (Erickson). A nineteenth century example of Édouard Manet's *Olympia* (1865), holds comparison as the physical separation is further indicated by the stark contrast between the naked white woman and fully clothed Black servant woman, which communicates emotional distance (Erickson). The self-contained white woman is oblivious of the Black maid, who is thereby reduced to an accessory (Erickson; Frazier)

An African-American artist Loarraine O'Grady, comments on the terms given by Manet's visual conventions in her article *Olympia's Maid: Reclaiming Black Female Subjectivity* (1992). bell hooks provided differential positioning of Black and white female bodies in contemporary high fashion. She offers a suggestive vantage point from which to consider the role of the Black female attendant in Renaissance configurations (Erickson). hooks analyses the ways Black femaleness in fashion magazines like Vogue, Elle, and Mirabella, are often positioned in a freakish, distorted manner. Black women are made to wear unnatural wigs and shown in distorted positions, this portrayal of the Black woman makes the adjacent White female body to be a signifier of 'natural' beauty at all times (Erickson).

Diana and Callisto (1639) and *Venus with a Mirror* (1612-1615) by Peter Paul Rubens are two paintings Erickson discusses as a focus point for examining the interpretations of the Black women servants. In *Diana and Callisto*, the sisterhood bonds between the named figures on either side, have been broken by Actaeon's actions that resulted in Callisto's pregnancy. Diana is being held from her legs by a Black woman. The intertwined bodies of the white and Black women function as a unit. Yet the image their female bodies fused into a

single unit conveys awkwardness, as the positions of the two figures look unbalanced (Erickson). The far-left side is where the Black woman resides, she is looking the other way, possibly further isolating her involvement in the relationships of the group of women.

To offer a different interpretation, Erickson introduces *Venus with a Mirror* (1612-1615). Already there is a difference in the composition of the white and Black woman's bodies. The Black woman is only depicted with her face, which is placed on the furthest right side and looks cropped and compressed. While their bodies are not intertwined like the figures from the previous comparison, there is a network of their gaze that is linked. Starting from the right the Black woman looks towards the white woman, and then her gaze looks to the mirror which then directly engages with the viewer's gaze. Firmly reinforcing the focus. This development confirms the un-importance of the Black woman, who, having set the sequence in motion, can be left behind and forgotten (Erickson).

Returning to *Diana and Callisto,* the impending disconnect between Diana and Callisto is unified, as a possible indicator for this is shown by Diana reaching towards Callisto. In contrast, the unbalanced whole of Diana and the Black maid is placed under pressure and threatens to divide them (Erickson).

It is as though the potential for conflict between Diana and Callisto has been removed by relocating the source of tension in the literally subordinate figure of the Black maid. The sense of tension is manifested not only in the contorted features of the maid's face and straining body, but in the compositional effect of the dark figures of the dog, deer, tree and maid that surround and threaten to engulf the whiteness of Diana's exposed body (Erickson). In addition, Diana is reaching in the opposite direction the maid is looking, which suggests further intention to remove the interaction between them and lead the Black woman behind and forgotten.

Along with artworks, works of literature carry an extensive database that presents the involvement of Black people in the Renaissance. A review by Francisco Bethencourt based on the book *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe* (2007) by Thomas F. Earle and Kate J. P. Lowe, has well-illustrated set of chapters focusing on author contributions and their works on the literary contributions of Black people and their achievements in the Southern Europe Renaissance. While it gives less information from Northern Europe, it raises new issues and provides substantial information and analysis (Bethencourt).

The book chapters help to deconstruct historical stereotypes that suggest Black Africans are only associated with the slave trade of the Americas, whilst the Renaissance was purely a European phenomenon centred on a largely homogenous ethnicity (Earle and Lowe). Lowe gives examples of how the main stereotypes concerning Black people were established in this period: the African was widely identified as a nude figure who modified their body through scaring, piercings, and tattoos; represented with an aura of naivety, considered lazy, sexually promiscuous, physically strong (Earle and Lowe). While there were noble or ennobled Black men in European courts, the systemic role of a Black person was to act as a counter-image in the construction of European 'whiteness' and civilization (Earle and Lowe).

In contrast to Ruben's *Bathsheba at the Fountain* (1635), the illustration *Mr and Mrs Cosway* (1784) by Thomas Rowlandson, depicts a Black man servant who did not fully encompass the submissive posture of gift-giver (Erickson 8). Thomas Rowlandson was the painter that was commissioned to draw *Mr and Mrs* Cosway, but it was Richard Cosway who received the backlash from this controversy, as it was he who requested his Black servant to be painted in a way that challenged the social conventions at the time.



Fig. 11. Cosway, Richard. "Mr and Mrs Cosway", 1784

In Tony Frazier's article *The Black Image in the English Gaze: Depictions of Blackness in English Art* (2019), he discusses the ways in which Black servants were kept at the edge of the painting, wearing 'exotic' clothing for their European masters, and dehumanised to the point of being considered an accessory (Frazier). Cosway has his servant dress in "crimson silk, elaborate lace and gold buttons and sometimes also in crimson Genoa velvet, which imitated the footmen at the Vatican" (Frazier). There is also a substantial amount of background and information about the servant, one of which included his name – Quobna Ottobah Cugoano. I found this painting admirable in a sense because the way Cugoano is depicted in the painting, further involves him in this society and practically removed him from the 'exotic other'. While he is still positioned in the servitude role, his adulthood remains intact and actively interacts with the woman (serving the grapes), while gently cupping his palm on the grapes above her, as though he is invited to take them. This humanises him more whereas systemically he was seen as inferior.

The backlash Cosway received was in the form of a satire painting that demonised his Black servant. Howitt, an artist that despised Cosway painted (Frazier 10) (see fig. 12). The main subject in the painting is of Cosway's servant who is painted with "a huge head, and big lips, holding tools of a painter" (Frazier 10). It was painted in a very exaggerated manner as a way of ridiculing Cosway. This could be considered one of the earliest examples of a racist depiction made to make Black people look inhuman and animal-like. Acknowledging Earle and Lowes conclusions of dignified Black men being used systemically to bring more favour to European 'whiteness' and civilization, I suggest that Cosway's painting may have not even presented that ideology as it still received retaliation.



Fig. 12. Howitt, William Samuel. 'Richard Cosway's Servant' Date of creation is unknown

Dangerous Bodies: Women's Nakedness and Theology by Wioleta Polinska (2000) states that the ownership of women comes from depictions of non-Western themes involving white female slaves with forbidden women of colour. She states that women's sexuality when placed in the context of a harem implies the excessive sensuality of multiple female partners firmly under male control. The focus of such themes are fair-skinned women.

When women of colour are present in these depictions, their bodies are placed in a subservient role to glorify the Western ideal of the fair-skinned woman (Polinska). All people, including Europeans have been sexualised throughout the history of art. However, the extent to which Black bodies were sexualised, dehumanised, fetishised, and othered, extends beyond the realms of art depiction. It serves as proof of opinions on how Black Africans were treated and viewed within the real-world social norms. Knowing the opinions of the masses towards Black Africans when these historical paintings were created, proves that Black African lives and their experiences were not treated with the same consideration their bodies were painted with. While the artwork depicting their figures were painted with great craftsmanship, it was not out of respect, or in admiration of their beings.

Even with the Western notion of beauty, Black women were still portrayed in erotically dehumanising ways. Polinska describes a Western artist, Albert Eckhout, who attempted his "ethnographic" rendering of a *Negro Woman and Child* (1641) depicting a half-nude woman with her breasts exposed and a short skirt. Where he receives praise from Paul Gaugin as he confidently states that the painting is an "an erotic invitation" that he claims is confirmed by the presence of the "half-blood child, serving as a reminder of the past sexual activities of his mother".

He also describes the corn cob that the child is holding to be literal icon of "absolute phallic gesture" (Polinska). This confirms that "Dark women's bodies have been employed for their erotic allure" (Polinska 4). No matter the context. This has resulted in many kinds of prejudice and fetishism against dark-skinned women's bodies through the media of artworks and the general perception of their bodies. Which has caused both physical and psychological harm to the individual or group of dark-skinned women.

2.2: The Fetishisation of Black Bodies and the Western-European Male Gaze

Throughout history, Black bodies have been at the forefront of prejudice, stereotypes and fetishisation in representation, both in real life and in media. Power does not only concern economic exploitation or physical coercion, but it can also lead to changing the way someone or something is represented. This symbolic power is exercised through representational practices (Hall 38). This kind of power is exercised on many occasions in human representation whether it is representing a real person, or a people, or culture through character design art. An example of this power is found in Saartje Baartman and how she became the main attraction for a thriving business for the London showmen who exhibited her (Young). Saartje Baartman was a woman of the Khoisan tribe in South Africa, she was taken from Cape Town to England in 1810 to become a spectacle for the European people (Phillip Vallentine) (see fig. 13). Baartman suffered through five long years, she was treated less than human, and more like a bear in chains. She was made to parade naked as they showed off her body and her body parts to the public as a 'spectacle' and every detail of her being was scrutinized down to her anatomy, while she was alive and after her death (Hall 44).

Baartman looked different from the typical European woman at the time, she was shorter, 147 centimetres, and she had a large rear and chest. These features of her body are what Westerners labelled as "Hottentot anatomy (Hall 44) ". Baartman didn't have the body type that was the standard for the European and Western women, so she was constructed as the 'other'. This was because she did not share the same body type, and of course the racist ideologies of the time rendered her non-human in the eyes of the coloniser. This gave them power to represent Saartje Baartman in a certain way (Hall et al.).

They reduced her body to the definition of basic form of nature, to say that her body was made that way for the more primitive of reasons, they did this as a justification for the way she looked, to them her having larger breasts and a larger bum was physical evidence to her 'otherness' and was therefore an irreversible difference between the 'races' (Hall et al.). This justification allowed them to have even more power over Africans, and to keep the sense of superiority over them.

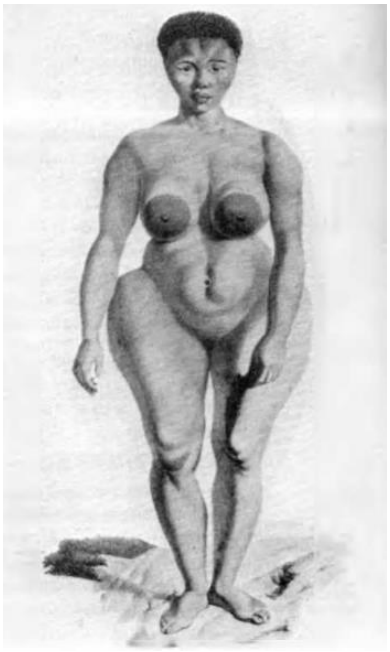


Fig. 13. Hall, Stuart. *The Spectacle of the 'Other'*. Sage Publications Ltd, 2003.

After Saartje Baartman died, she remained a spectacle as her body parts, especially her genitalia were preserved in an essentialising and reductionist way to summarise her entire being as an individual. Her humanity was taken away from her and she was seen as an object, something that was made for the gaze of another, she was fetishised (Hall et al.). In Stuart Hall's *The Spectacle of the Other* (2003) he gives different meanings of fetishism in different contexts. It involves a substitution of an 'object' for some dangerous and powerful but forbidden force, he gives an example of displacing a spirit of a god into an object and having that object become charged with that spiritual power. In psychoanalysis, he states, that fetishism is described as when the sexual drive becomes displaced to some other part of the body and the substitute becomes eroticised. Fetishism in representation, it borrows from these meanings, something that cannot be represented because it is forbidden, or taboo is transferred to another part of the body or another object which substitutes for it (Hall et al.).

Saartje Baartman, her individuality, her humanity, became an 'object'. She was not a person anymore, as her entire being was turned into an object of a sexual and taboo manner – her genitalia – her whole self was substituted into an 'object'. An object that was both sought out for sexual pleasure and at the same time pushed away and denied. This pushes the idea of how African bodies are either disguised and pushed away or their purpose is for the gaze or use for someone else. This still happens to dark skinned people in a digital and media sense, people who have power in the digital media space can and do represent dark-skinned people

however they see fit, and in most cases, the representation of the said people has had detrimental effects of the representation of dark-skinned people and dark-skinned Africans. Stereotypes and fetishism are harmful ways non-dark skinned or dark-skinned African characters in character design are represented.

Hall gives context to how Black bodies were represented through media and history. It will help me explain why Black bodies are still seen as a spectacle for fetishisation and how that still translates into digital art today. In one of his sections, *Heroes and Villains* – the title taken from the cover of The Sunday Times magazine – Hall speaks about the 'preferred meaning' given to Black athletes that won Olympic races which changed the meaning of their achievements in respect to 'race' and 'otherness' (Hall et al.). Ben Johnson –an amazing athlete and record breaker, who was also publicly disgraced because of drug taking – is a key element, the magazine's 'preferred meaning' is paradoxical, that even when in the hero's moment of triumph there is also villainy and moral defeat. However, it can also be implied that this photo has something to say about race, therefore changing the meaning related to race and otherness. Instead of the hero winning, despite having villainy in moral defeat, it changes to even when Black people are given praise for their achievements, they still fail in keeping them (Hall, 2003, p7).

People significantly different from the majority are frequently exposed to this binary of representation – good/bad, civilized/primitive, ugly/attractive, strange/exotic – and are often required to be both at the same time. Difference is interpreted as a constant and recurring preoccupation in the representation of people who are racially and ethnically different from the majority of the population (Hall et al.). Linford Christie grew up in Jamaica until he was seven but later moved to the UK and had been living there for 28 years. He stated that he couldn't be anything other than British (Hall et al. 9). In 1995, the cricket magazine, Wisden, had to pay libel damages to Black athletes for saying that they couldn't be expected to display the same loyalty and commitment to winning for England because they are Black. Everything is being read from the broader question of cultural belongingness and difference.

Hall gives an example of how the Olympic medallist; Linford Christie was sexualised and objectified when due to his negative publicity was reduced to his sexual organs when the tabloid focused on a photograph of his body in his tight-fitting spandex. This became widely recognised as a 'joke' to the point where his genitalia was indirectly called a 'lunchbox'. Christie was being stereotyped, he stated he felt humiliated. That tabloid was written a day

after he received his Olympic medal. “I don’t want to go through life being known for what I’ve got in my shorts. I’m a serious person ...” (Hall et al. 9). Images of bodies in action, at the peak of their physical perfection, will unfortunately carry ‘messages’ about gender and sexuality in the framing of difference. Black women are physically able to build more muscle and can therefore have more physically built looking bodies. This has caused many women in the sporting space to be compared to men or animals such as gorillas. Black women who have earned high ranking medals and world-wide recognition are always villainised and stereotyped to humiliate them and make their difference of being the other known to the majority. Jackie, Joyner-Kersee, who was a Olympic Gold medallist and broke records at Seoul, was preparing to throw a javelin, and the caption next to the photograph was quoting an observer, Al Joyner ‘Somebody says my sister looked like a gorilla’ (Hall et al. 11).

These examples gain in meaning when they are read in context, against or in connection with one another, the images on their own do not signify meaning on their own, there needs to be context. Inter-textuality is present in these examples because the accumulation of meanings across many text, or have its meaning altered, are being ‘read’ in the context of other images (Hall et al.). The question still stands, how does difference and the other still translate into digital art of today? While digital art may not always be images, it also has video forms, interactive and immersive mediums like video games. Digital art rarely showcases real people like photographs do, but they do take inspiration from real people, cultures and ethnicities, and when those inspirations are from Black Africans and their cultures, it is important to represent them accurately as if they could be a real person. As they can be made to be stereotyped or fetishised. While some Black characters in digital art have leaned away from stereotypes and have become their own characters that still represent the inspired ethnicities of people well, many Black African characters are still created from referencing stereotypes and fetishisations such as being exotic, violent, or loud. Such is the case with video games that use the white saviour complex. Which is when the position of power is put on white people to help a marginalised racial minority whom are considered incapable of helping themselves (Willuweit 1). The minority are often represented with stereotypical depictions and fetishised within the way they are visually designed and through the roles they play in the game.

Far Cry 3 (Plourde and Méthé) is a first person shooter game that takes place in the fictional Rook Islands, located in the archipelago which can be freely explored by players. The main character is a North American white man – Jason – who is enlisted to helping the native people expel the pirates. He meets a tribal woman named Citra who is viewed by her people as a warrior goddess (*Not Your Exotic Fantasy - Tropes vs. Women in Video Games*) (see fig. 14). Throughout the game Jason is given hallucinogens by Citra to where if he completes the trials in Citra's favour a cutscene plays with Jason having sexual intercourse with her (see fig. 15). Watching the cutscenes as an African woman, made me very uncomfortable because the Point of View is from a man, and the game assumes that the person playing is a man and who treats sexual intercourse as a reward.



Fig. 14. Ubisoft, Citra In-Game Screenshot, 2012



Fig. 15. Ubisoft, Citra 'Reward' Cutscene, 2012

Citra as a character is made to be a sex object, by having a lot of her skin show and her tribal tattoos are prominent especially on her chest area, the location of her tattoos do not have significant meaning but to accentuate her as a sex object. Her place of origin is from an island which is stated to be 'exotic' which by popular definition means strikingly unusual or strange in effect or appearance. This word is associate with difference, appearance and sexual connotations which is often used as a romantic adjective to describe romantic interests by virtue of their body and racial backgrounds (Waring).

Citra is seen as a person with power to her people, but Jason as a white North American man is viewed as a person with the most power – a white saviour – as he was called to help Citra's tribe. This possession of power shows that Citra as a character remains an object through her sexual meaning and her brown skin, which gives more power to Jason as he is the main character and is viewed and made to be the white savour in the game. Citra is a powerful leader over her tribe, but she's only shown to keep that power and expresses it through sexual acts, the 'message' shows her difference, and her otherness compared to the main character (Hall et al.). This relates to the paintings I discussed previously where dark-skinned people are used in paintings as objects to further enhance the status of their white masters. (Frazier) The same thing is happening in this game which was predominantly made for a white male audience.

Video games offer a sense of fantasy and escape, where there are no real-life consequences that happens to the player within the game. I would argue that the consequences in the game may not be real. Instead, the effects are real to the people and minorities represented who are treated as less than, stereotyped, fetishised and this goes on to affect the real people after the game has ended.

Character design starts from sketching the character on a canvas digitally or traditionally, it then undergoes many changes before it is ready to be finalised for the production whether that be 2 Dimensional or 3 Dimensional. Well researched and poorly researched examples of character designs are few and far between and depending on who creates the character it can be understood in different ways. I argue that there is a way of determining what makes a character good in the sense it is not made from any stereotypes, fetishisations, or misrepresentations. Hall gives pertinent insight on what to avoid when creating a character and I believe if an artist can avoid doing the following practices – typing and stereotyping – then they are already making good choices. Typing is how we make sense of the world, 'types' is any vivid, memorable, easily grasped and widely recognised description and any possibility of them being changed is kept to a minimum (Hall et al.). Stereotyping is a representational practice that essentially means to reduce people to a few simple and essential characteristics, which are presented as fixed by Nature (Hall et al. 257).

'Fixed' or 'reduced' by nature in my understanding, is what colonialists used to controlled people's perceptions of dark-skinned people. The perceptions became so pervasive and constant in time that they were believed to be the natural state of being of the individuals being perceived in the first place. Breaking away from these stereotypes and educating oneself on what are considered stereotypes and how to best avoid them when making characters is an application of Hall's work that allows one to create characters with more intentional design, and more considerate representation. It is important to do research of the culture or cultures that may be represented in a character design, to avoid any un-comfortability for the group that could witness what the artist is representing and to make sure there are no elements from that culture being misused within the design.

2.3: Discussing Stereotypes in Digital Character Design Art: Black and Whitewashing, Black Erasure, and Colourism

Scholars have tried to define racism in many ways. The academic article *Racism, disadvantage, and multiculturalism: Towards effective anti-racist praxis* (2010) by Gabrielle Berman and Yin Paradies gives different perspectives on how racism is defined. Racism is commonly known as a combination of prejudice and power (Berman and Paradies). Power gives a person or state control and authority. It is not bound to just physical, financial, or economic aspects of life. Power can also manifest in the form of representing a subject in a subjective manner that is accepted as fact rather than opinion (Hall et al.).

According to Berman and Paradies, racism can be expressed through stereotypes, prejudice, or discrimination. It is a product of multiple prejudices that include sexism, ageism, and classism, all of which fall under the overarching structure of Capitalism (2010). Racism does not always need to have a systemic or ideological starting point and it can be perpetrated by individuals from ethno-racial groups with limited social power (Berman and Paradies).

Black erasure is described to be the tendency to ignore, remove, and falsify Black bodies and Black voices in academia, news, media, and other outlets (Nelson). An example of Black Erasure found in video games is a character named Orisa from the video game *Overwatch 2* by Blizzard ("Overwatch 2 - Heroes - Orisa," n.d.). Orisa is a robot who was built by a child genius in Numbani, an imaginary Nigerian utopian city in the *Overwatch* universe. It is important to note that the majority the heroes in *Overwatch 2* are humans (or humanoid robots/cyborgs/animals) that are indistinguishable from a human exterior. I hypothesise there is Black erasure present with Orisa's character: she has an exterior more closely related to a conventional robot, and her voice is only physical trait that implies she is female. This difference from the other robot characters, makes her the other. The developers could have easily made her into a Black human woman, or depicted her as more human, giving potential to present Nigerian culture in her character.

Whitewashing is defined as the action of replacing or removing visible minorities in a film or book adaptation by making their skin appear lighter or removing them altogether (Nelson). It has a deep-rooted history of stereotyping dark-skinned people and demonising them, and it has spread to modern digital art platforms. Alyssa Smith's academic thesis *Whitewashing v. Blackwashing: Structural Racism and Anti-Racist Praxis in Hollywood Cinema* (2021), discusses whitewashing in the context of Hollywood and movie and filmmaking, but it is still

relevant in other forms of media, specifically through digital art media. The oldest analysed form of whitewashing occurred during the 16th century through theatre performances that stereotype Black people which was used as a justification for slavery. Within these plays demons and the demon Lucifer would be portrayed with Blackened skin, with consistently unappealing visuals that had the actor look physically deformed and behave as though they were mentally impaired. Which all served to perpetuate the ideology that Black people were too stupid to function without someone governing over them (A. M. Smith).

> "While whitewashing ultimately strips films of Blackness and promotes Eurocentrism, Blackwashing, or altering a character from White to Black, only serves to diversify the cast of the films and provide representation for Black people on-screen. By updating casts to consist of more People of Colour, Blackwashing regularly fits the setting of each film, and without changing the plot to be about race, helps provide Black people with characters they can empathize with. This lacks the same racist connotation and history that whitewashing has (49)". Smith states that Blackwashing is a positive step in the right direction, it may fall into being a tool to instil negative Black stereotypes (A. M. Smith).

African Americans, Black Africans, and Black Caribbeans do not form a single 'Black community'. African Americans form a single ethnocultural, including linguistic, community which defines itself based on race (Bondarenko). This perception is the driving force behind Blackwashing, as many figures of Blackwashed digital art have the character's skin colour changed to be darker and nothing else. Which fails to represent the ethnicity or cultural significance of a character. Each group has their historical struggle with what they all consider key events, both groups relations have shown indifference or are ignorant of the other's history struggles (Bondarenko). Whether it be in person or online, there is deep divide between the global Black diaspora.

Blackwashing has been upwardly evolving ever since its creation for Hollywood films, Blackwashing within the context of digital character design art still carries similar sentiment of wanting more dark-skinned representation in characters. Whether is it from them being whitewashed by a company or studio or is just a character who an artist may want to depict with having a darker skin tone. Both reasons are valid. However, the way the artist goes about changing the character can fall into racist stereotypes or generalise what it means to be Black.

Some Blackwashing depictions do nothing but change the skin tone of a character and deem it as Black, but Black is not defined by skin colour alone, and declaring so may be seen as being colourist. This can set a bad precedent on how an artist should re-design characters to make sure the people being represented are seen and not just assumed. I give an example of this further in this section.

These concepts do not only exist within the realms of racially Black or white characters. Whitewashing can also apply to cultures. Even if the culture (the food, architecture, music, clothing, religion) is showcased, the characters belonging to predominantly dark-skinned people culture will be made fair-skinned. Which causes damage of the perceptions of the origins of a culture, actively denying the theology through the culture's identity (A. M. Smith 40). I would argue that Blackwashing as a concept, is Americanised, because whitewashing was popularised in the USA. Thus, trying to Blackwash characters for the sake of representing 'Black' ethnicity may cause harm as the only 'Black' being represented is American. This narrow focus often overlooks the diversity within the Black diaspora.

Blackwashing, I would hypothesise, exists in a binary. On one hand it can be used to bring diversity and representation to Black audiences, who could positively benefit from viewing those characters. And on the other hand, it can be used to solidify and repeat stereotypes of Black people further misrepresenting them, this can be done with and without the artist's knowledge, as they may not be educated on or know the number of stereotypes that exist within seemly innocent media, they may take inspiration from. The creative process of character art design should not need Blackwashing. As the designer would be creating a character with their own identity, culture, and personality, without using established conventions of current world views.

I aim to show this within my artistic process. Using my own ideas, the culture I am obtaining inspiration from, and using artistic methods to express that by referencing the art books I am reviewing. When it comes to showcasing African features, instead of looking at characters that already exist, whilst I still may have some influences from characters already made, I try to look at examples of real people within Botswana. By doing this, I have avoided possibly falling into stereotypes, as I am seeking out my own sources and references for people, rather than using what has already been distributed and may carry negative connotations. Similarly with clothes and hair styles, I aim to focus on how the personality or trait of that character can be visually represented whilst also considering how I wish to represent their culture visually.

At times it may not be obvious unless blatantly stated, as many people belonging to diverse cultures may wear normal clothing, but traces of their culture can also be expressed in their clothing styles and self-expression too, thus an artist can still showcase a character's culture within a character's design.

There is much that goes into thoughtful character design art, an artist needs to express a culture, an experience, a personality, an impression all within one person. In *Force Character design from Life Drawing* (Mattesi), one needs to understand the importance of appeal in character design in order to tell a story. Mattesi explains the bridge between figure drawing and character design, his book is used as an aid to make the artist understand if the visual representation of the character presents well and if the story is being told in a way the artist wants it to be told.

Along with *How to Draw Black People* (Shabazz) to further ones understanding of what makes a good character design, are good steps into distancing oneself from recycling harmful rhetoric. Taking such steps could slowly erase the stereotypes Blackwashing recycles as one would be getting a more diverse and nuanced view of Blackness from other countries, cultures, traditions, and people used within the character design process.

Psychology is also a key factor in character design, as Marika Nieminen in her BA thesis *Psychology in Character Design: Creation of a Character Design Tool* (2017) states that the mental world and story of the character is equally as important as the visual appeal. Visuals can be forgotten, but the relatability between the audience and the character leaves a stronger impression, which helps link the character to the audience, evoking emotion and investment in the story (Nieminen). One of the basics of character design she discusses is the demography and application. Before the design process begins, the designer needs to establish whom the character is for as it gives the designer a direction and context in how to make the character.

Individually, an artist's decisions and thought process would not have to necessarily equate to Blackwashing. This could be for a multitude of reasons. For example, if a character has a cultural heritage but it is not visually shown within the initial design, the artist may re-create the character showcasing more of the culture in the visual of the design.

The artist could change the character's facial features entirely, researching and going through the process of designing and redesigning to better portray the newer variant. Pertaining to personal reasons, I insist that the term 'Blackwashing' does not apply unless it is specifically stated by the artist themselves. An artist is free to redesign and reimagine characters as they like, but it is important for the artist to at least know and acknowledge how they depict a character, as public works will be scrutinised.

Whitewashing and Blackwashing have close ties with United States history. As commonly seen traits of Blackwashing exhibit stereotypical Americanised Blackness (hairstyles, trends, lifestyles) when used to Blackwash characters. Without views into diverse representations of Black individuals, these stereotypes are viewed as reality. Each stereotype becomes "authentic" Blackness, when truly, Blackness is as diverse as Whiteness is (A. M. Smith 21). There is no Black monolith, but these stereotypes create a perception of what is true, making these portrayals seem authentic. This type of naturalization reproduces itself, once an authentic Blackness is produced, such depictions soak into people's minds. Which are internalized and result in individuals believing this is the proper way to represent Black people. Thus, studios reproduce the image as "true Blackness" and the cycle continues.

The journal article *Imagining Difference: The Politics of Representation in Multicultural Art Education* (2000) by Dipti Desai, expands more on these notions of "accuracy" and "authenticity" and how they have shaped multicultural art education when representing marginalised groups. By using feminist practices, particularly those articulated by women of colour and neo-Gramscian cultural analysis. Desai states that although all representations are partial truths, they are always positional truths which are linked to history, power, and dominance within a global context mediated by economic, political, ideological and cultural process (Desai). When the 'other' is being represented, it is often reduced to some partial characteristics – stereotyping. The power of representation, according to filmmaker Pratibhha Parma, is that the deeply ideological nature of imagery determines not only how other people think about the culture they view, but also how the people in that culture see themselves (Desai). As reiterated by Hall, a group is not only positioned as the "other", they are made to internalise and accept that knowledge of representation (Desai). Desai seeks to answer the question of what violence does multicultural art education enact, and they have stated that colonial violations have manifested themselves so strongly in the psyche which has constructed certain subject positions.

Hall answers this question by explaining that the power within a certain 'regime of representation' exercises symbolic power through representational practices, he states that stereotypes are a key element in this exercise of symbolic violence (Hall et al.).

These acts of violence exist within Black African character design and representation. Because there are so few made and proliferated sources of knowledge and materials designed to represent Black people. Which impacts artists to naturalise stereotypes as "authentic" and "accurate" ways of drawing Black characters with or without surface-level cultural signifiers. Throughout this paper, I have used the word 'stereotyping' as a negative connotation. However, stereotypes can be used to create redeeming Black African characters of cultural backgrounds if the intention of using them is not used in a prejudice way. For example, if an artist tried to create an 'authentic' cultural character from an African country, they could unknowingly create a stereotype of the most known cultural elements from that country.

Even if a finished character holds some stereotypes by the end of its design process, I persist that stereotypes should not be a conscious guide to creating the said character. As the designer should do their due diligence in reflecting the culture as it is, to the character, not as how the stereotypes assume of the culture.

With this being considered, Black people's bodies not appearing in established drawing guides that are considered the successors of the 'father' of anatomy, Leonardo Da Vinci, further others them within the pedagogical norms of drawing guidebooks. This is another act of symbolic violence, as it keeps the power of stereotypes in place as a continuous practice of depicting Black characters, thus perpetuating the "authenticity" of Blackness more.

I do not assume that any artwork that appears to be racially motivated (Blackwashed) is necessarily making a commentary on the state of race in artistic depiction. The art may also just be self-expression. Some art, even without realising it still portrays political bias. I am not assuming that a company or artist is intentionally making harmful or narrowminded depictions of Blackness, I am only observing criteria in the art that aligns with such.

A controversial method of 'washing is the practice of 'fixing' art, which mostly takes place online on social media platforms. Fixing art can be assumed to be in good or bad faith depending on the context. 'Fixing' art is when a person takes a piece of artwork or a form of visual media and attempts to change the way it looks visually to fit their personal agenda, to correct it. It can range from changing the body type, the skin colour, the way they dress, the

nationality of the character, the gender, anything that the 'fixer' deems as incorrect is changed. While there are examples of good faith fixings where either the fixer is trying to give helpful critique or trying to reverse harmful representation. It is usually done in a hostile or careless manner as the character that would be 'fixed' would be a character made to positively represent a minority that is usually misrepresented or stereotyped in society, e.g. black people, a religious group, disabled people, women, the list goes on. However, fixed art can also be made with the intension of wanting to see the representation of a group of people that may not exist in the media's universe or is an incorrect depiction of a character that was inspired from real life depictions of history or cultures. The ways of going about the said fixing may still be controversial.

One popular example of fixing includes Candace, a character from a video game called *Genshin Impact* (2020) created by Hoyoverse – a Chinese Game company. ("Home | HoYoverse," n.d.) The video game does have its merits, however with any form of media there are characteristics that can be improved upon. The game does include culture in other aspects such as music, food, character's names and symbolic reference, though these additions are not always extremely noticeable and can be overlooked. Many of the cultural elements in the game are directly inspired by a people that exists or existed in real life and their experiences. "Culturally focused designs rely on the experiences of the people your characters are designed after" (Shabazz 2), and when such designs directly exclude or whitewash the people that live those experiences, such actions may be seen as inconsiderate.

If a Triple A game company can go the extra mile in including cultural and ethnic game elements e.g. music, food dishes, names, symbolisms, deities, which are all encompassed within the game's fantastical environment and story; there is no reason why they cannot add cultural representation through its playable characters.

Playable characters are significant because they are the ones that sell the game. All other characters who do have darker skin tones are either Non-Playable Characters (NPCs), or enemies the players fight in the game.

To elaborate this, *Genshin Impact* has a region called Sumeru that is modelled and inspired after Ancient Egypt (Sumeru Desert) and India (Sumeru Forest), other inspiration includes The Middle East. Sumeru Forest is made from lush green forests, its architecture is inspired from Indian and Middle Eastern architecture, where much of the academic population lives,

most of whom are fair in skin colour. Sumeru Desert is a harsh and unforgiving landscape, it is home to ancient Sumeru's technology that is heavily based on Ancient Egyptian design and mythological figures (see Appendix B). However, the technology is unknown to the modern people of Sumeru Desert and most of the ancient Pyramids and histories have been buried under the sand and reduced to rubble. Many of the dark-skinned NPCs met in the desert will attack the player on sight. They live hard lives either as mercenaries or bandits, and there is no stable infrastructure.

As a Black person who is an active player of the game that enjoys the content, this aspect of Sumeru feels prejudiced and racist towards darker skinned people and their history. As a fantasy game, *Genshin Impact* could still tell compelling and immersive stories that do not contain harmful ideologies, yet it does.

This distinction adds another level of erasure as the darker skinned characters do not share the same limelight as their playable counterparts. They are physically being pushed back from being seen as important and are antagonistic to the playable characters. Cadance is a character from Sumeru Desert, who has the role of protector of the people within the main village area in the desert. She is depicted as fairer skinned than the majority of people who live in the desert.

Candace's direct visual appearance utilises Egyptian symbols like the Eye of Horus, meaning well-being, healing and protection ("Eye of Horus"), and an Ankh meaning life ("Ankh"). The gameplay reveals that she does embody these symbols' meanings, which gives intent in her design (see fig. 16).

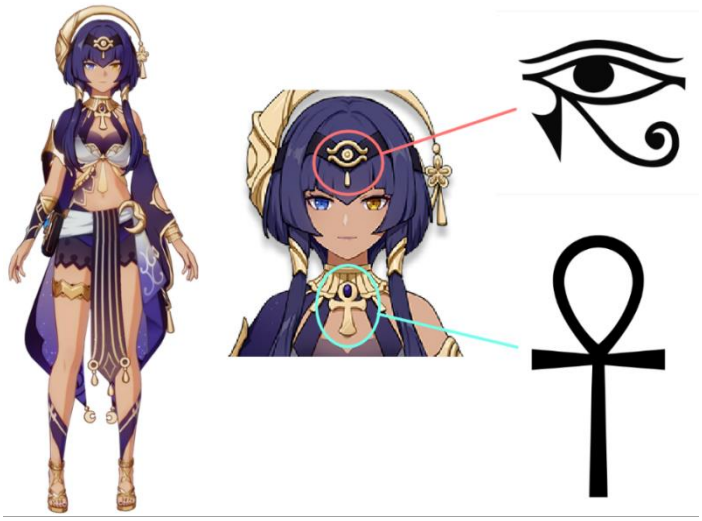


Fig. 16. Left to Right Genshin Impact, Candace Screenshots 2022, Eye of Horus 2007, Ankh 2003

Candance while mainly showing Ancient Egypt symbolism in her visual design, also has Middle Eastern designs within her character. However, despite the many cultures associated with her character, it is still a depiction of whitewashing and cultural erasure because Candace is Latinised from Kandake which is a Meroitic word which means a citizen of the ancient city of Meroe, located in present-day Sudan. This term was reserved for the sister of the King of Kush who is tasked to birth the next heir to the throne ("Kandake").

This information is not mentioned in the game, so it not only whitewashes, but it also makes the knowledge unknown to the typical player base. Even though the cultural inspirations of Candace have darker skin and is not shown in-game. People online have attempted to modify this design to allow for more accurate representation of her dark-skinned inspirations, by changing her skin colour to be more of a dark tone. Which in the context of Sumeru Desert, makes sense to do as the people in that region are darker skinned and because it is a region inspired from Ancient Egypt which was predominantly populated by dark-skinned Africans.

While this was a good attempt at bringing representation, I insist that changing the skin colour of a character does not do enough to bring representation into their design in any significant way to bring out more of the hidden cultures or ethnicities.

Cadence being fair skinned is fine, as there are people who live in desert climates and African regions that have lighter skin tones. As such, artists who redesign characters to depict a different ethnicity should be mindful of the intent of why they are doing so.

Black is not monolithic. And African is not just skin colour. 'Fixing' artworks can potentially further ingrain cultural erasure, racial stereotypes, and attempt to add a fixed meaning on the meaning of Blackness. Diversity in depictions of Africans is also important and should be taken into consideration when creating African inspired characters, as it reflects the diversity of Africans. Facial features and cultural signifiers play a key role in recognising a character's ethnicity.

Cadence is originally depicted in a stylised way. However, if an artist is familiar with the fundamentals of art, representing a character like Cadence in a similar style – if the artist wishes to do so, with the intention of representing her distinctive features – should not be a cause for concern. While this may not apply to extremely simplistic styles that may not have room for distinct features, or just up to personal choice, an artist can be mindful of how they choose to represent a character, e.g. not making the skin charcoal black, or making the

conscious choice to depict the palms of the hands lighter. For the original and Blackwashed comparison (see fig 17).



Fig. 17. Left to Right Genshin Impact, Candace ("Home | HoYoverse," n.d.), Twitter 'Fixed" art of Candace 2022

When representing cultures and ethnicities in a character design, one needs to have done research on the said culture, as to not possibly represent it incorrectly or be offensive in the physical aspects of the design. Their personality also must show through their physical design. Generally, claiming an artwork to be ‘fixed’ and well represented solely by changing their skin colour is unacceptable.

The redesigning of a character is distinctly different from ‘washing’ a character, as one can make better choices and research more thoroughly to represent the character’s culture. For example, adding ethnically distinct features such as hair textures, facial features (nose, lips, cheekbones). Creativity can also go further in visually representing the character as how one draws something can express the artist’s intention.

2.4: African Representation in Contemporary Graphic Media

While there have been many examples of Africans not being represented well in media or them having roles that play into stereotypical or colonial ideologies, there has been considerable amount of deep thinking that's taken place across the continent regarding the ways in which African bodies are represented in illustrated or animated narratives. This chapter discusses the works of *Akokhan* (1970s) by Frank Odoi. The journal article *'Akokhan returns': Kenyan newspaper comics and the making of an 'African' superhero* (2016) by Duncan Omanga will be the main discussion in this section. It is used as insights to the ways in which Black African characters have been designed for localised audiences using cultural elements such as artefacts, labels and social contexts.

Omanga's paper aims to make tentative steps towards a characterization of an African comic superhero and use the *Akokhan* comic series to mark it out as an important text in defining an African superhero (Omanga 262). In other words, this paper argues that 'a primordial' sense of the superhero is to be found in many African cultures through folklore, but 'new media' in the sense of 'new' print technologies enabled their retelling and eventual transmutation to comic superheroes. Thus, the African comic superhero is not new; rather, it is being remediated through 'new media' and new contexts of mass production and mass consumption (Omanga).

Akokhan (1970s) is a comic strip, created by Ghanaian-Kenyan cartoonist Frank Odoi in the 1970s, that appeared at different times in all three major Kenyan daily newspapers *(Daily Nation, The Standard, The Star).* Odoi's multiple heritage fully inspired the series, as it mainly draws from Ghanaian folklore, with references to cultural artefacts, labels and social contexts that are also West African (Omanga 263). While many of its cultural references come from West Africa, the comic still becomes a localised superhero from the many releases by the Kenyan newspaper.

In the story, Akokhan is known to be over 200 years old. As a character, he is made to represent an ambiguous interpretation of witchcraft as a force that is both good and evil. The people in the village believe the deaths that occur within their community are the consequence of him using his magical powers. As a result the villages take action and 'kill' him (Omanga 263).

The second character in the story is Tonkazan, who was once imprisoned in a 200-year-old spell and by chance, was freed by the spilled blood of two lizards fighting. He makes for a good antagonist for Akokhan as they have both been alive for two centuries or more and have both mastered the use of powerful magic. Tonkazan is characterised with a Frankenstein-like motif, as he reanimates corpses to do his bidding and transforms the local medicine man into his pet dog (Omanga 263). His placement in this role is aimed to "displace the white man's religion with himself as the focal point of worship"(Omanga 263). This is the origin of Tonkazan and Akokhan's feud, resulting in epic and deadly battles, competing for the talismanic eye of Kofi Larteh which gives the holder eternal life (see fig. 18). While Tonkazan is the villain in this context, I'd argue his role carries similar connotation of re-cantering the traditional African religion or spirituality as the main religion within African society.



Fig. 18. Omanga, Duncan. 'Akokhan returns': Kenyan newspaper comics and the making of an 'African' superhero. Taylor & Francis, Ltd, 2016.

According to Frank Odoi, the characters, shrines and storyline in the book are all drawn from the stories he heard as a young child growing up in the Ga tribe in Ghana, who mostly live in the greater Accra area. Frank stated that he was influenced by the Superman, Batman and similar comics as a child, and he observed that the western superhero's powers came from scientific sources that were easily explainable.

In response to those comics, he created an African superhero who's power source were stuff of fantasy and African religion, a deeply rooted power source that could not be explained (Omanga 264).

Taking inspiration from popular established characters of media, whether it is intentional or not, is unavoidable as that is where many first character impressions stem from when creating an original work. However, it should not stop there, as incorporating one's own culture and experiences can make the story its own unique work. In this way, the remediated the work has the potential of being more relatable to a localised audience of the culture it draws from (Omanga). As this is what Odoi did for the Kenyan audience as most of the shrines and geographical context mentioned in the comic were West African (Omanga 267). An interview participant for my research shared similar sentiments when asked about how an artist can create more uniquely African character design art:

> Go to your villages, learn from the elders. They have a new unique perspective that we're not used to, that we're not exposed to from the mainstream media. With this, you're bringing different insights into African character design. Which I think is very essential (Malakaila 00:06:26)

The African comic superhero is a response to, and not simply an appropriation of, the more famous Detective Comics (DC) and Marvel comic superheroes (Omanga). The article gives many examples of African made superheroes that were remediated popular comic heroes and localised them. Often changing the meaning behind the character which gave the audience someone they could relate to whilst displacing Western dominance over Africans. One such example speaks of Captain Africa, a character casted into a 1950's Hollywood movie. The character features an American journalist that gets involved in a battle to save a Congolese village. This version of Captain Africa mirrored stories which revolved around the exploits of white male characters in Africa with black Africans playing only subordinate supporting roles (Omanga 266). These narratives, which are also found in contemporary digital art media, as the previous sections discuss, aim to satisfy a phenomenon called the 'White Saviour Syndrome'. This concept puts a white person in a position of power to help marginalised racial minority whom are considered incapable of helping themselves, which disposes them of historical agency (Willuweit 1).

The original character of Captain Africa was a white man, and in response to this, a Ghanaian comic artist named Andy Akman recast the character to be a Black African:

> Adorned with the map of Africa on his green spandex, the character represented a pan-Africanism whose Ghanaian roots were already well established in the political philosophy of Ghana's founding president Kwame Nkrumah (Omanga 266).

This remediation is a successful approach to dismantling the previous oppressive narrative of the character, giving stronger positive representation and power shift to the African superhero, giving the local audience a symbol they can identify and relate to (Omanga).

Akokhan uses magic in a context where the villagers have abandoned the ancient African deities for the European religion, which they believe is a better offense in dealing with Tonkazan's malevolent magic. What followed was a trail of murder and violence when Tonkazan deploys his magic through spells and ritualistic manipulation. In the context of the story, Christianity is not condemned, but compared to the cultural ancestral magic, it is foreign, weak and inferior (Omanga). While Akokan used black magic, he does not use it to impose his will over humans but instead uses it to protect their social and religious liberties.

Odoi expressed that Akokhan's powers are eternal and primordial; they are not results of accidents, human error or laboratory experiments gone badly. As is conventionally the case with mainstream superhero template (Omanga 273). This illustrates the importance of incorporating African concepts into narratives as it reinforces the importance and original local religions before colonial European interference. This sends the message that the religions and spiritual ties Black African people had to their own beliefs should be acknowledged as legitimate. This also applies to character design, even if a character is drawn in a modern context, including one's own cultural elements and inspirations in the character design itself makes for a stronger representation.

Chapter 3: Lists and Descriptions of Existing Drawing Guides

This chapter is to highlight the lack of diverse representation of different kinds of ethnic features within fundamental guidebooks and present ways in which an artist may learn how to draw and represent those differences.

I will be discussing the below mentioned guidebooks by highlighting their helpfulness of guiding; the fundamentals of art, figure drawing fundamentals, and examining their representation of Black bodies and design of Black African characters:

- Andrew Loomis, *Figure Drawing for all its Worth* (1943)
- John H Vanderpoel's *The Human Figure: Life Drawing for Artists* (1935)
- Sarah Simblet's *Anatomy for the Artist* (2001)
- Malik Shabazz's *How to Draw Black People* (2022)
- Michael D. Mattessi's *Force: Character Design from Life Drawing* (2008)

The value existing drawing guides have regarding technical principles of drawing is paramount. An artist should always cross reference guides to get a broader understanding of a topic as some guides may be better at teaching one aspect of drawing fundamentals than another. Forming the ability to decide on what guide to follow, and what lessons to take from said guide is helpful and can only happen if more than one resource is acknowledged.

Bill Masuku – a professional 'Afromanga'[3] artist – stated in an interview that the fundamentals of art are extremely important skills for artists to learn. "They act as the science behind drawing, an inescapable requirement" (Masuku 00:08:07).

In Neil Cohn's book *The Visual Language of Comics* (2013), he discusses and emphasises that comics themselves are not a visual language. They are written in sequential images, which is the visual language. Just as books are written in English, comics are written in visual languages (Cohn). In *How to Draw Black People* (2022) by Malik Shabazz, he states "Art is a language, and character designs are stories told in that language" (12).

[3] While not have an official definition, it can be recognised as Western and Japanese inspired comics created with African perspective and aesthetics.

Referencing the definitions of what a visual language and what art and character designs are from Cohn and Shabazz. I would define fundamental art books and figure drawing guides as a means of teaching someone words (fundamentals), from which the stories (character designs) will be made. However, the 'words' taught in figure drawing guides do not carry enough diversity, which results in some stories and impressions being misinterpreted, miscommunicated, and misrepresented. Character designs are the visual language, that communicates more than the style in which it is drawn.

When designing human characters, much of what an artist has learned in those guides will inform how the visual design features may look like. The narrative traits chosen to visually portray the design may not be influenced by the guidebook only, but the character design – facial features, body proportions, ethnic or cultural cues – may still be absent as the main point of reference for the accurate representation of the human form, derived from established guides. Many established guides do not showcase a wide variety of human anatomy and ethnic features, consequently several artists may not be able to fully represent a character within a cultural narrative. It could be beneficial to add drawn examples and written explanations of cultural cues relating to the character design in a drawing guide that communicates the artistic and technical process of the drawing.

The art style – which is the distinct way an artist expresses their work– in art fundamental guidebooks is not the driving factor of how the form is communicated. Guidebooks will always have accompanied text next to the illustration to teach effectively, because of this, fundamental guidebooks should be considered visual languages as their main purpose is to communicate anatomical accuracy in drawing the human form.

George Bridgeman's style in his guidebook *Constructive Anatomy* differs from his personal artworks. The art in this guidebook presents as blocky for the purpose of showing the human form and how different parts connect to each other. The human body can be broken up into simple 3D shapes – cylinders, cubes, spheres – that allow for better understanding of construction of the human form because life exists in a 3D space. Bridgeman's blocky art style is intended to make the absorbing of human anatomical knowledge easier. By visualising the body in blocky shapes, it can help an artist understand the literal building blocks that make up human anatomy. In contrast, Bridgeman's personal drawing style presents closer to realism without exaggeration. (see fig. 19).

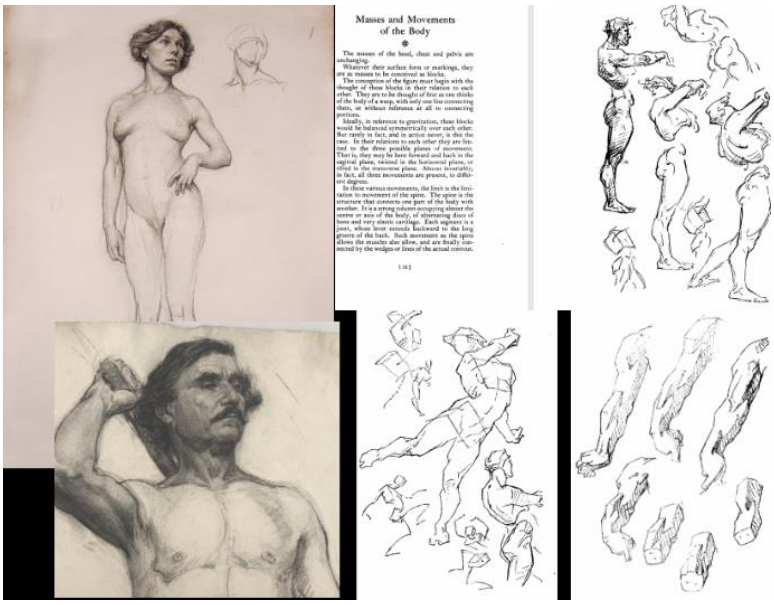


Fig. 19. Personal and guidebook illustration art style differences (Bridgman)

Fundamentals determine accuracy of form in a three-dimensional space, they would not determine how an artist chooses to express their art. Many of these guides state that figure drawing is an important skill set for artists to learn. Figure drawing is essentially the skill to draw what the artist sees in real-life surroundings and can emulate the form, expression and motion that figure gives. Despite this definition, different figures of human beings are not showcased in these books. People with various body types, skin tones, facial structures and facial features are seldom seen in Loomis and Vanderpoel's guides.

3.1 Loomis and Vanderpoel Guidebook Analysis

Loomis and Vanderpoel's guidebooks are most popular amongst self-taught artists as they are easily accessible online as the copyright for these books has expired, allowing many people to access the full copies online. The resources made by Loomis and Vanderpoel while very old in age, still carry important knowledge on, how one can construct a human body through understanding anatomy and proportions, draw the figure in different positions, perspectives and gives technical advice on achieving artistic effects for more interesting drawings.

Loomis and Vanderpoel's guidebooks are valuable resources when learning to draw the general human form and how to present it anatomically in different scenarios. However, neither of them represents Black Africans at all. The knowledge learned from Loomis and Vanderpoel cannot always be applied to everyone as there still lies a gap in the people represented. The models drawn in these books are Caucasian people of Euro-American decent, therefor the anatomical fundamentals only show the facial features and structures from a Euro-American framing.

In these books, a variety of mouths, noses and eyes are drawn, with no black people's external feature are included. Additionally facial anatomy guides showing placement of the lips, nose and chin and the prominent waterline in the bottom eyelid (see fig. 20). As an artist I find it difficult to be able to draw Black features from the basis of a white person's facial features, as I am not getting the full sense of how to construct the body part as how one would see it on a real person. While some may argue that the examples used in Loomis' and other books can be used as a base to construct all facial features. I do not agree that Caucasian people should be used as a basis for drawing, when the intended result is to be a drawing of a Black person. I would also argue that this way of thinking suggest that Black people are an extension of white people which is entirely incorrect and should not be normalised. As it feeds into colonialist beliefs that Black people are inferior to Caucasians, due to established guides only depict people from a Euro-American descent. Further pushing Black people to be seen as the 'other' in depictions of art expression.

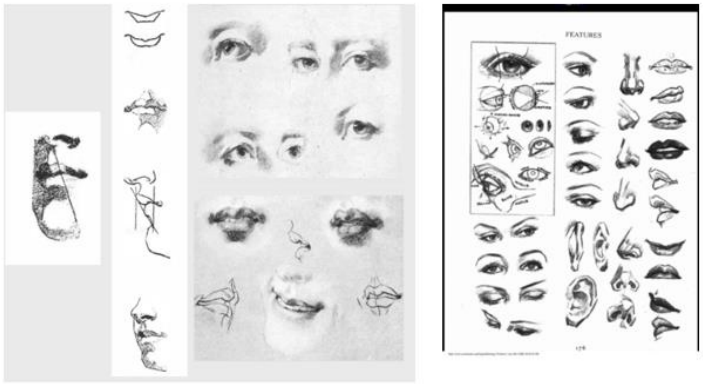


Fig. 20. Vanderpoel (left) and Loomis (right) facial features drawings (Vanderpoel 22, 34, 37,40)

A guide only representing one group of people isn't a bad thing. However, these books only represent figures of white people whilst justifying their proportions and features as the fundamentals of art. This further contributes to the misrepresentation of how fundamentals of art are perceived. Learning the fundamentals of art within a Euro-American lens limits an artists' knowledge and skill set in drawing, painting, and structuring the bodies of Black people within their representation in art and when designing Black African characters. This further contributes to the neglected knowledge of representing Black African people and characters.

Loomis teaches the ways one can keep the accuracy of proportions of the body even in movement using arcs and head units. He gives thorough explanation and examples showcasing how one can create realistic scenes that utilise other fundamentals such as perspective in relation to the human proportions, as well as many other important foundations for composition. Loomis is very mathematical in his demonstrations, like the way Da Vinci illustrated his human dissection drawings, which gives his lessons more credibility as it leaves no room for ambiguity (see fig. 21).

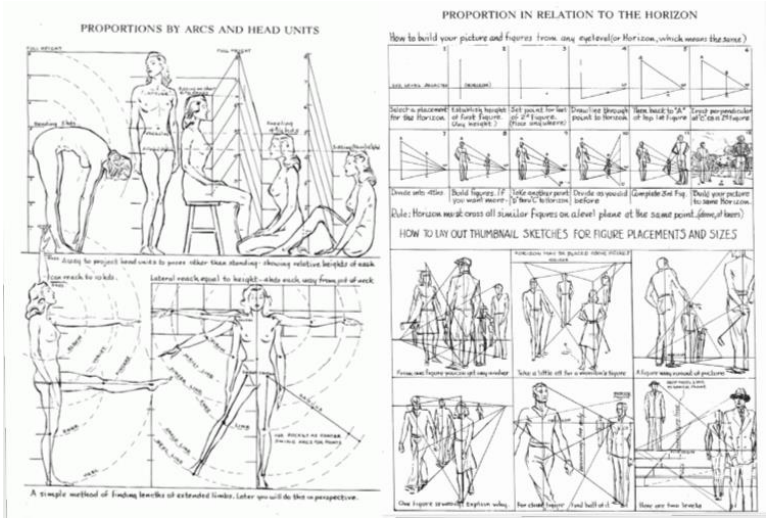


Fig. 21. Proportions by Arcs and Head Units, Proportions in relation to the Horizon (Loomis 33-34)

Lessons such as the ones stated above can be applied to anyone. However, the book only portrays people of proportions he deems as "ideal", the body types of the male and female figures are drawn to be very stylised. The proportions are accurate to the length of body parts, but the way the 'ideal proportion' models are depicted resemble figures used in Western styled comic books. (see fig. 22) for comparison.

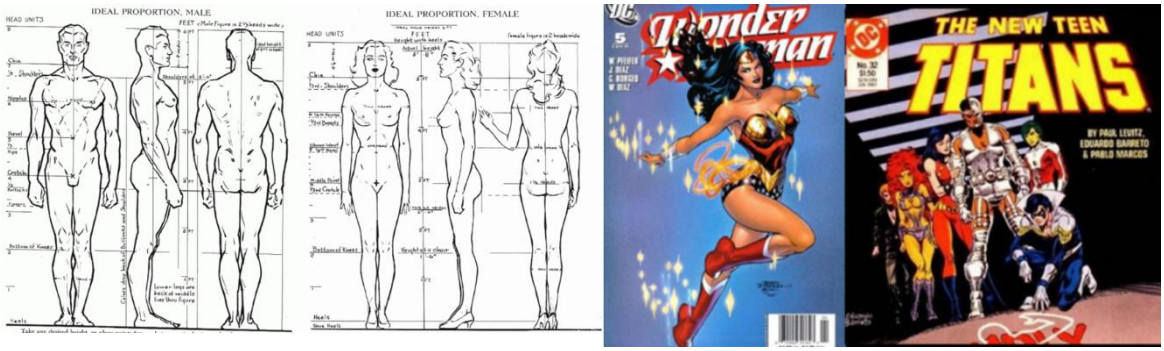


Fig. 22. Ideal Proportions Male and Female chart (Loomis 26-27), Wonder Woman and Teen Titans DC Comic Covers (Barreto, Unknown; Dodson, 2007)

Neil Cohn describes styles of visual languages as 'dialects'. He describes one dialect that appears a lot in the mainstream North American visual language as "Kirbyan" (139) after Jack Kirby, which appears mostly within superhero comics. This style is also prevalent in how to draw books and lessons (Cohn). A similarity with comics books and how to draw guides is their common body types, which are referred to as the ideal body types, wherein women are often drawn in a sexualised manner.

Anatomical and proportional differences between men and women are common, but are not common enough to display two moulds for all humans (Shabazz). Gender normalities suggests that female characters should portray softness, sex appeal and grace, while male characters should portray physical strength and stability (Shabazz). The drawings of the nude women throughout Loomis' guide are posed in alluring positions with the addition of high heels in some depictions, even while posed in non-sexual poses they still wear high heels, further accentuating their feminine form, body parts and sex appeal. Whilst the nude male illustrations portray them in stances that represent confidence, reliability and strength. The men illustrated within this guide are rarely depicted sitting down, compared to their female counterparts, further highlighting the strong male archetype. All of which are depicted in the "ideal" proportions (see fig. 23).

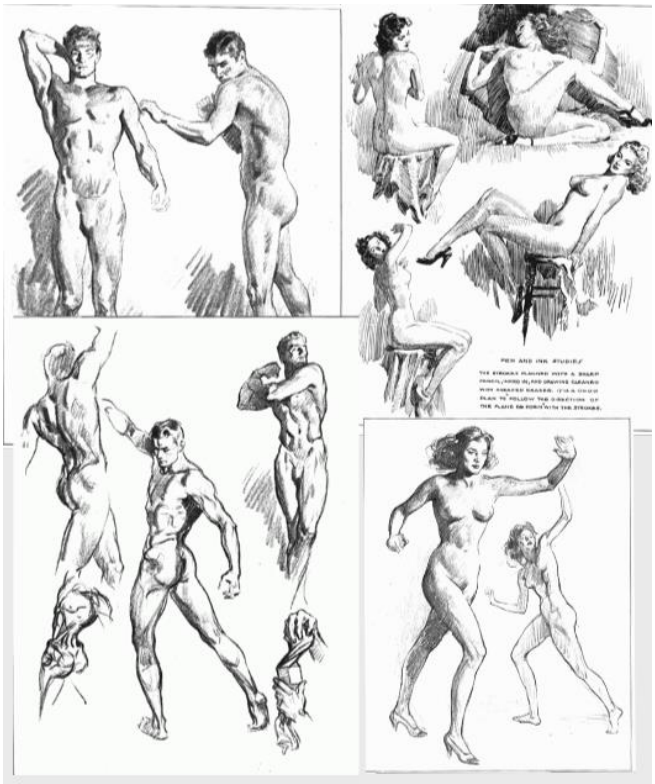


Fig. 23. Series of men and women drawings in various poses (Loomis 99, 105, 126, 154)

Additionally figure drawing guidebooks created by authors such as Loomis and Vanderpoel reflects the opinions and discourse from the 1930s of women and Black Africans. That Black people were incapable of serious intellect and artistic accomplishment, and the images that depicted Black people were highly stereotypical and demeaning, which conformed to the dominant ideology of white supremacy in the United States (Blum).

John H Vanderpoel's *The Human Figure: Life Drawing for Artists* (1935), follows a similar format to Loomis and many drawing books. Vanderpoel's book has more text-based information that is accompanied with drawings and illustrations. Which can make the learning experience easier to digest and less daunting for a beginner, since one needs to read and understand whilst also drawing from the descriptions. While his book is divided into many chapters dealing with each part of the body, he urges the artist to understand the body part in the relation to the entire structure. "the student must fully realize that no matter how intimate his knowledge of a part may be, it is only of value when it coexists with an appreciation of its relation to the entire structure" (Vanderpoel 17).

The first two books mentioned, while not specifically stated what level artist they cater for; are widely accepted as beginner friendly. While they delve into complex concepts, they still inform the structuring of the human form with simple shapes and easy to understand language. Not all books are directly stated to be for beginners. Upon reading the material within them, one may need to have a stronger foundation of fundamental understanding and be familiar with certain concepts to be able to absorb the information successfully. This may not always be the case for as long as the written text is not too complex, beginners and master artist can benefit from them.

3.2 Simblet Guidebook Analysis

Sarah Simblet's *Anatomy for the Artist* (2001) is very comprehensive and complex in the explanations, illustrations, photographs and concepts. It is a book that focuses heavily on the human anatomy. Whilst it is a book that caters to artists, the knowledge contained illustrates medical anatomic depth and precision. It shows a deep appreciation of the many anatomical strides and efforts taken by artists, scholars, and scientists throughout history, such as Leonardo Da Vinci and Jaque Fabien Gautier d'Agoty (see fig. 24).



Fig. 24. Leonardo Da Vinci (left) and Jaque Fabien Gautier d'Agoty (right) human anatomy studies (Simblet, 2001: 13, 14, 15)

Simblet's ability to reveal and replicate the muscular structure underneath the accompanying photographs of human models shows her incredible skillset and specialised knowledge of human anatomy, which can greatly aid artists on acquiring and applying this knowledge to their own art and studies. The book showcases advanced anatomical illustrations and photographs of real people accompanied with extensive explanations of what the illustrations depict, giving the artist a thorough foundation when learning human anatomy (see fig. 25).

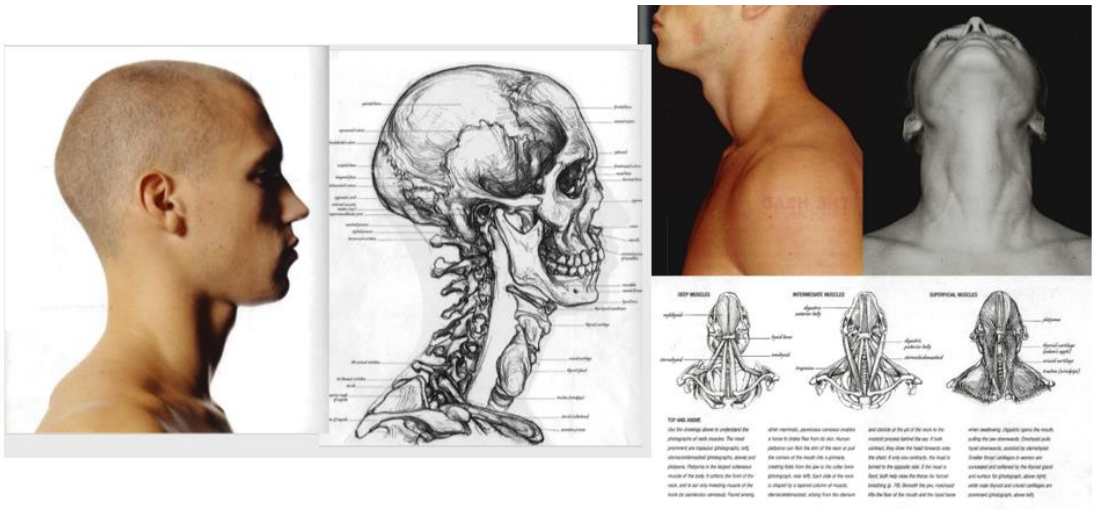


Fig. 25. Human Head and Neck Musculoskeletal illustrations with text (Simblet 47, 48, 59)

3.3 Mattesi Guidebook Analysis

Mike Mattesi's aim in *Character Design from Life Drawing* (2008) is to explain the bridge between character design and figure drawing. "From my own work experience, this I have found is one very important bridge, a bridge of inspiration" (12)! The main theme in book is Force. Forcing one's drawings to become what they are desired to become and tackling one's ideas and opinions within them. According to Mattesi, the character is the main force that captivates the audience (13). The clearer the character is, the more connected we feel to them (Mattesi), which makes the character's outer appearance important to visually portray and communicate to the audience as much as possible. From their stance, the way they dress, their resting facial expression, these elements help sell the character to the audience and answer questions of who they are and give a possible hint on how they could react in different situations. Throughout the book, one can view illustrations he created that represents his ideas and experiences that he incorporates into his characters. Which in turn shows how the reader can use their experiences and ideas and as inspirations to create diverse and fleshed out characters. Mattesi's book also focuses on different character design foundations separated into chapters: Force, Space, Shape, Costume, and Reportage. Where he goes into detail with illustrations and accompanying text that help the artists understand how these foundations work together to create meaningful character design.

To summarise on each of these chapters, *Force* focuses on pushing the boundaries of the character's design, their pose, facial expressions, and other visual indications that give them their personality. Flow of the character also aligns with force as flow brings motion and dynamism into a character design, making it seem more fluid and less rigid or stiff. Flow is an important concept to learn when drawing people and creating characters, as humans are not machines, our bodies move and flow with the actions we perform. Figure drawing studies help an artist practice visualising and drawing these expressive figures and actions, which can help translate personality and pose into character designs. Figure drawing studies and fundamental learning work hand in hand to create expressive, thoughtful character designs. The arrows depicted in the drawings represent the force, it can push extremes creating dynamic and fluid motions (see fig. 26).

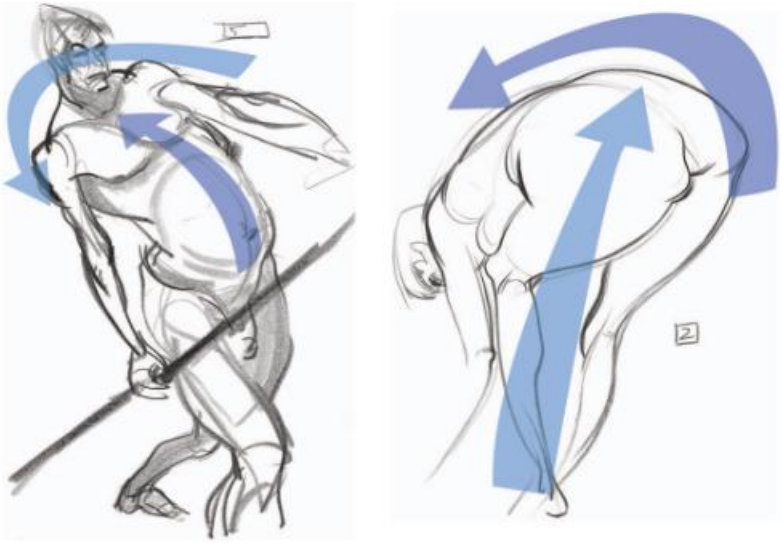
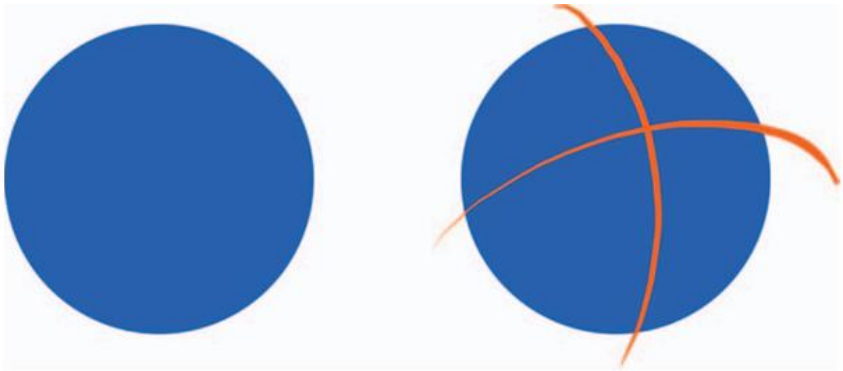


Fig. 26. Figure drawing illustrations with Force arrows (Mattesi 4, 11)

Space focuses one's capacity to understand drawing depth in a drawing and understanding the flat plane one draws on. Mattesi states that no matter how skilled an artist is with fundamentals such as light, perspective, form, that there is real power in understanding that one is still working on a two-dimensional surface (Mattesi). Two-dimensional (hereafter 2D) and three-dimensional (hereafter3D) shapes can exist on a 2D surface, but the shape only becomes 3D when an artist adds indications of depth and form. As seen in the image below, the blue circle on its own is flat, but when the orange lines are added it creates form (see fig. 27)



The shape on the left shows us a flat circle; the shape on the right shows us the form of a sphere. This incredible change occurs because of the two orange, curved lines. They make our minds think that the flat blue circle is round. Of course the circle is not and never will be, but look at how deceiving some simple curved lines can be on this circle shape. Let's look at some figure drawings that show how the curved line implies form.

Fig. 27. Blue circle Flat and with Form (Mattesi 37)

He gives further examples of how curved lines imply form on human figures (see fig. 28).



Fig. 28. Human figures showing form indicated with curved lines (Mattesi 38- 39)

Shape is the next chapter, which discusses one's understanding of depth and flatness. When a drawing is two dimensional, one will still see lines and a silhouette which gives the sense of flatness. It is form that creates shape, without form there is no silhouette that can be seen. In other words, form is what gives a character their personality, recognisability and what makes them iconic.

Mattesi showcases examples of body types in simple shape representations, each one representing a characteristic. When force is added to these shapes, they become personified, and their character is shown more (see fig. 29). Generally, shapes convey different personalities and emotions just as colours do. Triangles are often connected to action, aggression and energy. Circle or oval shape language is connected to friendliness and cuteness, and safety. Squares or rectangles defines strength or seen as a foundation (Nieminen).

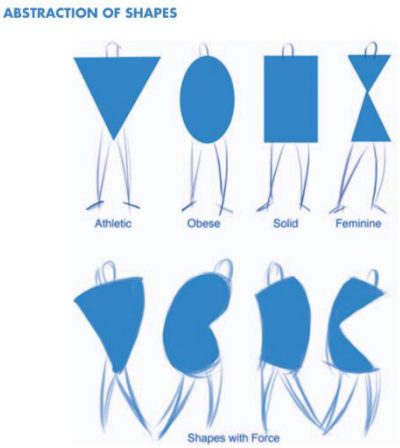


Fig. 29. "Abstraction of Shapes" (Mattesi 62)

Costume adds more character to a drawing, with the addition of shapes, colours, textures, patterns, and more, one can create lasting impressions with the characters they design. Reportage or drawing "on location" (171). Allows the artist to build up their visual library of information and creativity. Watching human behaviour like people's mannerisms, gestures, facial expressions, and postures informs the artist's own character designs. Reportage with force brings out more of the personality, intention and life into the character designs. Resulting in the ability for characters to tell a story through the designs themselves (see fig. 30).



Fig. 30. Unhappy American dad, and caricatures of people drawn from the zoo (Mattesi 172- 173)

One can still apply the knowledge from the previously mentioned guides onto one's own characters, but designing Black characters is more than just appealing visuals. An artist needs to understand the nuances and diversity of Blackness, Black people, and their cultures to apply it to designed characters without the addition of pre-existing opinions of it.

How to Draw Black People (Shabazz), guides the reader on how to achieve this, along with many valuable resources I will be discussing in this section. He also supplies the reader with technical digital art techniques on drawing Black people from other artists. They provide techniques on how may apply their theoretic skills to their physical drawing skills.

3.4 Shabazz: Designing Black Characters and Cultural Representations

How to Draw Black People (2022) aims to establish a cultural approach to designing Black characters and to supply the techniques to execute on culturally driven character designs. The first half of the book discusses his design process he calls Culture, Aesthetic, and Theme (C.A.T.). He emphasises that his book is not to be taken as gospel but is intended to be used as a catalyst for learning and growth. Recapping on what I mentioned earlier, Shabazz believes that art is a language, and characters are stories told in that language.

It is important that one puts careful thought and intention into their characters to make a good impression upon the viewer. This is measured by the character being able to tell a story just from looking at them (Shabazz). However, a problem arises that he discusses, which is how an artist designs a character from a culture they have no experience with, which he answers by stating the more someone learns about culture the better someone will be at creating characters that resonate with a Black audience. However, the shared observations of Black culture, compared to the shared lived experiences of Black people has created inconsistencies within characters presented as Black. Racial stereotypes and offensive tropes are the results of these inconsistencies (8). It becomes especially difficult when the Black culture that is from shared observation, often comes from one perspective or group of Black people, which does not represent the diversities of Black people and cultures.

Shabazz presents a cultural character prompt (see Appendix B), where he guides the artist with the approach of culturally designing a character. This is helpful as it shows a more in-depth approach to determine what characteristics the character would have and how those decisions would affect the way it is drawn or what the intentions would be. It also helps the artist determine how they want the character to be perceived. It not only helps what the character may look like but also cultivates what their personality, values and views of the world would be. Additionally, it gives more intention into the physical design and allow the artist to represent those intentions accordingly. Further into his book, he goes into more detail with each question asked on the list.

Shabazz discusses the negative racial stereotypes, and the dangers one can fall into if one does not understand or is familiar with racial stereotypes and racial prejudices such as colourism. To help an artist not fall into these traps, he identifies racial tropes in characters across many kinds of media and explains why they are designed from these offensive themes.

An example of origins of these stereotypes is Docile Negro, also known as the “pickaninny” (15) was one of the first stereotypes to come into use in describing Black people. This stereotype told the story of Black people that were similar to mischievous children (Shabazz). Next is the Savage Negro, which was the first stereotype that depicted Black people as dangerous. The common trope of this stereotype was to take advantage of the “kindness” of white people and betrayed them with violence (Shabazz). These two stereotypes, evolved into the Black Brute. Visually the Black Brute’s design accentuates physicality and size, wearing sleeveless shirts, heavy looking accessories or having significantly large weapons, all of which are designed to be over-exaggerated compared to the other characters it is grouped with. Other visuals include but are not limited to close cut fade hair style or bald head, cornrows and dreadlocks. An immense physique, and wearing athletic attire even when it is not necessary (Shabazz). The Black Brute was used to make Black men have the same characteristics as animals or lesser evolved humans, but now it has changed and has become a staple in the action and adventure genres, however some characters still carry the original stereotypical characteristics. Examples of modern characters that are derived from the Black Brute stereotype are Cyborg from *Teen Titans* (2003) and A from *Naruto* (2005) (see fig. 31).

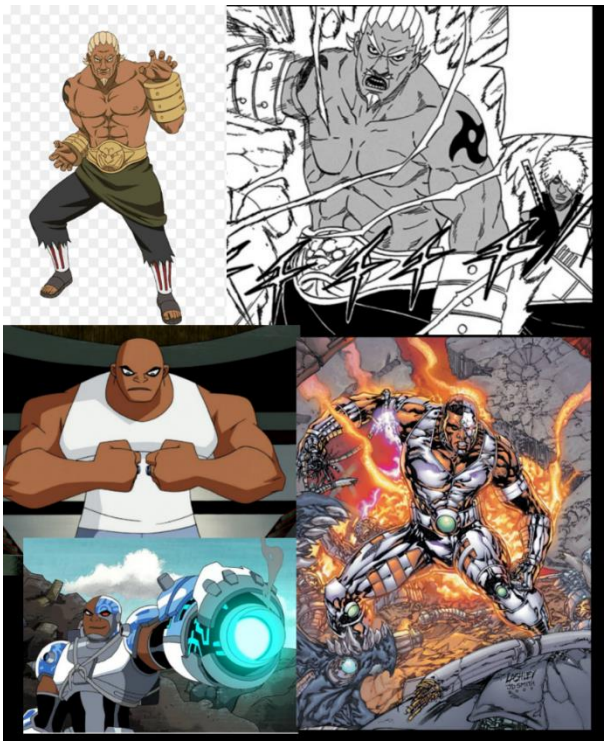


Fig. 31. A (top images), Cyborg’s human and cybernetic forms (bottom images) (Naruto, 2005; Teen Titans, 2003; “Victor Stone (New Earth) | DC Database | Fandom,” n.d.)

This is important because many artists will take inspiration from beloved characters of media but not be aware of their ties to racial stereotypes and may unintentionally create their character to represent that stereotype. This is very common and because there is not a lot of knowledge about the diversities of Black people among character design artists and their audiences, it further contributes to the misrepresentation of Black people.

Shabazz states there is a common thread between racial stereotypes that imply Black people are Dangerous, Exploitable, or both. This extends into the perception and representation of Black characters. Dangerous can be visually defined with size, physical build, facial expressions, posture and extreme contrast of colours with sharp and jagged shape language. Exploitative is depicted with a single quality that is made the focus of the character. The Black Brute stereotype, as I stated previously, exists within the dangerous and exploitative perception because it is defined by physical strength and stature. Colourism plays a role with juxtaposition of the two terms. Depending on how much darker or lighter the Black character's skin is, they will be treated differently in comparison to each other. As I discussed previously within Chapter 2, the game *Genshin Impact* presents colourism within the characters. The darker skinned characters are treated as enemies the player fights, while the lighter skinned characters are the player's characters or some non-aggressive NPCs.

This next section of the chapter will focus on his application to designing Black characters through Shabazz's design process CAT, and the technical drawing guides he provides. The image below presents multi-coloured words that are the levels that make up the concept of culture in CAT. The more in-depth the character design is the more opportunity there is to add cultural identifiers modelled after the cultural production of Black people across the African diaspora (Shabazz) (see fig. 32).

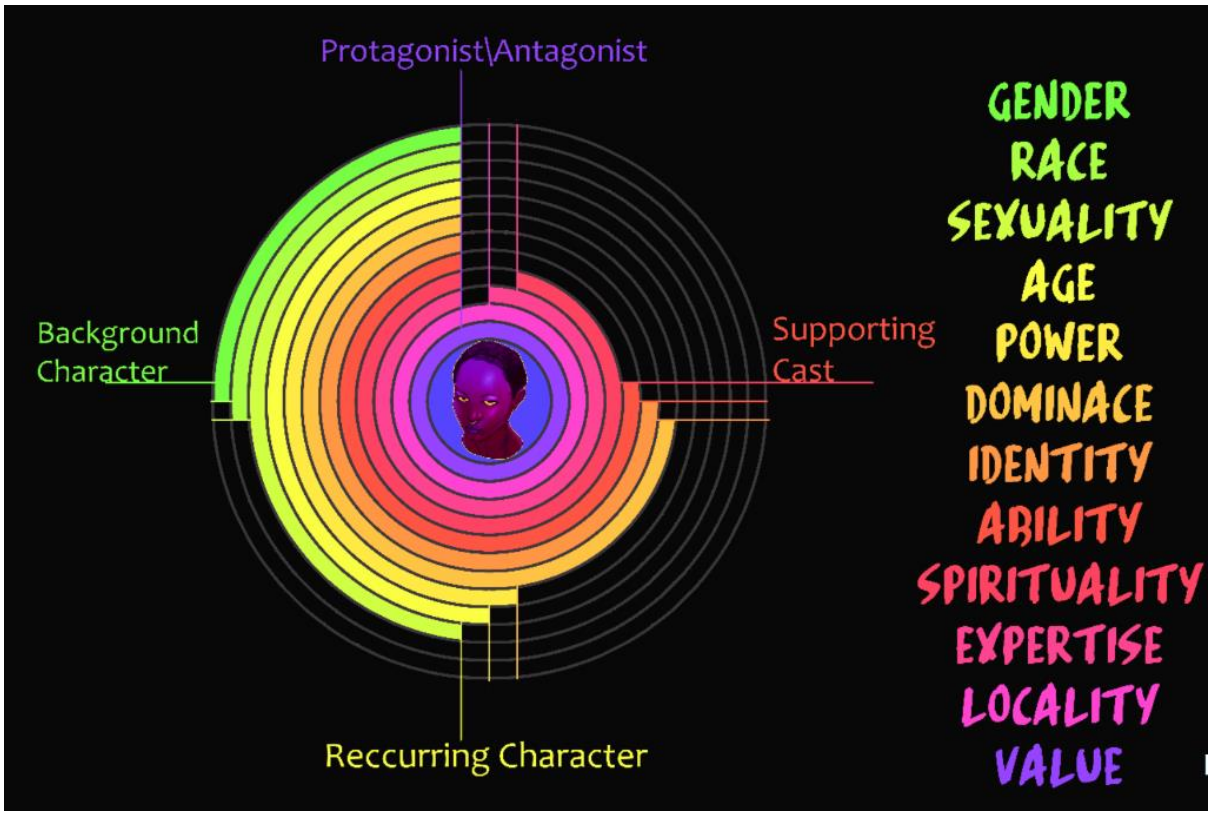


Fig. 32. 12 Levels of Depth to Cultural Design (Shabazz 29)

Shabazz answers the questions from his culture character prompt list (see Appendix C). He states that a design is not a person, but the impression of a person (30). People have genders, designs, and identifiers, and it's important to represent those aspects in culturally inspired Black characters. Gender is also an important part of character designing. Many how to draw books only present a binary of male and female, and two figures for those binaries, and there are real people who do not match the gender binary norms of the male or female body type depicted in guidebooks.

Throughout this section, he speaks on the importance of showing different body types, that may not fit with the perception of the gender norm, as women and men have diverse anatomy. As Shabazz utilises the Culture, Aesthetic, and Theme process in the book, the character changes many times. Which reflects how people, their figures and their impressions can change within a character's development.

Facial anatomy is important when designing Black characters, as the character's face hold the most information for identifying their ethnicity, and gender identity. Shabazz introduces five identifying features that indicate whether a character is Black which he calls African Phenotype Identifiers – nose, mouth, hair, skin tone, cheek bones. These are the physical

attributes that associate heritage belonging to a specific race of human beings (Shabazz). The African phenotype is exclusive and diverse. Across the African diaspora Black people look different from each other whilst looking different from everyone else (Shabazz). He states that for a character design to present as Black, it needs to have at least three of the five African phenotypes identifiers – nose, mouth, hair, skin tone, cheek bones, which are the distinct features found on Black people. African is not just a skin colour and Black does not always mean dark skinned; this section could aid an artist in create diverse cultural characters. It also allows for people to learn that Black does not mean one attribute and can spread positive representation within Black character designs.

The last sections of his book go into technical application of facial feature anatomy. In Black cultures, strong and unique features define beauty and that pronounced features are not exclusive to being masculine or feminine (Shabazz). I defend this as important because the modern beauty standards are inherently Euro-American, thus many artists may use that as a foundation to draw Black features, when the features should be seen and drawn for what they are, without the influence of predefined notions of beauty. To combat this, Shabazz, in his book, invites other artists to present their own ways and guides of drawing Black people.

The guides on the nose and lip construction of Black facial features (see fig. 33) are presented by Lion who is a portrait artist. I found his guides to be most helpful, as the construction itself is fundamentally different from the counterparts shown in previously mentioned Euro-American drawing guides. While it may not apply to all shapes and sizes of lips and noses, it is still a great foundation on how to draw Black African specific features; as it offers structural guidance using mathematical diagrams that make it easier to understand as a foundation that can be applied to different variations of these phenotypes, giving it more credibility as it leaves no room for ambiguity.

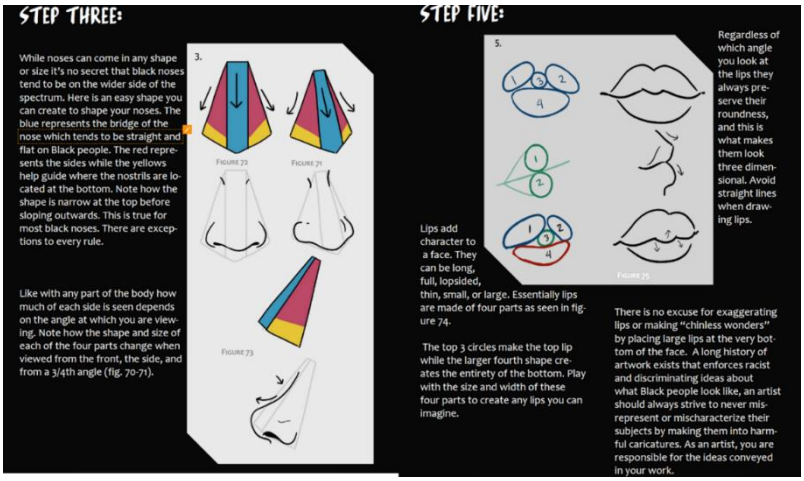


Fig. 33. Lion's guides on Nose and Lips construction (Shabazz 69, 71)

Chapter 4:
Using Interview Data in Discussion Point Arguments regarding the Fundamentals of Art

4.1 Lack of diversity in Art Fundamental guidebooks contributes to knowledge gap in drawing African Character Design Art

One of the goals of these interviews was to analyse varying people in a similar group of Southern African expert artists actively practising in the Southern African digital art industry. It includes five people because it aimed to highlight multiple successful people who encountered the same problem and while it was not a conclusive result, it proves there is a knowledge gap within fundamental of art learning.

The inclusion of the amount of interviewee data is imperative to this research as it informs the lack of Black African drawing resources available to artists. While many of these expert artists have succeeded in representing Black African people their work now, the process of getting to this point supplied little to no aid to understanding or guiding how they could present Black African figures the way modern and classical art fundamental guidebooks do with Caucasian figures. Many of the candidates shared a similar sentiment when it came to learning to draw or present Black Africans which was live observation of people in their surroundings, looking inwards within one's own culture or close family group, etc. This way of learning applies to anyone who wishes to master drawing organic figures, however it is still concerning that the amount of proliferated written material regarding how to draw people mainly focuses on Caucasian anatomy.

The most striking insight that I learned from these interviews is the application of fundamentals of art do not apply to Black African bodies. Lighting is one of the most important fundamentals of art, yet when one searches for resources on this topic, many example rarely include people with dark skin tones as example of how different lighting affects the visual appearance of their skin.

Digital art industries such as video games, comics and animation are occupations many artists aspire to achieve when mastering fundamental art skills. However, even after one has mastered the art fundamental skills and is working in the digital arts industries as a professional there continues to be a knowledge gap when drawing African characters.

I interviewed five participants: Bill Masuku from Zimbabwe, a comic and storyboard artist who's created comic books such as *Razor Man Volume 1 and 2* (2019, 2020) - following the character Lovemore Garwe's story in investigating the real reason behind his faster's passing by suiting up as the masked vigilante Razor Man. Ziyaad Rahman from South Africa, a comic artist, creator of *Siri Watu* (2017), a comic book series inspired by the real-life myth and folklore of the Lost City of the Kalahari and the Great Zimbabwe. Tumo Mere from Botswana, a senior character designer and concept and illustrator who has worked on concept art for the video game *Tales of Kenzera: Zau* (2024), developed by Surgent Studios by. Khumoetsile Masokoane from South Africa, a character animator intern, at Cabblow Studios, and Tlotlo Malakaila from Botswana, a character illustrator and author of the book *Daydreamer* (2024) (see fig. 34).

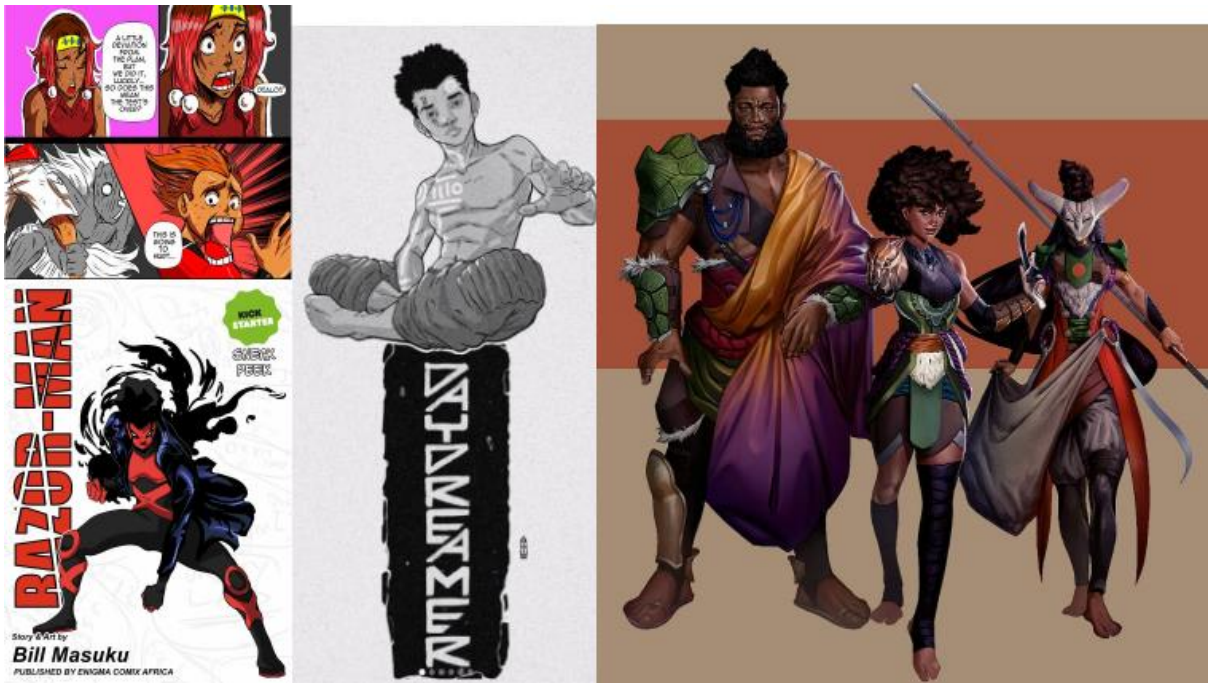


Fig. 34. Bottom Left: Masuku, Bill. *Razor Man* Front Cover, 2019. Top Left: Rahman, Ziyaad. *Siri Watu* Comic Panel, 2017. Middle: Malakaila, Tlotlo TT. *Daydreamer* Poster, 2024. Right: Mere, Tumo. Character Wallpaper, 2019

The interview regarded the importance of the fundamentals of art; colour theory, form, perspective, composition, value, line, anatomy, shape, lighting, proportion, brushwork and texture, and if they are essential to learn for beginner and expert artists to learn and remember. All agreed on the importance of the fundamentals of art. As one participant stated, "Art fundamentals are like a science, they are not expressions" (Masuku 00:08:07).

Even if one wanted to draw without using them, you still need to be cognisant of their existence (00:08:41). They are the universal basics of drawing that can be applied to anything. The fundamentals of art are a valuable tool for any artist.

While the fundamentals of art may be difficult to grasp at first, they can still be fun to learn, and once an artist has a firm understanding of them, they gain the ability to go beyond the bounds of reality in art, stretch proportions and create unreal looking scenes with lighting, perspective. They help an artist express their creativity more, overall (Mere) as fundamentals and creativity work hand in hand. There are many possibilities one can make with their art, but only when the fundamentals have been grasped (Malakaila; Masokoane; Masuku; Mere; Rahman).

I will be presenting my arguments on the following points of focus, using the interview data for substantiation:

- The Art Fundamentals and Painting Diverse Skin Tones
- The Miscommunication, Misrepresentation, and Misunderstanding of the Fundamentals of Art related to Black Africans
- Diversity Gap in Art Fundamental Learning and Interview Data

These focus points will allow me to divide the chapter in their respective topics and create an outline for the main discussion points. Which will be discussing how some of the fundamentals of art are not commonly known or do not have a physical origin to where applications of certain fundamentals of art knowledge may be found. The misrepresentation, miscommunication, and misunderstandings of how the fundamentals of art of human anatomy are perceived and applied will also be discussed.

Finally, giving suggestions through interviewee answers on how the diversity gap could be filled. For example, colour and colour theory fundamentals regarding painting the hues of Black people's skin are not commonly accessible. One would need to have been taught these techniques at an institution or have committed themselves to many hours of self-study. The answers or guides for painting Black skin cannot be traced back to a guidebook, like how many techniques for colouring fair skin can be found in established guidebooks. It is agreed that the fundamentals of art are important, but they are very limited and not diverse enough to be applied to all human bodies.

I argue that over time, the fundamentals of art have been misrepresented, miscommunicated and misunderstood to only greatly benefit people of a Euro-American descent. Through my interviews I prove that a knowledge gap exists with drawing and depicting Black African characters, not only in drawing, but through inspiration and media consumption. Throughout the section I will be offering insight through the interview answers of what obstacles the interviewees went through in drawing Black African characters, and what specific characteristics amateur artists need to have when pursuing a career in the digital arts industries. I also gained insight on how else the knowledge gap could be filled with not only drawing Black people and characters, but where to get the inspiration to make their stories.

Discussion Point 1: The Art Fundamentals and Painting Diverse Skin Tones

Theoretically, fundamentals can be mastered by anyone if they are given the right foundational training. In the journal article *Advanced Training Simplified for Amateur Painters* (1971) by David Friend, he proposes a new art foundation course that enables adult amateur painters with no prior experience, to learn a simplified version of a painter's integrative process. This process included the mentor instructing the student on the artworks of old masters within a variety of contexts and simultaneously encouraging the students to evaluate and improve their own art (Friend). This teaching practice is most common with advanced students, but Friend proposed that the same techniques could be taught and immediately grasped in amateur painters with no prior experience.

These techniques Friend developed are like how artists learn to draw today, either with using drawing guides and online guides, or being taught by more experienced artists or mentors. With a plethora of information available to the public, all the artist needs to understand to get started, is what their goals are for what they want to master in their art training. For example, character design artists would actively study other character design artist's artworks whilst also utilising the knowledge from online guides and established drawing guides to improve on their technical drawing skills. The professional, after years of trial and error, can juggle and integrate all the visual elements at one time – colours, shapes, light and dark values, lines and textures (Friend). Technical training and creative expression can be learned by any artist regardless of their skill level.

This leads me to my first point on the application of light on dark skin. This is regarding the fundamentals of art that can affect the visual appearance of skin. The presence of light does not only mean to shine light on something. Light theory links to colour theory, and one needs to be cognisant of their existence and how they interact with each other when adding light to dark-skinned characters. Due to an object's material properties, light may not affect one object the same way it affects another, even if both subjects exist in the same room. An artist needs to be aware that those two objects will react to the light shining on them differently, thus creating different visual appearances. It is easy to look at picture examples and copy them, but this alone cannot help one grasp the understanding of the inner workings of colour within the skin, and how one can express that understanding through technical art ability.

Human skin is as diverse in its appearance, as the people who have it. The colour of skin in art is not only made up of one colour; it harmonises with different hues and tones on the surface, and painting undertones helps the skin look more lifelike. There are many ways to paint skin, but the foundations of painting dark skin are either taught through word of mouth or there are many conflicting and similar opinions online, making it difficult for an artist to discern what would enable their practice. Either way it is not common knowledge, nor does it have concrete source to where that knowledge may be found.

Undertones in visual painting are used to distinguish how the final colours of the painting will be perceived; it can also be used to determine the overall mood of the painting (Malakaila; Masuku; Mere; Rahman). Different undertones fit better with different skin tones, for example many sources say that green and yellow colour undertones work with darker skin(InflamedAbyss13 and Unable_Attorney_2666) and blue undertones work with fairer skin as it gives a colder look to the skin (EIPrezAU). I personally learned of the undertone technique from my high school art teacher, as seen in the process of (see fig. 35), where I used green and yellow undertones. In digital painting, green and other colours can work with many skin tones, if the artist knows how to apply it.



Fig. 35. Nolwazi Waugh. My painting process of undertones and skin I created for my Matric Visual Art Exam (2017)

Online resources do cover application of undertones for Black people, but they still lack variety and mostly only show limited examples of dark skin, mostly consisting of one lighter skin tone and one for a darker skin tone. This does not show the variety and diversity of Black people. The more skilful an artist is in their fundamental application and knowledge, the more they are listened to when guiding others, even if they may not be well-informed in a certain topic. This is the case with many online sources.

From my observations, a recurring pattern for painting undertones on Black people is using the colours orange and purple. Orange for lighter tones, and purple for darker tones. The way they are painted to have that undertone is presented as if they are in a room with a coloured light source. People are not always in an environment where there is a coloured light source, and Black people can still be depicted as visible without having to use unnatural colours to make the skin visible (see fig. 36)

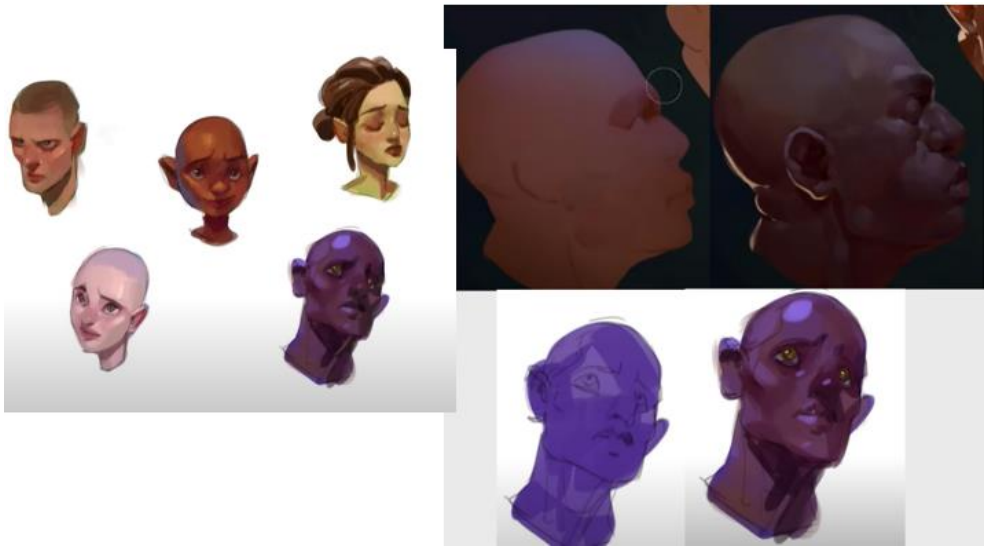


Fig. 36. (Top Right) Sinix Design (Left and Bottom) Ahmed Aldoori Painting undertones and dark skin. (Anatomy Quick Tips, 2022; Painting Skin Tones, 2021)

While these guides do not explicitly say these are the only skin tones for Black people, they still perpetuate the assumption that there are only two types of skin colour variations for Black people. Which further diminishes the diversity that should be represented in a Black person. Shabazz and the artists he referred to, do offer more methods on how to obtain the desired effect whilst keeping the original skin colour of the character within digital art. Shabazz has gone through great lengths to guide people on drawing, depicting, and designing Black characters. However, his work is made less significant because of inaccessibility of his book, which makes it lesser known, decreasing its credibility. Many beginner and advanced artists, consider the established art guides, and online video guides to be the best sources for art techniques to learn from, because most of them can be obtained for free and both are created by highly skilled artists. Established art guides also have the advantage of being known for longer, thus also appearing at the top of search results when looking for art guides. Not only that, but one would specifically need to include 'Black' in the search, otherwise the Black character or people guides will not be shown otherwise. These few factors, push the work of Shabazz and other Black art guides away from the eyes of artists. Further diminishing his impact. Which is why it is important to create more accessible and diverse knowledge on how to better represent Black people.

Point 2: The Miscommunication, Misrepresentation, and Misunderstanding of the Art Fundamentals related to Black Africans

Hall defined power as something to be understood as not only in terms of economic exploitation and physical coercion. It includes the power to represent someone or something in a certain way (Hall et al.). Hall was speaking about how stereotyping is used in the exercise of symbolic violence. I would argue people with the power of influence can change the meanings of things which can later have detrimental effects, even if the intention is not meant to be antagonistic. Its perception may affect others negatively.

Regarding the lessons surrounding fundamentals of art, mainly Caucasian Euro-Americans appear as models with the "ideal" body proportions within established drawing guides. While guides that show these ideals wouldn't be a bad thing if it was a standalone guide, many guides follow this standard and exclude many varieties of people including Black people. As

these ideals are instructed and perceived as the fundamentals of art, the knowledge on how to depict other body types, ethnicities, and human bodies are further discarded.

This expands upon what was previously discussed in chapter 2. Scholars like Edward MacCurdy, E.H. Gombrich, and several others that Da Vinci's motivation for performing his studies of anatomy was directly related to his painting (Cothern). This assumption is believed even now, because the scholars had the qualifications for their theories to be believed. Their power of influence spread across centuries, and it is believed that Leonardo's sole purpose for human anatomy studies was dedicated to his art. When, in actuality, he was very indifferent towards art, and more interested and dedicated to his scientific curiosities in the human body. He believed the human body was the perfect machine, to be studied for its structure and function. The most popular drawing guides such as *Figure Drawing for all Its Worth* (1943) were published during the 1930s and 1940s. These older guides show a reflection of discourse of who was included, how they were represented and who was excluded from these guides.

The development of the fundamentals of art, I believe is a biproduct of these histories and opinions, mainly catering to people of fair skinned features and ethnicities from a Euro-American descent, as previously discussed in chapter 2. While efforts are being made to diversify the knowledge of fundamentals of art in character art application regarding Black people, more still needs to be done for it to be more inclusive.

As previously discussed in Chapter 1, the images depicted in many drawing guides only represent people from a Euro-American descent, present mainly two body types, or even when Black people are presented, they still present the ideal or standard body type. Which leads to this representation of human anatomy being labelled as an art fundamental. This leaves many artists that do not match these standards feeling dejected and stunted from learning to construct a variety of figures of people. "Again, if you don't see yourself in generalized guide books, it's a little demoralizing" (Masuku 00:03:18). It further insinuates that the "ideal" of human beings are Caucasian people which leads to negative psychological impacts Black Africans and Black people who learn from these drawing guides.

Briefly going back to chapter 3, I disagreed with the notion when drawing people of different proportions. Regarding the fundamentals of art, it is believed that Caucasian people are considered the basis of drawing all people in art, as they are depicted more in fundamental guidebooks. The expert Tumo Mere states that once an artist has a good understanding of the

fundamentals of art “breaking the fundamentals becomes more fun… anatomy can be, like, contorted in these really cool fun ways” (Mere 00:08:30). Tumo is referring to drawing fantastical human proportions. However, this same mindset exists when a beginner artist desires to draw body types that do not appear in established drawing guides, they are then advised by a skilled artist to learn the fundamentals first. Which is expected.

However, established fundamental guidebooks only cater to limited figures. As Shabazz stated in his book, “anatomical differences are common but not common enough to have two molds cover all humans” (Shabazz 52). Drawing body types and proportions of Black African figures, and any other human form should not be considered breaking the rules of art, when referring to the fundamentals of art. It should be included in them. The fundamentals of art for drawing people should be more diverse, not necessarily portraying every single human being, but a variety of foundational knowledge for more proportions should be present.

Point 3: Diversity Gap in Art Fundamental Learning and Interview Data

Point 3 focuses on the interview answers and suggests what could be implemented and created to help fill in the diversity gap of knowledge of drawing Black Africans in digital art. Throughout this section, I will be addressing the participants on a first name basis, as that was how the interviews were conducted, and will make it easier to differentiate who I am addressing.

According to the data collected in my interviews, a number of participants shared similar inspirations from watching anime or reading manga in their youth (Malakaila; Masokoane; Masuku; Mere; Rahman). Anime and manga share similar character styles. Anime is a Japanese animation style that is produced or influenced by Japan and its culture (Team). Anime often characterised by the stylisation of the human form – big eyes, small lips and nose, unnatural looking hair styles, and longer limbs (see fig. 37) All of which serves to emphasise character expression and enable wider range of emotions the characters can express (Team). Manga is a Japanese comic book, presented as an illustrated novel in a unique graphic style. It is defined as entertaining or exaggerated drawings or images, in panels presented in a sequential order, similar to Western comics (“The History of Manga and Its Origins”).



Fig. 37. (left) Tokyo-MewMew TV Series (2002–2003), (right) Yu-Gi-Oh! TV Series (2000–2006)

One participant stated that they used anime how to draw books which catered to this style. An art style can be defined as the unique way an artist represents their art. It can be the way they use their linework, or colour techniques, shading, and aesthetics. Within, drawing guides, it can be a way the artist draws the figure to make it easier to understand or exaggerate figures for better understanding. A variation of art styles is used in drawing guidebooks.

Bill stated that anime styled guide books, made drawing different human bodies difficult to navigate, especially for drawing Black people (2024). Some participants used mimicry from watching TV shows and tried to replicate the styles in their own drawings (Masuku; Mere; Rahman). Some of the mentioned productions were *Pokemon* (1998-2023) , *Dragon Ball Z* (1996-2003) , *Beyblade* (2001-2005) and *Digimon* (1999-2007), and *Naruto* (2002-2007), which were all very popular airings at the time of the participants' childhoods. The participant Rahman stated that he appreciated the storytelling told through animation he watched in his youth, which cemented his desire to become a cartoonist. He mentions a Nigerian artist, that created a book called *Apple Black* that "talks, extensively about how to draw different, aspects of the African body" (Rahman 00:04:32). The artist's name was not disclosed during the interview.

All the participants stated that their main points of reference when learning how to draw were also from family members and other artists they took inspiration from (Malakaila; Masokoane; Masuku; Mere; Rahman). For example, while growing up Malakaila's uncle was a landscape painter and sculptor. He also had a cousin that introduced him to comics which he

became fascinated by (Malakaila 00:03:26). He stated that both were valuable sources of learning for his art journey. “My uncle used to paint landscapes… so I grew up with that in my knowledge” (Malakaila 00:02:24).

Rahman talks about his uncle who drew a lot and wanted to be a graphic designer. Even though his uncle did not become one, Rahman learned a lot from his uncle’s prior knowledge in drawing. It was not his official profession, but he made time to practice it. As Rahman grew up, his love for illustration grew even more as his uncle taught him certain ways of drawing hands and arms. While they were not perfect depictions, according to Rahman it was still valuable to him and allowed his passion for art to grow stronger. “He taught me, the love for illustrating even more… He instilled that love for art in me” (Rahman 00:06:16).

When asked what their point of references were when drawing African characters specifically, participants had a variety of responses – some with shared similarities. Participants looked up to artists that created artworks and productions with African characters or stories and read overseas comic books that featured a Black protagonist. Examples include Sam Wilson as Captain America, Miles Morales as Spiderman, and South African comic book *Kwezi* (2016) along with other Black superheroes. Masuku stated that nowadays searching for references for Black people on Google is becoming dangerous, as Artificial Intelligence (AI) takes the place of what would be real humans, which are often not accurate representation of Black people (Masuku 00:07:09).[4]

Khumo Masokoane’s reference when drawing African characters was an artist named Panda Exclamated, an Instagram artist who has worked on a few shows. He stated that Panda had an art style that conveyed a diversity of human figures which Masokoane referenced for his own art (Masokoane 00:05:02).

[4] Many recent discussions on ethical considerations of bias in AI systems have centered on racial bias. This article argues the antiblackness in AI’s design and development and deployment needs more examination (Dancy and Saucier).

Tlotlo Malakaila's point of reference were illustrations within folk tale books. He stated that the illustrations fascinated him, as they were more detailed and had a more unique art style than the comic books he read during the same he read the folk tale books (Malakaila 00:03:26).

All the artists above shared common interests such as watching anime when learning how to draw. Watching this media influenced the subject matter they would draw the most in their youth. Having more Black characters in media would also diversify who is represented in media and further contribute to the knowledge gap of representing Black Africans. Additionally, it could lead more people to have Black characters be their first point of reference when learning to draw. As seeing Black characters in comic books had a positive impact on Masuku, as he felt inspired and seen.

If Black African characters, and African culture made characters were more popular, commonly known, or were in demand in the digital art industries, then Black African and African artists could have an easier time trying to pursue work in the digital art industries, and more authentic African stories and characters could be presented.

When asked how a digital artist could bring more diversity into the digital art space. Malakaila stated that one could get storytelling and character inspiration from visiting their home villages, as those would be unique experiences one could implement into their characters and stories (Malakaila 00:06:26). Rahman further stated that taking inspiration from the people around you and your experiences can also add a unique perspective to your character that will be uniquely African.

Designing Black African characters from one's experiences and impressions from their life makes for a more thought-out character that can successfully tell a story just from looking at it (Shabazz). This could cause a positive feedback loop where uniquely cultural experiences could be produced. Both artists and viewers would get exposed to more Southern African stories with Black African characters, with no pre-existing stereotypes within them.

Whilst nothing stops an artist from designing Black African characters, gaining a foothold in the digital art industry for character design drawing, as an African digital character artist can be challenging. One interviewee expressed there are some uniquely African issues that come with trying to get into the digital art industry, one main difficulty is lack of internationally recognised African companies or studios.

There is also a lack of artist support communities. Ones such as the Visual Arts Network of South Africa (2019 - 2025) where artists can get help seeking opportunities such as employment, funding, professional practice or enter competitions to make themselves more known. Or outsourcing studios where projects can be worked on and gain international recognition, which offers benefits such as finding work more reliably and helps the artist's work reach a wider audience. While artists can and are encouraged to post their work online, it still does not offer a reliable system to help when an artist gain employment (Mere).

While there are digital art studios and companies throughout the African continent, the reach of their productions may not be as well recognised as an established international studio. If an African made studio wanted more reach, they may have to service commissions for an outside studio, which could negatively impact their creative power in representing African characters. While events like Comic Con Africa – a multi-day event in which comic book fans gather to meet creators, experts in the field and each other, and art studio galleries – events where visual artists showcase their work, take place, they are still isolated and may only be known or orchestrated by active community members. This may make it difficult for non-active members to engage and know of important movements such as better representation of Black characters in digital art.

Studios and publishing places for African made character design productions should try and reach wider audiences that cover even the niche ones, so more people, artists and non-artists can view them.

Marketing for projects is important as it can help reach a wider audience. One of the interviewees, Ziyaad Rahman, created a comic book called *Siri Watu* (2017), and has currently adapted it into short animation. It carries popular aesthetics elements from anime shows such as fight scenes and facial expressions, but presents it within a South African perspective, whilst having South African characters and cultures present within the short. If his production becomes more accessible to wider audiences, it could lead artists and viewers to be exposed to better representation, and lead to more artists creating more diverse African characters because of the positive influence they were exposed to.

Chapter 5: Process and Outcomes of my Creative Research

This chapter describes the processes and inspirations taken when producing the creative component of the research: a digital art book. The purpose of the book is to showcase visual character designs that use cultural and traditional signifiers from my own Motswana context as a someone raised in Botswana. Specifics about the design process, thoughts about intention behind the designs, and problems solved throughout the process will be discussed. Additional insights on my artistic influences will give more information on my artistic developments in the art book.

This section is organised in sections, the first is not titled, but it talks about the practice in the lens of myself as the artist. The second section describes inspirations that informed my practice, the decisions and processes that I made while creating the characters, and the challenges that occurred within these processes.

While I trained in traditional art during my years in high school, I have since transitioned into digital art and have been practicing it ever since. While growing up, the Botswana Television channel showed many kinds of animated shows. Many of which reflected myths, legends and stories of other countries in Africa and across the world, further engraving their mark on me as I viewed them. The stories told were in an African perspective, and while I watched them, I still remember the premise at least of one of them – a tribal woman with the ability to turn into an impala. This animated media shows the importance of broadcasting African stories to children in Africa. As an artist now, being exposed to the many variations of digital art – videogames, comics, animations, 3D renders, and other digital creations – it makes we wonder why I do not see similar stories being proliferated or created as much as compared to when I was a child.

As an artist I draw human and humanoid characters. Growing up and even now, it always fascinated me on how an artist could depict people through different variations to exaggerate an emotion, trait, or personality all mixed with the artists creativity and premise of the story. In my experience, drawing human characters can represent Black Africans and their features and mannerisms best. While I am still improving my art skills, I try to implement Black African figures while incorporating the lessons from guides such as Loomis and Bridgeman to diversify my learning material.

I have many subconscious influences that have informed my practice. Some of those influences remain at the forefront of my mind as I continue to learn and use their techniques of drawing to achieve in my own art. Others live in memory but still hold importance to me as they inform the creative thinking process behind my creative thinking that informs the art.

Painting Software

The creative research is a collection of digitally hand drawn illustrations accompanied by informative storytelling related text. Clip Studio Paint was the first painting software I used before switching to work with Krita. Krita is a painting software program I am more comfortable using in terms of technical skill and knowledge with the program itself. I thought of using both programs interchangeably, however, that would make the process disruptive. Therefore, I chose to only use Krita.

Character Design Developments

The Tswana (1984) by Isaac Schapera et al. and *Culture and Customs of Botswana* (2006) by James Denbow and Phenyo C. Thebe were the main sources of information used regarding some older Botswana culture, traditions and beliefs, and traditional clothing and accessories that are still present in Botswana's contemporary culture. The main cultures and traditions I chose to express through storytelling and character design drawing were Totemism and Rain Rituals. Totemism is described as a group having a certain animal species as its object of honour, veneration, avoidance, or praise. There are special myths on how each group acquired its totem, and there are rules the group members must abide by when engaging with their totem. The totem should not be killed, eaten or touched on the skin, if these rules are broken, a purification ceremony will be performed to avoid illness or other misfortune (Schapera et al.). The other tradition I chose is a ritual performed during the rainy season. Where by newly bereaved people were reported to the chief, and a 'cooling' ritual would occur by smearing the grieving person's body with rainmaking medicines to prevent them from scorching the land wherever they went (Schapera et al. 60). I took a modern approach to representing the Totemism characters. I wanted them to resemble people you'd see in life. Additionally, Botswana culture has been blended with European cultures from its early history, so having the characters include present day Botswana clothing with cultural elements and symbolisms added more intention to their designs. By contrast, I took a traditional approach when visually representing the Rain Ritual characters as shown in the artbook.

I used Totemism as inspiration for the first iteration of characters. To avoid over-scoping, I chose two totems, the monkey which is my mother's totem, and the crocodile totem because I thought it would make for interesting character designs.

The second batch of characters I came up with was when my creative drive started to form, as I really focused on making characters that expressed Motswana cultures through different impressions. My initial concept drawings were mainly based on modern-day people, but that felt limiting to me, as a character drawn may not always be from modern day, it could be of fantasy or science fiction. This change also allowed me to challenge myself in expressing culture in any character theme. Applying African phenotypes to the characters was an important aspect, as that would make them to be perceived as African which would also be representing their ethnicity into their designs. I gave all the characters varying nose and lip sizes and different eye shapes and facial structures, to show that there is diversity within black characters but still chose to depict these features more pronounced within the character's proportions. I questioned if I was making the noses or lips too big, as I was internally referencing guides such as Loomis and how the lips and noses were displayed in proportion to the models faces. I remembered Shabazz stating in his book that "In Black cultures, strong unique features define beauty" (Shabazz 65). I used that as motivation to not fear having more pronounced facial features or body structures when designing my Motswana characters.

Inspirations and Thought Process

I was shown the art book *The Art of Death Stranding* (2020) by Kojima Productions. The art style is very professional, and as one person making my art book, I tried to not feel discouraged that I could not make the same quality of art. As numerous people, worked on *The Art of Death Stranding*. I took inspiration from the way the art and information were formatted and displayed and incorporated that into my own practice.

The book information from Schapera et al. and Denbow et al. about Botswana culture helped shape the storyboard setting, characters, and the other visual elements of the characters from the art book that are not part of the storyboard.

Totem Characters

Regarding the totem characters I wanted to display groups of characters with the same theme but exhibiting different personalities as I saw a similar thing be done in Mike Mattesi's art book (name it and get the pic) which I drew some sketches for the crocodile totem character.

This helped with the initial idea finalising and sketch iterations to finding the first good design, but I later decided to only focus on one character rather than multiple, as that would be minimised the probability of me losing energy drawing many characters at a time.

When designing the Totem characters, I wanted to explore different fashion styles that would also inform the personality of the character. I believe self-expressions, shape language and personality can be accentuated through the clothing of the character. When designing the crocodile totem character, I wanted him to have the role of a mob boss or a leader of a high-profile organisation. I wanted to display sharp shapes and hard edges in his silhouette, as crocodiles are often associated with those shapes in character design.

So, to convey these shapes I made the character wear a suit with pointy padded shoulders, a long brimmed white hat, shiny scaled shoes, and a fancy cane. This way, his status would shine through. A problem arose however, as it started to look like the Black pimp archetype and I wanted to stay away from any caricatures of Black people. I changed the character to be a woman instead and have her personality to have a boisterous, loud, and confident demeaner, in a way where her very being commands authority and respect. I took away many of the original accessories and had her hold a cigar instead. I was inspired to make this her personality because it reminded me of a beloved late family member who I grew up knowing that had similar mannerisms.

The monkey totem was designed to resemble a herbalist or a forest dweller living in the city. To achieve this, I drew her clothing to resemble an internet aesthetic called goblin core[5], with a mix of cultural jewellery and accessories on her head and waist. She wears a beanie in the colours of the Elder Healer's hood from the storyboard; I thought it would add more intention to her role and a link between her possible ancestry as a herbalist. I incorporated inspiration from a band my mother used to wear; the waist band made of string adored with beads. Traditionally these are worn for healing purposes, it can be described as a prescription given to a patient by a traditional doctor. It is also worn for traditional fashion purposes.

[5] An internet created aesthetic inspired by the folklore of goblins and forestry. It celebrates non-conventional norms of beauty and visuals such as soil, snakes, worms, snails, and second-hand objects. It is also connected to maximalism and escapism ("Goblincore").

I also wanted to draw a room that she spends most of her time in. I chose a kitchen because it can show where she works usually and showcase the homely feelings of a well lived-in and cluttered home that also resonates with the goblin core visuals – jars, copper cook wear, rusty ovens, hanging dry herbs, scattered recipe cooks and notes, potted plants, do-it-yourself furniture, and other trinkets. The colour palette also adds intention as I coloured it in warm tones and added colours from her clothing to make a closer connection.

Both Totem character have story inspirations from the anime and manga series known as *Terra Formars* (2011) written by Yū Sasuga and Kenichi Tachibana, where humans are given animal and insect DNA to fight monsters on Mars (Sasuga and Tachibana). The monkey totem has pendant on her neck that allows her to change her human form, it is a similar concept of the transformations that take place in the Disney film *Brother Bear* (2003). As a monkey, the character gains access to harder to reach natural herbs and medicines, a downside to this is she can be quite messy, as seen by the books and cups on the counter and fur on the carpet in the kitchen drawing. The crocodile totem is drawn with sharp teeth, slanted eye shape and long claw-like nails.

Traditional Doctor Character

Inspired from a story about a real traditional children's doctor that cured me as a baby. The aesthetic of old healers reminded me of solitary life people, buried in their books and only conversing with society, when necessary. The character has a collection of preliminary concept sketches as I mainly wanted to explore different design elements, which I succeeded in as I drew up many different ideas for his facial appearance, attire, and tools. On top of the fact that this character is recluse, I wanted to draw them in a band with other hermit characters playing instruments, but I scrapped that concept as I was over scoping.

Fantasy Characters

Fairies of fantasy have always been a special interest of mine, and I wanted very much to draw Black people as fairies, as they are not commonly found in media. Fairies are popularly known and paired with anything that exists in nature and the imagination; thus, I created two elemental fairy characters. One that controls plants, and the other sculpts clouds. The plant fairy has albinism. The first concept for the plant fairy that was drawn of him resembled Disney's depiction of *Peter Pan* (1953), which was a subconscious influence that affected this process. At this time concept looked like a re-design of Peter Pan rather than its own

character. So, with more deliberation, I drew him wearing traditional Motswana dancer attire – animal skin loin cloth usually worn by men, and matlhoa[6]. I also made his hair pale yellow in colour to try and resemble albinism hair colour.

Through my years observing and creating art I have always been inspired by other artist that created works of art that reflect their own cultures and stories of their or other experiences within those cultures. Many a time, those artist's works have become renowned in the digital art world, a space that is usually very harsh to depictions of artistic creativity that do not showcase the 'industry standard'. [7] Not to say the art created with the industry standard in mind are not incredible as many artists within it do have exceptionally high skill and creative visions, but seeing African made art break into a European and Western centric industry without being bound to its 'rules' is very motivating.

Fundamentally, I wanted to portray my culture and how I could represent Botswana's multiculture and different ethnicities as character designs. Additionally, while researching for these character designs, I learned things I was not aware of before, especially the knowledge relating to ancient burial rituals and meanings behind them, and that there were no oppressive gender roles for professions such as doctors or medical practices before European influence. I applied this idea to the storyboard, which is discussed below.

Storyboard

I created a storyboard for the purpose of telling a story based on ancient Rain Rituals in Botswana traditions and beliefs, found in The Tswana by I. Schapera (1984). At first, it was going to be a comic, but I changed it to be a storyboard as the wider aspect ratio would provide more room to draw the scenes. I also had to consider what my strengths were, and I had more confidence in drawing storyboards. In total I made five characters, as storyboards are used mainly animation, I had to keep in mind the number of characters that would keep the story condensed and easy to follow and keep their designs as animation friendly as

[6] Rectangular husks that contain seeds that have been strung together and wrapped around the ankles and calves of the dancers.

[7] There is a racial bias in the digital arts industry that favours the narratives and visual features of European, Western, and East Asian people. This marginalises the narratives and visual features of Black, indigenous and other non-white minorities, which limits diverse representation and reinforces systemic inequalities within art education and practice. (Kim et al.; T. J. Smith)

possible. Usually, the storyboards would be drawn with a shorthand which is a simplified drawing style, and while many scenes do depict that, I decided to draw some scenes with a bit more detail to push the narrative more, as drawings with too much simplicity without prior context, may not have been understood. I admittedly did not give the characters names as what was more important to me was their visual design and what role played in the story. In hindsight, adding more names possibly could have made the process of creating them more personal and added more intention to their cultural representation, however I chose not to as the roles and visual designs were of higher priority (see fig. 38).



Fig. 38. Nolwazi Waugh, Storyboard Character Lineup, 2024

The information I obtained for the story in the storyboard came from *The Tswana*. The clothing worn and the cultures and rituals performed were all during a time before European influence. The story follows a ritual explained in the book that was performed throughout the rainy season. In which newly bereaved people were reported to the chief, where he would instruct the grieving person to be smeared with juice of irritant bulbs used in rainmaking medicines. This treatment was intended to “cool” (60) their bodies and prevent them from scorching the land (Schapera et al.). I chose to fantasise the story more to make it more impactful. For example, the grieving person’s grief becomes a physical embodiment of fire, which alerts the doctors and the chief that begins the treatment. My aim was to represent the closeness the village people had with each other. I also drew the characters with a variety of African body types, mainly seen within the women characters. Using the lessons in Shabazz’s guidebook helped me design these characters, especially using his process and lessons on

how I could represent different proportions in body types. I also used prior knowledge and referenced lessons from Loomis for accurate proportion lengths and other anatomical accuracies.

Challenges

There are times where I did not believe in my anatomy skills when drawing the features and phenotypes of Black characters were acceptable. Most of my anatomy and fundamental learning came from authors like Loomis, who taught the fundamentals of art and human proportions of Euro-American people. This limited me when it came to drawing Black people's features.

While I did use Shabazz's book and artists' guides, it was difficult trying to adapt and relearn a new anatomy reference in a short amount of time. Even though Shabazz's references were closer to what I was trying to represent in my own art. It was hard trying to apply that anatomy knowledge after years of only knowing Loomis. Which proves that the fundamentals need to be more diverse to avoid restructuring and doubt in one's art skill.

Despite this, I started to learn how to portray the prominent facial features of Black people and other kinds of body types. This gave me confidence that I was improving while designing. Improving my draftsmanship skills is still a laborious effort, but having Shabazz and the artists' guides he provided will help me close the knowledge and skill gap that has held me back in drawing and properly representing Black African characters.

The women drawn in the storyboard have exposed chest areas, or wear animal skins. This brought up a concern of whether they would be viewed in a sexual manner or if the story would have been viewed the way it was intended. As a woman myself, I am aware that women's bodies, are viewed in a sexual manner without needing to exist in a sexual context. However, while this was a concerning thought, I decided to carry on drawing them as they were depicted traditionally from this time, as doing otherwise would have succeeded the oppressive European opinions about Black Africans, and taken away the accurate representation of the people in this time. I had no desire of making my depictions digestible as to me a woman's natural body is not something that should be shunned or rejected, and the opinions of those who choose to view them in a sexual manner, should be promptly disregarded.

Through my challenges I felt I was able to express characters and their impressions well, while showing their African features and cultural inspirations. And I feel my skills in character design have also improved.

Although I critique the art books, I discussed prior, I am still influenced by them and tried to incorporate their principles and applications to my work. These include, applying Force to characters (Mattesi), as Mattesi described in previously in chapter 3, and other principles from the guides I have discovered throughout my tenure as an artist.

I could not fully show the culture in all the character designs I created, as I had to think about many factors and aspects when designing them. These included, preventing every character in looking too traditional, and adding modern or fantasy elements to them to make them more interesting, without losing cultural elements. Many people in life can and are cultural without overtly presenting it in their visual appearance, which is something I wanted to carry in some of my designs.

I had to include many aspects such as incorporating clothing designs, occupations whether it was real or fantasy, and thinking about the fundamentals of character design to make sure their visual design left an impression, as I did not add full stories for many of them. This took time to get right, even at the end of the creative process I still felt I did not achieve this goal in some of them.

The drawing processes for each character took multiple days to finish which was very taxing. I would enter periods where I would have no energy, inspiration, and feel depressed, which would make it stressful as I was losing time. I endeavoured to make sure that the artworks were expressed in a creative and representative way. I also decided on a character design as quickly as possible and change the designs appearance as I was drawing, rather than plan out everything before I started drawing. This helped quicken the process, but it still came with its drawbacks such as not feeling confident in my art abilities. Overall, I believe I managed to achieve most of the aims for the creative research in representing thoughtful African character design with Southern African cultures.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This research aimed to improve representation for Black Southern Africans in comic, animation and game character design art. Additionally it aimed to investigate the impacts that how-to-draw guidebooks produced in the West have on this representation, and what could be applied to the creation of an artbook of Motswana characters. Based on qualitative research through literary analysis and case study investigations, this research concluded that the amalgamation of racial bias in the pedagogical norms of mainstream guidebooks, and within the practices of the digital art industry perpetuate the exclusion of Black bodies. Additionally resulting in less visibility and accessibility of content created by Black artists and preventing the engagement and incorporation of Black characters in an artists' practice. Diverse and inclusive character design art is made by drawing more from inner cultural experiences and gaining inspirations through cultural or traditional practices and less from pre-existing Black characters made from Western perspectives.

Originating with the 'father' of anatomy, Leonardo Da Vinci, his anatomical studies and illustrations pioneered the accurate depictions of anatomical human figures in art. While these studies were revolutionary in understanding the human body and depicting it, his work was misappropriated in being the most legitimate way to depict human bodies in art. This resulted in established drawing guides from authors such as Loomis and Vanderpoel to depict human bodies in similar ways as Da Vinci. Continuing into modern art practices and drawing guide materials, the exclusion of Black bodies continues as the majority of online guides only showcase applying the fundamentals of art onto fair-skinned Caucasians and East Asians. This racial bias affects digital art industries as most of them are Western dominated and require artists to master the fundamentals of art using these guides which perpetuate the racial bias further. While there are redeeming depictions of Black people in digital art media, the roles in which they are made to play mirror the opinions of them dating back to the Renaissance and Colonial historic times. This results in artists using these depictions as character design inspiration, unaware of the harmful underpinned elements the art carries. Additionally Black bodies not being represented in drawing guides or having those drawing guides be easily accessible, prevents artists from positively representing and depicting Black characters in their art. The pre-existing racial bias extends into three-dimensional digital art software, which is better at realistically rendering white human skin, whereas dark human

skin looks artificial in comparison. Additionally, both Black children and adults develop a negative self-image, which is reinforced by the lack of representation in drawing guides, and digital art media.

This isn't to say good Black African representation doesn't exist, as the research article *'Akokhan returns': Kenyan newspaper comics and the making of an 'African' superhero* (2016) by Duncan Omanga discusses Frank Odoi's *Akokhan* as an example of a superhero comic series that fully utilises Ghanain folklore and references to West African cultural artifacts, labels and social contexts. Omanga states that the African superhero is a reclamation of the Western superhero, whereas the Western superhero gains power from scientific accidents, the African superhero's power is primordial and has closer ties to culture, spirituality and tradition which localises the narrative and characters textually, and thus extends into their visual depiction.

This informed my approach of creating Motswana characters for my art book. Much like the reclamation of superheroes that Odoi did with *Akokhan*, I took the concept of fairies, which mainly appear in European narratives, and created Motswana characters of them. In the process of creating the art book I used a mixture of literary analysis that discussed insights of Botswana's society and culture before European influence, and my own personal cultural experiences.

Many of these sources were obtained from more experienced people who were knowledgeable about Botswana's culture and books that pre-dated European influence which informed much of the narrative and visual design aspects of my drawings. I argues that by creating characters with these methods, it gives the artist creative freedom and removes racial bias that would otherwise be gained from Western sources. It also allows for character designs and narratives to be more localised and relatable by the audience. However, while some designs within the art book do carry influence from European culture, that does not mean the reclamation has failed as it adds a sense of historical accuracy and realism within our daily lives, as we engage with cultural influences that are not out own. These influences do not dominate the original cultural narrative as it serves as an enhancement to make it more relatable and localised a Motswana audience.

I interviewed five practicing industry artists from Botswana and South Africa, all participants agreed that learning the fundamentals of art either early or later in one's artistic practice is important, for it is a science that cannot be ignored, however that science is flawed in its exclusion of Black human bodies, as many expressed their desire to have been able to use Black drawing guide books when developing their drawing skills. They all agreed in the importance of drawing from personal life experience whether yours or others, observing Black people and drawing them, and seeking unique perspectives from older generations to capture and localise African character designs and narratives.

Regarding the application of the fundamentals of art within the artbook process, I struggled to depict Black African figures because the majority of my art career has been using drawing guides that perpetuate the ideal body type that Loomis and other guides follow. While I did have guides from Shabazz to reference from, it was still difficult to incorporate the knowledge from Shabazz while still trying to maintain the pre-conceived notions of "correct" anatomy I had been conditioned to learn. This proves the need for more inclusive drawing guides that depict diverse Black human figures and proportions. This exposure to a variety of Black people could prevent an artists' drawing skills from suffering from not being able to depict Black people and provide diverse depictions of Black people across the Black diaspora. This could diminish the need to rely on characters with potentially unnoticeable racist narratives.

With the growth of art learning resources on the internet, further studies could address the implications of Artificial Intelligence learning from already established racial biases to create references and art learning resources that depict Black people. Additionally, the concept of Blackwashing and its impacts of representing "true Blackness" while still perpetuating stereotypical Americanised Blackness requires further study. I hope this research can inspire others to go out and critically examine existing racism in digital art practice, pedagogy in art education, software, guidebooks, and the lack of accessibility that makes art education resources that represent Black people less visible.

The majority of Black artists that created works and guidebooks within this research were only discovered through word-of-mouth or references from people who already knew about them or engaged in spaces that discussed them. These works have existed for many years alongside many previously established guidebooks, yet they are less proliferated compared to guides produced in the West. Further studies need to critically examine why this is so and possibly create three-dimensional software and their rendering processes that do not exclude Black and dark-skinned people.

Therefore, my findings confirm the existing theory of power dynamics through racial biases that control representation and the perception of people in digital art character design.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Below are the images of the paintings discussed in Chapter 2. They are displayed in the order they are mentioned from Chapter 2 for easier navigation.



Fig. 39. Rubens, Peter Paul. The Adoration of the Magi. 1609. Artchive, https://www.artchive.com/artwork/the-adoration-of-the-magi-peter-paul-rubens-1609/



Fig. 40. Rubens, Peter Paul. The Drunken Silenus. 1620. Artchive, https://www.artchive.com/artwork/the-drunken-silenus-peter-paul-rubens-c-1620/



Fig. 41. Rubens, Peter Paul. Studies of the Head of a Negro. 1613-15. Artchive, https://www.artchive.com/artwork/studies-of-the-head-of-a-negro-peter-paul-rubens/



Fig. 42. Rubens, Peter Paul. Bathsheba at the Fountain. 1635. Artchive, https://www.artchive.com/artwork/bathsheba-at-the-fountain-peter-paul-rubens-c-1635/



Fig. 43. Berchem, Nicolaes. A Moor Presenting a Parrot to a Lady. 1660-70. Gallerix, https://gallerix.org/storeroom/1419628688/N/1741462450/



Fig. 44. Haarlem, Cornelis van. Bathsheba at her Bath. 1594. Picryl, https://picryl.com/media/bathsheba-at-her-toilet-eee9c1

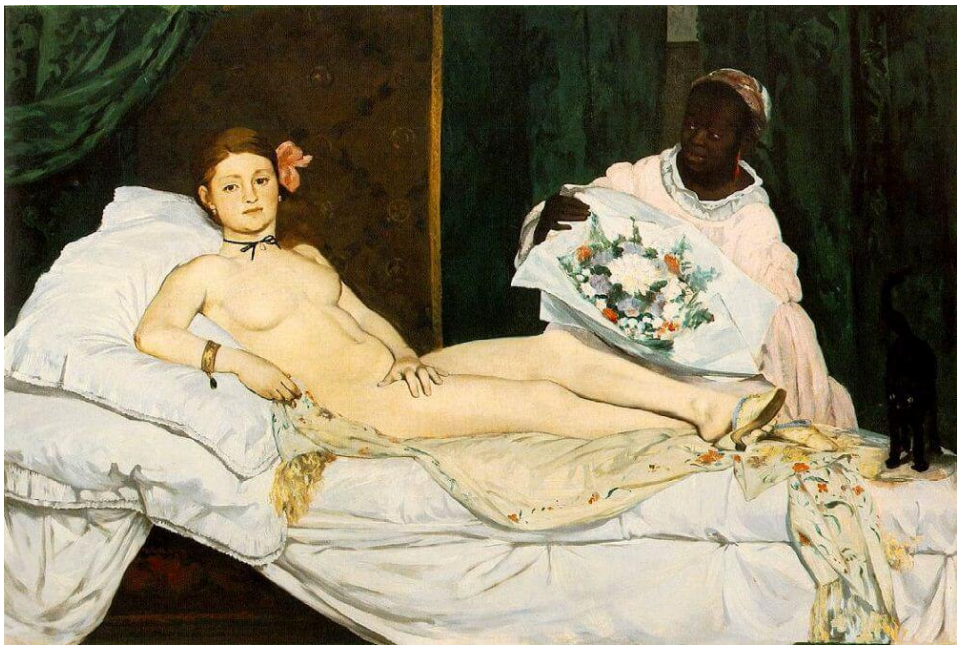


Fig. 45. Manet, Édouard. Olympia. 1863. Édouard Manet, https://www.manet.org/olympia.jsp



Fig. 46. Rubens, Peter Paul. Diana and Callisto. 1639. Artchive, https://www.artchive.com/artwork/diana-and-callisto-peter-paul-rubens-c-1639/

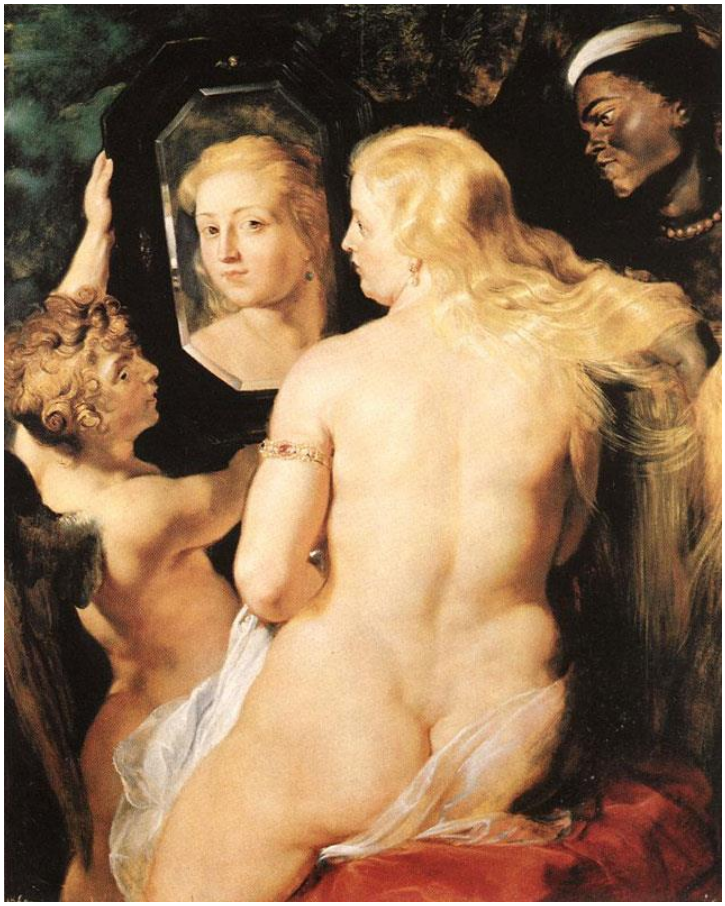


Fig. 47. Rubens, Peter Paul. Venus with a Mirror. 1612-15. Artchive, https://www.artchive.com/artwork/morning-toilet-of-venus-peter-paul-rubens-1612-1615/

Appendix B

The next 8 images display screenshots of characters, buildings and landscapes taken from the video game *Genshin Impact*. These images are related to the discussion in Chapter 2, which discusses the differences in economy, infrastructure and quality of life of the fair skinned and dark-skinned people of Sumeru Forest and Sumeru Desert. This is seen as racist as it only shows dark skinned characters living harsh lives and being aggressive towards the player, and fair skinned people living comfortably.



Fig. 48. Sumeru Forest, Architecture, NPC Characters, and Environment

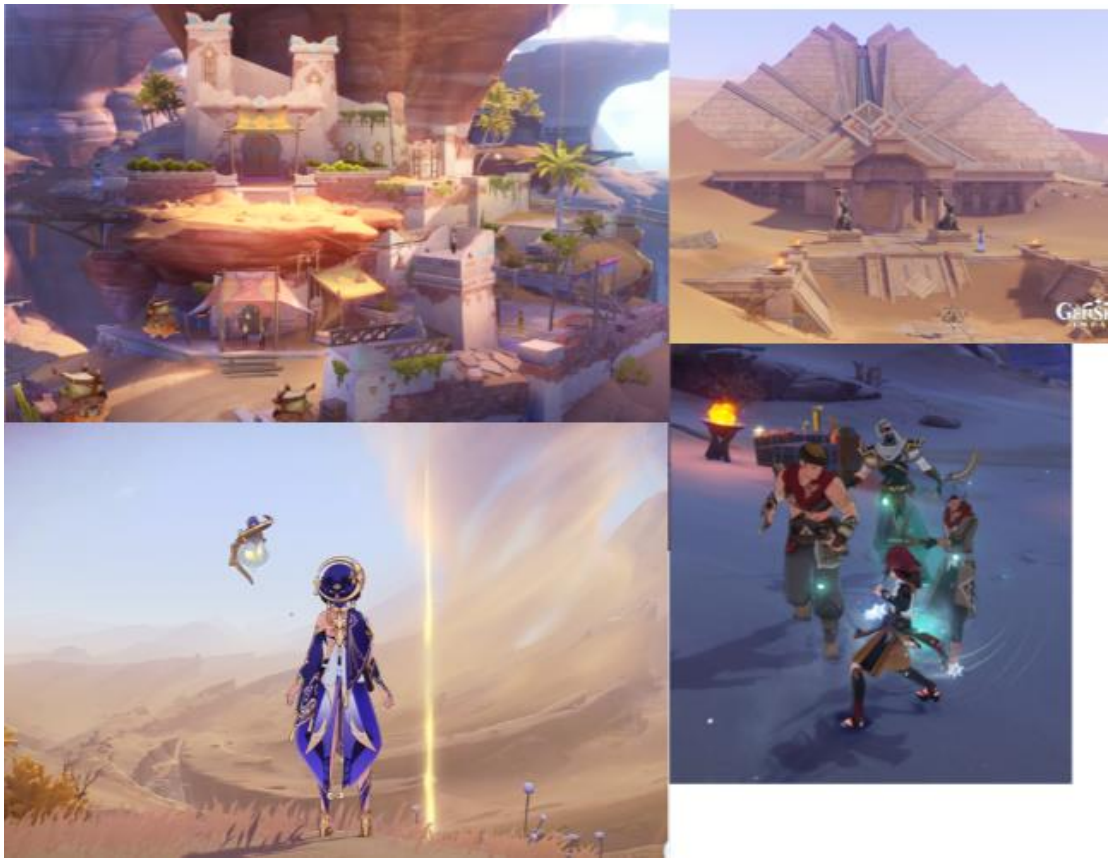


Fig. 49. Sumeru Desert, Architecture, NPC Characters, and Environment

These 4 images prove that the culture in Sumeru Desert is heavily inspired from Egyptian mythology, which was practiced by dark-skinned people. In relation to the discussion in Chapter 2, it backs up my argument of the stereotype of Black people being impoverished and violent are presented within the game, and only during ancient times is when they could thrive.



Fig. 50. Sumeru Desert Statue and Sobek Mythological Figure



Fig. 51. Sumeru Desert Statue and Horus Mythological Figure

In real life images of Persian, Middle East and Indian architecture to show inspirations of Sumeru Forest building designs.



Fig. 52. Hraad, Mehdi. “Mosaic on a Mosque in Iran”. Isfahan, Iran. Pexels, https://www.pexels.com/photo/mosaic-on-a-mosque-in-iran-17728052/

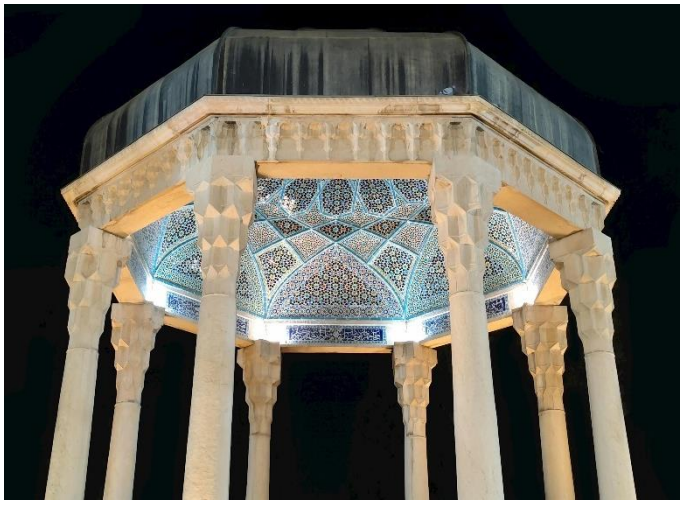


Fig. 53. Ramezani, Behnam. “Hafez Tomb Pavilion at Night in Shiraz”. Shiraz, Fars Province, Iran. Pexels, https://www.pexels.com/photo/hafez-tomb-pavilion-at-night-in-shiraz-28581451/

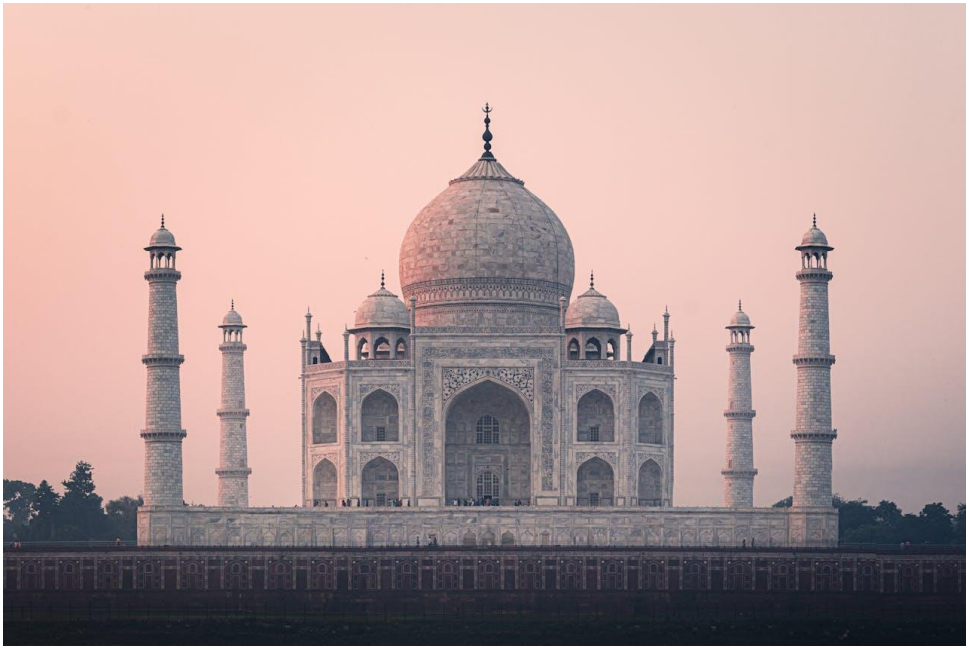


Fig. 54. Voronov, Dmitry. “Taj Mahal at Sunrise”. Agra, Uttar Pradesh, India. Pexels, https://www.pexels.com/photo/taj-mahal-at-sunrise-iconic-indian-landmark-30638768/

Appendix C

All the below images come from the book *How to Draw Black People* (Shabazz) by Malik Shabazz. They are included in relation to the discussion in chapter 3 which discusses his cultural character prompt that aims to guide artists to design more in-depth Black character designs that do not use pre-existing stereotypes. It also discusses his Culture, Aesthetic, and Theme guide. In these images he goes into detail answering the questions that detail the prompt and explain his reasonings.

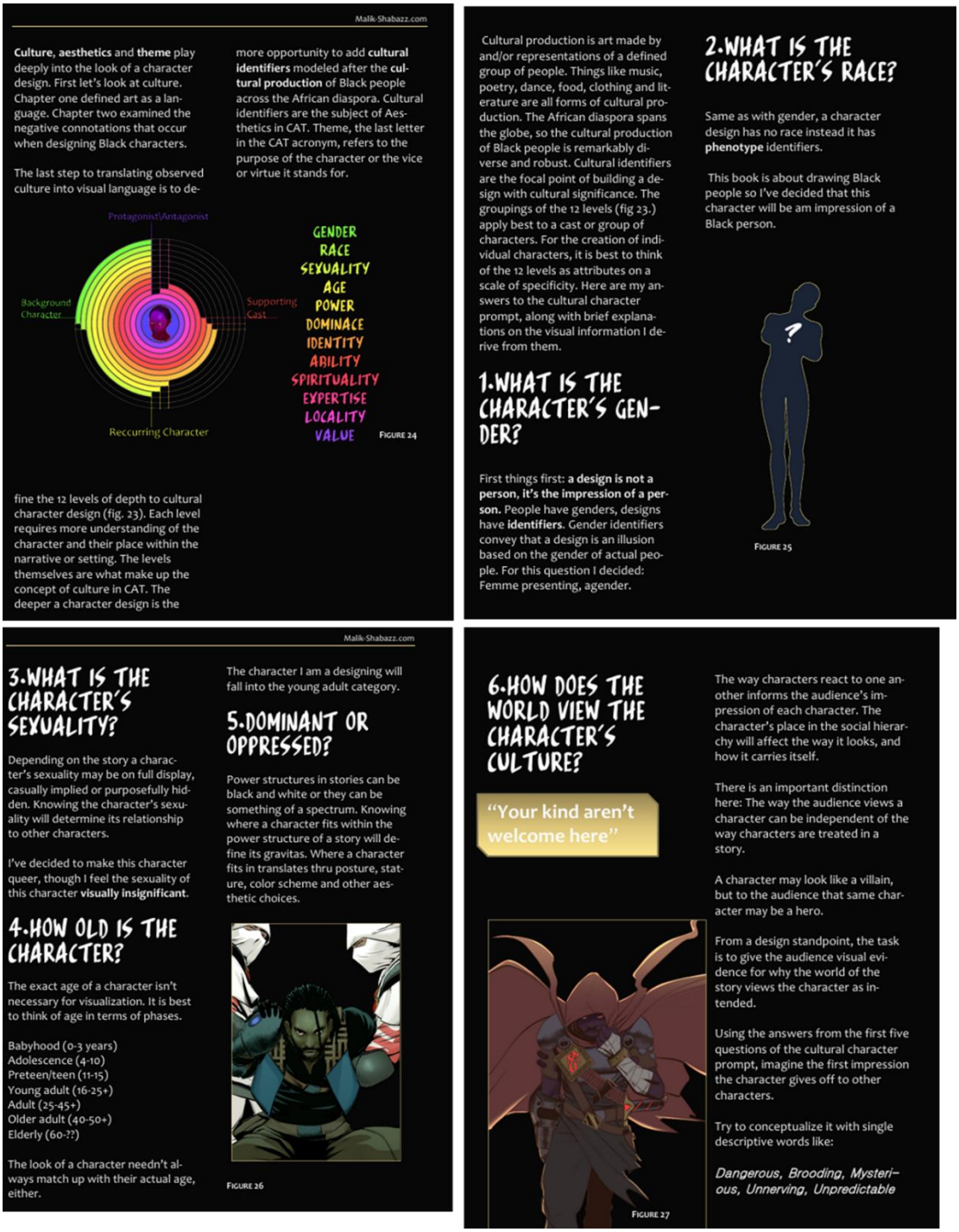
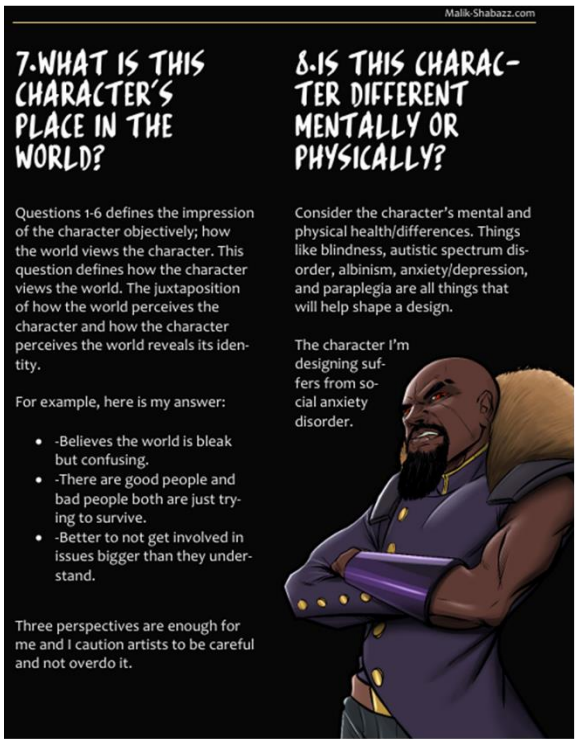
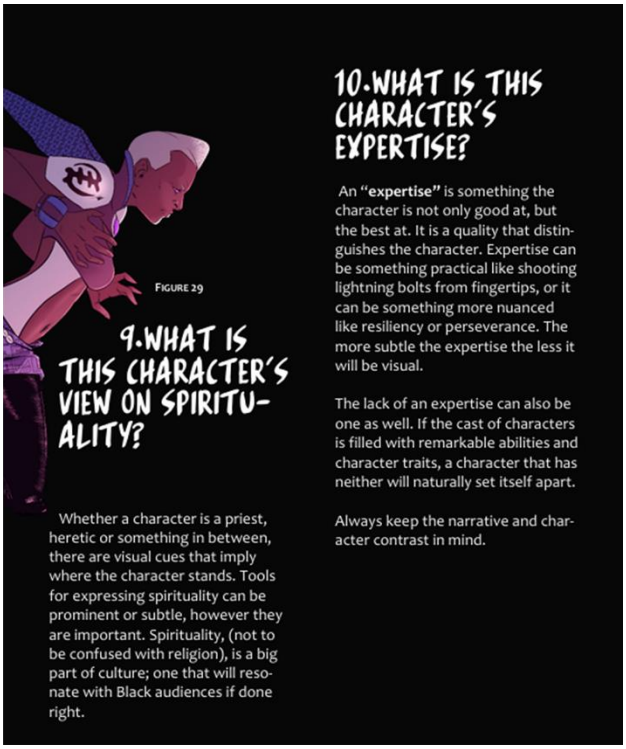
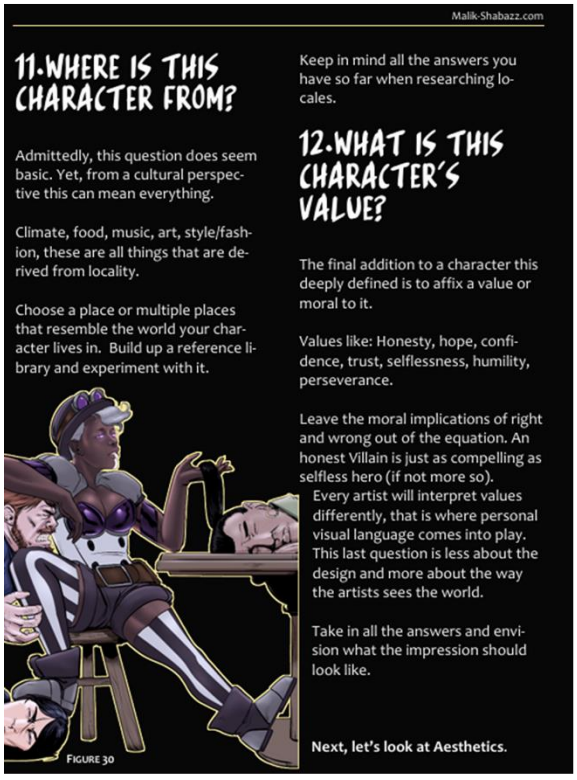


Fig. 55. *How to Draw Black People* (29, 30, 31, 32)







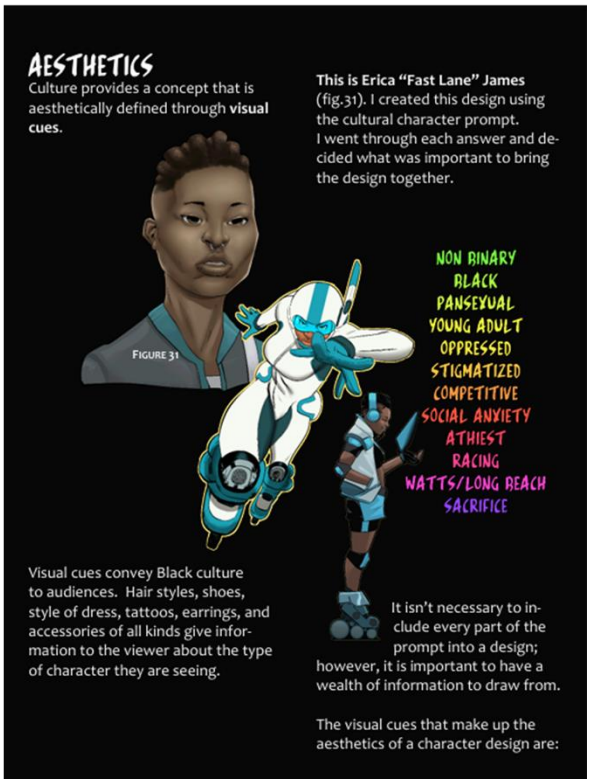
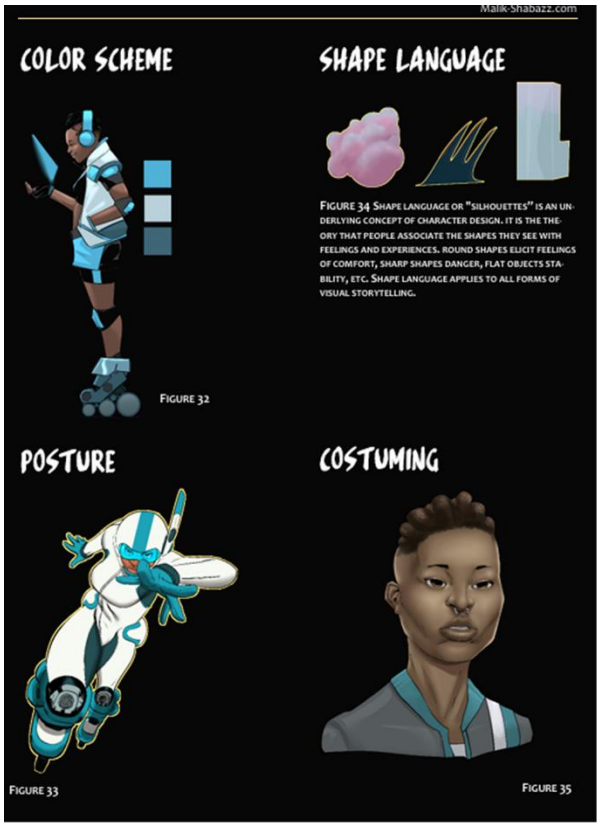
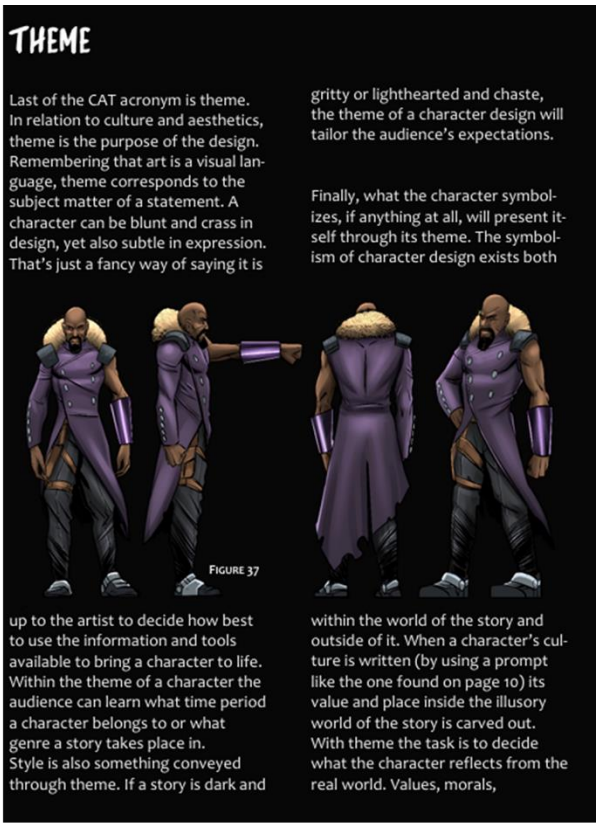


Fig. 56. *How to Draw Black People* (33, 34, 35, 36)





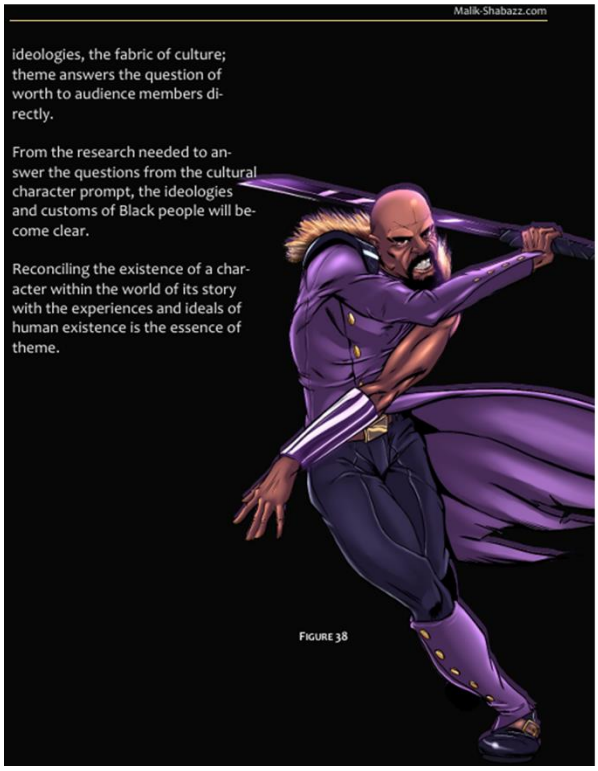


Fig. 57. *How to Draw Black People* (37,40,41)