

**RE-IMAGINING AFRIKANER MASCULINITY THROUGH
CONCEPTUAL FASHION DESIGN**

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STATEMENT OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

The work contained in this dissertation has not been previously submitted to meet requirements for an award at this or any other higher education institution. In accordance with Rule G5.11.4, I, Dalton Smit, 213205432, hereby declare that the above-mentioned dissertation is my own work. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the dissertation contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

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ABSTRACT

Traditional Afrikaner culture has often been associated with conservative beliefs, giving patriarchal figures such as the husband and father superior status. Although South Africa has undergone social progression, large numbers in Afrikaner communities still live according to old, patriarchal norms. My perceptions of Afrikaner masculinity, informed by my cultural background, enforce patriarchy's functioning in some Afrikaner homes, allowing the development of rigid expectations of a male's self-expression. These mind-sets of what masculinity is do not align with my values, beliefs, and the visual presentation of my identity. With the application of autoethnographic inquiry in this practice-based study, I was able to analyse and interpret the nuanced discrimination against the performance of my male identity in an Afrikaner cultural context. I implemented autoethnographic and practice-based methods to respond to and challenge outdated and conservative views regarding the prevalence of Afrikaner masculine ideals and their negative implications. The contribution of the research practice is *FYN BOI*, a fictive persona constructed and performed by me. He represents a liberated facet of my identity whose reaction is rejection against the Afrikaner cultural opinions of me, and in turn, is fuelled by the criticism to provoke further and challenge these views. The conceptual garments created are considered his wardrobe, which he uses in his self-expression online. With this unconventional approach to a fashion study, disseminating the research practice online instead of a physical exhibition allows for the study to be accessed to audiences beyond academia's domain. This undertaking intends to contribute to the existing discourse of masculinity and prejudice against individuals' self-expression of their identity.

www.instagram.com/fyn__boi

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INTRODUCTION

RE-IMAGINING AFRIKANER MASCULINITY THROUGH CONCEPTUAL FASHION DESIGN



Figure 1.1: Aart Verrips, *Crash Car Burn* (2019). Photo credit: Aart Verrips. Source: Provided by artist

I cannot classify myself as either masculine or feminine when I think of the visual identity I present to the outside world. More specifically, I do not pigeonhole which of my attributes are masculine or feminine, as my perception is complex, not linearly black and white. There is really no point in the process where I determine which elements are masculine or when I get clothed. I merely dress, behave, communicate, and present myself in a way that comes to me most naturally (Addendum A: 132).

1.1 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXTUALISATION

The perception of masculinity and femininity assigned to either a male or female is part of socially conditioned attributes considered outdated in contemporary society (Buchbinder, 2013: 4). A shift has occurred, where perceptions of gender and how one self-expresses have evolved (Goldberg, 2017: para. 4, 8, 9). The journal entry above describes an attribute of my character, valuing freedom in how I present my visual identity. My perception of masculinity is that its boundaries do not sit where femininity begins. I see it as subjective, part of a spectrum, and everyone encompasses both the masculine and feminine.

My views are grounded by Butler's (2006: 8,9,12) theory of gender as a social construct, that it does not essentially relate to one's sex assigned at birth. Gender and the assigned norms are merely a performance of culturally constructed meanings assigned to a sexed body. Then, masculinity and femininity should not be considered a performance of biological sex (Storey, 2018: 180). As a male in my Afrikaner cultural background, my subjective perceptions showcase that these views can be incredibly progressive compared to the nuanced discrimination I experienced. This results from Afrikaner masculine norms' expectations that enforce patriarchy in some Afrikaner homes, enabling the creation of rigid standards of a male visual identity and its behaviour. I received criticism from Afrikaner cultural members¹, where my identity's performance did not correlate with the rigid Afrikaner masculine standards.

Buchbinder (2013: 6) believes that these reactions could result from anxiety towards cultural and societal changes that do not endorse conservative beliefs. Queerness and the associated characteristics of flamboyance and

¹ I purposefully obscure the identities of other Afrikaner cultural members throughout the research. Although the nature of this study is to be provocative, I do not wish to defame another human's character, nor is it in my nature to do so.

femininity are still primarily disapproved of by Afrikaner men (Sonnekus, 2013: 22). In conservative Afrikaner contexts, men still exemplify their interpretation of hyper-masculinity, and Sonnekus (2013: 23, 24), believes that they imagine that displaying feminine characteristics could threaten the male identity that once placed them at the apex of power. The criticism and ostracisation resulting from these Afrikaner outdated values should then be challenged. The idea of masculinity and femininity as a cultural performance that does not inherently relate to one's sex (Butler, 2006: 11), have been embraced by South African contemporary fashion and visual media practitioners, who have challenged essentialism of how a man should present himself.

Patrick Mauriès, in *Androgyne: Fashion and Gender* (2017), draws from the realms of literature and art to provide a perspective of the continual desire humans have to escape defined boundaries, where the emphasis is on the exploration of representations of gender in past and contemporary fashion. Mauriès (2017: 8, 154) argues that many fashion practitioners have disregarded binary ideologies of masculinity and femininity for decades, and he emphasises that the topic is even more relevant in contemporary society. This then includes those in South Africa.

Gender, gender norms and more specifically, masculinity, have been continuously redefined in the South African fashion and media industry; and has received international recognition and media attention accordingly. Notably, featured in the *i-D* produced documentary *Out of This World* (Lambert, 2017), Rich Mnisi's gender-fluid label, and the musical collaboration FAKA, are significant examples. Through their creative practice, Mnisi deals with his sexuality through challenging collective consciousness. The self-defined "cultural movement" FAKA express themes related to their experiences as black queer individuals in post-colonial Africa (Salter, 2017: para. 1, 8; FAKA, 2019).

As a visual communicator, having the same intention as theirs with my work, I address conservative Afrikaner masculine ideals through an academic study. The aim is to contribute an authentic and innovative creative output (guided by accounts of my lived experiences of nuanced discrimination) to destabilise Afrikaner masculine norms through research practice. Therefore, the combination of autoethnographic inquiry and conceptual fashion practice can achieve this. A conceptual fashion approach allows a creative to step outside of the conventional space, where the objective is to create with a consumer in mind. Conceptual fashion practices, like conceptual art, can then be understood as producing work to convey an immaterial idea (Geczy & Karaminas, 2017: 91). This then allows the practice to engage in social commentary and demonstrate a representation of oneself, in the same way that art would, by creating a visual paradox through juxtaposing different materials and symbolic imagery (English, 2013: 91, 118). The concepts and embedded meaning in the research practice are then informed by examining my lived experiences and personal views through autoethnographic inquiry.

Furthermore, given the personal nature of this study, with its focus being to address discrimination towards my self-expression, the research practice's contribution then mimics the exact manner in which I self-express myself the most. That being through dress and using Instagram as a platform for representing and constructing my identity. According to English (2013: 110), dress is a means to declare your individuality and identify with social collectives. Correspondingly, Instagram is how I display personal characteristics and self-express and connect with a like-minded community. For this reason, the resultant outcome of this study then uses conceptually designed garments (embodying my identity, values, and subversion of Afrikaner masculine norms) in a performative expression of this autoethnographic study. Altogether, the practical component's contribution then being *FYN BOI*, using Instagram as a platform to construct a narrative

of an identity who self-expresses online, with his provocative clothing (the conceptual garments and the styling of the photographs). The accompanying Instagram account is to showcase the conceptual garments and disseminate the work to a larger audience beyond the academic space. His Instagram account is accessible by searching his username (@fyn__boi), scanning the QR code² (see Figure 1.2), or on www.instagram.com/fyn__boi for a desktop view.

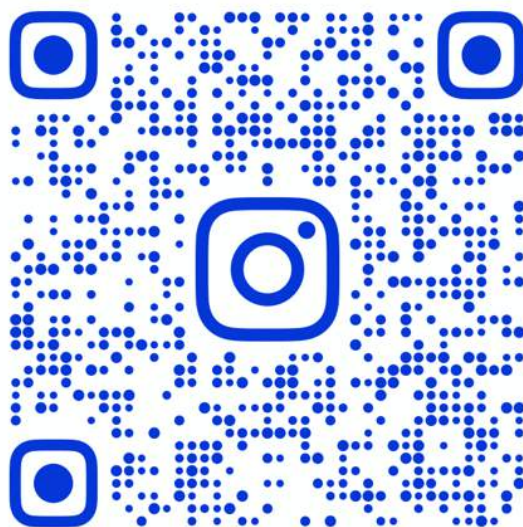


Figure 1.2: QR Code of FYN BOI Instagram account (2021). Source: www.instagram.com/fyn__boi

1.2 FYN BOI AND HIS OPPOSITION TO *expectations of an 'afrikaner' boy*³

FYN BOI, a fictive persona constructed and performed by myself, represents a liberated facet of my identity, a part that does not care for outsider's opinions about my self-expression. When Afrikaner cultural members

² When on your own profile, select the options in the top right corner of the screen, select 'QR Code', select 'Scan QR Code' at the bottom of the screen, proceed to scan QR code.

³ This term is intentionally written in lowercase format. This study takes a conceptualist autoethnographic approach, discussed in the following section, which allows for questioning, design, and formality of academic research. The reasoning behind this is to disempower this concept and pass it over to *FYN BOI*. *His name* in uppercase represents his provocative nature, as well as giving him more power than the opposing theme.



Figure 1.3: Dalton Smit, *FYN BOI profile picture* (2019). Digital mixed media

question the expression of his identity, he is fuelled by the criticism and in turn, provokes and further pushes boundaries as an act of empowerment and rebellion driven by emotion. An exploration of *FYN BOI*'s identity and analysis of his character is located in Chapter Four.

FYN BOI and *expectations of an 'afrikaner' boy* are the two opposing themes that lead to this study's practical contribution. That being *FYN BOI*'s reaction to the conservative masculine

norms in Afrikaner culture, to which he refuses to conform. In lowercase, *expectations of an 'afrikaner' boy* represents the aspects of Afrikaner cultural ideology that disparaged my identity and self-expression. In turn, he reacts passive-aggressively by exaggerating the elements and characteristics that were found problematic and subverting and juxtaposing the cultural gender norms.

1.3 AUTOETHNOGRAPHY AS METHOD

Autoethnography is a qualitative approach that uses personal and insider experiences, knowledge and insights as the primary source of information for research, contributing knowledge to existing research and larger conversations (Adams, Holman Jones & Ellis, 2015: 21, 25, 36). Adams, Holman Jones and Ellis (2015: 8) explain that autoethnography formed in response to evolving ideas and ideals regarding social scientific and qualitative research. This is where the limits of scientific knowledge and the importance of social identities were realised. There is now a growing recognition of the value personal narratives have in research (Adams, Holman Jones & Ellis, 2015: 8).

By foregrounding the researcher's insider knowledge in research, unique and complex experiences are described in nuanced ways that another researcher never could (Adams, Holman Jones & Ellis, 2015: 26, 31). The unique accounts about researcher's feelings towards cultural beliefs and experiences allow those engaging with the content to think and perceive taken-for-granted norms in a new light (Adams, Holman Jones & Ellis, 2015: 33). This makes it particularly useful to address and critique cultural beliefs and practices, and influence societal change and social consciousness (Adams, Holman Jones & Ellis, 2015: 33, 34). This study does this through conceptualist autoethnographic representation⁴, where ideas dominate, and the researcher (and visual artist in this study) questions the format and formality of research (Adams, Holman Jones & Ellis, 2015: 88). This representation is in the form of a critical autoethnography, which is concerned with the researcher's viewpoint, as well as their presence in their work to criticise cultural identities, experiences and systems (Adams, Holman Jones & Ellis, 2015: 89; Dutta & Basu, 2016: 149).

In this study, my presence as the subject being studied is evident in:

- Autoethnographic texts that describe my lived experiences as a cis-gendered male in my Afrikaner cultural background, as well as my opinions of them, as influenced by my personal worldview.
- The conceptual garments, using the above to guide the design process that represents a wardrobe for *FYN BOI*
- The Instagram account of *FYN BOI*, the platform where the fictional persona expresses his identity

⁴ Conceptual autoethnography can be compared to a conceptual art approach (Adams, Holman Jones & Ellis, 2015: 88).

1.4 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aims to use conceptual fashion practice to exhibit a representation of my male identity as the antithesis of my Afrikaner cultural background. The purpose is to present critical commentary on the masculine norms to which men are expected to conform, influenced by gender binary stereotypes in traditional Afrikaner culture. The intention of this being to propose that one can confidently embrace characteristics of masculinity, femininity and anything in-between, as these conservative expectations of men are socially constructed. The following objectives were formulated to support this aim:

- Examine how conceptual garments, like conceptual art, can function as a medium to engage in social commentary.
- Motivate that a conceptual fashion practitioner utilising their ideas, views and beliefs to guide their creative process can accomplish this by adding meaning to fashion, and how the outcome can provide new understandings of a social issue.
- Explore the notion of masculinity as a cultural construct that predetermines behaviours appropriate for a male, to discredit the rigid Afrikaner values being addressed. This is investigated to communicate that masculinity and femininity should not be considered a performance of biological sex, as it does not naturally come from being male or female.
- Provide background context by identifying how a fluid perception of masculinity and femininity has been embraced in local and international contemporary fashion, art and visual media industries.
- Employ autoethnographic methods to accumulate data to provide the study with personal memories relating to my lived experiences as a cis-

gendered male in my Afrikaner cultural background and my opposing personal values and beliefs. The purpose of this being:

- Focus on disparaging remarks regarding my self-expression from Afrikaner cultural members, where I did not perform masculinity to the satisfaction of the cultural norms.
 - Examine my personal beliefs, values and views regarding masculinity and femininity to guide my response to the above.
- Use conceptual fashion practices to visually interpret the self-expression of *FYN BOI*, as the contribution of the research practice with the following components:
 - Producing a conceptual clothing collection functioning as *FYN BOI*'s wardrobe disregarding the rigid notions of Afrikaner masculine standards.
 - Communicating his persona through the art direction and styling in the clothing's display.
 - Expressing his personality by creating an Instagram account as a fictional persona.

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study's significance is to showcase how using conceptual fashion practice to disrupt the traditional Afrikaner standards of what it means to be a man. It could be considered a valuable perspective to contemporary discourse and visual arts practice concerning masculinity by undertaking this from a unique perspective through autoethnographic inquiry. Informed by accounts of lived experiences of nuances of Afrikaner masculine norms, this study's destabilisation of them is influenced by my personal beliefs and values.

The research practice outcome transforms the received negative responses into a visual identity that celebrates my character, embracing authenticity in self-expression. This illustrates that, just as a woman can impersonate masculine traits, a man can impersonate feminine traits. In the grand scheme of things, this study encourages (under the condition that there is no insensitivity and no-one is harmed) that one should express themselves irrespective of social stereotypes. This undertaking aims to contribute my unique approach and response to contemporary discourse regarding toxic masculinity and gender performance.

1.6 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The study is situated in an interpretivist/constructivist paradigm, as the intention is to use the language of conceptual fashion to respond to my personal experiences. This approach is based on the ontological assumption that there are many realities for people developed through interactions and experiences (Chumney, 2015). The practical output is conducted in a subjective space, and viewers would then interpret it by considering the context and their personal views.

Additionally, since this study is mainly concerned with the studio practice, it is conducted with a qualitative approach with an autoethnographic approach informing the outcome. A qualitative research design, which is interested in detailed analyses of particular groups, their realities and interpretations of meaning, allows the examination of my subjective experiences and my opinions thereof (Saks & Allsop, 2007: 24, 25). To allow for studio work to be considered for examination, a practice-based strategy is embraced. This practical component then incorporates a conceptual approach to fashion design processes to produce something that transcends conventional thinking and exhibits new knowledge that the creative work

contributes to the discipline (Candy & Edmonds, 2018: 64). This study uses conceptual fashion practices to engage in social commentary, and the practice-based strategy warrants the use of studio work to convey research practice outcomes.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Traditional Afrikaner masculinity, fashion challenging
masculine norms and conceptual fashion digitally
engaging in social commentary

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, various themes framing this study will be explored. Firstly, relating to my lived experiences, the ideas surrounding masculinity in an Afrikaner cultural context are discussed. My perceptions of Afrikaner masculinity enforce patriarchy's functioning in some Afrikaner homes, allowing the development of rigid expectations of how a male should present himself in the way he acts and dresses. These expectations triggered feelings of frustration, due to these ideas of masculinity not aligning with my views, values and the representation of my identity. I express myself through clothing, my appearance and my creative work. I mainly use the social media platform, Instagram to do so. The representation of my identity can be considered a combination of both masculine, feminine and neutral traits. I do not consider myself to be either masculine or feminine; I view masculinity as part of a spectrum and merely a performance stereotypically fashioned for an assigned male at birth. Therefore, masculinity as a cultural and social construct is discussed, informed by literature such as John Storey's book, *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture* (2018), David Buchbinder's book *Studying Men and Masculinities* (2013) and Judith Butler's texts relating to gender as performance in *Gender Trouble* (2006).

Furthermore, there has been a significant shift in how most Western democratic society views gender performance in the 21st century. These conservative beliefs of masculinity are now regarded as outdated and problematic when gender expression has become increasingly fluid. I use *National Geographic's* special issue, *Gender Revolution* (2017) as an example of this stance, with the issue focusing on society's progressing perceptions of gender and gender expression. Contemporary fashion, art and visual media embracing this progressive stance are also investigated by looking at how this is occurring on a global scale, as well as in an African and South African context.

The South African fashion industry is discussed to highlight how the traditional notions of masculinity and gender are being challenged locally and how these practitioners have been celebrated and received international recognition. These discussions are informed by online media, publications, and social media, as there is little to no recent academic literature regarding the South African fashion industry challenging masculine norms and the international recognition they have received.

These ideas are explored to gain insight into the social issue that is intended to be addressed by the practical output, that being a conceptually designed clothing collection, with my views expressed through embedded meaning by disregarding gender norms and ultimately challenging the preconceived ideas of how an Afrikaner male is expected to present himself. A conceptual approach to designing clothing is studied to determine how fashion can engage in social commentary. Firstly, by examining how fashion can be conceptual, and secondly, how a designer utilising their personal views and beliefs to guide their creative process can accomplish this by adding deeper meaning to fashion practice and how the outcome can provide new understandings of a social issue when interpreted by the viewer.

2.2 TRADITIONAL AFRIKANER MASCULINITY

Traditional Afrikaner culture possesses many socially conservative values, including rigid gender norms. These values still exist in contemporary Afrikaner culture, despite the transformation that has occurred since the abolition of apartheid, and the liberal constitution of South Africa that has entrenched rights for groups such as women and queer individuals.

Traditional Afrikaner culture has often been associated with conservative beliefs (von Veh, 2013: 274), partially derived from a devotion to Christianity, which gives patriarchal figures such as the husband and father superior status, according to Vestergaard (2001: 10). Furthermore, although South Africa has undergone social progression, large numbers in Afrikaner communities still live according to old, patriarchal norms. This can be seen in Steenkamp's (2016) exploration of the functioning of patriarchy and rigid gender performances in the popular Afrikaans reality television series, *Boer soek 'n vrou*. Targeted at a conservative Afrikaner audience, patriarchy and nostalgia are used to enforce these ideas in the show, such as females being portrayed as passive, subservient and domesticated housewives (Steenkamp, 2016: 329, 332). By contrast, the men are depicted as the household's breadwinner and household leader (Steenkamp, 2016: 328).

Some men still perform their idea of Afrikaner masculinity, being influenced by Christian Nationalist ideology, as Sonnekus (2013: 23, 24) suggests, to perpetuate an identity that once placed them at the apex of power. More specifically, some Afrikaner men are continuously expressing hyper-masculine characteristics as an attempt to uphold these associations of power and superiority. An Afrikaner male displaying any gender-nonconforming characteristics could result in criticism and ostracisation. According to Garfinkel (in Adams, 2011: 31), criticism or physical harm can be evoked by an individual's gender-nonconforming expression not matching their assigned sex. For instance, if a person's sex is male, they are

encouraged to express masculine characteristics (Adams, 2011: 31), since ideas of conventional masculinity reject femininity, as it is associated with queerness (Buchbinder, 2013: 99).

Oelofse substantiates this idea in *Re-imagining Afrikaner Identities - Plenary* (Wits University Official, 2016). He expresses that normative Afrikaner masculinity denies queerness from its self-definition since it is regarded as deviant and perverse. Therefore, by displaying any feminine characteristics, their representation of power could be jeopardised. Overall, queerness and any traits or characteristics surrounding it are still primarily disapproved of by Afrikaner men (Sonnekus, 2013: 22). Aligning with my views on this mode of Afrikaner masculinity, Oelofse (2016) states that this idea of expressing masculinity is highly outdated, yet it is still preserved by many Afrikaner men today. Furthermore, this concept is the central theme highlighted in my firsthand experiences, where criticism was expressed to, and about me, regarding my gender-nonconforming expression of my identity.

As mentioned, these outdated views are no longer customary in most of society. An evolving understanding and perception of gender roles, gender identity and gender expression have initiated a shift in beliefs, where perceptions of gender have undergone a rapid shift (Goldberg, 2017: para. 4, 8, 9). Individuals once oppressed regarding these matters have now become empowered, which has led to a struggle for authority and legitimacy for Afrikaner masculinity, according to Oelofse (2016). To this end, the idea of feminine and masculine traits being assigned to either a male or female body is culturally specific and historically conditioned attributes (Buchbinder, 2013: 4), as is the case in Afrikaner culture. The negative responses towards an individual not displaying an identity conforming to Afrikaner masculinity's rigid expectations can be considered reactions (resulting from anxiety or panic) to cultural change (Buchbinder, 2013: 6).

2.3 EXPLORING MASCULINITY AS A CULTURAL CONSTRUCT

To understand Afrikaner masculinity's rigid notions and what is expected of an Afrikaner male's outward presentation, a broader context of masculinity is explored. In this section, the construction of gender norms by culture is discussed. Author of *Studying Men and Masculinities*, David Buchbinder (2013: 24) suggests that one needs to frame masculinity in the context of gender, by considering how it operates socially and culturally.

The rigid notions of Afrikaner masculinity that this study focusses on can be considered a cultural construct, one that has been normalised through set standards of how an Afrikaner man should present himself. This can be assumed when compared to Easthope's argument (in Storey, 2018: 178) that dominant masculinities such as these operate as gender norms, where men presenting alternate types of masculinities are often expected to conform to. This can be better understood by looking at the formations of gender and their stereotypes, influenced by expectations from one's biological sex.

To discuss the distinction between biological sex and gender, Storey (2018: 179) believes that the book *Gender Trouble* by Judith Butler is appropriate to begin with, as it is regarded as an influential text in this regard. Butler (2006: 8) argues that gender is culturally constructed, not something determined by biological sex. One's body is an instrument that has had cultural meanings assigned to it. According to Butler (2006: 9, 12) gender, along with the stereotypes and norms attached to it, are only cultural meanings that the sexed body has taken on.

Therefore, in a more conservative context such as Afrikaner culture, one's biological sex predetermines the appropriate behaviours for a male and female (Buchbinder, 2013: 24). According to Butler (in Storey, 2018: 179), since biological sex is already culturally gendered as male and female, particular versions and perceptions of femininity and masculinity are

guaranteed. An individual's sex being either male or female comes with a set of rules that one is expected to obey (Storey, 2018: 180-181). This then requires each individual to learn and assume the appropriate behaviour, manners, and gestures appropriate for their particular sex (Buchbinder, 2013: 25).

Marginalisation would occur when deviating from these norms, such as a man impersonating culturally deemed feminine characteristics (Buchbinder, 2013: 25), where the very notion of a person is called into question when they do not conform to the culturally generated gender norms (Butler, 2006: 23). This is evident in a patriarchal society, as seen in Afrikaner culture, where power and status are given to men. Buchbinder (2013: 80-81) refers to Butler's notion of gender performance, where a male's performance of his masculinity is judged, and those who fail to meet the requirements often encounter disciplinary action such as ostracisation, ridiculing or physical violence. Supporting this argument, Bola (2019: para. 12) comments on the idea of culturally reinforced ideas of masculinity specifically,

There are many more examples of this kind of narrow-minded, limited thinking, which is actually used to reinforce a stereotypical perspective of what a man should and shouldn't be. This varies and differs depending on culture, location, and era - which only goes to show that masculinity is not fixed. Outward expressions of masculinity, including stereotypes of it, do not exist in a vacuum, but rather exist within society. By the time we as men become aware of some of these performed expectations, we will have already spent many years living up to it in one way or another through what we are told is 'normal', making it that much harder to unlearn.

Overall, masculinity and femininity should not be considered a performance of one's biological sex (Storey, 2018: 180), they are cultural performances that do not naturally come from being male or female (Butler, 2006: 11). Furthermore, there has been an ongoing shift in understanding this in most

of society, which can be considered extremely progressive compared to my personal experience of living within Afrikaner culture. In January 2017, *National Geographic* published an entire issue, titled *Gender Revolution*, focused on ideas surrounding gender in a time where perceptions relating to gender are changing. The issue, featuring a five-year-old transgender girl on the cover, concentrates on the youth and the current state of gender roles worldwide (2012). With a progressing understanding of people on the gender spectrum, gender identity, and gender-nonconforming, evolving notions of being a man or a woman are becoming more popular (Goldberg, 2017: para. 9).

2.4 GENDER AND MASCULINITY IN FASHION AND MEDIA

In the discipline of fashion and visual media, such as photography, design, and online and printed publications, a fluid perception of masculinity, femininity, and other beliefs surrounding gender, have been embraced. This is not a new stance, as English (2013: 92) suggests, fashion designers have been questioning notions of gender and sexuality for a long time and defying gender norms can be considered a significant feature of the postmodern era (Negrin, 2008: 139). This can be illustrated by Jean-Paul Gaultier's work, who believes that fabrics and garments have no association with one particular sex (Mauriès, 2017: 121). Gaultier often disregarded gender signifiers and presented clothing on men commonly regarded as appropriate for female dress (Negrin, 2008: 139), putting stereotypes associated with each sex into question. This can be seen in his spring/summer 1985 collection, *Et Dieu Créa l'Homme* (And God Created Man), where male models wore skirts and walked and behaved like their female counterparts (Mauriès, 2017: 120). Also, Gaultier's 1985 collection, *One Wardrobe for All*, garments with stereotypical feminine elements such as backless tops, figure-hugging fabrics, and the use of lace and voile were presented on male models (Mauriès, 2017: 120).

Likewise, the popularity of public figures during this time such as Grace Jones, David Bowie and Boy George, all freely playing with expressions of gender, shows how the concept has been gaining popularity, according to Negrin (2008: 139).

Although blurring gender boundaries is not a new occurrence, the perspective of it has broadened, with an ongoing expanding opinion of gender codes not being tied to biological sex. Patrick Mauriès (2017), in his book *Androgyne: Fashion and Gender* explores the idea and representations of gender in fashion from the past, and how the topic is even more relevant in the field today. Rigid ideas of masculinity and femininity have been disregarded in the last decades, along with any remaining belief that a specific trait should be regarded natural for a specific gender, according to Mauriès (2017: 8, 154). He further points out that "male or female is just a hangover of the past". Emerging and established contemporary designers assuming this stance, such as JW Anderson's deliberate refusal to design gender-specific looks (Mauriès, 2017: 154), shows that these historically and socially constructed ideas are now often disregarded. Mauriès expresses that fashion embracing inclusivity and challenging culturally constructed ideas surrounding gender displays something fundamental about the spirit of our age. Newman states (2019: para. 2): "in an era of gender fluidity, all bets are off. As the binary of male/female falls by the wayside, fashion follows suit".

Since gender has grown popular in the field of fashion, Newman (2019: para. 2) believes that the expanding of LGBTQIA+ rights and the role of social media has had an enormous impact. One recent example of this is a photo posted by public figure Rihanna (Rihanna, 2019), where she wears a garment by Art School, an emerging label that defines itself as being non-binary and queer. Having over 77 million followers on social media platform Instagram, Rihanna posted this photo in November 2019. Eden, one of the partners running Art School (in Elan, 2019: para. 7), believes that their label carries a political message, and considers someone as powerful as Rihanna wearing

one of their garments as "really important". Another point to consider is the fashion industry's re-evaluation of casting models, where the inclusivity of more diverse and nonconforming identities have become the norm, according to Mauriès (2017: 155).

The inclusion of gender-nonconforming models illustrates a symbolic significance beyond the domain of fashion (Mauriès, 2017: 154), with some of today's most renowned models in the industry being queer (Cordero, 2019: para. 5). Data acquired by *The Business of Fashion* shows that during the Spring/Summer 2019 season, 25 percent of the models who walked in the industry's top fashion shows were queer (Cordero, 2019: para. 7). Hence, several modelling agencies have emerged that have adopted a new approach to representing and casting their talent. New Pandemics, a New York-based agency, dedicates itself to increasing queer inclusivity in the industry (New Pandemics, 2019), and has worked with inclusive indie labels and major fashion houses such as Gucci and Prada (Cordero, 2019: para. 19).

Correspondingly, many fashion and beauty publications and online platforms have increasingly been addressing gender-related topics. Concerning this study's focus on masculinity, *GQ* and *Dazed Beauty's* engagement with the topic are referred to. *GQ*, conventionally regarded as a fashion and culture magazine for men, has changed their stance in 2019. Editor-in-chief, Welch states (2019: para. 5) that the magazine's content is no longer created exclusively for men, but rather a gender-nonspecific audience. The November 2019 issue of *GQ*, titled *The New Masculinity Issue* explores the topic of masculinity and how perceptions of traditional masculinity have changed (Welch, 2019: para. 11).

Likewise, *Dazed Beauty* launched *Behind The Masc: Rethinking Masculinity* in August 2019. The campaign initiated by the online community platform, run by Dazed Media, explores what masculinity means at present. In an era where perceptions of gender identity and expression are "in an ever-

evolving state of flux" (Peters, 2019: para. 2), Eden (2019: para. 3) believes that traditional notions of masculinity are being rejected. Multiple contributors submitted creative work that challenged standard and outdated ideas of masculinity and voiced their opinions on what masculinity means to them, with some disregarding categorisation completely (Eden, 2019: para. 6).

In particular, one of the most compelling comments appears in the article, *Nine unsigned photographers reimagine masculinity through their lens*, featuring work from emerging photographers. Photographer Lumia Nocito (in Peters, 2019: para. 14-15) proclaims that at present, due to the content being more accessible to society and masculinity increasingly challenged in fashion, gender codes being broken are no longer considered controversial. He further states that an image of a man wearing a dress "is not the most shocking image to see". Referring to deconstruction and arguments made by philosopher, Jacques Derrida, Fernie (1995: 353) writes that with opposites being overturned, such as masculine and feminine, constructions such as these are weakened.

2.5 SOUTH AFRICAN CREATIVES CHALLENGING GENDER NORMS AND MASCULINITY

Issues of gender, gender norms and masculinity have often been addressed, challenged, and redefined by local creatives, in the same manner as the examples identified in section 2.4. These examples are provided to situate these ideas within an African, and more specifically, South African context, as this study focuses on challenging traditional notions of Afrikaner masculinity through fashion practice and visual identity. In this section, the discussion's approach highlights the international recognition of the

creatives and the South African fashion industry has received for the work that challenges societal norms regarding masculinity and gender.

2.5.1 MEDIA, CREATIVES AND THE SOUTH AFRICAN FASHION INDUSTRY

Notably, the *i-D* documentary directed by Matt Lambert, *Out of This World* (2017), investigates queer culture through Johannesburg-based creatives' eyes. Hosted by queer musician and performance artist, Mykki Blanco, they met with young creatives such as Elle van der Burg, Rich Mnisi, Umlilo and music duo FAKA are redefining being African, queer and visible. Themes such as gender, sexuality and the subversion of masculinity in South Africa are explored by considering the creatives' opinions and the nature of their work.

In the film, Blanco joined Umlilo in the 'femme walk', where queer individuals and activists walk through the city as an act of protest, empowerment, and representation to promote visibility. Umlilo (Lambert, 2017) claims that homophobia persists in South Africa, even with the progressive constitution of South Africa regarding homosexuality. Despite this, creatives are continuously challenging narratives around queer identity and producing work receiving international attention. Fashion designer, Rich Mnisi is a notable example of this. Firstly, Mnisi's pieces have been worn by public figures such as Beyoncé Knowles and Naomi Campbell (Cooper, 2019: para. 8), but more importantly, his work has featured in various international online and printed media, namely, *Vogue Italia*, *Fucking Young*, *ELLE*, and trend forecasting company *WGSN* (Rich Mnisi, 2019).

Additionally, the South African modelling industry becoming more inclusive, and the creation of visibility of queerness has received international

recognition. In a *British Vogue* article discussing four Generation Z political influencers shaping the future, the model and activist featured in *Out of This World*, Elle van der Burg, discussed transgender representation in the media (Burney, 2019). With her being one of Johannesburg's few transgender models, as Blanco (2017) mentioned, she has appeared in numerous fashion, beauty and other local and international projects; notably Dove's *#ShowUs* (2019) and Nedbank's *I Don't Live for Money* (2017) campaigns. Furthermore, My Friend Ned, a modelling agency founded over ten years ago, was amongst the first reported as having included a non-binary board on a global scale (Hellyer, 2017: para. 4), where other agencies have since followed suit. Since *i-D* published the article about My Friend Ned's progressiveness, the agency has abandoned categorising entirely by having all models listed under one board titled 'models' (Charles, 2018). In a *The Way of Us* podcast (2018), the agency's founders spoke about this move. They claim that by categorising models into male, female and non-binary, they felt that they were othering non-binary models and by implementing this step, they normalised the concept of individuals not identifying with either male or female. Although the notion of gender identity being celebrated in the South African fashion and media industry has just been discussed, the intention is not to validate the notion of fluid masculinity that this study is promoting. Instead, this topic is raised to emphasise the progressiveness of embracing and recognising nonconforming and queer identities in the country. In this case, the identities expelled by traditional Afrikaner masculinity's self-definition (see section 2.2).

Another point to consider is the international recognition of South African queer musical duo, FAKA. Fela Gucci and Desire Marea's collaboration describes themselves as more of a cultural movement who expresses themes relating to their experiences as black queer individuals in post-colonial Africa (FAKA, 2019). The name 'FAKA', meaning 'to penetrate', is a reflection of what they want to present in their work, according to Maditla (2017: para. 8-

9), who further states that the group defines themselves as an act of penetrating spaces that exclude them. They do this through various mediums such as music, performance, literature, photography and video.

FAKA has performed internationally, featured in *Vogue* and *i-D*, ranked at number twenty-six in the *Dazed 100* list and provided the soundtrack used in the Spring/Summer 2019 Versace show (Hahn, 2018; Masuabi, 2018; Davidson, 2019). According to the group (2019), their international success is due to their 'unapologetic representation of black queer culture in South Africa'. In *Out of This World* (2017), Marea states that their queerness is the reason they create; they are not merely artists who happen to be queer. Marea feels that society has been robbed of queer history, and they are proud to be known for being a queer art collective for years to come (Lambert, 2017).



Figure 2.1: FAKA, (2016). Photo credit: Nick Widmer. Source: www.siyakaka.com/about-1

To bring the attention back to the topic of challenging rigid masculinity, *Pansy* is a South African online menswear magazine blurring boundaries between masculine and feminine with the content it publishes. In the magazine described as "not listening to your dad when he says you cannot wear your flared, bedazzled hot pants" (Pansy, 2019), one can see imagery not conventionally ascribed to menswear magazines. In *i-D*, *Pansy* is described as presenting fluid masculinity not bound by societal norms, done so by presenting images defying conventional ideas of masculinity and embracing uniqueness (Baritoux, 2018: para. 1, 4). It is also important to highlight that my graduate collection, produced for my practice-based project challenging gender norms in Afrikaner culture, that this MA study is now expanding on, was featured in this magazine (see figure 2.2).



About · Contribute



Dalton Smit Spring/Summer 2017 Lookbook

Currently obsessing over South African designer **Dalton Smit**'s Spring / Summer 2017 Lookbook captured by **Zander Opperman** featuring **Armand Dicker** (BOSS Models) and grooming by **Vuvu Dlwati**.

Take a look:



Figure 2.2: Pansy, Dalton Smit spring/summer 2017 lookbook (2017). Screenshot of Dalton Smit's feature in Pansy. Photo credit: Zander Opperman. Source: www.pansymag.com/dalton-smit-spring-summer-2017-lookbook

2.5.2 SOUTH AFRICANS DEFYING MASCULINE NORMS THROUGH FASHION



Figure 2.3: Rich Mnisi, *Lobola* (2019). Lookbook 2019. Photographer credit: Ricardo Simal. Source: www.richmnisi.com/lookbook-lobol

Zagha (2019: para. 6) refers to Rich Mnisi and Nao Serati as forerunners in designing clothing challenging masculine norms in South Africa. Through Mnisi's gender-fluid label, he challenges perceptions and collective consciousness by exploring the history and heritage of South Africa and dealing with his sexuality through his brand (Salter, 2017: para. 1, 8). Similarly, Neo Serati Mofammere's brand, Nao Serati's⁵ speciality lies in exploring the boundaries and perceptions of gender, subverting what it means to be a man or woman in a modern South Africa (Nao Serati, 2019: para. 1).

⁵ The brand is called Nao Serati, and Neo Serati Mofammere is the owner. Note the intentional spelling variations in "Neo" and "Nao".

Mofammere explains in a *Bubblegum Club* article (Dee, 2017: para. 3) that he received negative responses to his first collection, where African males were presented in a feminine manner. This inspired him to continue with the way he approached design since he felt that this was a topic that needed to be addressed and further communicated to normalise it (Dee, 2017: para. 3). The brand aims to capture the fearless spirit of the youth's manner of representing their identities through dress in South Africa (Dee, 2017: para. 4), such as the young South Africans featured in the *Cape Town's New Masculinity* (2018) article in *The New York Times*.

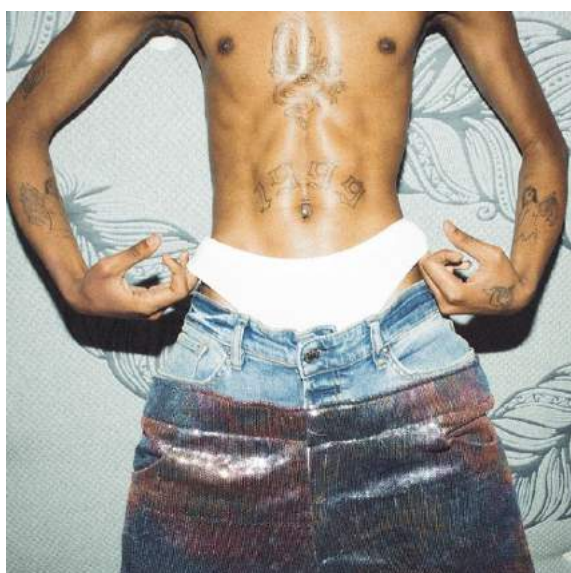


Figure 2.5: Nao Serati, (13/08/2020). Screenshot of Nao Serati Instagram. Photo credit: Zander Opperman. Source: www.instagram.com/p/CD0g_Lej_ub/



Figure 2.5: Nao Serati, (19/06/2020). Screenshot of Nao Serati Instagram. Photo credit: Zander Opperman. Source: www.instagram.com/p/CBm8ETOjbWo/

The *Cape Town's New Masculinity* (2018) article explores how queer youth use their dress and identities to challenge essentialism regarding how a man should present himself. Clothing has often symbolically shaped and conveyed the social identity of a wearer (Svendsen, 2006: 63-64), where European colonialists in South Africa used their dress code to indicate social hierarchy. Meslani (2018: 4) indicates that a similar notion of contemporary Eurocentric menswear still dictates this in South Africa, where the queer youth is rebelling against these notions of gender codes. The South African

individuals photographed and featured in this article provide their opinions on the matter. From this group, one explains his experience with conservative Afrikaner masculine ideals, stating that he is not the only one who has suffered from the toxic masculinity (Meslani, 2018: 13). Another conveys that both masculinity and femininity occurs naturally to them, and in turn, they do not allow rigid ideas of masculinity to undermine them (Meslani, 2018: 4).

Furthermore, Mnisi points out that it is essential to realise that being able to challenge these beliefs in South Africa is a privilege and that it is not as easy to address LGBTQIA+ topics in other African countries (Salter, 2017: para. 8), as in the case of Nigerian unisex brand, Orange Culture. Although not a South African example, the nature of the brand's work resonates with this study's aim to challenge a culturally prescribed masculine identity. Founder Adebayo Oke-Lawal, frustrated by the preconceived ideas of masculinity in Nigerian culture has used his brand to challenge them and open a conversation about a man's expectations in his country (Shoemaker, 2017: para. 1). Oke-Lawal describes the beginning of Orange Culture in an article posted by *The Council of Fashion Designers of America (CFDA)* (Campbell, 2018: para. 5-6); he wrote the article *Orange Boy* as a teenager, expressing how he was bullied due to his identity and beliefs not conforming to stereotypes. With the article receiving a large amount of recognition, he was inspired to merge his storytelling passions and creating to explore vulnerability in men. Oke-Lawal claims that the brand's international success, most notably being a finalist for the prestigious LVMH (Louis Vuitton and Moët Hennessey) prize in 2015 (LVMH, 2019), is what has changed the Nigerian community's perception of Orange Culture and the message it is trying to communicate (Shoemaker, 2017: para. 11). As has been noted, fashion can play a philosophical and political role, with the ability to creatively address social issues such as gender and masculinity (Swale, 2017: 181).

2.6 CONCEPTUAL FASHION DESIGN AND SOCIAL COMMENTARY

Using design to provoke conversations around societal issues is one of the defining features of conceptual design according to Dunne and Raby (2013: 12, 34), who consider critique as one of its most exciting qualities. This approach to design can be described as 'design about ideas', where the production of the designed object is not motivated by designing with a consumer in mind, but rather to explore new ideas and ways of thinking (Dunne & Raby, 2013: 11, 14). The creative outcome from designing conceptually then being the artist's ideas and beliefs, translated into materiality by using the language of design to engage with the viewer.

2.6.1 THE EMERGENCE OF CONCEPTUAL DESIGN

Conceptual design was highly influenced by the conceptual art and the postmodern design movements that emerged in the 1960s (English, 2013: 106), where conceptual artists strived to produce and present work that defied the traditional mode of art-making (Geczy & Karaminas, 2017: 5). This is the typical attitude of postmodern art and design, influenced by postmodernist scepticism regarding grand narratives and as Powell (1998: 18, 149) states, they were "seeking to de-define art". Geczy and Millner (2015: 138) refer to Hal Foster's anthology, *The Anti-Aesthetic*, where he claims that modernism had failed to disrupt power regimes and instead, became the official culture at the time. Overall, postmodern art rejects modernist aesthetic ideas of 'good taste' by evoking ideas such as irony, disruption and parody and ultimately critiquing society in general (Malpas, 2005: 7; English, 2013: 91). Geczy and Karaminas (2017: 3) also express that postmodern projects are engaged in critique in a pluralised form, with cultural identity and gender often being prominent themes.

Therefore, conceptual art does not usually take on a traditional form and the embedded meaning underpinning the work is considered more important than the appearance and visual qualities of it, demanding an active engagement from the viewer (Morley, 2013: 29-30). Clark (2012: 67) states that conceptual art had taken on many new and investigative methods by the 1970s, such as installation, performance and video art. Accordingly, conceptual fashion, like conceptual art, can then be understood as clothing designed where an immaterial idea that informed the making is as important as the garment itself, where the purpose of the garment's existence is to convey an idea (Geczy & Karaminas, 2017: 91).

2.6.2 CONCEPTUAL FASHION IN THE PAST

Conceptual design practices in fashion emerged in the 1980s, with practitioners such as Jean Paul Gaultier and Rei Kawakubo of Comme des Garçons applying techniques usually deemed more appropriate for art than luxury fashion, violating conventions of what clothing is expected to look like (Svendsen, 2006: 91). Conceptual approaches in fashion also started to gain recognition in the 1980s by international media, especially the work of Japanese designers such as Issey Miyake, Yohji Yamamoto and Kawakubo (Clark, 2012: 68). Svendsen (2006: 98) adds that during this time, influential art magazines such as *Artforum* and *Flashart* increasingly featured more work of fashion designers such as Miyake, Kawakubo and Margiela.

Furthermore, the Belgian designers, Martin Margiela and the 'Antwerp Six' (consisting of Walter Van Beirendonck, Ann Demeulemeester, Dries Van Noten, Dirk Van Saene, Dirk Bikkembergs and Marina Yee) are significantly influential conceptual fashion designers, and Clark (2012: 69) suggests that the heritage of conceptual approaches to fashion lays in the Belgian city, Antwerp. This is where the renowned Royal Academy of Fine Arts is situated,

with Margiela and the Antwerp Six having graduated from the esteemed school between 1979 and 1981 (Clark, 2012: 69). These creatives are forerunners in disrupting traditional clothing conventions through conceptual approaches to fashion design, exploring themes such as metamorphosis, identity, gender and androgyny by using clothing as their medium (Clark, 2012: 69; Geczy & Karaminas, 2017: 131). With attention to Margiela's work, whom Clark (2012: 69) considers the most influential of the Belgian designers, one can perceive multiple layers of embedded meaning throughout his collections. He encourages a reflexive analysis of the meaning in his clothing to derive multiple interpretations when viewing the garments (English, 2013: 63, 122). His method's consisted of deconstructive techniques and the use of "debased and abject materials", and overall, critiquing the fashion design system (English, 2013: 62). This can be illustrated in his use of materials like playing cards and broken dishes and second-hand garments and producing clothing with exposed seams and lining, leaving loose threads and playing with sizing proportions (English, 2013: 122; Swale, 2017: 185).

2.6.3 DESIGNING CONCEPTUALLY

As has been noted, conceptual fashion designers interrogate traditional beliefs of aesthetic qualities, materials, construction and meaning in fashion. Additionally, clothing also possesses a performative quality with its interaction with a body, allowing designers to explore how it interacts with the human form and shapes identity (Clark, 2012: 68). Therefore, according to Morley (2013: 40), conceptual clothing questions the fashion object and how one can communicate and engage through fashionable dress by exploring the relationships between the body, identity, self and fashion. Morley (2013: 41) further states that clothing symbolically communicates aspects of our identity regarding gender and social status. With this in mind,

for a designer to engage in social commentary through fashion, one needs to adjust their approach to the design process.

With the objective of fashion traditionally being to clothe the body, Swale (2017: 184) explains that conceptual garments are regarded as autonomous artefacts that are engaged with critically, and therefore the wearer becomes a secondary element. Dunne and Raby (2013: 11-12) argue that conceptual design exists in a space where the designer moves away from industrial production and disregards market pressures, allowing a creative to explore ideas and issues freely. Conceptual fashion's interest then does not lie in the utilitarian aspects of conventional and commercial fashion, such as a simple T-shirt or black dress, characterised by its useful and unobtrusive nature (Geczy & Karaminas, 2017: 4). A conceptual approach instead prioritises creative experimentation through an innovative exploration and realisation of ideas, and when the concern of designing for utility is reduced, the opportunity to communicate ideas through clothing is expanded (Loschek, 2009: 62, 171; Morley, 2013: 25). Therefore, this use of the unorthodox approach amplifies fashion design's language and makes it progressively complex, according to Swale (2017: 185).

The design process when working in this space begins with exploring and investigating research concepts (traditional Afrikaner masculinity, masculine stereotypes being a social construct, other creatives defying gender norms in their practice), which will determine the direction of the creative outcome, where methods similar to conceptual art are applied (Crane, 2012: 102; Morley, 2013: 38). To use clothing to evoke interpretation, debate and discussion, Dunne and Raby (2013: 3) believe that conceptual work is typically provocative. Loschek (2009: 39) describes the concept of provocation as a conscious stimulus that triggers an excessive reaction. Provocative presentations in clothing can be achieved by crossing borders and rules and deviating from traditional design norms, such as extreme over-

forming of the body or stylistic elements or having socio-political associations (Loschek, 2009: 39).

Crane (2012: 102) provides examples of fashion designers implementing this approach by providing five approaches discussed in what comes next, using Howard Becker's examples of artists invading crafts, producing artworks that transgress the conventions of beauty and functionality of craftsmanship. She does this by applying this model to fashion, with crafts being comparable to consumer-driven fashion as the product is either useful or beautiful, and artists being comparable to conceptual designers, as their design approach disregards these factors (Crane, 2012: 101). The following strategies are examples of fashion designers challenging the traditional norms, meanings and conventions of luxury fashion to illustrate how work of this nature often appears:

- Use of unconventional materials:

As in the work of Margiela (see section 2.6.2), this refers to using materials that are not usually considered for producing clothing, such as metal and plastic and generally deviating from using materials customarily considered appropriate for luxury fashion (Crane, 2012: 102).

- Transgression:

This violates the basic conventions of clothing in general. This involves disregarding concepts such as symmetry, "perfection of craftsmanship" and fit. This can be seen in the work of Kawakubo, who has presented work such as distressed garments with holes and imperfections and clothing with asymmetrical details (Crane, 2012: 102).

- Subversion:

This approach involves the subversion of aesthetic norms. Crane (2012: 102) explains this as satirising norms and conventions, such as using clothes traditionally used for a specific purpose in a very different context, such as Gaultier placing a corset over clothing and using it as outerwear.

- Surrealism:

Making use of surrealist themes could be incorporating unexpected associations between different garment types or between garments and objects (Crane, 2012: 102). Surrealism, originating from the avant-garde movement, justifies altering the clothing's connotations to provide alternate perceptions to familiar objects. Elsa Schiaparelli's shoe-shaped hat and a dress decorated with a lobster is referred to as an example (Crane, 2012: 103).

- Pastiche:

The use of the postmodernist approach of pastiche includes reshuffling and imitating fragments of pre-existing styles from the arts and popular culture, such as John Galliano's pairing of a jacket, hat and boots associated with seventeenth-century musketeers, with a miniskirt and train (Crane, 2012: 102-103).

Overall, conceptual fashion design practices often apply and combine materials, styles and objects from different contexts and everyday life, which transforms the meaning of the garments produced and how they are interpreted when viewed. As Swale (2017: 185) suggests, through unorthodox approaches to designing clothing, the complex vocabulary fashion design can use to comment on social issues are enlarged. Furthermore, a designer deviating from traditional design norms then needs

to consider the intent and nature of their work if they want it to constitute to the equivalent of conceptual art (Crane, 2012: 103).

Fashion can be an art form comparable to cinema, painting or poetry if an artist creates it, according to Bergé (in Steele, 2012: 24). Both fashion and art are aspects of visual culture that incorporate texture, colour and form (Steele, 2012: 24). Therefore, fashion, like art, can be technically and conceptually rich because both have access to the poetics of associated ideas (Steele, 2012: 24). Correspondingly, Bourdieu (in Steele, 2012: 23-24) states that "the work of art is an object which exists as such only by virtue of the collective belief which knows and acknowledges it as a work of art" and "the production of the producer as an artist is the precondition for the production of these objects as works of art."

Therefore, with the purpose of this study's practical component being using clothing to challenge the rigid ideas of what it means to be a man in Afrikaner culture and disrupting and challenging Afrikaner masculine stereotypes (derived from my lived experiences), adopting a conceptual art approach to fashion does this. The clothing collection's nature can be considered provocative, as Dunne and Raby believe conceptual design to be. By assuming a conceptual art approach to designing clothing to disrupt social norms, a fashion designer then invites the audience to view their work in the same manner, interpreting the message the clothing communicates, just as conceptual art encourages an active engagement from the viewer.

2.6.4 PRESENTING FASHION USING DIGITAL FORMATS

Yotka (2020: para. 1) claims that seismic changes need to happen in the fashion industry and be modernised. From its nature of exclusivity, systematic racism, and more specifically, the fashion show, which has already been undergoing radical reformation (Yotka, 2020: para. 1). Michele, the current creative director of Gucci, although being passionate about traditional fashion shows, believes that one should be open to new ideas and view the notion of a fashion show differently (in Browchuk, 2020: para. 8). Dizon (in Yotka, 2020: para. 5), whose company produces shows for many esteemed fashion houses states that they have been trying to break the standard idea of a conventional show for a long time now. Ermenegildo Zegna's artistic director, Sartori (in Browchuk, 2020: para. 9) adds that he long wanted to use alternative formats to communicate work to a larger audience. By taking a digital approach to presenting collections, he believes that the digital tools provide him with greater creative and innovative opportunities to enter directly into "people's place" (in Browchuk, 2020: para. 9).

Critics have questioned whether digital presentations can have the same impact as conventional, in-person events. According to McDowell (2020: para. 5), two divergent groups have emerged: those who embrace the new digital and innovative formats made possible by technology, and those who are still firmly committed to tradition. Burke (in McDowell, 2020: para. 6), founder of fashion consultancy agency, Robert Burke Associates, expresses that the fashion industry is a "creature of habit", and labels were caught off guard despite many discussions of the conventional fashion show no longer working. Although digital concepts might seem foreign to some now, the approach serves wider and new audiences, and digital visual content is a crucial facet of what many fashion presentations will look like now and in future (McDowell, 2020: para. 20; Yotka, 2020: para. 3).

Although digital fashion presentations gained momentum when the industry had to embrace alternative modes of showcasing collections during restrictions from the Covid-19 pandemic, it is important to realise that it is not a new concept. One example being Helsinki Fashion Week (HFW) already being heavily digitised prior to the pandemic, and leading the way in this digital space (Davis, 2020: para. 5, 9). HFW is continuing with their experimentation with creating digital experiences, according to Davis (2020: para. 9). HFW founder, Mora (in Davis, 2020: para. 6) states that cyberspace has already changed the way we live and operate, that digital has already taken over many facets of our lives and shifts society into multidimensional ways of living.

Designers are still showcasing clothing, but in more innovative and intimate ways to wider audiences, with digital displays being able to be shared globally, to both fashion enthusiasts and any other audience to enjoy from home (Browchuk, 2020: para. 8; Davis, 2020: para. 9). Furthermore, as many highly esteemed labels have announced their intentions to permanently abandon traditional notions of presenting collections, with Michele describing it as "stale", the pandemic restrictions escalated the inevitable. They forced the practitioners to reconsider old ways in an industry that had already been evolving (Davis, 2020: para. 3). Various approaches to physical runway alternatives turned out to be effective (Friedman, 2020: para. 6; Phelps, 2020: para. 3). Fashion presentations can therefore be amplified through digital and online capabilities, which alludes to an enhanced multimedia experience (Yotka, 2020: para. 7)

Yotka (2020: para. 11) claims that a poetic, digital fashion space provides designers with an exciting opportunity, with technology offering the advantage of creative innovation. The president of the Camera della Moda, Capasa (in Browchuk, 2020: para. 7), notes that a designer has greater freedom of expression in this digital space, with the ability to decide on one's message and its portrayal. Furthermore, designers have developed new

ways of displaying collections and expressing their ideas, where concept dominated clothes in some fashion presentations (Browchuk, 2020: para. 2; Friedman, 2020: para. 1). This shows that in some cases, less importance was placed on the physical and technical production of the garments, but rather on creative innovation of the collections. These were packaged as brand promotions, designer musings and displays of high-concept creativity prioritising concept over clothing, according to Friedman (2020: para. 7).

This mode of representation, as opposed to a three-minute runway show or temporary exhibition, can have more considerable impact as it provides an in-depth space for one to show work in creative ways, as well as connecting the viewer with a designer's concepts, values and creative ideas (Davis, 2020: para. 21). Dizon (in Yotka, 2020: para. 5) expresses that digital presentations alleviate many issues that one would face with physical space, and more significant creative innovation results from not having constraints concerning time, space or location. With special attention to Instagram, Sikarskie (2020: 76) states that disseminating research results on the social media platform, specifically from fashion research, has become increasingly useful and popular due to its system being succinct, instant and can reach desired audiences.

As mentioned, this fashion study's practical output is not focused on market-driven design, and Burke (in McDowell, 2020: para. 7) states that digital presentations have progressed to where it is about creating an experience and not about selling products or looks. In like manner, this study's studio work is focused on its concept and not craftsmanship, being that the output is a combination of conceptual fashion practices communicating a message through the design and creation of a collection, the styling and art direction of photographic and video content, and the digital presentation of the outcome.

2.7 SUMMARY

This chapter contextualises the study by exploring how designers can integrate their ideas into society using conceptual fashion practices. In this case, my reimagination of Afrikaner masculinity with my understanding of the expectations of being a man in an Afrikaner cultural context, and how my views do not align. This chapter also highlights the conservative nature of traditional Afrikaner culture's ideas of masculinity, and how these views are considered outdated and no longer customary in most of society. The discussion of masculinity being a social and cultural construct, and that masculinity and femininity should not be considered a performance of one's biological sex, aligns with my views. I consider it unfair for someone to expect this of my self-expression as a cis-gendered man who does not adhere to rigid gender norms. With this view of masculinity as a social and cultural construct, including my understanding of masculinity in Afrikaner culture, a fashion designer can freely stylistically explore notions of masculinity, femininity, and anything intermedial, regardless of whom the garments are intended to clothe. This chapter shows how the relationship between this stance and conceptual fashion practices is used to communicate this.

Challenging toxic masculinity has not been a new endeavour in the creative industry, but more significantly, African fashion creatives have addressed this in the concepts behind their clothing collections to challenge the concept of toxic masculinity from their cultural setting. These practitioners share the same enquiry as I do, firstly with my already established design approach and preferences. Secondly, with my personal views of rigid notions of masculinity being a set of attributes, roles and behaviours expected to be embodied by men. Therefore, with my unique and personal approach through autoethnographic inquiry, this study contributes to their body of work in a comparable, yet distinctive manner. This is conducted by using my

lived experiences in an Afrikaner cultural context to guide my conceptual studio practice addressing similar issues.

Moreover, the significance of using a conceptual approach to incorporate deeper meaning to a fashion object is discussed and illustrated. Examples of how conceptual fashion often materialises and the value of artists incorporating their beliefs in arts-based practices are provided, which is the purpose of this study's practical component. This provides the framework for the creation of the conceptual fashion collection and the presentation of it. That being integrating embedded meaning with the conceptual fashion practices through autoethnographic inquiry.

Therefore, my values and beliefs are integral to adding deeper meaning to the fashion objects produced in this study, as emotions are considered useful in contributing knowledge and new understandings. This contribution is conveyed through this study's creative outcomes, as visual art has also been shown as a mode to facilitate new understandings of a social issue and advocate change. Therefore, with the application of autoethnography, where I explore my lived experiences and my opinions of them, to the discipline of fashion, I then integrate my subjective opinions into the social world innovatively. This is done by disseminating the creative output to large and diverse audiences, having the fashion study's concept and its materialisation accessible on a digital platform.

Ultimately, I can respond to the opinions expressed to and about me concerning the presentation of my identity not conforming to conservative Afrikaner masculine norms. My response then disregards Afrikaner gender norms, since masculinity has been argued to be a societal construct, by portraying multiple ways of being a man by presenting my gender nonconforming self-expression through the study's conceptual fashion practices. The dissemination of this creative output and its concept is presented in a contemporary approach, through the digital formats of

photography, video to conceptually communicate the study results, where I use Instagram as a platform as documentation of intervention. Disseminating my personal and subjective experience to diverse audiences provides a multitude of engagement and interpretation possibilities. This allows it to be examined by academic audiences and provides a new perspective of the social issue and encourages social change to the rest of the social world. With this intention, by using fashion to disrupt social norms, a fashion practitioner then invites the audience to view their work in the same way one would when engaging with conceptual art. This encourages an active engagement from the viewer, where they can interpret the message communicated through creative work.

Chapter Three provides an explanation of the methodology used to employ my lived experiences and personal beliefs to conceptual fashion practices, to communicate my response to my cultural background. The next chapter also motivates visual material use to communicate research findings, being my personal response, and how this mode can unconventionally communicate the findings (compared to traditional research methods) to multiple audiences using digital formats and social media.

METHODOLOGY

Practice-based research and conceptualist
autoethnography as method

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter Two examines masculinity as a cultural construct, and how creatives, as well as other fashion practitioners, have embraced this position in their work. The chapter concludes with a discussion regarding the use of conceptual fashion practice as a means to engage in social commentary, and fashion practitioners using digital formats to present their work. The relationships between the issues discussed in the theoretical framework provide the lens used to situate the study's approach, that being to explore how conceptual fashion may engage in social commentary with regards to toxic masculinity in Afrikaner culture.

Chapter Three provides the methodology for adopting an autoethnographic approach to practice-based research to produce a conceptual fashion project highlighting the prevalence of toxic masculinity in Afrikaner culture. The body of work does this by visually interpreting a rebellious aspect of my identity defying rigid masculine norms, encouraging resistance through the subversive nature. For the conceptual fashion project to convey my response to conservative and rigid Afrikaner gender norms (informed by my subjective experiences) with embedded meaning, the study uses autoethnographic methods to guide the research's practice. This allows the collection, analysis, and interpretation of autoethnographic data to inform this study's creative processes.

This project aims to contribute to the existing academic discourse by artistically challenging restrictive Afrikaner cultural masculine norms from my nuanced experiences. The intention is to provoke questions, discussions and reflection about issues concerning toxic masculinity, and encourage social change by presenting my personal resistance to expectations of Afrikaner men, using fashion. Emphasis is then placed on the project's evocative potential by using an online, and easily accessible digital platform for its visual presentation. This abandons the traditional notion of a temporary show or exhibition to reach audiences beyond the gallery and academic space.

Hilary Collins (2010:39) explains that this postmodern world view's objective is to investigate how the world is understood and interpreted by human beings. This approach is based on the ontological belief that multiple realities exist for humans, constructed through lived experiences and interactions (Chumney, 2015). Therefore, when conducting research of this nature, one should interpret findings by understanding the setting and context, while also considering their own experiences and background (Creswell 2014:9). Collins (2010:40) further explains that within this paradigm, individuals formulate their own meanings and multiple interpretations are accepted, regardless of the interpretations being objectively true. Furthermore, due to this study's unneutral nature, using my lived experiences and personal values to guide the outcome of this research, this world view can be considered appropriate. By adopting an autoethnographic approach, I then become a participant in the research.

An interpretivist/constructivist research approach then considers my values and beliefs significant in this study, and recognises that my subjective experiences and views are influenced by my historical, social and situational context in which they occurred (Chumney, 2015). Therefore, autoethnography is employed for data collection and analysis to provide an interpretation of toxic Afrikaner masculinity, where the nuanced nature of

my subjective encounters with this concept led to the response through clothing, which counters the toxic Afrikaner masculine status quo.

In this study, this paradigm functions with the philosophy of symbolic interactionism, which is the lens used to visually embed meaning into the conceptual clothing collection and its presentation, with aesthetic elements depicting my response.

3.2 INTERPRETIVIST PHILOSOPHICAL WORLD VIEW

Hilary Collins (2010:39) writes in *Creative Research* that this postmodern world view's objective is to investigate how human beings understand and interpret the world. This approach is based on the ontological belief that multiple realities exist for humans, constructed through lived experiences and interactions (Chumney, 2015). Therefore, when conducting research of this nature, one should interpret findings by understanding the setting and context, while also considering their own experiences and background (Creswell 2014:9). Collins (2010:40) further explains that within this paradigm, individuals formulate their own meanings and multiple interpretations are accepted, regardless of the interpretations being objectively true. Furthermore, due to this study's unneutral nature, using my lived experiences and personal values to guide the outcome of this research, this world view can be considered appropriate. By adopting an autoethnographic approach, I then become a participant in the research.

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toxic Afrikaner masculinity, where the nuanced nature of my subjective encounters with this concept led to the response through clothing, which counters the toxic Afrikaner masculine status quo.

In this study, this paradigm functions with the philosophy of symbolic interactionism, which is the lens used to visually embed meaning into the conceptual clothing collection and its presentation, with aesthetic elements depicting my response.

3.2.1 SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM

Symbolic interactionism centres around the idea that the development of the individual and meanings one assigns to things is a social process. Blumer (1969:2) explains that the nature of the theory can be better understood by considering the following three principles:

- 1 An individual's reaction to 'objects' is based on the personal meaning associated with it.
- 2 Meaning is influenced and developed through experience and interaction.
- 3 Meaning associated with something is not fixed. Meaning can change through interpretive processes that occur through experiences.

When the term 'object' is used in this theory, it is used out of context from its assumed connotation to something material that can be seen and touched. Here it signifies anything tangible or intangible that can be indicated or referred to, such as clouds, ghosts, love or beliefs. To elaborate on this concept, Blumer (1969: 10, 11) explains that human beings live in a world made up of objects, where the nature of them is influenced by the meaning they have for an individual. He further explains that objects can be classified into three categories, namely physical, social and abstract (Blumer,

1969: 10). Furthermore, an object can have a different meaning to each individual, where the meaning one has for it affects how it is interpreted and interacted with (Blumer 1969:11). Denzin (2003:135) argues that the interaction with an object is experienced politically, where the perception of it is defined by culturally influenced meanings derived from values surrounding work, the individual, family and sexuality.

Overall, an interpretivist/constructivist world view and the philosophy of symbolic interactionism determine the approach to analysing, interpreting, and representing findings from my autoethnographic data. Memories of aphorisms and opinions expressed to and about me, regarding my manhood as an Afrikaner cis-gendered male led me to the desire to address and challenge toxic Afrikaner masculinity as a researcher and fashion designer. This is driven by my values and beliefs and the confidence in my creativity and self-expression, using objects relating to these. Therefore, the objects refer to design elements that have been utilised in the conceptually driven fashion practices, such as materials, colours, garment types, and other visuals. Therefore, these elements relate to Afrikaner gender norms, as well as my self-expression, identified by my interpretation of them as my interactional experience influenced them. The design elements are used to embed meaning into clothing, where they are used in ways to communicate a response to my cultural background. Furthermore, to permit the contribution of the conceptual fashion practices as part of this study, a practice-based approach to the research is used.

3.3 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN

This fashion study utilises a qualitative research design. A qualitative research design values the quality of data over the quantity of data. This approach is different from the quantitative method as it focuses on the quality of entities, methods and meanings when analysing and interpreting data (Creswell, 2014: 173). Unlike a quantitative approach, which often provides general descriptions of interaction, Adams, Holman Jones, and Ellis (2015: 21) describe qualitative research's interest in human intentions, emotions, motivations and actions. Data for this practice-based study consists of the personal memory data, contextualised with literature. With this being addressed during the desktop study, a researcher pursuing a qualitative research method in a practice-based study also conducts a significant amount of their research in an environment like a studio, allowing them to experience direct interactions with their work while focusing on the practical component (Creswell 2014:185).

The framework for this study and the practical outcome development is informed by my personal memory data related to my experiences. This is supported by a collection of literature and media addressing the following themes:

- Afrikaner masculinity enforcing the functioning of patriarchy
- Masculinity as a cultural and social construct
- The shift of broader society's views on masculinity and the performance of gender in the present day, where traditional notions of masculinity are considered outdated and problematic in a time where gender expression has become increasingly fluid

- Contemporary fashion, art and visual media embracing this progressive stance globally as well as in a South African context
- A conceptual approach to designing clothing to engage in social critique

3.4 PRACTICE-BASED RESEARCH STRATEGY

A practice-based approach has become common in creative arts research, being an original study consisting of a research project with a contributing body of studio work (Candy & Edmonds, 2018: 63). Practice-based research aims to gain new knowledge and understandings through the practice's creative processes and resultant outcomes (Candy & Edmonds, 2018: 63). This practical component then involves using processes intrinsic to fashion design and a conceptual approach to creating something that transcends everyday thinking, and how the creative process leads to new developments (Candy & Edmonds, 2018: 64). The artefacts produced are considered central to the research, which makes it unlike conventional modes of research. Candy (2006: 3) explains that this is due to the outcomes of the studio work being included in the submission for examination, as the creative work demonstrates new knowledge that contributes to the discipline (Candy & Edmonds, 2018: 64). This study aims to provide an alternate interpretation of a male in an Afrikaner cultural setting, and how a social construct like masculinity can be reinterpreted by dismantling the rigid notions of being a man and embracing one's creativity and self-expression.

Although the emphasis is placed on the artefacts here, both theory and practice "operate as interdependent and complementary processes" according to Candy and Edmonds (2018: 63), with theory and practice leading to new developments in each other. Then equally important, the theoretical component functions as a structured desktop investigation for

seeking new knowledge and understandings regarding the various facets of the research project (Candy & Edmonds, 2010: 470, 2018: 64).

Categories such as the nature of conceptual design, Afrikaner masculinity, masculinity as a social construct, and notions of masculinity and gender in the fashion industry are explored in the theoretical framework. This contextualises the autoethnographic data and justifies the making of a conceptual clothing collection to formulate and visually communicate my feelings towards Afrikaner masculine norms through the presentation of the clothing and the study concept.

Although the practical component is informed and driven by theory and autoethnographic data interpretation, my intuition used during the cyclical process of design and production led to the final conceptual clothing collection and how it is captured and presented. The development of the findings and decisions occurred while searching for visual inspiration, designing, redesigning, fabric and material sourcing, sewing, and epiphanies during these developments. Iggulden, in *Practice as Research* (2010: 66-67) argues that an artist's intuitive response through material practice is more significant than the theory, as it merely helps one understand the matters dealt with through the art. She further adds that a visual artist establishes an expression of previously inexpressible psychological states through the physicality and experience of making the creative work. Although practice-based research methods include moving between theory, creative processes, and the evolving demands of the visual artist's physical and psychological state, the practice dictates the direction and methods followed (Barret, 2010: 10-11). Ihde (in Barret, 2010: 6) suggests that knowledge can emerge through human action and material processes, manipulating the artefacts. Barret (2010: 6) adds that precise operations cannot be predetermined, as the practical developments are "based on the tacit and alternative logic of practice in time". The experimental, material and social processes in studio practice are complex, and new

understandings emerge when addressing ideas through the tools and materials of artistic production (Barret, 2010: 3; Bolt, 2010: 31). Therefore, with the practice being the centre of research and discovery in this study, Barret (2010: 5, 9) states that the visual practitioner's interests and experiences motivating the research process are typical of a practice-based study.

My values and preferences and my lived experiences were explored through autoethnographic methods, utilising Professor Heewon Chang's book *Autoethnography as Method* (2016a) to adapt her methodological approach to collect the autoethnographic data. The analysis of the autoethnographic data allowed themes to emerge. The relationship between the themes then guided the execution of the research's practical outcome.

3.5 AUTOETHNOGRAPHY AS METHOD

Autoethnographers have adopted many styles, ranging from scientific and analytical to more literary and artistic (Chang, 2016b: 118). According to Adams, Holman Jones and Ellis (2015: 89), who use visual arts movements to describe the diversity of autoethnographic research representation.

3.5.1 CONCEPTUALIST REPRESENTATION

A conceptualist autoethnography uses the researcher's personal stories as a "mechanism for conveying and critiquing cultural experiences, breaking silences, and reclaiming voices". The findings from autoethnographic inquiry become the inspiration for the narrative presented (Adams, Holman Jones &

Ellis, 2015: 89). My personal story's artistic response represents the findings through embedded meaning in the research practice.

Conceptual autoethnography can be compared to a conceptual art approach, where ideas dominate and the role of the artist (myself being the researcher and visual artist in this study) is reimagined as an innovator who produces work showcasing new and unexpected ideas and perspectives (Adams, Holman Jones & Ellis, 2015: 88). By adopting a conceptualist approach in autoethnography, Chang (2016b: 118) believes that a more imaginative and creative style in autoethnography research produces innovative outcomes different from conventional research projects. A conceptual autoethnographic approach questions the format and formality of research and writing (Adams, Holman Jones & Ellis, 2015: 88). This study foregrounds my subjective experiences and personal beliefs, as well as a selection of cultural artefacts. The visual response to my lived experiences is formed by taking my personal values into account. Bartleet (2016: 445) explains that visual art can produce cultural knowledge with its ability to represent research findings in an autoethnographic study. The collection and its presentation conceptually express and celebrate my identity and my gender nonconforming expression through my dress, while at the same time subverting the Afrikaner masculine and gender norms that do not align with my self-expression and beliefs

3.5.2 CRITICAL AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

Adams, Holman Jones & Ellis (2015: 89) further provide examples of the many forms that a conceptualist autoethnography come in, and this study utilises the format of critical autoethnography. The study's intention resonates with critical autoethnography's aim to address cases of injustice by focusing on the criticism of cultural identities, experiences, and systems

(Adams, Holman Jones & Ellis, 2015: 89). Furthermore, critical autoethnography is concerned with the researcher's viewpoint being accessible for critique and evaluation (Adams, Holman Jones & Ellis, 2015: 89), with the researcher also being present in their work, according to Basu (2016: 149). In this case, my views and opinions are evident in the personal texts that were analysed and interpreted and included myself in a performative manner in the visual expression of the conceptual fashion practices. Furthermore, Alexander (2016: 543) believes that critical and performative methods are empowering, as they "open up spaces of pain to critical reflection on self and society". To do this, the steps in the collection and analysis of data allows for:

- Collecting autoethnographic data relating to my subjective experiences in Afrikaner culture, as well as my values.
- Establish two themes in the data and examining the dichotomy between them, which becomes the inspiration for interpreting my response to toxic Afrikaner masculinity.
- Examine and code the data to identify occurrences related to the themes, informing my response through conceptual fashion.
- Correlating the findings resulting from the analysis to reach a conclusion relating to my resistance to my understanding of toxic Afrikaner masculinity. To encourage social change by communicating my response to my nuanced experiences, integrating the examined data with fashion practices is guided by authentic and novel perspectives.
- The use of conceptual fashion practices to visually depict how the relationship between the themes led to my approach to responding to toxic Afrikaner masculinity.

3.6 AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC DATA COLLECTION AND HANDLING

The data collection methods for this study discussed below are adopted from and informed by Heewon Chang's *Autoethnography as Method* (2016a), from the *Developing Qualitative Inquiry* series. The thematic analysis conducted helped identify themes in the autoethnographic data addressing the research aim aided in interpreting and making sense of the data.

Chang (2016a: 115) suggests various methods to collect data, by drawing from the past and in the study's duration. She further adds that the researcher produces data, and other forms of data from external sources, this being the theoretical framework to contextualise the study. Two forms of autoethnographic data were collected, that being personal memory and self-reflective data. Firstly, personal memory data collection techniques of visualisation and inventorying helped gather information about my lived experiences. Secondly, self-reflective data collection techniques, resulting from introspection and self-analysis, informed the study with a self-evaluation of whom I am, based on my values and preferences.

Chang (2016a: 114) further argues that data management, collection and analysis processes are dynamically interconnected and inform one another. Chang (2016a: 116) suggests immediately labelling and classifying data sets⁶ as they are collected. This study did this by applying descriptive names for the data sets, such as "Family Dinner" and "Expectations of an Afrikaner male identity", discussed in the data collection methods below. They are then easily identifiable for analysis and interpretation by establishing themes and categorising relevant codes (Chang, 2016a: 115, 116). Labelling data sets and

⁶ This refers to data collected through a particular method in a specific timeframe.

classifying them into themes creates a coherent structure in the data, navigating processes towards the research's goal.

3.6.1 PERSONAL MEMORY DATA

When the self is the focus of a study, Chang (2016a: 71) believes that personal memories provide a wealth of information when used in an autoethnographic study. The personal memory data collection involved starting with Chang's visualising exercise of free drawing to stir up memories and her inventorying writing strategies.

VISUALISING SELF: FREE DRAWING

Chang (2016a: 81) refers to the proverb "one picture is worth a thousand words" to suggest that in some cases, visual imagery can communicate a message more effectively than written text. The succinctness and simplicity of capturing and condensing complex narratives into a visual image enhance this method's effectiveness as a communication tool (Chang, 2016a: 81). The visualisation strategy of "free-drawing" used here, condensing memories into one image, helps one arrange loosened fragments of memories into a visual structure (Chang, 2016a: 81). The image is a precursor for further data collection can then be unpacked, demonstrated in the "inventorying" section following this.

According to Chang (2016a: 84), drawing is an excellent prewriting tool to stir up memories, as one can draw a person, object, scenario and place from a lived experience. For the free drawing exercise, with the research goal in mind, one selects a memorable event, ritual or scenario that helped

understand oneself and relationships with others (Chang, 2016a: 87). The piece "Family Dinner" is the result of this exercise (see figure 3.1). The mixed digital media work illustrates the connection between who I am and where I was. The artwork itself is a conceptual and metaphor that is the foundation for this project. In short, it displays how I had always been different from most Afrikaner cultural members.

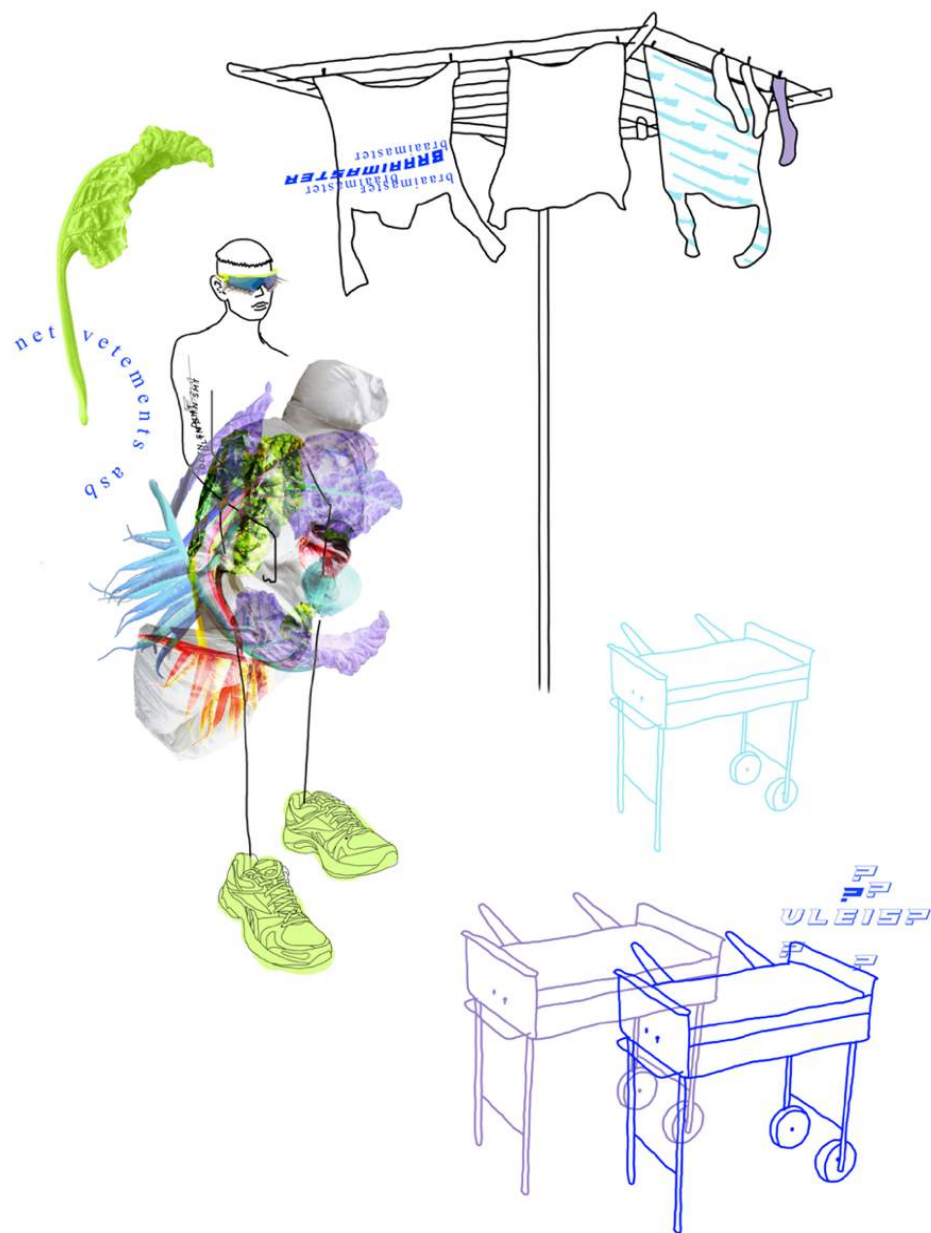


Figure 3.1: Dalton Smit, *Family Dinner* (2019). Digital mixed media.

INVENTORYING SELF: THEMATIC CATEGORIES

By collecting data using the inventorying writing exercises, randomness in data collection can be avoided, as these activities give order to bits of data by listing points in thematic categories (Chang, 2016a: 76). When undertaking this process, Chang (2016a: 76) recommends considering the study's focus when creating a list of thematic categories related. Then, when rummaging through memories relating to a thematic category, list points and expound on each listed item in rich detail. The written texts resulting from these exercises become part of the personal memory data (Chang, 2016a: 76). This study's inventory then led to the two thematic categories, "Expectations of an Afrikaner male identity" and "Cultural Artifacts".

1. Expectations of an Afrikaner male identity

Chang's thematic category, 'proverbs', initiated the creation of this thematic category. A proverb refers to a short and memorable phrase embodying a fact considered valid by some people (Chang, 2016a: 77), such as "beauty is in the eye of the beholder", which expresses beauty being subjective to each individual (Davies, 2018: para. 19). This category steered me to list my ideas of masculine stereotypes in Afrikaner culture, influenced by societal conditioning. More specifically, I listed disparaging remarks, aphorisms and opinions expressed to, and about me concerning my male identity performance. This thematic category is conjured three views that I felt are related to expectations of what an Afrikaner male's interests should be and how he should present himself through his mannerisms and physical appearance. The three topics below are the study's focus, as they are the memories of lived experiences that highlight the Afrikaner cultural views of masculinity to which I am creatively responding. Relevant extracts from the texts that resulted from this exercise are presented with the three topics. The full texts appear in the addenda (Addendum B, C & D: 135, 137, 139).

- Afrikaner boys do not take part in stereotypically feminine activities

The memory in this topic discusses instances where I was criticised for wanting to knit and sew as a child.

I cannot remember exactly how the situation played out, but I know that I was told to stop by a prominent male figure in my life that I was not allowed to knit or sew - since these are stereotypical hobbies for girls. I remember being very frustrated, these activities really interested me, and I really wanted to participate. I also felt confused, knowing that these activities were stereotypically feminine, but at the same time not seeing why this mattered.

- Afrikaner boys should appear hypermasculine

This is a general view, which relates to how a man is expected to present himself in a stereotypical masculine fashion. Although the memory in this topic discusses an opinion expressed to me about my mannerisms being too feminine, I feel the expectation of a man needing to appear hypermasculine applies to all ways that one expresses themselves. This applies to mannerisms, speech, and physical appearance.

The Afrikaner who had been observing the conversation from afar mentioned that my mannerisms and gestures made me look like a 'moffie'. I do not think that this person's intention of sharing this with me was to be hurtful or to attack my character, it was to inform me about these problematic mannerisms I must avoid doing these things in the future. I guess the reasoning behind it was that they didn't feel that the way I was carrying myself was normal or correct - so maybe to avoid being teased by others or shape me into a version of myself that would align with how an Afrikaner boy should carry himself.

This was an instance where my manhood was questioned, and I was made to feel that the way I had been expressing myself was wrong and that I would be ostracised if I hadn't changed it.

- An Afrikaner boy's appearance is uncontroversial and never flamboyant or provocative

The memory in this topic discusses one of many instances where I was asked to change my clothes before leaving home (although I hardly ever submitted). This scenario is when I was wearing a brightly coloured and printed two-piece.

I was asked to change by an Afrikaner cultural member, as they did not feel that this look was appropriate for where we were going - or rather, they did not want someone with the appearance I had on this day to be associated with them and the perception of themselves they wanted to showcase to others. Perhaps this 'outrageous' look was not considered appropriate or normal for an Afrikaans boy to be wearing, as it is very colourful.

Each memory's written texts in these topics are merely examples of views that relate to many other expectations of a man by Afrikaner culture. The next category further explores stereotypes, listing cultural artifacts from my tacit knowledge related to the three topics just discussed.

2. Cultural artifacts

According to Chang (2016a: 80), cultural artifacts are objects created by members of society that overtly or indirectly reflect social norms and values, and in all eras and levels of culture, artifacts are omnipresent material evidence of that, as they are incorporated into our lives with their utilitarian and ceremonial values. Chang (2016a: 80) uses a soccer ball to illustrate this, expressing that regardless if it is made from leather, rubber or a soda can, it is a fundamental artifact of soccer players' culture.

For this study, through a symbolic interactionist lens, I listed objects related to the "Expectations of an Afrikaner male identity" thematic category, where the three topics were used to categorise the artifacts that were listed. These

objects then influenced the choice of materials used in the conceptual garments, their style, type, silhouette, and the digital artworks used for prints on fabric, visual inspiration, and content for *FYN BOI*'s Instagram. How this was executed is discussed in Chapter Four.

- Afrikaner boys do not take part in stereotypically feminine activities

I listed objects that relate to both stereotypically masculine and feminine norms, activities, and traits. I listed objects such as braai⁷, barbed wire, and stereotypical Afrikaner male-related garments, such as rugby shorts, for the masculine. For the feminine, the list consists of objects relating to working in the kitchen and keeping the home stylish and clean. Examples of these are the kitchen sponge and laundry related objects and materials, such as the washing line, towels, bedsheets.

- An Afrikaner boy's appearance is uncontroversial and never flamboyant or provocative

I listed objects and accessories that defy this principle. The collection in its entirety, being a wardrobe designed for an alter-ego of myself, *FYN BOI*, would be considered as flamboyant, provocative, or tumultuous. To reiterate, it is a conceptual rendition of my expression through appearance, with the objective of the clothing produced to display exaggerated elements considered problematic, to provoke, rebel against and challenge the expectations of what a man's appearance should be. The list then includes loud and colourful printed clothing, BDSM wear and punk-inspired accessories, and wearing jewellery and gender non-conforming styled garments and accessories

⁷ The word braai, originating from Afrikaner culture, is an Afrikaans term for a barbecue (Bernd, 2009: para. 3)

- Afrikaner boys should appear hypermasculine:

Although the written memory in this thematic category's relates to my mannerisms, the lived experience is simply a catalyst for further development. I listed objects that visually relate to and defy this view, as this study focuses on visual communication. This inventorying of cultural artifacts is closely related to the first two topics, focusing on objects and traits used in self-expression through dress and appearance. I listed objects appropriate for an Afrikaner male to wear or incorporate into his appearances, such as sport-related garments and utilitarian wear. The objects that would defy the idea of hypermasculinity include pearls, ribbons, embellishments such as crystals, as well as feminine colours, fabrics and garments. I used these to visually juxtaposed with masculine and gender-fluid design elements and reinterpreted masculinity from my perspective through the artworks and garments

In addition to these personal memory data sets, I responded with personal texts with Chang's self-reflective data collection method, focusing on my values and preferences. Here I discuss my opinions regarding my self-expression and my non-conforming aesthetic and my views regarding masculinity, femininity and gender roles.

3.6.2 SELF-REFLECTIVE DATA: PERSONAL VALUES AND PREFERENCES

Investigating personal values and preferences provides the opportunity to understand social ethos, and Chang (2016a: 96) believes that this mode of investigation is effective and useful in autoethnographic research. Purposefully guided by the study's objective, a perspective of whom I am

resulted in writing the self-reflective data, which involved introspection, self-analysis and self-evaluation (Chang, 2016a: 95).

Personal values and preferences influence one's perception, evaluation, beliefs and actions, according to Goodenough (in Chang, 2016a: 96). Chang (2016a: 96) expresses that values and preferences are encoded into our moral standards and behaviours, manifested in our perceptions of people, the activities we engage in and the material items possessed. In my texts, I reflect on my own identity and self-expression, my dress and appearance, and my views of masculinity and femininity. These autoethnographic discourses contradict most of the traditional notions of an Afrikaner male identity and highlight why I found the responses to my identity and self-expression problematic. Presented below are relevant extracts from these texts, and an exploration of them appear in the data analysis in Chapter Four. The full texts appear in the addenda (Addendum A: 132).

- My perception of masculinity and femininity

I feel that masculinity and femininity do not come in one form, and I could consider myself having my own combination of masculine, feminine and everything in between.

- My identity and self-expression

I don't believe that I fall into the stereotypical categories of either masculine or feminine

I am trying to say that being masculine or feminine doesn't matter to me – to a point where I don't even think about whether I'm more masculine or more feminine on a particular day. I see clothing, make-up and jewellery as fluid and genderless, I don't even consider the cultural or societal expectations of how a man should appear.

- My dress and appearance

When I get dressed, there is no point in the process where it crosses my mind to identify which characteristics are masculine or feminine. I just get dressed.

The way I dress is also a complete spectrum, on one day I can wear a sweatshirt, sweatpants, and sneakers and on another day, I can wear high-waisted jeans, a women's blouse, and make-up. Alternatively, I can wear a sweatshirt, sweatpants, and sneakers with make-up. I guess you can also measure it against the context and setting I am in, for which I do not keep in mind and use as a brief when I get dressed anyway.

Two preliminary themes were identified during the data collection process: The first, *expectations of an 'afrikaner' boy*, is derived from the thematic category discussed earlier. This represents rules Afrikaner cultural members expected me to adhere to, a cis-gendered man. The second theme, *FYN BOI*, relating to the self-reflective data concerning my values and beliefs. The theme refers to the version of my identity as the first theme's antithesis, who disregards characteristics expected from a man in traditional Afrikaner culture.

At this point, developing the research's practice was to challenge and subvert Afrikaner masculine and gender norms mentioned in "Expectations of an Afrikaner male identity", as a personal response to my experiences of my self-expression being considered problematic and my manhood criticised by Afrikaner cultural members. The research's practice displays an interpretation of my self-expression and masculinity from my perspective, accomplished through the concept of *FYN BOI*, which is considered an exaggerated and stylised visualisation of my own identity. To inform the execution of integrating a more profound meaning into the practice, the analysis and interpretation of the personal memory and self-reflective data revealed findings embedded in the concept, design, and representation of the conceptual garments.

3.7 THEMATIC ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC DATA

Analysing data involves identifying essential themes and understanding the interrelationship between them, whereas interpreting the data involves finding meaning from, and beyond the data by searching for connections between the autoethnographic component and external opinions (Chang, 2016a: 127, 129). The following methods clarify how the thematic analysis of the autoethnographic data organised relevant data with themes that guide the visual interpretation of my resistance to masculine norms in Afrikaner culture. The in-depth discussion of the analysis is in Chapter Four.

3.7.1 INDUCTIVE THEMATIC CODING

The three personal memory data sets and the self-reflective data sets discussing my views and opinions were imported into *ATLAS.ti* data analysis software for data coding. This software was employed to analyse the primary data, which informed the conceptual fashion project's construction and outcome and its digital presence. This is where I coded each of the segment of data relevant to the research.

Chang (2016a: 119) describes the coding process as fracturing data sets into smaller bits, and the codes that result from this are grouped into larger themes for analysis. Correspondingly, Maxwell and Chmiel (2014: 26) explain that through the segmenting and categorising of data, a researcher then reconstructs it in a way to capture essential concepts in the data.

Therefore, to develop a theory from the personal memory and self-reflective data, an inductive thematic coding approach was used to identify topics in the text without pre-set codes (Collins, 2010: 42). Collins (2010: 93) explains

that through an inductive approach, the purpose of the analysis is to make sense of a situation, and the result of the analysis would be the theory. With this intention, although I already had knowledge of what the data contained, I performed inductive thematic coding by allowing patterns to emerge while being immersed in the data. Bezuidenhout and Cronje (2014: 242) describe this process as repeatedly reading through the material and recognising dominant ideas in the text. I created descriptive phrases and names for the codes assigned to portions of textual data, allowing me to recognise the recurring and important themes. An illustration of this can be seen in a screenshot from *ATLAS.ti* (see Figure 3.2), which shows how co-occurring codes develop and confirm the concepts of their assigned themes. In this example, relating to an “an Afrikaner boy’s appearance is uncontroversial and never flamboyant or provocative” topic from the personal memory data, the co-occurring codes highlight that while in an Afrikaner cultural setting, fault was found with my appearance, as it was considered provocative and did not conform to the expectations of what an Afrikaner man should wear.

Assigning codes to themes then followed this process. Maguire and Delahunt (2017: 3356) explain that themes represent something significant in the research, and codes are categorised in a theme. I achieved this when organising relevant codes in the personal memory and self-reflective data sets into themes that express something specific about the research.



Figure 3.2: Dalton Smit, *Co-occurring codes* (2020). Screenshot of *ATLAS.ti* data analysis software.

3.7.2 DEVELOPING THEMES

As mentioned, the themes were established during the collection and writing phases. The data collection, analysis and interpretation steps are often intertwined according to Chang (2016a: 121, 122), explaining that the research process in an autoethnographic study "is not linear in the sense that one activity leads to the next one, and so on until you reach the final destination". The steps in research of this nature overlap and often co-occur, informing each other in a cyclical process. Therefore, the two themes in the project that had already been established prior to the analysis inform the development of the conceptual fashion project. The coding process aided in finding segments of data that supported the themes. The dichotomy between themes is examined in Chapter Four, discussing the meaning and how themes influenced the work. The following paragraphs provide brief descriptions of the roles that themes play.

THEME ONE: *expectations of an 'afrikaner' boy*

This represents the Afrikaner cultural views on masculinity that the concept of the studio work is addressing. The three memories in the topics of "expectations of an Afrikaner male identity" data set are the focus, which provides the study with the concepts of masculine traits creatively addressed through subversion and rejection of them. To reiterate, the three topics are:

- Afrikaner boys do not take part in stereotypically feminine activities
- An Afrikaner boy's appearance is uncontroversial and never flamboyant or provocative

- Afrikaner boys should appear hypermasculine

THEME TWO: *FYN BOY*

FYN BOI refers to the fictive character representing my alter-ego, who displays characteristics of a version of myself who dismisses the traditional Afrikaner expectations of male identities. The codes assigned to this theme are related to a body of data discussing my identity, how I self-express and my opinions on masculinity and femininity. This theme informs the study with my stance, influencing how and why I respond in the way I do.

Furthermore, Maxwell and Chmiel (2014: 26) suggest that a researcher should recognise relationships between them as the development of themes progress. By considering the opposition between the themes, inspiration, and a way forward, the research practice was established. To put it in another way, the study examines when *FYN BOI* (second theme) experienced criticism when he did not conform to the *expectations of an 'afrikaner' boy* (first theme). As mentioned, the resultant concept of the conceptual clothing garments is that it is a wardrobe designed for *FYN BOI*, my liberated alter-ego who does not care for outsiders' opinions about their self-expression.

This then influenced the response to *expectations of an 'afrikaner' boy* (first theme), where conceptual fashion practices and their display are used to challenge the status quo. My personal beliefs and values are considered the motivation for why and how I respond to my experiences. The final stage of data analysis that produced findings involved a synthesis of the data by grouping the codes and related texts with the themes and constructing their narrative. This presents the information used to inform the study's creative response through fashion.

3.8 THE USE OF VISUAL MATERIAL TO PRESENT RESEARCH FINDINGS

This is the product of the analysis and interpretation of my personal memory and self-reflective data. The presentation of the findings from the analysis and interpretation is conducted creatively and visually. This is possible through the conceptual autoethnographic approach discussed earlier, where the format of research and its outcome is re-evaluated. The analysis findings informed the conceptual fashion practices, with the results contributing a new perspective to conversations on masculinity.

Rose discusses using visual material to share the results of one's research in *Visual Methodologies* (2016: 330), where she explains that the interest in presenting research results in this manner has grown across many disciplines, where the type of visual material used has expanded immensely. Visuals carry different kinds of information than text (Rose, 2016: 330), and Pink (in Rose, 2016: 330) believes that the use of colour, composition, gesture, and movement are more effective at conveying facets of the social world than textual description. Moreover, visual material evokes effect, which is an essential factor in presenting research findings, according to Rose (2016: 331). Therefore, the specific approach to disseminating the research practice was developed, through visual, digital, and public means. Rose (2016: 331) argues that because we live in a world where communication is increasingly happening through visual media, which can communicate a study's results more directly, academic research should then consider this as an opportunity as it is a format more familiar to most audiences than academic work.

Rose (2016: 333) explains that arts-based research gains and creates insight through creative possibilities, where the research project relies on artistic techniques to do this, not solely on traditional research methods. Harper (2005: 31) explains that these outcomes are typically descriptive and

suggestive, usually functioning through metaphors. Moreover, the product is usually a work of art intended to be displayed or performed (Rose, 2016: 333). Furthermore, since this study aims to use conceptual fashion garments, and their display, to engage in social commentary.

The research practice visually and publicly depicts the findings from the analysis. The intention of the study's practice, being the conceptual garments and the context of their presentation (on *FYN BOI*'s Instagram account) is to challenge Afrikaner gender norms and male identities' expectations. The execution of this discussed in Chapter Four.

The study's outcomes can be seen in the digital presentation, being the concept Instagram account of my fictionalised character, *FYN BOI*. His opposition to the *expectation of an 'afrikaner' boy*, his reaction to conservative masculine norms and refusal to conform, is the study's research practice contribution. Additionally, with the objective of conceptualist autoethnography being to critique cultural experiences, break silences and reclaim voices (Adams, Holman Jones & Ellis, 2015: 89), restricting the presentation of research outcomes exclusively to an academic audience does not seem as effective. Instagram is the chosen stage for the constructed narrative of an identity that self-expresses, self-performs, online, alongside his provocative clothing (the garments themselves and the styling and art direction). *FYN BOI* is the practical component's contribution. Using social media can have an increased effect and encourage social change on a larger scale.

3.9 USING DIGITAL MEDIA TO DISSEMINATE RESEARCH PRACTICE

As discussed in Chapter Two (see section 2.6.4), the format of fashion shows has been evolving in the industry, more specifically, becoming digital and reaching a larger and more diverse audience. Rose (2016: 347, 354) suggests that disseminating research's studio work online is an effective approach. A physical display is limited to the number of people who visit the space, as those attending are typically part of a particular group interested in art, culture and visiting museums and galleries (Rose, 2016: 354). Digitally exhibiting visual research allows the research practices to be easily accessible and can therefore reach wider audiences in a way that has real impact, where a conventional academic paper and temporary exhibition might not (Rose, 2016: 331, 347, 352). As Yotka (2020: para. 11) said, technology can offer innovative and creative possibilities which result in poetic digital fashion presentations.

Another key point to digitally exhibiting studio work is that this method offers a multitude of displaying possibilities. Coover (in Rose, 2016: 348, 349) explains that digital presentations draw on older visual communication methods such as text and photography, but offers new and innovative ways of communicating with layered tropes and juxtaposition of various visual and textual elements. This is done by organising visual and textual material from a study and transforming how the viewer engages with the work (Rose, 2016: 348), where the relationship between these components provides a multimodal viewing experience. Therefore, digitally presenting this study's fashion practices for the examination is amplified through digital capabilities. This is now no longer only a showcase of conceptual garments. The discourse from this autoethnographic conceptual fashion study is hereby disseminated and broadcasted beyond academia.

3.10 SUMMARY

In this chapter, the methodological processes used to produce conceptual fashion practices that challenge restrictive Afrikaner cultural masculine norms are outlined. An autoethnographic approach firstly allowed me to examine the nuanced discrimination I have experienced, where my self-expression was addressed as it did not adhere to the archetype of a conventional Afrikaner male identity. Secondly, I used my personal values and beliefs as data, which contest the conservative standards of how a male should appear. The findings resulting from the collection, analysis, and interpretation of the autoethnographic data applied in this practice-based study embed a deeper meaning in the research practice.

The conceptual clothing collection functions as a wardrobe for a version of my identity, visually interpreting resistance to conservative Afrikaner masculine norms. I achieved this through subversion, by amplifying elements that considered problematic and juxtaposing masculine and feminine traits from my tacit knowledge of Afrikaner cultural gender norms. This undertaking aims to contribute my unique approach and response to contemporary discourse regarding toxic masculinity and gender performance.

The more significant impact of disseminating research practice outcomes online embraced encourages resistance to conservative gender norms in an era where perceptions of gender expression are becoming increasingly progressive. This abandons the traditional approach of showcasing works in a temporary show or exhibition, to reach audiences beyond the gallery and academic space. Chapter Four provides detailed descriptions of how this materialised.

REFLECTIONS + FINDINGS

The analysis of autoethnographic data that led to the development of @fyn___boi

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The ideas discussed in the theoretical framework in Chapter Two contextualise the study and its practical output, and the methods explored in Chapter Three informed the materialisation of the research practice. The resultant findings from the analysis and interpretation of autoethnographic data and my intuition as a creative practitioner guided the practice's development. As mentioned, the autoethnographic data consists of personal memories of my experiences as a man in Afrikaner culture and self-reflective data providing the study with my values, beliefs and preferences regarding self-expression and gender norms.

The autoethnographic data was studied to inform the interpretation. Firstly, to establish and study critical moments where Afrikaner cultural members criticised my male identity and self-expression. Secondly, exploring how and why my identity rejects their opinions of my self-expression to display masculinity from my perspective. To summarise these concepts, two themes that represent the opposing views. The relationship between the two themes informs the analysis of data and the practical outcome's production:

- *expectations of an 'afrikaner' boy*
- *FYN BOI*

Inductive thematic coding of the autoethnographic data led to the analysis. The findings from this process were then correlated to assist in the direction of the study's practice's development. To achieve this, I categorised the autoethnographic texts and their codes in the themes shown in the next section. Based on the thematic analysis findings, this study's fashion practices adopt a conceptual and performative approach. The outcome, displayed on Instagram, visually expresses the rejection of Afrikaner masculine norms from my perception. This is achieved by presenting the conceptual garments in being a wardrobe instead of a clothing collection. They are then viewed through this lens, as they are worn by a fictive persona, representing a facet of my identity liberated from Afrikaner culture's masculine norms, as well as the judgement of me not abiding by them. *FYN BOI's* identity, performed on Instagram, accompanies this document as the culminating contribution of this practice-based study.

Furthermore, Braun and Clarke (2006: 92) argue that in presenting an analysis, one should analyse what lies within that. This captures the essence of each theme or piece of analysed data. As this is a very personal autoethnographic study, I do this by considering the analysed and categorised work and reflect on the occurrences as I read and document them. Autoethnographers often write to analyse and reflect on experiences, so as to turn the data into stories around the themes extracted (Adams, Holman Jones & Ellis, 2015: 77).

Throughout the analysis, my commentary and reflections can be identified in this chapter when seeing this royal blue text, in size 14 *Times New Roman* font.

4.2 THEMATIC ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC DATA

This section provides a detailed discussion of the thematic analysis of this study. This is done by exploring the essence of the two themes, *expectations of an 'afrikaner' boy* and *FYN BOI*. The features of data captured by themes and codes categorised with them are provided to develop and discuss the narrative developed from the autoethnographic texts and how the cultural artifacts play a role in this. The narrative is the concept of *FYN BOI* and all the roles he fulfils in the research practice. Themes in this autoethnographic research are created to provide logic to a narrative and identify characters to include in the narrative, according to Adams, Homan Jones and Ellis (2015: 77). They further state that when one is in the thematising process, they can be literal characters, including the researcher, as well as different forms such as subjects or identities. The characters in this research are thus *FYN BOI* and the traditional Afrikaner cultural norms.

4.2.1 *expectations of an 'afrikaner' boy*

This theme is intentionally written in lowercase format. As I've mentioned, this is a conceptualist autoethnography that allows for questioning the design and formality of academic research. The reasoning behind this is to disempower this concept and pass it over to *FYN BOI*.

expectations of an 'afrikaner' boy represents the aspects of Afrikaner cultural ideology that disparaged my identity and self-expression. The research practice's response is of passive-aggressive nature through subversion, so it seems logical to mirror this act in the text.

This theme represents the Afrikaner cultural views of masculinity that the body of studio work is addressing. The following codes were categorised in *expectations of an 'afrikaner' boy*, with the overarching category being “In an Afrikaner cultural setting”, which will be discussed in what comes next. With this being the overarching code, this indicates that all my nuanced experiences of discrimination occurred while I was in the company of Afrikaner cultural members. The three experiences, signified by the three codes below, are considered a set of expectations or rules in this study, to which male identities must conform to, from my understanding. Selected excerpts from the texts that relate to the three codes are provided below.

- Afrikaner boys do not take part in stereotypically feminine activities

One of the women was exceptionally skilled with needlework and knitting and had always made me gloves, socks, and other crafted gifts. She was teaching another, a female close to me, how to knit and sew.

The details are now vague to me, but one thing I do know is that I was told to stop, that I was not allowed to knit or sew - since these were hobbies for girls.

- Afrikaner boys should appear hypermasculine

So, the individual who had been observing the conversation from afar mentioned that my mannerisms and gestures made me look like a ‘moffie’. I do not think that this person’s intention in sharing this with me was to be hurtful or to attack my character, I think it was to inform me about these problematic mannerisms I have to avoid doing these things in the future. I guess the reasoning behind it was that they didn’t feel that the way I was carrying myself was normal or correct. Perhaps to help avoid being teased by others or shape me into a version of myself that would align with how an Afrikaner boy should carry himself.

- or rather, they didn’t want someone with the appearance I had this day to be associated with them and the perception of themselves they wanted to showcase to others. Or perhaps this ‘outrageous’ look was not considered appropriate or normal for an Afrikaans boy to be wearing, as it is very colourful.

And this reaction was definitely influenced by their ideas of masculinity, since I am a boy and that this is not how a boy should be dressing.

- An Afrikaner boy's appearance is uncontroversial and never flamboyant or provocative

I was asked to change by someone*, they did not feel that this look was appropriate for where we were going - or rather, they didn't want someone with the appearance I had this day to be associated with them and the perception of themselves they wanted to showcase to others. Or perhaps this 'outrageous' look was not considered appropriate or normal for an Afrikaans boy to be wearing, as it is very colourful.

As can be seen, this theme captures the opinions, criticism, and nuanced discrimination I experienced. These are only a few of many incidences I could recall that have occurred in the span of my life. The three categories above are the ideas that are addressed and challenged in the research's practice. The discussion of the next theme, FYN BOI, will inform the study of why and how these notions of masculinity are challenged in the way they are.

4.2.2 FYN BOI

Here, the opposite is applied. Although it is the name of both the theme discussed here and my liberated fictive alter-ego, the same energy of empowerment through uppercase typeface applies to both titles.

FYN BOI refers to the fictive character representing my alter-ego, who displays characteristics of a version of myself who dismisses the traditional

Afrikaner expectations of a male identity. Therefore, the codes assigned to this theme are related to segments of data relating to my identity and how I self-express, my opinions on masculinity and femininity, and the emotions I experienced while subjected to criticism in an Afrikaner cultural setting. This theme informs the study with my stance, influencing how and why I respond in the way I do. The following three categories elaborate on this.

EMOTIONS THAT EVENTUALLY LED TO PROVOCATION

The codes assigned to this aspect signify the feelings I had while being subjected to criticism regarding my male identity not meeting Afrikaner masculine norms. The provocation occurred in the most recent memory where I became more confident and comfortable with my identity. Below are selected excerpts that are informative to the study.

1. Emotions

- Frustration

I remember feeling frustrated, these activities really interested me, and I merely wanted to join.

I was angry that someone was trying to dictate and control how I self-expressed, that something as petty as the way I dressed was so important.

- Insecurity

So, I am sure that this being pointed out to me had made my twelve-year-old self even more self-aware than I had already been. At this age I was not yet comfortable with myself as a person, knowing that I was a little different from the other boys, knowing that I was overweight and knowing that most of my friends were female. This was an instance where my manhood was questioned. I was made to feel that the way I had been expressing myself was wrong and that I would be ostracised if I didn't change it.

2. Provocation

...since I am a boy and that this is not how a boy should be dressing.

Regardless, I chose to provoke the situation and kept the outfit on.

As I grew more comfortable and confident in myself, this showcases that the criticism I received fuelled my desire to push boundaries and provoke. This does not refer to all aspects of my life, only when an opinion or action is unjustified. Such as telling a fashion student to change their ensemble.

This informs the study of why I respond in the way that I do, since the research's practical contribution is an interpretation of my values and preferences, conveyed through the concept of an alter-ego. An aspect of this then being to provoke when criticised. The intention of displaying this in the research practice is to transcend the notion of what provocation and passive-aggressiveness are, and in turn, using it as an act of empowerment to encourage social change through conceptual fashion practice. As mentioned in Chapter Two, Dunne and Raby (2013: 3) believe that conceptual work is typically provocative, and Loschek (2009: 39) describes the concept of provocation as a conscious stimulus that triggers an excessive reaction.

I wouldn't say that I was seeking an excessive reaction through my dismissal of Afrikaner cultural members' views. But in the case of this study, it aims to conceptually communicate my story to contribute to the discourse surrounding similar issues. It urges the viewer to engage, interpret and reflect the ideas of the study.

Therefore, it seems that *FYN BOI* seeks to provoke a conscious stimulus to trigger an excessive reaction from the members of his audience.

MY IDENTITY

This facet of the theme resembles who I am as an individual. The codes categorised in this section were assigned to both the personal memory data and self-reflective data. The first part, being my outlook on masculinity, femininity, and individualism, corresponds with the emotions that eventually led to provocation. This informs the study as to why I respond subversively. The second part, relating to what I perceive my self-expression to be, informs the study of how I respond. The codes, relating to the two aspects of my identity, and selected excerpts are demonstrated below.

1. My outlook on masculinity, femininity, and individualism

- My perception of masculinity and femininity

I believe masculinity and femininity are a performance on a spectrum. I don't think that masculinity stops where femininity begins, and I don't believe that these traits are restricted to gender. I believe each individual encompasses both qualities, along with many others. It is each individual's choice as to what they embrace, how they embrace it and to what level they embrace it in whichever way feels most natural to them.

I think that a cis-gendered man who displays hyper-masculine qualities was not born with these traits, he has learned them. If he feels that his expression is what comes most natural to him, then that is great, but he should not feel that he is defined by his culture or society's expectations of what a cis-gendered man should be, act or dress.

- I view masculinity and femininity as non-rigid

I also felt confused, knowing that these activities were stereotypically feminine, but at the same time not seeing why this would be a big deal.

Regardless, I was at a point where I was slowly becoming more comfortable and confident as a person, with my self-expression and exploring different styles without identifying them as feminine or masculine.

I feel that masculinity and femininity do not come in one form. I could consider myself having my own combination of masculine, feminine and everything in between.

- My grey mind

This code refers to how I think and subjectively perceive things. I do not get tied down to a single view; I frequently question and rethink my perceptions.

...because my thinking isn't so linear nor black and white.

I don't consciously think about whether I'm putting on a female shirt with male trousers - it doesn't cross my mind.

- My identity rejecting masculine norms

I don't believe that I fall into the stereotypical masculine or feminine.

I could consider myself having my own combination of masculine, feminine and everything in between.

If I had to go into specifics and analyse my characteristics, I still can't pinpoint every trait I feel would be manly or girly. Visually, I can identify my physical form - I exercise and do weight-train at the gym, which gives me a toned/athletic form (when I'm disciplined), which could be considered on the masculine side. But I feel my mannerisms as being in-between, I can sit wide-legged and have masculine stances, but I can also be soft and sit cross-legged, there is no way to categorise my mannerisms as being either masculine or feminine.

Considering this, as a cis-gendered man, I have never felt less of a man than anyone else (not that it matters), I don't measure myself in this way. I'm trying to say that being masculine or feminine doesn't matter to me - to a point where I don't even think about whether I'm more masculine or more feminine on a particular day. I see clothing, make-up and jewellery as fluid and genderless, I don't even consider the cultural or societal expectations of how a man should appear.

I guess the reasoning behind it was that they didn't feel that the way I was carrying myself was normal or correct. Perhaps to help avoid being teased by others or shape me into a version of myself that would align with how an Afrikaner boy should carry himself.

FYN BOI encompasses the same views that I do. It is these beliefs that he shares with me that is the cause for him to be fuelled by the criticism that seems to bounce off Afrikaner conservative culture, he is provoked and feels empowered to push boundaries further.

Yes, possibly to get a reaction, but his boundary-pushing acts are never ill-intended, but instead favour social justice and self-empowerment. More importantly, he pushes boundaries to encourage an understanding that members of society have different (and opposing, in many cases) worldviews.

And in some cases, the boundaries that are pushed are not valid as boundaries in the first place, if they are a form of control over a person's agency. As I consider the expectations of Afrikaner masculine standards to be.

2. What I consider my self-expression

- Neither masculine nor feminine

Alternatively, I can wear a sweatshirt, sweatpants and sneakers with make-up.

I own male and female trousers, male and female shirts, male and female shoes and some items that I have no idea of where they would have been merchandised in a store. When I get dressed, I don't consciously think about whether I'm putting on a female shirt with male trousers – it doesn't cross my mind. It can go even deeper when considering how I wear and style the garments, looking at how high my pants are pulled up, how I have buttoned the shirt, which necklaces I am wearing, or if I was wearing a dangling earring or if I'm wearing any jewellery at all.

I don't think that masculinity stops where femininity begins, and I don't believe that these traits are restricted to gender. I believe each individual encompasses both qualities, along with many others.

- Flamboyant and provocative

Or perhaps this 'outrageous' look was not considered appropriate or normal for an Afrikaans boy to be wearing, as it is very colourful, and something with this particular style could seem abnormal to wear in a town that I consider to be more conservative than London.

Regardless, I chose to provoke the situation and kept the outfit on.

- Confident in my identity

Considering this, I have never felt less of a man than anyone else (not that it matters), I don't measure myself in this way.

Although my manhood has been questioned in the past, I decided not to internalise it or be affected by it in any way. I've always had a more assertive personality and sense of individuality to identify which opinions were not valid for me.

Regardless, I was at a point where I was slowly becoming more comfortable and confident as a person, with my self-expression and exploring different styles without identifying them as feminine or masculine. I had been to London for a while, so my character naturally developed and matured from being independent, learning how to dictate my daily life and make my own decisions. Also, the surroundings that I had been in for a while there were vastly different from Port Elizabeth - I experienced London as an extremely progressive city.

This is where my personal growth happened, where no one had asked me what my sexual orientation was - because it didn't matter. I saw many 'outrageously' dressed people and hadn't noticed anyone in public even pay attention. This sense of freedom excited me. I witnessed men dressed in drag on the underground where no one expressed any negative comments or gestures, and people dressed in alien suits were applauded.

This situation made me angry, especially because something like this was said to me in a stage of my life where I became more confident in myself and the way I expressed my identity. I was angry that someone was trying to dictate and control how I self-expressed, that something as petty as the way I dressed was so important. Regardless, I chose to provoke the situation and kept the outfit on.

While grouping these codes together, I realised how the different facets of my identity are interlinked. This was made evident when I noticed how the codes listed in this section were assigned to the same body of text.

It's evident how different aspects of myself are related to, and affect one another. How non-linear thinking influences my perception of gender norms, and how the confidence in my identity causes *FYN BOI* to continue to dress flamboyantly.

*

The codes and their assigned data relating to my perception of how I self-express, which include both

appearance and attitude, are the attributes that were criticised by Afrikaner cultural members.

These are the qualities I appreciate most about my identity, which are given to and amplified in *FYN BOI* and his means of self-expression. His self-expression is an exaggerated and stylised rendition of my identity, provoking by disregarding gender norms and subverting cultural expectations of male identities. Discussed next is this aspect of the research.

4.3 THE FINAL OUTCOME AND DETAILS OF THE RESEARCH'S PRACTICE

FYN BOI, constructed and performed by me, is a fictive persona representing a facet of my identity liberated from the judgments of others. His fuel is the criticism that seems to bounce off the Afrikaner conservative culture. All they manage to achieve is further provoke his boundary-push. An act of empowerment, through passive-aggressiveness.

FYN BOI's opposition to the *expectations of an 'afrikaner' boy*, his reaction to conservative masculine norms and refusal to conform, is the research practice's contribution to the study. His reaction is rejection, subverting the insular and imprisoning culture's rejection of him. With cheek, he exaggerates that which was seen as problematic, juxtaposing and contrasting gender norms.



Figure 4.1: Dalton Smit, *Self-portrait* (2019). Digital Illustration.

Instagram is the chosen home and platform for the constructed narrative of an identity that self-expresses, self-performs, online, alongside his provocative clothing (the garments themselves and the styling and art

direction of their documentation). *FYN BOI* is the practical component's contribution. This is now no longer only a showcase of conceptual garments, but a digital salon through which to disseminate the discourse to an audience beyond academia.

This is done by displaying the subverting and juxtaposing of cultural artifacts relating to details of my experiences. The visual echo of the subverted and juxtaposed elements (cultural artifacts) is intended to summarise the outcome of the study with the provocative and subversive nature of the practice's concept and display. The following sections will discuss how this materialised through the identity *FYN BOI* displays, communicating the conceptual response to *expectations of an 'afrikaner' boy* through:

- His dress, the conceptual garments and mixed digital media:
 - The choice of materials used in the production of the garments
 - The style, type, and silhouette of garments
 - The digital artworks created and used

- The photographic footage capturing the work, communicating through:
 - The art direction and styling
 - Modelling the clothing on myself, in the performance of the fictive identity of *FYN BOI*.

- The digital presentation of the work:
 - The concept Instagram account presents the culmination of this study's practice, encapsulating the entire body of work and communicating the study's concept in an evocative manner.

4.3.1 *FYN BOI*: A FICTIVE IDENTITY

An example of a creative practitioner who blurred the lines between fashion, art and performance is fashion designer, club figure and performance artist Leigh Bowery. According to Granata (2017: 8), Bowery was a contemporary embodiment of 'the carnival spirit', whose practice questioned strict divisions between life and art. Bowery presented his ensembles, exclusively worn by him in a flamboyant manner, with fashion as the basis of his performance, to create "a wholly artificial self", using humour to disrupt gender boundaries (Granata, 2017: 8, 57). The performances made the perceptions of pregnant women and gay men's bodies as grotesque and immunologically problematic, visible (Granata, 2017: 8).

Bowery is considered an icon to those interested in his genre, or the Club Kids from the late 1980s to 1990s. His approach to interdisciplinary creative outputs is the main inspiration for undertaking a fashion study in the way that I am. This section provides a short character analysis of *FYN BOI*, describing who he is, his values, and his interests.



Figure 4.2: Leigh Bowery, *LOOK AT ME* (1983). Photo credit: Sheila Rock. Source: rmitgallery.com/exhibitions/look-at-me-leigh-bowery/



Figure 4.3: Leigh and Nicola Bowery, *Look 37* (1994). Photo credit: Fergus Greer. Source: Granata (2019: 66)

The phrases that break up the paragraphs were listed as his favourite sayings in his identity's initial character analysis. I soon realised that they were also song quotes from strong female musical artists I had listed for him, as I refer to further in the text. I decided to provide the actual quotes instead of my reinterpreted mottos in admiration for the songs and their artists who have given me perspective and motivation.

*

*"I'll go and pray for you hun"*⁸

FYN BOI shows skin, he has a boyish figure which he dresses loudly –in a juxtaposition of flow and tight, of sheer and vegan leather, of green and lilac, of plastic and metal. Decorated by his bondage-inspired accessories, he drapes himself in silvers and blues, crystals and pearls and adorns himself with spikes and weaponry. *FYN BOI* is a maverick with platinum hair.



Figure 4.4: Dalton Smit, *Silver safari suit pyjamas and plastic spike harness* (2020).

*"You know me as the girl who plays with fire"*⁹

FYN BOI would be a female pop star in another life, but in this life, he will very soon take Demna Gvasalia's role as creative director of Balenciaga. He has no weaknesses – if one does not count thinking some men can change. Men should move out of the way in his world, a world filled with dismantling the patriarchy and *My Little Pony*. This *Libra* pushes boundaries; *FYN BOI* only expects attention in return – a celebration of his face and wit.

*"I like the taste of blood in my teeth"*¹⁰

FYN BOI loves fashion, social justice, interior design, irony, song quotes from strong female musicians, and saying no relentlessly. Flash or no flash, he documents himself and preserves himself. *FYN BOI* will do more than just flirt with passive-

⁸ Quoted from *Sugar Honey Iced Tea (S.H.I.T.)* by Princess Nokia (2019)

⁹ Quoted from *My Name is Dark (Algorithm Mix)* by Grimes (2019)

¹⁰ Quoted from *Halloweenie* by Ashnikko (2018)

aggression; he will provoke with it to highlight discrimination. *FYN BOI* kicked down the door and came to the party; bring your own destruction and violence.

*“Don't you fuck with my energy”*¹¹

Fyn.

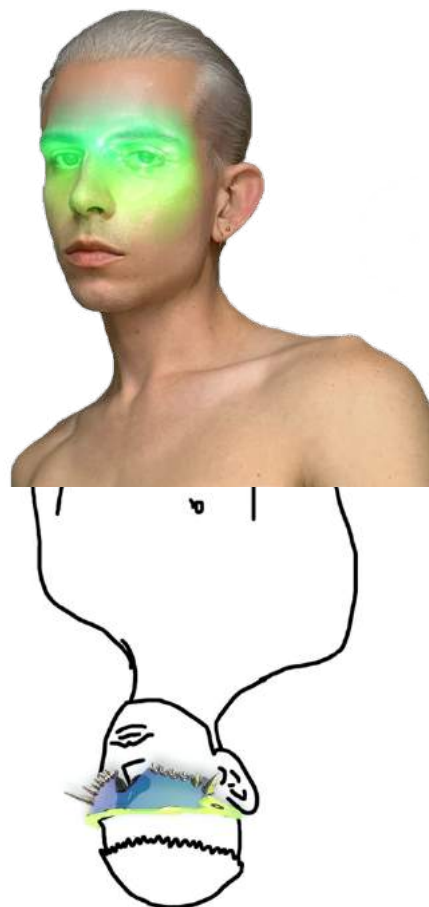


Figure 4.5: Dalton Smit, *FYN BOI bust* (2021). Mixed digital media.

¹¹ Quoted from *Brujas* by Princess Nokia (2017)



Figure 4.6: Dalton Smit, *FYN BOI in blue towelling and crystal shorts 0.1* (2021).



Figure 4.7: Dalton Smit, *FYN BOI bakkie* (2020). Mixed digital media.

4.3.2 THE GARMENTS AND MIXED DIGITAL MEDIA

FYN BOI redefines masculinity by not adhering to the culturally pre-set characteristics and displaying a version of masculinity from his perspective. He incorporates gender-fluid stylistic elements in his dress and self-expression. The garments are designed with a conceptual approach, blurring the lines between wearable and non-wearable. The garments all have silhouettes not far from anything designed for a consumer, but the conceptual element lies in the embedded meaning and finer details. The garments can, however, be considered provocative by some.

Provocative clothing often asks more questions than provides answers, according to English (2013: 92), who explains that one can use clothing as a visual metaphor, a device often used by counter-culture to publicise alternative views. The punk and hippy counter cultures illustrate this, showing their attitudes towards society and beliefs of anti-war, anti-establishment and nihilism using their self-expression.

With this study's close attention to the details of my experiences and personal values, the same attitude is evident in the research practice. This notion was investigated and applied by paying attention to codes that were assigned to relevant cultural artifacts. The cultural artifacts categorised with codes in the *expectations of an 'afrikaner' boy* theme are juxtaposed with those assigned to the 'flamboyant and provocative' code from the *FYN BOI* theme, in order to reimagine Afrikaner masculinity from my perspective. These artifacts and their assigned codes are listed next.

THEME ONE: expectations of an 'afrikaner' boy

- Afrikaner boys do not take part in stereotypically feminine activities
 - Objects relating to working in the kitchen and keeping the home clean: apron, kitchen sponge, rubber gloves, cleaning products, bucket
 - Objects and materials relating to laundry: washing lines, towels, bedsheets
 - Objects relating to home decoration: chandelier crystals
 - Sewing and knitting: the entire collection of garments that a male produced
- Afrikaner boys should appear hypermasculine
 - Braai, braai utensils and braai novelties (like a men's t-shirt with a braai related quote)
 - Barbed wire: relates to the idea of the farm and the protection of it
 - Large pickup vehicles
 - Toolbox
- An Afrikaner boy's appearance is uncontroversial and never flamboyant or provocative
 - Stereotypically Afrikaner male related items:
 - Rugby shorts
 - Utility wear
 - Sports-related garments
 - Safari suit
 - Suit/dress pants

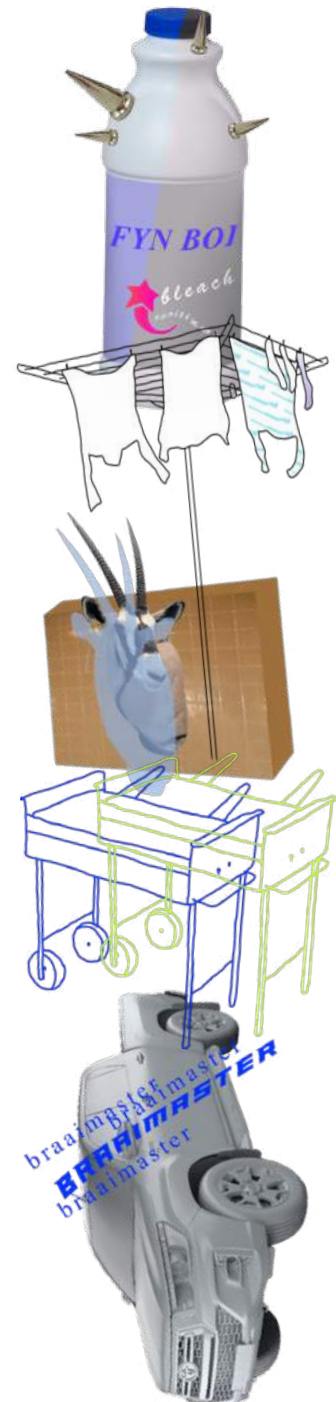


Figure 4.8: Dalton Smit, *Cultural artifacts 0.1* (2021). Mixed digital media.

THEME TWO: FYN BOI

- Flamboyant and provocative
 - Colourfully printed or metallic clothing
 - Piercings and tattoos
 - Bondage wear and punk-inspired accessories
 - Spike studs
 - Jewellery and gender non-conforming styled garments and accessories
 - Unnatural hair colour
 - Flowers
 - Embellishments, such as crystals and pearls
 - Stereotypically feminine colours such as pinks, purples, and pastel hues
 - Stereotypically feminine styled garments such as puffed sleeves, cinched waists, tightly fitted garments
 - Stereotypically feminine materials such as flowy and lightweight fabrics, shimmering or metallic fabrics, textured fabrics such as fluffy, velvet or plush



Figure 4.9: Dalton Smit, *Cultural artifacts 0.2* (2021). Mixed digital media.

Figure 4.10: Dalton Smit, *Silver vegan leather and embellishment test* (2019).



Figure 4.11: Dalton Smit, *Green organza pirate sleeve top and plastic spike harness* (2019).



Figure 4.12: Dalton Smit, *Warped Toyota* (2020). Mixed digital media.



Figure 4.13: Dalton Smit, *Silver safari suit pyjamas, warped* (2020).



Figure 4.14: Dalton Smit, *FYN BOI in blue towelling and crystal shorts 0.2* (2021).

As can be seen when examining the blue towelling and crystal shorts, multiple symbolic interactionist “objects” listed as cultural artifacts are evident in the garment. They showcase the juxtaposition of a pastel hue, rugby / sports inspired style, laundry related fabric that is plush and soft and home decorating related embellishments.



Figure 4.15: Dalton Smit, *Posh farm boy 0.1* (2020). Mixed digital media.

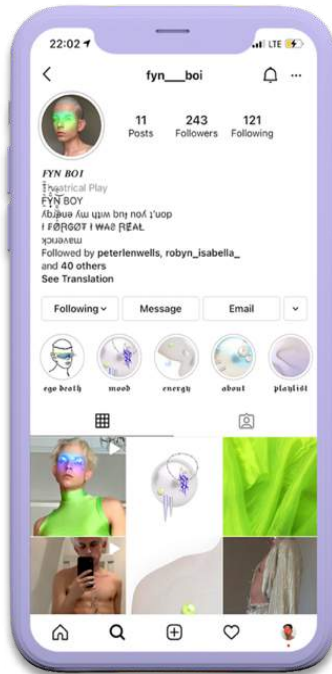


Figure 4.16: Dalton Smit, *Silver safari suit pyjama shirt* (2020).



Figure 4.17: Dalton Smit, *Posh farm boy 0.2* (2020). Mixed digital media.

4.3.3 @fyn___boi: THE CONCEPT INSTAGRAM ACCOUNT



Rose (2016: 331) argues that because we live in a world where communication is increasingly happening through visual media, which can communicate a study's results more directly, academic research should consider this an opportunity. It is a format more familiar to most audiences than academic work. With the increasing use of technology, autoethnography practices should adapt, as social media platforms provide new ways of engagement through evolving research environments through direct contact with audiences and the context of their daily life (Pink et al., 2016).

Figure 4.18: Dalton Smit, *FYN BOI's Instagram* (2021). Screenshot.
Source: www.instagram.com/fyn___boi

Dunne and Raby (2013: 140) state that contemporary media channels offer forms of engagement with social issues that are more aesthetic, intimate and contemplative. Likewise, Sylvester (2019: 61) examines how self-portraiture is already frequently used by artists to demonstrate the extent to which social media can be a place to explore and document the creation of an ongoing series of self-narratives. This visual medium provides new opportunities for academic scholars to explore the performance of identity with emerging technologies and contemporary self-construction (Sylvester, 2019: 88).

Furthermore, this study's studio work focuses on its concept and not craftsmanship. The output is a combination of conceptual fashion practices communicating a message through the design and creation of a collection,

the styling and art direction of photographic and video content, and these outcome's digital presentation on *FYN BOI*'s Instagram account.

The social media account of the constructed character, *FYN BOI*, found as (@fyn__boi) on Instagram, is the research practice contribution of this fashion study. This venture is performative, as I use myself by adopting this alternate identity of *FYN BOI*. I adopt his characteristics and presentation of his identity by wearing his clothes, displaying his unconcerned persona online and change the colour of my hair as a way of differentiation between *FYN BOI* and myself. This endeavour relates to my self-expression on social media, where I showcase my creative expression and representation of my identity.

Since *FYN BOI* is a creative interpretation of myself, social media allows me, as a visual communicator, to showcase my identity's interests and characteristics. In the case of *FYN BOI*'s account, I am interpreting my rejection of Afrikaner masculine standards. The rebellious nature of the content mirrors my values, preferences and beliefs.



Figure 4.19: Dalton Smit, *Becoming FYN BOI* (2021).

Instagram is the place where I visually express myself the most, so it only felt natural that *FYN BOI* would do the same.

@fyn__boi is a new and exciting venture. A venture where I can take the approach that I've had with my identity performance on social media, and apply it to a whole new identity – but also so familiar.

Although I don't feel that I hold back with my self-expression on Instagram, I consider @fyn__boi to be an outlet to share content that I would not usually have considered for my personal account.

The same aesthetic, but fixated.
The same aesthetic, but more particular.
The same preferences that guide self-expression, but focused.

The same values and beliefs that influence what is shared online but louder.

@dalton.smit, but with a colour palette, customised clothing, harnesses and spikes.
@dalton.smit, but platinum.



Figure 4.20: Dalton Smit, *FYN BOI and I* (2021). Self-portrait with AR face filter

@dalton.smit,

but

@fyn__boi

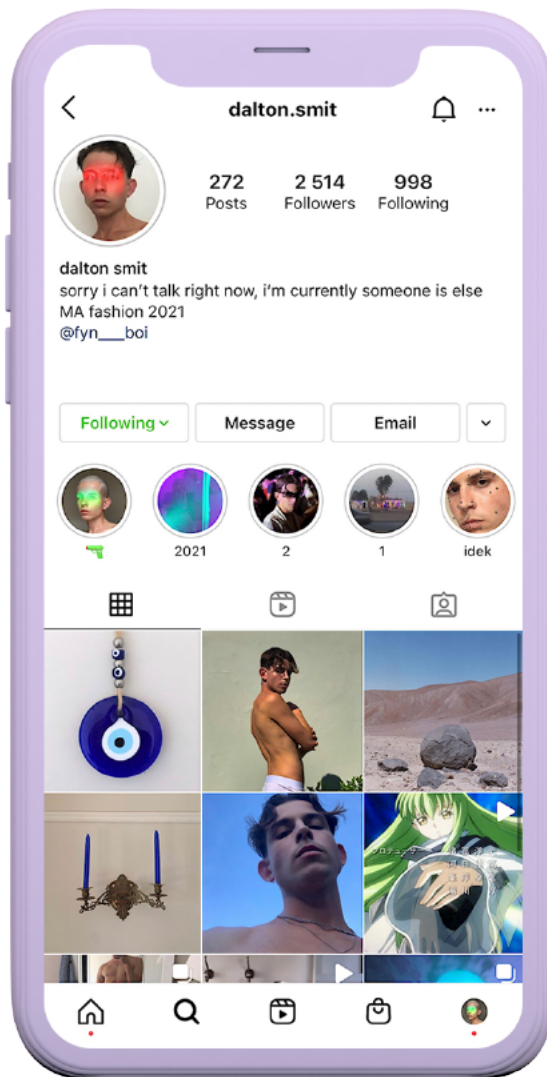


Figure 4.21: Dalton Smit's Instagram (2021). Screenshot. Source: www.instagram.com/dalton.smit

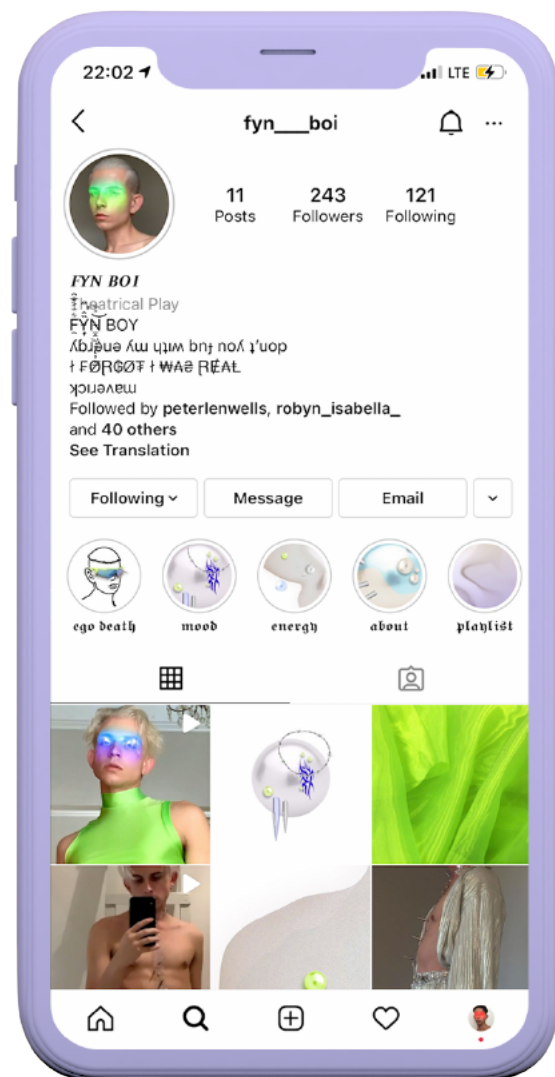


Figure 4.22: Dalton Smit, *FYN BOI*'s Instagram (2021). Screenshot. Source: www.instagram.com/fyn__boi

In support of this undertaking, Lüneburg (2018: 9,15) argues that this is achievable by using a communication tool such as Instagram in the context of visual research practice. I perform a self-constructed narrative of rejecting the expectations of masculine norms prescribed by my cultural background, as found in Lüneburg's (2018: 13) argument with Judith Butler's theories of gender performativity, embraced in this study. Butler's (in Lüneburg, 2018: 13) belief that for something to be performative, it produces a series of effects, such as the intention of undertaking this project, to provoke and

engage in social commentary. Displaying this facet of the research practice online, to provoke attention around it, Lüneburg (2018: 41) believes that using social media can be effective.

One can grasp the characteristics of *FYN BOI*'s identity when exploring his social media account. Instagram provides a multitude of opportunities for creative self-expression. This study utilises most of the post formats that the platform provides to disseminate and represent the research outcomes. Those Instagram content formats, shown next, are:

- Grid posts
Photos posted on the account's main feed.
- Story posts
These are posts that disappear after 24 hours, unless the stories have been added as a story highlight.
- Story highlights
Story posts selected to be featured on the account permanently
- Publishing augmented reality (AR) face filters
Created using *Spark AR Studio* software, which is uploaded and published by Instagram after a reviewing process.
- Guides
Collection of posts based around a theme, which form a guide for a specific topic. This is done by selecting posted content and inserting text and headings.

GRID POSTS

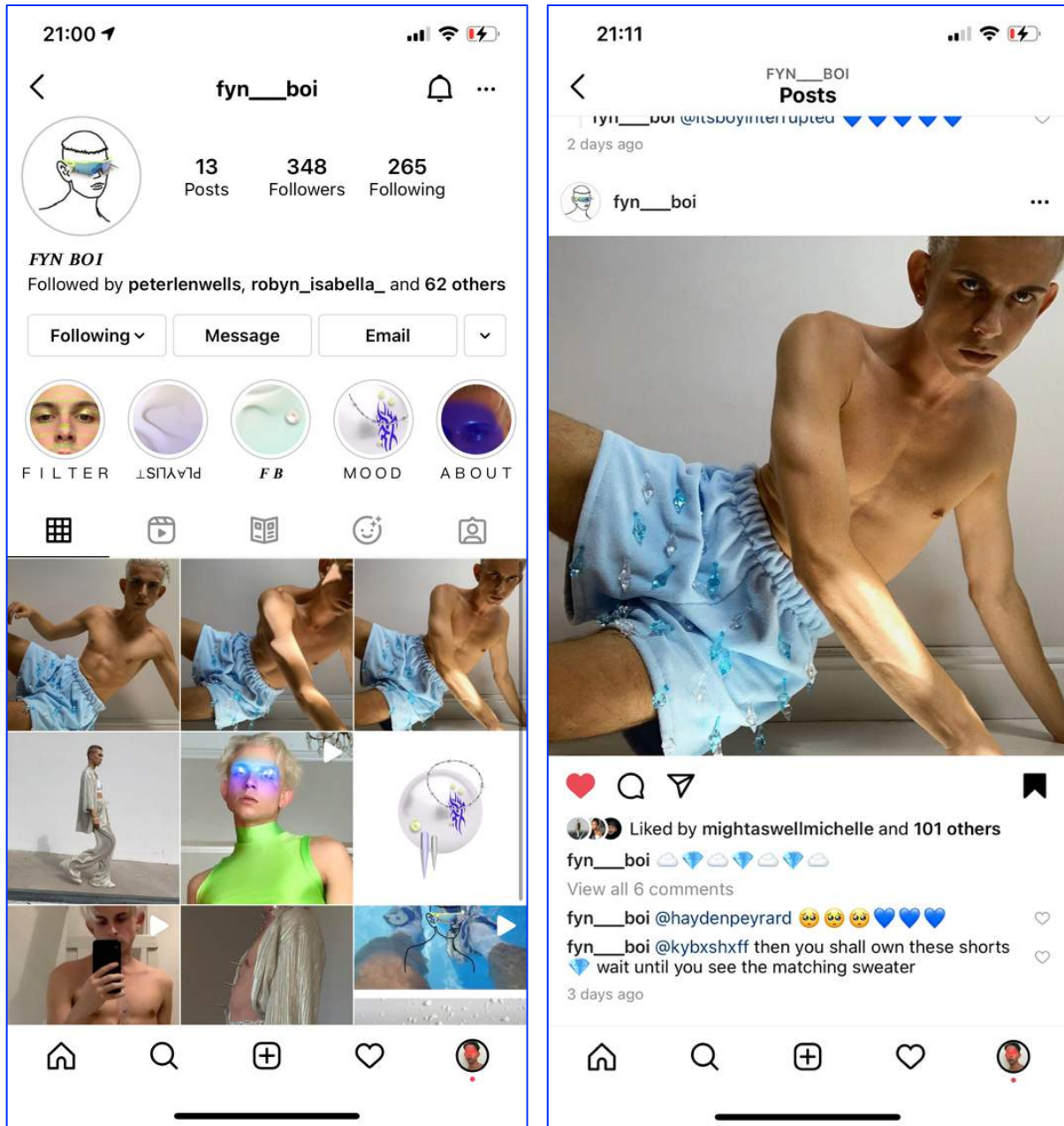


Figure 4.23: Dalton Smit, *FYN BOI's* Instagram grid posts (2021). Screenshot. Source: www.instagram.com/fyn__boi

STORY POSTS

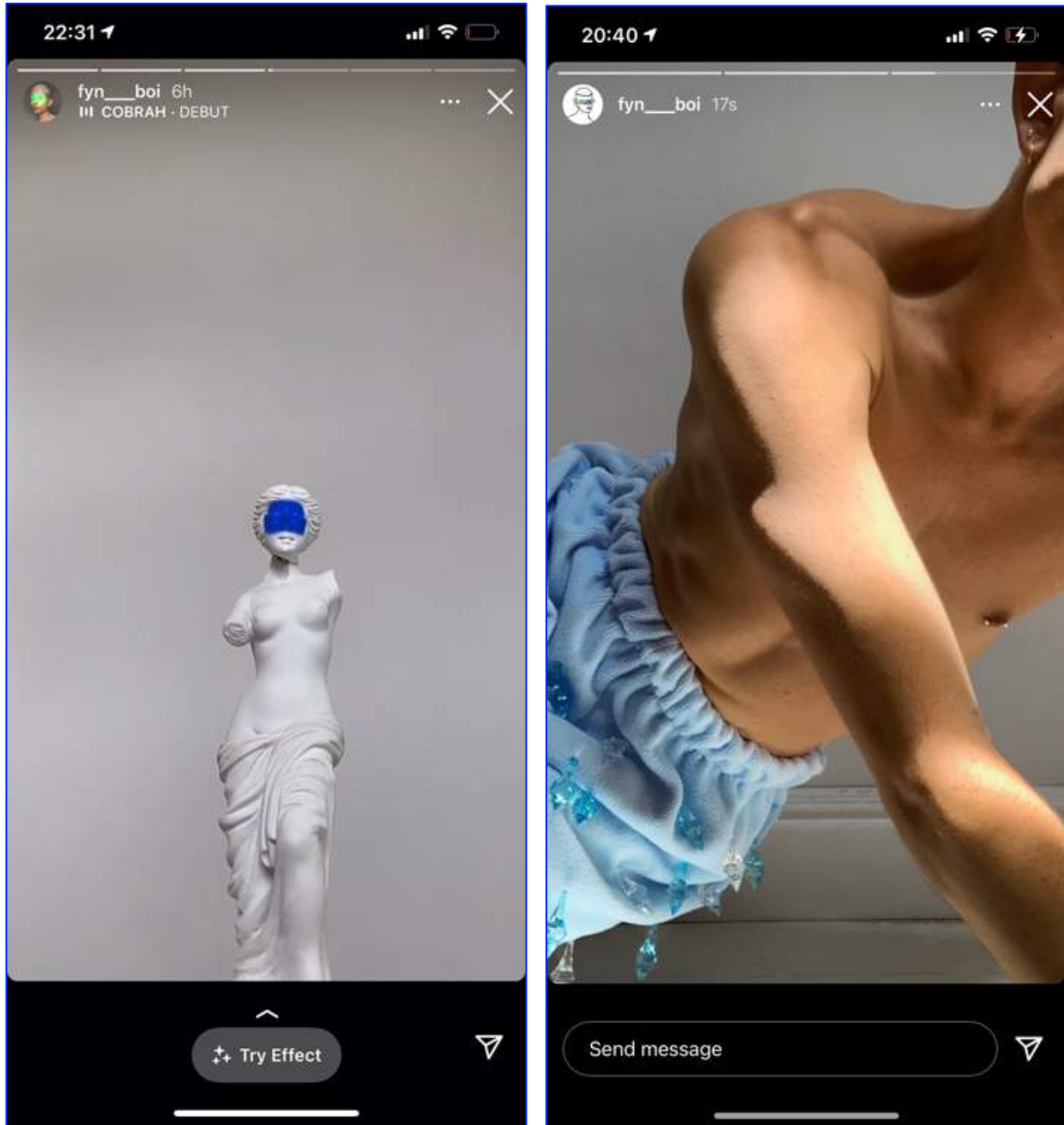


Figure 4.24: Dalton Smit, *FYN BOI's Instagram story posts* (2021). Screenshot. Source: www.instagram.com/fyn__boi

AR FACE FILTERS

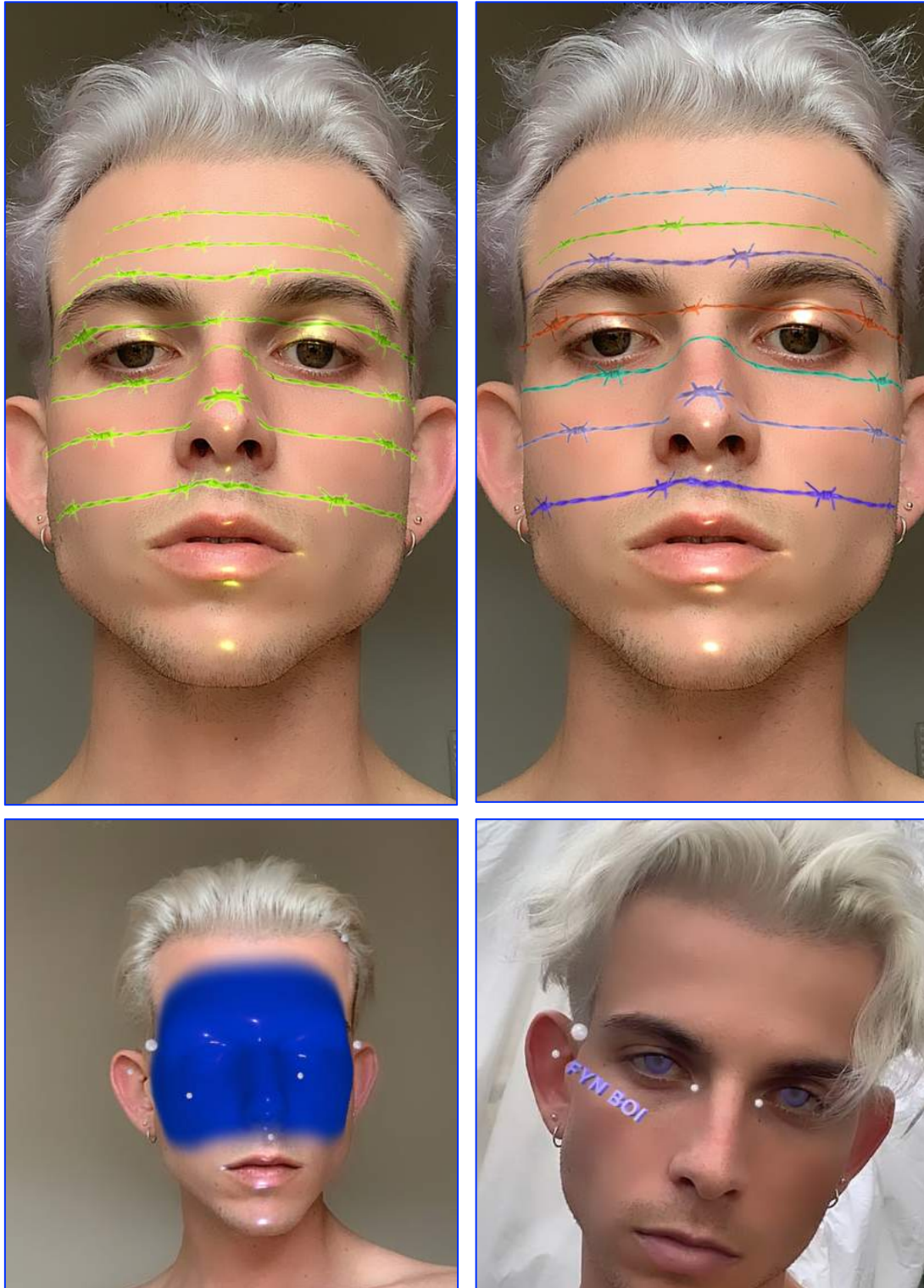


Figure 4.25: Dalton Smit, *FYN BOI*'s AR face filters (2021). Screenshot. Source: www.instagram.com/fyn__boi

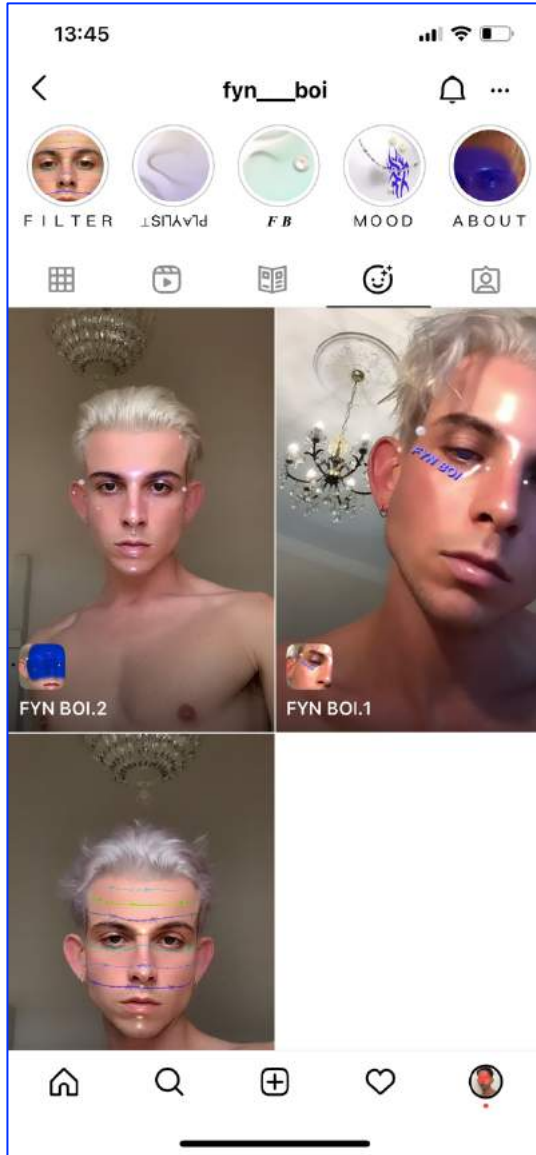


Figure 4.26: Dalton Smit, *FYN BOI's AR face filters* (2021). Screenshot. Source: www.instagram.com/fyn__boi

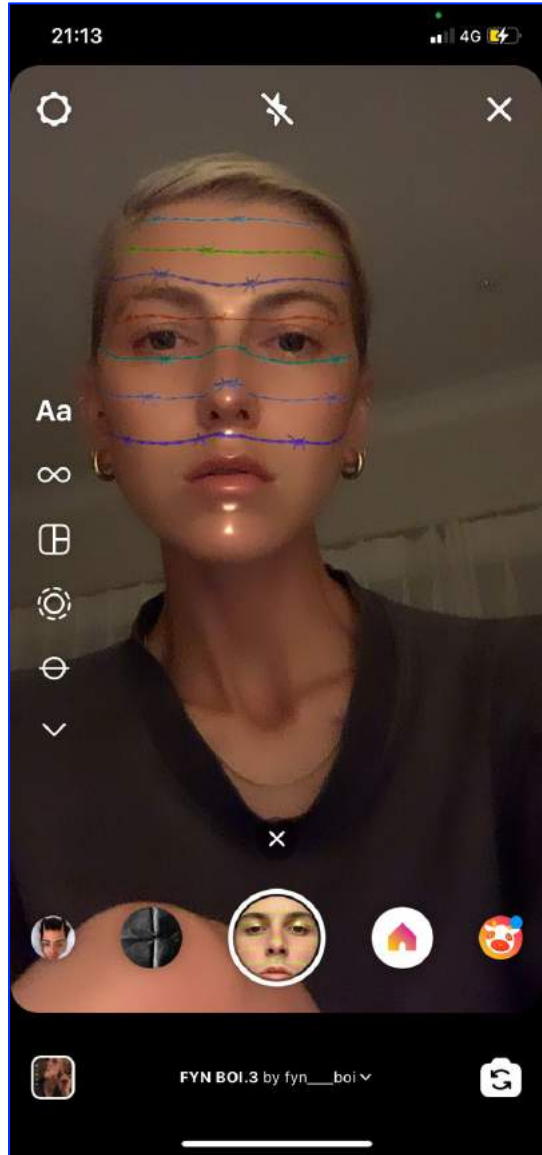


Figure 4.27: Dalton Smit, *FYN BOI AR face filter* (2021). Screenshot. Source: Provided by Michelle Drake

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

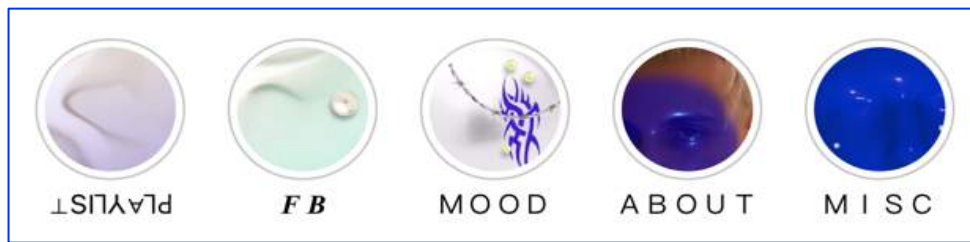


Figure 4.28: Dalton Smit, *FYN BOI's Instagram highlights* (2021). Screenshot. Source: www.instagram.com/fyn__boi

GUIDES

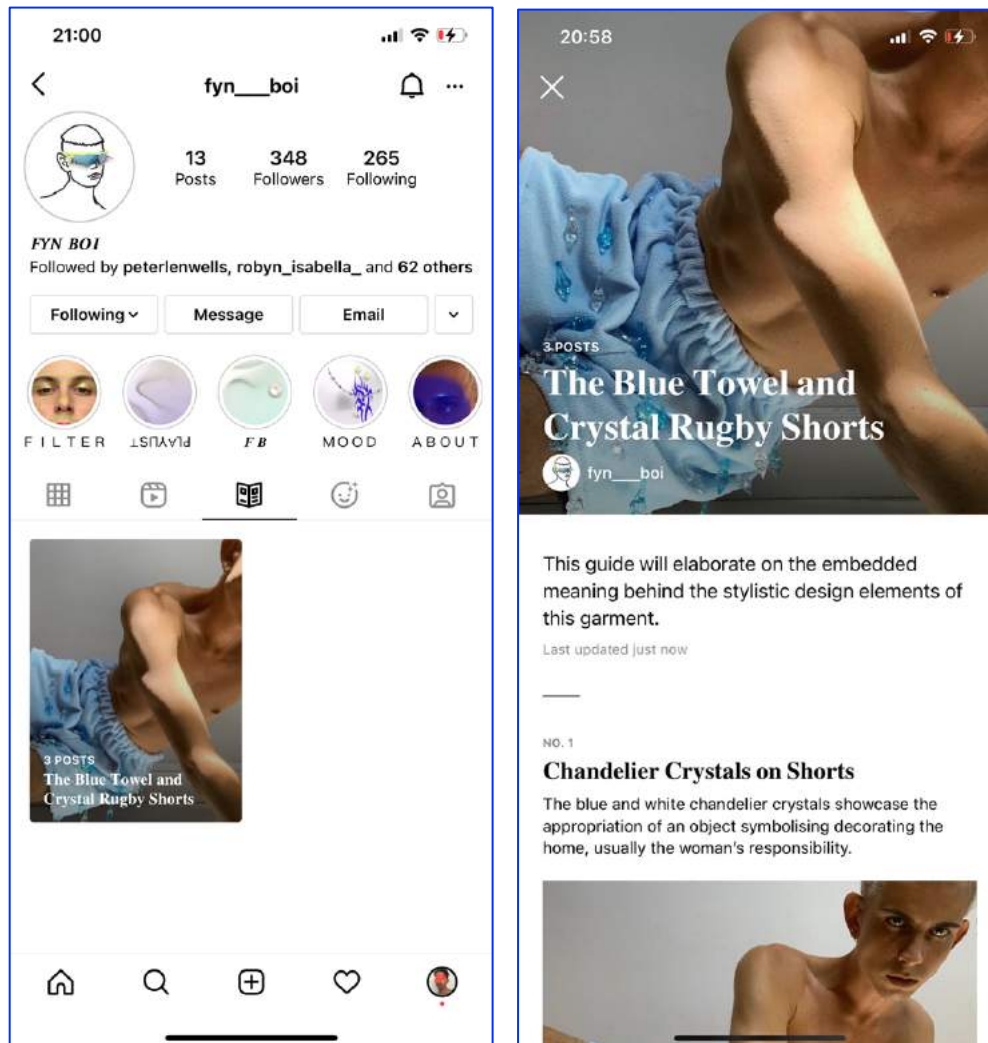


Figure 4.29: Dalton Smit, *FYN BOI's Instagram guides* (2021). Screenshot. Source: www.instagram.com/fyn__boi

4.4 CONCEPTUAL FASHION AND INSTAGRAM, THE CHOSEN MEDIUMS EMBODYING AND DISSEMINATING MY STANCE THROUGH @fyn___boi

As discussed, conceptual fashion can evoke an emotional response from the viewer, leading to discussions, questions, and reflection concerning the social issues addressed in work. This study's studio work encourages social change by combatting the oppression and ostracisation of men who do not conform to rigid beliefs and expectations of what an Afrikaner man is, and how he appears. The collection accomplishes that by communicating:

- What Afrikaner society expects me to be is not whom I want to be
- There is no way of measuring one's masculinity, since opinions of what masculinity should be is a societal construct.
- There are various ways of being a man, and exploring the many facets of masculinity, femininity and everything in between should be accepted and celebrated

Studied through an autoethnographic approach, my lived experiences as a man in an Afrikaner cultural setting, and my feelings towards them, therefore, guided the creation of the garments, as Shauna Butterwick (2017: 72) states that "arts-based practices create pathways to an expression of emotions" in her article, *The Contributions of Political Fashion Shows and Fabric to Visual Arts-Based Practice*. Further, Butterwick (2017: 72) argues that emotions can be considered central and integral to meaning making and knowledge construction. Visual material is equally as valuable with its ability to evoke effect, as Rose (2016: 331) considers particularly important in the representation of research, discussed in what comes next. By integrating a researcher's emotion into the process of knowing and reconnecting to their beliefs, one can fight oppression according to Butterwick (2017: 73), who further suggests that when one becomes more cognisant of emotions and

beliefs, it becomes difficult to be dominated and controlled. This study's aim is to accomplish this in an academic and social context with the research practice concept.

This approach is conducted through the autoethnographic research approach considering my values and beliefs. Using my personal and insider experiences as primary data guiding the clothing's creation, a unique insight into the social issue provides a new understanding of it through clothing. This approach allows me to mobilise fashion in theoretical inquiry, particularly in epistemology. Also, I am contributing a unique and very personal body of work to that of other designers confronting toxic masculinity relating to their cultural setting, such as Rich Mnisi, Nao Serati and Orange Culture.

In visual arts, autoethnography has provided creatives with a means to understand, contextualise and communicate their individual stories behind their conceptual work, where the form of representation is creative, evocative, and heartfelt, produced through an embodied mode of inquiry that is sensuous, emotional, and personal (Bartleet, 2016: 444). The resulting artistic outcomes and accompanying narratives can express the artist's distinctive voice (Bartleet, 2016: 456). Therefore, through the creative modes of expression that go beyond the literal, viewers are engaged emotionally and sensorily through active engagement with what is visually expressed (Bartleet, 2016: 444-445). As a result, instead of closed statements and assumptions implied through the conceptual clothing, the objective of this approach is to promote further thought and questions with the viewer (Bartleet, 2016: 445, 449). Rose (2016: 330) states that visual materials hold different types of information from written text for many researchers. Also, Pink (in Rose, 2016: 330) argues that images are instrumental at conveying elements of the social world that can elude written description through the purposeful use of colour, arrangement, gesture, and texture.

According to Harrison (in Bartleet, 2016: 445), audiences can then grasp the greater social significance of the researcher's encounters by utilising visual content, such as conceptual clothing, to express the researcher's personal stories and symbolic value. This study uses its research practice to engage in social commentary, promote social change and provide a novel interpretation of the social issue. Alex Grey first conveyed how a visual artist's work can achieve this in his TEDx talk, *Cosmic Creativity: How Art Evolves Consciousness* (2013a), discussed in what comes next. Grey is a visionary artist, described as having led a revolution in his field (Duwe, 2015: para. 1), and author of numerous books such as *Art Psalms*, *Net of Being* and *Mission of Art* (CoSM, 2020).

He employs Ken Wilber's integral map of the four quadrants (see figure 4.30) to illustrate the relationship between the inner and outer worlds of the individual and the collective, to describe how the process of an individual's artmaking and its integration into society (the collective) can help transform consciousness. Furthermore, provided below is Grey's (2013b: para. 2) explanation of how to use of the integral map in the context of visual art:

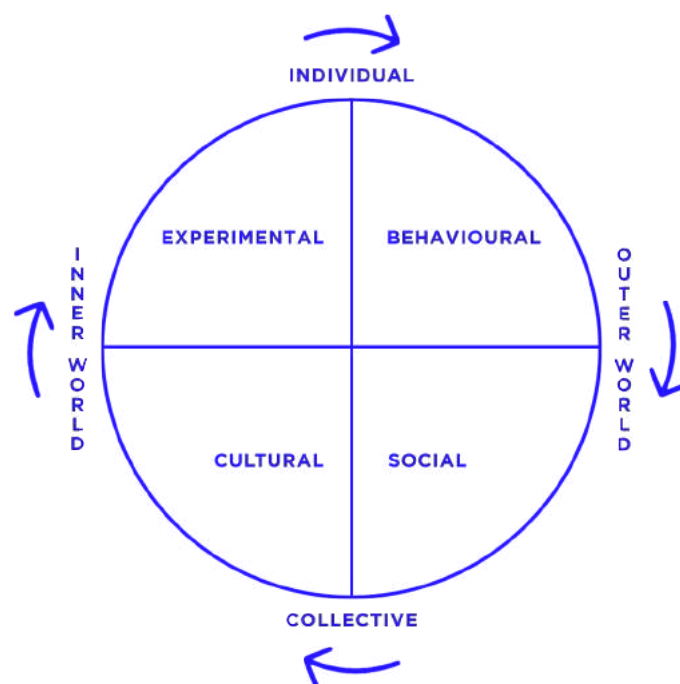


Figure 4.30: Dalton Smit, *Integral map of the four quadrants* (2021).

1. The upper left quadrant signifies the inner world of the individual, being the visual artist's mind and sense of self. The work's inspiration originates here, influenced by the artist's values, beliefs, and emotions.
2. The upper right quadrant represents the visual artist's behavioural state creating their artistic work, expressing their subjective views through creative production in the outer world.
3. The lower right quadrant refers to when that creative work is integrated into the outer world for aesthetic reception by an audience, such as a gallery, magazine, or website.
4. Lastly, the lower left quadrant represents society's inner world, where world views and the zeitgeist are situated. The meaning of the artwork is interpreted by its viewers here to influence cultural beliefs. This being an aim of conceptual fashion. This happens when the interpretation of the work creates a new understanding of a concept.

This model describes how visual art can create new understandings of a social issue, highlighting how this study's conceptual work can do so. A 'cultural turn' could be used to describe this pursuit. The notion of culture has become a central way for many social scientists to understand social structures, social identities, and social change and conflict (Rose, 2016: 2). Additionally, they are now interested in how social life is formed by people's thoughts and feelings about it, and the practices that arise from it (Rose, 2016: 2). Hall (in Rose, 2016: 2) says that culture is primarily concerned with the creation and exchange of meanings, where Rose (2016: 2) adds that these meanings can explicitly or implicitly be expressed in ways such as everyday speech, art or film. By presenting views of the social world, visual content can be considered central to social life's cultural construction (Rose, 2016: 2). Therefore, when a visual communicator integrates their subjective

experiences into the social world through their creative output, a unique representation of their interpretation is expressed.

Conceptual garments can then effectively communicate an artist's ideas with embedded meaning in their work when considering their emotions, beliefs and values in the creative process. As has been noted, an artist's emotions can be vital to the contribution of knowledge and provide an alternate understanding of a social issue. In this study, I considered my values and beliefs and how they influence my response to my cultural background through fashion. Given that autoethnographic methods inform this study's creative output through fashion, to communicate my reimagination of Afrikaner masculinity as I see it, I embraced a conceptual approach to a fashion research project. The conceptual genre urges the viewer to experience and interpret the garments differently; in the same way one would view conceptual art by considering the work's embedded meaning and social commentary. As a result, through provocative conceptual fashion practices that disrupt Afrikaner masculinity's rigid notions and the expectations of what it means to be a man in Afrikaner culture, I respond to how my cultural background is the antithesis of what I consider my identity and its self-expression to be.

Firstly, the objective of doing this is as an act of empowerment and claiming agency over my self-expression. Secondly, the research practice intends to provoke dialogue around masculinity to encourage social change, and communicate that a male identity is not defined by societies' prejudiced perceptions. Therefore, showcasing the project to viewers beyond the academic field and the few who would have attended a physical exhibition, or fashion show, say, a more effective presentation mode would be in an easily accessible digital format so as to reach a wider audience.

4.5 SUMMARY

This chapter presents the research methods and their practical outcomes to illustrate the steps taken, with @fyn___boi and his ensembles resulting from the thematic analysis and interpretation. The two themes, *expectations of an 'afrikaner' boy* and *FYN BOI*, represent opposing views and opinions. The relationship between the themes informed the research practice, visually depicting *FYN BOI's* rejection of *expectations of an 'afrikaner' boy* and reimagining Afrikaner masculinity in a way authentic to him. The development of the research's practice adopted several approaches to achieve the thematic analysis's visual interpretation. The study embraced a conceptual approach to research, fashion practices and its presentation in several ways.

Firstly, with a conceptualist and critical autoethnographic approach, the academic document's format and formality were questioned to correlate with the practice's nature. Secondly, through embedded meaning in the mixed digital media and conceptual garments informed by the analysis, the documentation of them using photographic and video content, the art direction and styling, as well as the exhibition of the research practice on social media. Lastly, this study's conceptual approach values concept over craftsmanship, allowing me to be the subject researched, the visual artist, and using me as performer, conveying the ideas and displaying the practical outcome. The final conceptual garments are exhibited as a facet of the research practice, as a fictive identity's wardrobe. I wear and display the clothing on social media, communicating the study's overall concepts to provoke thought, reflection, and discussions.

CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This study aimed to explore how conceptual fashion practice, in conjunction with the autoethnographic inquiry, could reimagine traditional Afrikaner masculinity from a personal perspective. This was based on a qualitative thematic analysis of my memories of Afrikaner cultural members' disapproval of my self-expression and how my personal beliefs contradict my cultural background. The dichotomy between the themes of *expectations of an 'afrikaner' boy* and *FYN BOI* was expressed through the narrative of the fictive identity of *FYN BOI*, told over a series of visual content postings on his (my alter-ego's) Instagram account. *FYN BOI*, representing a facet of my identity that provokes and disregards Afrikaner masculine norms, encourages others to embrace authenticity rather than conforming to an expression of identity fashioned as acceptable by Afrikaner society and culture.

5.2 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

The prevalence of toxic masculinity in most societies and cultures has affected many men and any other identity that does not conform to the societal definition of what a man should be. As illustrated with this study, fashion is one mode that can address this and pose a challenge to the preconceptions of masculine ideals. This is made possible when disregarding

the utilitarian aspect of clothing and seeing it as more than items used to cover the body. Conceptual design is one approach used in the construction of garments, with the intention of engaging in social commentary. Conceptual fashion practices allows meaning and emotion to be embedded into a fashion object, influenced by my autoethnographic inquiry of personal perspectives and lived experiences.

Incorporating a personal perspective, focusing on my experience with Afrikaner masculine ideals in the studio, also allows for the research practice resulting from this fashion study to contribute to the broader discourse concerning masculinity, femininity, and other notions of gender and cultural discrimination against marginalised groups.

5.3 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Based on these conclusions, where the research's practice is disseminated, expressed, and performed through digital means, other fashion practitioners could consider a similar path. Alternative approaches to fashion studies, especially when situated in a conceptual space, could be considered. The contribution of these projects typically consists of creating a seasoned collection inspired and guided by their research. Fashion is a form of visual communication. This project embraced technological capabilities and alternative approaches for presenting this visual communication, intending to enhance the communicative abilities clothing already has. With this unconventional approach to a fashion study, disseminating the research practice online instead of a physical exhibition or fashion show allows the study to be accessed to audiences beyond academia's domain. In this case, on a platform where daily, most people experience visual communication on social media. Additionally, future fashion practitioners could consider incorporating their own identity in their work by applying an

autoethnographic approach to their study. This offers the opportunity to enhance and add a more profound, personal, and more authentic aspect to their creative work.



Figure 5.1: Dalton Smit, *FYN BOI is vegan* (2019). Digital mixed media.

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ADDENDA

ADDENDUM A

PERSONAL MEMORY DATA: WHAT DO I THINK OF MY OWN IDENTITY AND EXPRESSION OF MASCULINITY?

WHEN: 18/12/2019

- [My own identity and expression](#)

This is the first time that I've consciously thought about and had to write about, my own expression of my identity. I don't believe that I fall into the stereotypical masculine or feminine, I feel that masculinity and femininity do not come in one form. I could consider myself having my own combination of masculine, feminine and everything in between.

When I think of the visual presentation of myself that I show to the outside world, I can't categorise myself in either a masculine or feminine box. I can't even specify which trait is masculine or feminine, because my thinking isn't so linear nor black and white. When I get dressed, there is no point in the process where it crosses my mind to identify which characteristics are masculine or feminine. I just get dressed, act, speak and present myself in the way that comes the most naturally to me.

If I had to go into specifics and analyse my characteristics, I still can't pinpoint every trait I feel would be manly or girly. Visually, I can identify my physical form - I exercise and do weight-train at the gym, which gives me a

toned/athletic form (when I'm disciplined), which could be considered on the masculine side. But I feel my mannerisms as being in-between, I can sit wide-legged and have masculine stances, but I can also be soft and sit cross-legged, there is no way to categorise my mannerisms as being either masculine or feminine.

The way I dress is also on such a spectrum, one day I can wear a sweatshirt, sweatpants and sneakers and on another day, I can wear high-waisted jeans, a women's blouse and make-up. Alternatively, I can wear a sweatshirt, sweatpants and sneakers with make-up. I suppose one can also measure it against the context and setting I'm in, which I do not keep in mind or use as a brief when I get dressed anyway.

I own male and female trousers, male and female shirts, male and female shoes and some items that I have no idea of where they would have been merchandised in a store. When I get dressed, I don't consciously think about whether I'm putting on a female shirt with male trousers - it doesn't cross my mind. It can go even deeper when considering how I wear and style the garments, looking at how high my pants are pulled up, how I have buttoned the shirt, which necklaces I am wearing, or if I was wearing a dangling earring or if I'm wearing any jewellery at all.

Considering this, I have never felt less of a man than anyone else (not that it matters), I don't measure myself in this way. I'm trying to say that being masculine or feminine doesn't matter to me - to a point where I don't even think about whether I'm more masculine or more feminine on a particular day. I see clothing, make-up and jewellery as fluid and genderless, I don't even consider the cultural or societal expectations of how a man should appear.

Although my manhood has been questioned in the past, I decided not to internalise it or be affected by it in any way. I've always had a more assertive

personality and sense of individuality to identify which opinions were not valid for me. Not many people have the same experience, unfortunately. I suppose my views on my personal expression has also been highly influenced by my involvement in performing and visual arts, which I'm eternally grateful for.

- [My views on masculinity and femininity](#)

I believe masculinity and femininity are a performance on a spectrum. I don't think that masculinity stops where femininity begins, and I don't believe that these traits are restricted to gender. I believe each individual encompasses both qualities, along with many others. It is each individual's choice as to what they embrace, how they embrace it and to what level they embrace it in whichever way feels most natural to them.

I think that a cis-gendered man who displays hyper-masculine qualities was not born with these traits, he has learned them. If he feels that his expression is what comes most natural to him, then that is great, but he should not feel that he is defined by his culture or society's expectations of what a cis-gendered man should be, act or dress.

ADDENDUM B

PERSONAL MEMORY DATA: AFRIKANER BOYS DO NOT TAKE PART IN STEREOTYPICALLY FEMININE ACTIVITIES

WHEN: A LONG TIME AGO

ME, AS A PERSON, AT THE TIME THIS OCCURRED: A CURIOUS CHILD

- *Afrikaner Boys don't knit and sew*

Others* and I visited other Afrikaner cultural member's in a small, predominantly Afrikaans speaking town. One of the females was exceptionally skilled with needlework and knitting and had always made me gloves, socks, and other crafted gifts.

She was teaching another, a female close to me*, how to knit and sew. My interest was sparked, and I had wanted to join in the activities. Naturally, when one is a child, curiosity, and the fear of feeling left out will significantly ignite participation in any situation.

The details are now vague to me, but one thing I do know is that I was told to stop, that I was not allowed to knit or sew - since these were hobbies for girls.

I remember feeling frustrated, these activities really interested me, and I merely wanted to join. I also felt confused, knowing that these activities were

stereotypically feminine, but at the same time not seeing why this would be a big deal.

ADDENDUM C

PERSONAL MEMORY DATA: PROBLEMATIC MANNERISMS

WHEN: 2006

ME, AS A PERSON, AT THE TIME THIS OCCURRED: A CHUBBY, 12-YEAR-OLD BOY, WITH A LOWER SELF-ESTEEM

- **Problematic Mannerisms**

When I was around twelve years old, others* and I had gone for breakfast. While the bill was arranged, I went to talk to someone, a very close friend to me at that time, who had been dining there with her own family.

I don't remember any of the content of that conversation, but it lasted for around five minutes - we were just catching up, also knowing that we were going to see each other at school the next day. While in conversation with her, I was not paying attention to how I was carrying myself, my gestures or mannerisms at all - I don't feel that this is natural for anyone to do while chatting to a close friend? More importantly, I was comfortable around her since we had been close.

When the conversation had ended, I returned to the others* to leave. I do not specifically remember who then decided to mention the following, I suppose these moments of discomfort are somewhat blurry now. So, the individual who had been observing the conversation from afar mentioned that my mannerisms and gestures made me look like a 'moffie'. I don't think that this person's intention in sharing this with me was to be hurtful or to attack my character, I think it was to inform me about these problematic

mannerisms I have to avoid doing these things in the future. I guess the reasoning behind it was that they didn't feel that the way I was carrying myself was normal or correct. Perhaps to help avoid being teased by others or shape me into a version of myself that would align with how an Afrikaner boy should carry himself.

I do not remember how I felt when this happened, but I was already aware that I displayed some feminine characteristics at this point. So, I am sure that this being pointed out to me had made my twelve-year-old self even more self-aware than I had already been. At this age I was not yet comfortable with myself as a person, knowing that I was a little different from the other boys, knowing that I was overweight and knowing that most of my friends were female. This was an instance where my manhood was questioned I was made to feel that the way I had been expressing myself was wrong and that I would be ostracized if I didn't change it.

ADDENDUM D

PERSONAL MEMORY DATA: AN AFRIKANER BOY'S APPEARANCE IS UNCONTROVERSIAL AND NEVER FLAMBOYANT OR PROVOCATIVE

WHEN: APRIL 2015

ME, AS A PERSON, AT THE TIME THIS OCCURRED: I HAD BEEN A FASHION STUDENT ALREADY, BUT I HADN'T BEEN CONFIDENT IN MYSELF AND MY CHARACTER AS MUCH AS I NOW PRESENTLY AM

- [Not Celebrated in an Afrikaner context](#)

This scenario revolves around one particular two-piece. I had bought it from Primark while I was in London for an internship. It is a t-shirt and shorts combo with a collaged and detailed print of characters from The Simpsons. I do see how this look would seem loud to someone who dresses more conservatively, but at the same time, the style of the garments isn't so outrageous that it would receive strange looks from people when worn in public. I find the print humorous and fun, not 'out there' at all.

This instance happened when others* and myself were going out. I had been wearing this look at university, where I then met the others* afterwards. I was asked to change by someone*, they did not feel that this look was appropriate for where we were going - or rather, they didn't want someone with the appearance I had this day to be associated with them and the perception of themselves they wanted to showcase to others. Or perhaps

this 'outrageous' look was not considered appropriate or normal for an Afrikaans boy to be wearing, as it is very colourful, and something with this particular style could seem abnormal to wear in a town that I consider to be more conservative than London. At the time, high street stores and clothes of this nature were not yet available in Port Elizabeth.

I think that this situation was affected by the power dynamics affected by someone* considering themselves as superior, where they feel that their patriarchal position made their opinion the only correct view and deny any other idea that opposed. And this reaction was definitely influenced by their ideas of masculinity, since I am a boy and that this is not how a boy should be dressing.

Regardless, I was at a point where I was slowly becoming more comfortable and confident as a person, with my self-expression and exploring different styles without identifying them as feminine or masculine. I had been to London for a while, so my character naturally developed and matured from being independent, learning how to dictate my daily life and make my own decisions. Also, the surroundings that I had been in for a while there were vastly different from Port Elizabeth - I experienced London as an extremely progressive city.

This is where my personal growth happened, where no one had asked me what my sexual orientation was - because it didn't matter. I saw many 'outrageously' dressed people and hadn't noticed anyone in public even pay attention. This sense of freedom excited me. I witnessed men dressed in drag on the underground where no one expressed any negative comments or gestures, and people dressed in alien suits were applauded.

This situation made me angry, especially because something like this was said to me in a stage of my life where I became more confident in myself and the way I expressed my identity. I was angry that someone was trying to

dictate and control how I self-expressed, that something as petty as the way I dressed was so important. Regardless, I chose to provoke the situation and kept the outfit on.