Designing the South African Nation

From Nature to Culture

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There is to date very little published research and writing about South African design history. One of the main obstacles has been dealing with the legacy of forty years of apartheid censorship (1950 to 1990) that banned and destroyed a vast array of visual culture in the interests of propaganda and national security, according to the Beacon for Freedom of Expression (http://search.beaconforfreedom.org/about_database/south%20africa.html). This paucity of material is aggravated by the general lack of archival and documentary evidence, not just of the struggle against apartheid, but also of the wider domain of design in South Africa. Even mainstream designed material for the British imperialist and later apartheid government has been lost or neglected in the inadequate archival facilities of the State and influential organizations such as the South African Railways. Efforts to redress this are now appearing as scholars start to piece together fragments, not in order to write a definitive history of South African design, but rather to write histories of design in South Africa that recuperate neglected narratives or revise earlier historiographies.

This chapter is accordingly an attempt to document a number of key moments in the creation of South African nationhood between 1910 and 2013 in which communication design played a part. Our point of departure is rooted in Zukin's (1991: 16) belief that symbolic and material manifestations of power harbour the ideological needs of powerful institutions to manipulate class, gender and race relations, ultimately to serve the needs of capital (and governance). South Africa passed through various iterations of colonial

domination before attaining monolithic control over the black majority population, which only ended in the 1990s with the emergence of democracy. We shall examine the official or sanctioned historiography of South Africa from 1910 to 2013 and show how selected myths of nationhood were employed for ideological purposes. We shall suggest that selected state institutions and government-sponsored initiatives created prisms through which successive South African 'imagined communities' were represented visually (Anderson 2006).

We shall not necessarily discuss these official discourses in terms of success or failure but, rather, we want to emphasize the vital role that communication design played in ideological activation. The manner in which South Africa was projected – from being a 'white' nation for white people to a post-apartheid state for a new multiracial constituency – corresponds to the change from colonial to postcolonial and global gazes. In attaining this status, a new visual language emerged that rejected the clichéd colonialist image of South Africa and explored its new, confident urban identity of the early twenty-first century. Sauthoff (2004: 35–36) argues that this 'capacity of visual domains to clarify cultural identity, forge a national consciousness, and contribute to the expression a national identity' encapsulates the way in which the 'new social, political, and cultural order is conceptually fixed and visually registered'.

As stated above, this chapter is not a national history of design, nor does it attempt to deal with issues related to the ontology or teaching of design history in South Africa. There has been a lack of a critical discourse in South Africa about these matters, largely as a result of inadequate documentation and ongoing debates concerning contested national histories. South African historiography in general has traditionally been divided into successive schools – British imperialist, settler colonialist, Afrikaner nationalist, and the revisionist – but only the latter started to incorporate broader social history in the 1990s (Visser 2004: 1). At that time, South African (cultural) historians started to interrogate issues such as identity, gender, memory, heritage, environmentalism, national monuments and museums, and leisure and tourism (Visser 2004: 17–19). Writing as a communication designer and a visual culture specialist respectively, we consider that writings on design could benefit from the interdisciplinarity ushered in by cultural studies during the latter part of the twentieth century. In particular, cultural studies scholars' interest in the operations of ideology and power by means of cultural practices (such as design) informs this chapter.

In order to investigate how communication design mythologized the nation and invested meaning in signifiers to invent the idea of the nation, we shall look at three key periods in South African history: 1910 to 1948, 1948 to 1990, and 1990 to the present.

A 'White Man's Land', 1910–1948

The first colonial settlement of South Africa was undertaken by the Netherlands in 1652, but Britain became the dominant imperial power after 1815. By the late 1800s, what was once the vast, unspoilt domain of the San and Khoikhoi was ruled by white colonizers and worked by the descendants of their Malay (Coloured) slaves and Indian indentured labourers. Under British colonial rule, land previously populated by indigenous peoples became the Cape Colony, Republic of Natalia, Republic of the Orange Free State and the Transvaal Republic. British domination was maintained until after the end of the South African War (1899–1902). After this victory by Great Britain, the imperative of nation building and conciliation between the English- and Afrikaans-speaking white people became a national priority. The Union of South Africa was declared in 1910 and after this, successive white governments enacted policies that gave control of the land and economy to a white minority, entrenched urban segregation, and controlled black movement (for example, the Natives Land Act of 1913). The declaration of Union facilitated the reinvention of the South African nation, constructed principally around the notion of modernization to counter connotations of backwardness (Rassool and Witz 1996: 359). Modernization, as a metaphor for the advantages of Western culture, stood as a powerful counterfoil against the colonial legacy of essentialist imagery, based on stereotypes of nature, by which (South) Africa had previously been represented. The period from Union until 1948 is characterized by the oscillation between images of nature/'primitivism' with images that asserted the advantages of culture/modernity; this rhetoric satisfied Western desire for the exotic, but simultaneously offered reassuring images of 'civilization' (Rassool and Witz 1996: 364).

One of the most influential bodies that shaped the Union was the South African Railways (SAR). With the South Africa Act of 1909, the formerly separate railway systems were combined into the government-controlled South African Railway and Harbour Administration (SAR&H) under the first General Manager, Sir William Hoy. The SAR controlled all the harbours, train services, motor bus services, and air travel, representing an effective monopoly related to travel to, in, and from South Africa. The SAR was not limited to transportation; according to Foster (2003: 661), as one of the main employers, it influenced almost every aspect of South Africa's social and economic life. The SAR expedited the expansion of the mines and agriculture and facilitated the urbanization and industrialization that made the Witwatersrand the economic centre of South Africa (Foster 2008: 34–36). According to Foster (2008: 203), the first-generation Anglophile administrators of the SAR strategically aligned their policies with those of the Union government to illustrate the advantages of capitalism, imperialism, urbanization and modernization (Foster 2003: 661, 663).

The process of conceptualizing a new metanarrative of South Africa was, for the first time, largely a visual one. The SAR established a Publicity Department (SARPD) in 1910, under Mr A.H. Tatlow to deal with publicity in newspaper, magazine and book advertisements, guide-books, pamphlets, posters, and photographs (SAR 1910: 36). The purpose of the 'publicity propaganda' produced by the SAR was to disseminate visual material of 'South African scenery and industries in all parts of the world' (SAR 1910: 37) to stimulate tourism and industrial investment in South Africa (SAR 1911: 43). The SARPD employed photographers and graphic 'artists' to envision the new nation, and as British trends predominated in the first half of the twentieth century, most of these artists had strong ties with the English-speaking audience in South Africa (Sutherland 2004: 53). Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, *The Illustrated London News* carried extensive advertisements by the SAR. The visual and written rhetoric centred on the myth of nature that tapped into the prevailing fashion for sunshine as healthy and restorative. South Africa, 'the Empire's sun land' (Fig. 3.1), was accordingly promoted for its outdoor life, fresh mountain air of the veld, and escapism. But the 'vast romance and inspiration of Africa' (Fig. 3.1) was continually offset by reassuring images of modernity: 'Few countries so perfectly blend the luxury of modern civilisation with primitive customs' (*The Illustrated London News*, 9 October 1937); the SAR often used transport as the signifier of modernity that helped to create the myth of the modern South African nation.

The SAR also had vested interests in how (white) middle-class South Africans imagined 'their' country, and helped to promote a common white identity that was largely based on familiarity with, and entitlement to, the land (Foster 2003: 660). The SARPD documented the country visually and created iconic views that formed a conceptual prism through which notions of nationhood and the idea of South Africa as a 'white man's country' were read (Foster

Figure 3.1 SARPD advertisements in *The Illustrated London News*. From left to right: 'South Africa. The Empire's sun land', 28 July 1928; 'Visit South Africa's Riviera', 12 September 1936; 'South Africa', 9 October 1937; 'For speed and comfort', poster published by South African Railways & Airways, circa 1934. Courtesy of Transnet Heritage Library.

2008: 40–42, 49, 86–87). These images included natural scenes such as Table Mountain, the veld, and the Drakensberg, but also cultural production such as so-called Bushman paintings and Cape Dutch architecture. These Cape Dutch gables became emblems of an idealized, romanticized white history, and were taken up by the 'hegemonic official discourse of nationalism' (Coetzer 2007: 174), forging a new social imaginary of white South Africa.

In 1947, the state-sponsored South African Tourist Corporation (Satour) was founded and its mandate was to publicize South Africa for the international market, whereas the SARPD continued to focus on the domestic market. Particularly during the apartheid years, Satour played a key role in projecting a positive view of South Africa and supporting the country's policies.

The Anglophile nature of the South African Union began to change during the 1920s. The pact government in 1924 between the National Party and the Labour Party offered preferential treatment for white (Afrikaans) farmers and workers, especially in the SAR. The rise of Afrikaner nationalism during the 1930s brought to an end the solidarity that had existed between English- and Afrikaans-speaking South Africans during the early decades of the twentieth century (Foster 2008: 250). Afrikaner nationalism was supported by the founding of the *Broederbond*,[1] FAK (Federation of Afrikaner Cultural Organizations), and the ATKV (Afrikaans Language and Cultural Organization, the cultural arm of the SAR) in the 1920s, the recognition of Afrikaans as an official language in 1925, and the creation of a new national flag in 1928 (Fig. 3.2).

Figure 3.2 The South African national flag, 1928–1994. Image courtesy of South African Bureau of Heraldry.

The political history of this flag offers a representative narrative of this era in South Africa's quest for nationhood since it raises many questions related to imperialism, nationality, compromise, concession and imagined cohesion, which have been largely unexplored in the design discourse. South Africa used the defaced red and blue British ensigns as national flags after 1910 (Brownell 2011: 43–44). In 1925, the Union Parliament introduced a bill that paved the way for a new South African flag. The design process sparked emotional controversy and dissent between English and Afrikaans speakers regarding the inclusion or not of the Union Jack, as it was felt that this perpetuated British dominance (Brownell 2011: 46). A compromise was reached by making the orange, white and blue *Prinzenvlag* the basis of the design since it was considered to be non-political and probably the first to be raised in South Africa by Jan van Riebeeck in 1652. The Union Jack, the flag of the Republic of the Orange Free State and the *Transvaal Vierkleur* were positioned as flaglets in the centre of the white band as a gesture of compromised cohesion (Brownell 2011: 48). The Nationality and Flags Act of 1927 provided further concessions by allowing the Union Jack to be flown alongside the new South African flag, an arrangement that lasted until 1957. These compromises for the sake of cohesion seem to be a re-occurring metanarrative of South Africa's complex history as the terms represent a prism that reflects the win/loose, loose/win, or win/win scenarios for different interest groups at various stages.

The gradual Afrikanerization of government in the 1910 to 1948 era culminated in the victory of the National Party in 1948, ushering in the era of apartheid rule and the win/loose scenario of imagined cohesion where the majority black population lost the right to self-determination for more than forty years.

Communication Design under Apartheid, 1948–1990

Benedict Anderson (2006: 6) famously defines a nation as 'an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign'. The myth of the apartheid era mainly centred on the concept of nurturing the notion of the *volk*, the Afrikaans term for nation or people. The relevance of the term is an imagined identity or perhaps more accurately, a community of (self)interest, since it symbolically describes the rise of Afrikaner nationalism as a political ideology that excluded the realities of all South Africans. Three key aspects determined how this manifested itself in the political and communication design domains: language (Afrikaans), religion (Calvinism), and ethnicity (separation). In the late nineteenth century, the Rev. S.J. Du Toit proposed that Afrikaners were a distinct nationality with a fatherland[2] (South Africa) and their own language (Afrikaans) and that the *volk*'s destiny was to rule South Africa. For more than forty years, the National Party built on this mythic tripartite

conception, which eventually resulted in the ostracization of South Africa from the international arena.

The Nationalist government implemented numerous apartheid policies, including the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act, Suppression of Communism Act, Population Registration Act, Group Areas Act and the Immorality Amendment Act. The most notable outcome was the establishment of *bantustans* (homelands) from the 1950s onwards as a means of segregating the black and white populations, which resulted in the forced relocation of vast numbers of people. The total land allocated for black people was 13 per cent, while the remainder was reserved for white South Africa to develop and prosper from the country's natural and mineral wealth. The government focused on its global gaze and appropriated the British imperialist model of modernity and rapid development in conjunction with what was considered morality within apartheid's ideological framework. The long-term goal was that the homelands would become autonomous states based on principles of ethnic self-determination and segregated development, and they had to develop their own visual identities by means of flags and heraldic and other symbols.

The Nationalists understood the power of the visual language and used it to entrench political dogma. The notorious *Broederbond* infiltrated all spheres of society and acted as government propagandists (and censors). The government invested heavily in acquiring influence over the media and publishing sector and produced mass propaganda to influence the mindsets and perception of the population – black and white. Government controlled the radio service and the country did not have a television service until 1976. Furthermore, the largest newspaper group, which controlled 90 per cent of all printed media, was privately owned but ran by powerful *Broederbond* members and was closely aligned to the government's interests (Venter 2013; Hydén, Leslie and Ogundimu 2003: 146).

During the 1950s, the official mythic discourse was propagated by government-sponsored journals such as *Panorama* and *Lantern*,[3] which were targeted at a local white audience but also had a substantial international readership. According to Groenewald (2012: 61–62), *Panorama* failed 'to contextualise their relentlessly positive reportage, and [were] selective in their portrayal of cultural [and political] experiences within South Africa'. Much of the reportage and visual imagery focused on representing South Africa in terms of Western constructs of modernity and development, firmly rooted in the worldview of an exclusively white South Africa. In contrast, magazines such as *Drum*, *Bona* and *Zonk!*[4] were targeted at a black readership, reflected the dynamic changes that were taking place among the new urban black South African communities. Peter Magubane maintains that '*Drum* was a different home; it did not have apartheid. There was no discrimination . . . It was only when you left *Drum* and entered the world outside of the main door that you knew you were in apartheid land' (Barlow 2006).

On 21 March 1960, a mass demonstration against apartheid pass laws erupted into a massacre of sixty-nine people by the police in the township of Sharpeville and resulted in the declaration of a state of emergency. In May 1961, South Africa declared itself a republic and left the British Commonwealth. In the same year, Nelson Mandela proposed the adoption of armed struggle to achieve liberation for the disenfranchised. Mandela and his Rivonia Trial peers were sentenced to life imprisonment for treason against the apartheid state in 1963. By 1966, the United Nations General Assembly had endorsed the cultural boycott against South Africa and in 1970 declared apartheid 'a crime against the conscience and dignity of mankind' (*United Nations Juridical Yearbook* 1970: 53).

South Africa was plunged into an economic crisis and the government's Department of Information aggressively responded by increasing investment in all available media resources to support local and international propaganda campaigns to manage the government and country's reputation (Marsh 1991). So, for instance, publicity material produced during the 1960s and 1970s by Satour featured the obligatory images of sun, sea, sport and wildlife as 'South Africa had to [continue to] appear as an invitingly outdoor, exclusively white country' – a truly imagined community that was not aligned with reality (Grundlingh 2006: 110). Grundlingh (2006: 110–111) further asserts that as a tourist destination, South Africa was still principally associated with outdoorism, primitivism, wildlife and leisure. Satour's promotional material was accordingly constructed around the mythic rhetoric of sunny skies, the romance of gold and diamond mines, adventure, wild animals in their natural surroundings, and the ceremonies, colourful dress and charming dances of the so-called natives.

The Soweto riots of 1976, partly a protest against the imposition of Afrikaans as a primary medium of instruction in public schools, led to further states of emergency and irreparable damage to South Africa's reputation. By the 1980s, South Africa was at the precipice of a civil war and the Nationalist government had to embark on a road of negotiated transformation. But the government still implemented strict censorship, which had a direct impact on the design sector (Beacon for Freedom of Expression). Testimony to this is the fact that few examples of resistance and liberation struggle communication design still exist because most were destroyed by the police and the Bureau of State Security, leaving design historians with few archival resources to explore the history of this period. So, for example, between 1979 and 1985, protest posters that were printed in Botswana and smuggled into South Africa to display on walls were immediately 'ripped down . . . by the security police' (South African History Online a). The government also manipulated the demographics of the design profession by controlling access to tertiary education according to race. By the mid-1980s, twelve public higher education institutions offered design education, but these were segregated according to race with few granting access to people of colour.

Communication design produced during the apartheid era for mainstream discourse was stylistically comparable with what was being produced in Western countries. The principles of Modernism ruled – a perfect fit for Nationalist philosophies since the international 'rules of form comfortably fitted the functions' of the regime (Lange 2005). Van Wyk (2001, emphasis added) states that:

> Design in pre-democratic South Africa was hardly reflective of its own space. The virtually exclusively white design fraternity kept their eyes firmly trained on the North. Bauhaus Modernism and its attendant philosophy of form following function dictated training and practice as designers strove towards the western aesthetic . . . This . . . echoed the unrealistic ideals of a regime that doggedly *denied its African context.*

The rhetoric of nation building as a theme was adopted by both politicians and commercial enterprises during the transition years between the late 1980s and 1994, but the sense of nationhood proved to be more elusive (Sutherland 2004: 57).

Today I Live in a Country of the Free: The Creation of the Rainbow Nation, 1990–2013

Nelson Mandela was freed on 11 February 1990 after twenty-seven years of incarceration, which ushered in an era of dramatic political reforms and setting South Africa on 'a path of negotiation politics motivated by the new ethic of compromise and win-win solutions' (Van der Merwe and Johnson 1997: 1). Accordingly, the multi-party Negotiating Council and later the Transitional Executive Council used one of the most important national symbols, the flag, to make bold statements about the country's commitment to a free and representative society (Brownell 2011: 51–59). After almost a half century of liberation struggle, in April 1994 the previously disenfranchised majority participated in the first democratic election and voted the African National Congress (ANC) into power. On 10 May 1994, Mandela was inaugurated as president of the Republic under a new interim flag,[5] designed by Fred Brownell. The new six-colour flag (Fig. 3.3) represented what Nobel Laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu metaphorically described as the rainbow nation's convergence of cultures, people and inclusive ideologies (Desmond Tutu Diversity Trust; retrieved 1 December 2013 from http://www.desmondtutudiversitytrust.org.za/patron.htm). What was previously a highly regulated and divisive national symbol now became a popular and unifying symbol of the people of South Africa (Brownell 2011: 61–62).

'Rainbowism' became the principal post-apartheid myth. Almost overnight, South Africa changed its international image from being one of the worst pariahs to becoming an example of peaceful transformation. The

Figure 3.3 The South African flag (1994, left), Coat of Arms (2000, centre) and National Orders (2003, right). Images courtesy of South African Bureau of Heraldry and The Presidency.

reality is, however, that this was accompanied by pain, concessions, compromises, disappointments and idealistic hopes for a brighter future. The poet Antjie Krog dismisses notions that the rainbow nation implies that everything is always perfect and states perceptively that '[t]he rainbow in the sky can only be formed with unstable and contradictory conditions . . . It must still be raining, but the sun must also shine . . . One should therefore refuse any pressure to reflect the Hollywood "Someday over the rainbow" . . .' (Cunningham 2010). For designers, this posed many challenges since they were intimately involved in shaping the rainbow myth. The search for a new common South Africanness was, and remains, complex and largely illusory. The new South Africa consists of a tangled tapestry of heterogeneous cultures characterized by deep-seated racial, ethnic and religious differences, eleven official languages, extreme socio-economic disparity, and divisive ideologies that are often sites of struggle (Bornman 2006) and interference in the quest to attain the elusive state of nationhood.

Under the reconciliatory presidency of Mandela (1994–1999), radical change became part of the fibre of the country in pursuit of nationhood and the redefinition of identity. Mandela focused on fostering social cohesion and became the symbolic face of the country's new ideals. This made him the most powerful and recognized visual icon of democratic South Africa, and indeed democracy worldwide (Du Preez 2013).

The communication sector was deployed to educate the nation regarding its new value systems, constitution, transformation policies and reconstruction programmes. It also contributed to an extensive rebranding campaign of almost everything that government controlled, ranging from geographic names to the identities of national sporting teams and corporate identities of state institutions and enterprises (South African History Online b). Examples include the restructuring of the country's former four colonially-named provinces to nine, which required the design of new regional identities and symbols. This process was echoed in the strategic renaming of many towns, cities and municipalities to reflect their post-liberation identities – many reverted to their precolonial and pre-apartheid heritage. Visually, these identities manifested themselves mainly in heraldic traditions, but the symbolism was rooted in a South African

context, often resulting in curious fusions characterized by mimicry, cultural appropriation, quotation, eclecticism and surface (Sauthoff 2004: 37).

In June 1999, Thabo Mbeki became President and implemented a different and more pragmatic approach to nation building by focusing on economic growth and African pride. Mbeki also understood the important role that design could play in achieving his government's strategic goals. The Government Communication and Information Service was positioned within the office of the Presidency and served as a channel through which Mbeki engaged with the communication and design sectors. In 2001, the International Marketing Council was established, partly to create a consolidated strategy – *Brand South Africa* – with a consistent message that highlighted strategic advantages in terms of trade and tourism in a very competitive marketplace (Brand South Africa, http://www.brandsouthafrica.com/who-we-are).

Mbeki is best known for championing the African Renaissance, which focuses on a sense of continental pride and more specifically, the inclusive humanistic philosophy of *Ubuntu*, or human kindness. In 1999, Mbeki commissioned the redesign of the South African Coat of Arms (Fig. 3.3). It was based on a European heraldic structure, but the individual elements were clearly African. The central shield features two Khoisan figures, representing 'the beginning of the individual's transformation into the greater sense of belonging to the nation and by extension, collective humanity' (Mbeki 2000). The most unconventional element was the introduction of the motto '*!ke e: /xarra //ke*' (diverse people unite), written in the language of the now extinct */Xam* people. For Mbeki (2000), 'these words on our coat of arms . . . make a commitment to value life, to respect all languages and cultures and to oppose racism, sexism, chauvinism and genocide'.

In 2003, the country's National Orders were also redesigned (Fig. 3.3). The designers attempted to capture the essence of a new aesthetic that took cognisance of Africa and reflected the new spirit of the country through its designs, honouring its history through the renaming of the orders, as well as celebrating the country's indigenous materials (South African Government Online).

Government initiatives thus led the way in developing the official new face of the country's graphic symbology post-1994, but since the early 1990s, designers had already proactively established their own initiatives in pursuit of a visual language that reflected the emerging new society. Johan van Wyk (2001) states that: 'The elections of 1994 signified not only a political liberation for South Africa but also a cultural one. In its wake local designers could for the first time reflect the country's diversity without making an overtly antagonistic political statement and risking retribution'. Leading this dynamic era of exploration was Garth Walker, founder and publisher of the seminal experimental magazine *i-jusi* (Fig. 3.4), who said that: 'A new way of seeing was born – a new visual order to reflect a new social order. People were waking to

Figure 3.4 Covers and page spreads from various early editions of *i-juisi* magazine. Images courtesy of *i-juisi* and Garth Walker.

the possibilities of a visual language rooted in the African experience' (Van Wyk 2001). One of the key results of the *i-jusi* phenomenon was the development of a uniquely South African design process, based on documentary and bricolage (Lange 2013: 11; Sauthoff 2006: 14).

The outcome was a hybrid of cultural representation that combined images taken from nature, popular culture, everyday life, street signage, vernacular language and traditional crafts, thereby foregrounding vibrant urban culture as the new face of South Africa. The new approach was firmly rooted in Africa and the new aesthetic opted to honour spontaneity and imperfection, as opposed to Westernized ideals of balance and aesthetic perfection (Lange 2005). This urban culture is, however, not 'backward' or 'uncivilized', in the old parlance of colonial discourse – it merges the geometric forms of African decorative art comfortably with imagery derived from high-tech information technology.

One example of this is Walker's design of a typeface for the new Constitutional Court in 2003, which was built on a site that contains a historical fort and several prisons that had incarcerated people such as Ghandi

Figure 3.5 Façade of the South African Constitutional Court featuring the custom–designed typeface designed by Garth Walker. Image courtesy of Garth Walker.

and Mandela (Fig. 3.5). Walker studied archival material, signage and prisoner graffiti on cell walls, and the design solution speaks the visual language of the site and its fraught history (Sauthoff 2006).

Another seminal moment in South Africa's recent design history that channelled official mythic discourse in the interests of nation building was when the country hosted the FIFA World Cup in 2010. According to Asmal (2013), 'South African identity has been over-simplified … Stereotypical images, and heated news reports have painted a deductive wash over a nation of incredible complexity and cultural diversity'. During 2010, a collective identity became more apparent, and the country's 'planning, economic, business, arts and advanced infrastructure were on display. South African cities replaced the savannah, world-class transport replaced the mountains, images of a nation united replaced those of crime, and organizational triumphs replaced those of corruption … South Africa forged a *new, confident, urban identity* emerging from the World Cup' (Asmal 2013, emphasis added).

Conclusion

It is perhaps fitting to end this overview with the death of Nelson Mandela (18 July 1918–5 December 2013), as his lifelong struggle for a democratic South

Africa almost exactly paralleled the path to nationhood sketched in this chapter. The elaborately scripted and visual process of iconization that followed his passing introduced literally overnight a new era of discourse about how South Africans perceive themselves as a united nation.

The process of writing national histories is bound to be fraught with tensions and omissions, even more so in a country such as South Africa that has had an incredibly complex history. As alluded to previously, the absence of a proper design history discourse has been exacerbated by contested histories and a scarcity of visual and archival material.[6] Already in 1988, the historian Smith (1988: 8) remarked that the decolonization of South African history had started to take place, ousting previous Eurocentric ideas and incorporating a richer social and more Africanized history. In this chapter, we indicated how successive state or government institutions 'scripted' different versions of nationhood that were executed, acted out and performed by designers in the visual domain. Colonial legacies of visual stereotyping in terms of race and national identity were found to be wanting, and a new, more inclusive and representative visual vocabulary was established that reflected and possibly helped to construct this emerging Africanization. This process is by no means over, as the imperatives of globalization continue to inform the contemporary South African 'imagined community' and challenge the need for indigenous and inclusive histories of the visual.

Notes

1. Literally, 'brotherhood' – a clandestine (and all-male) Nationalist network of Afrikaans politicians, businessmen, academics, religious and community leaders, and media owners.

2. This paternal reference is historically relevant since (white) women were only given voting rights in 1930.

3. *Lantern* was published between 1951 and 1994, *Panorama* from 1956 to 1992.

4. *Zonk!* was first published in 1941, *Drum* in 1951 and *Bona* in 1956.

5. It was officially adopted as the permanent national flag in 1996.

6. See the special issue of *Africa Today* 52(2), dedicated to 'African Electronic Publishing' and in particular the article by Isaacman, Lalu and Nygren (2005: 55–77) on the digitization of a postcolonial South African archive.

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