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Drum magazine project: A decolonial shift in teaching fashion theory and history

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Abstract

The *Drum* Magazine Project is a cross-institutional teaching and research project designed to explore a decolonial approach to teaching fashion theory and history. The project used the 1950s and 1960s archives of *Drum* magazine, found at Bailey's African History Archives (BAHA) in Johannesburg, South Africa. Fashion was considered by looking at South Africa's political, social, and cultural landscape during the 1950s and 1960s. Students wrote biographical essays based on individuals who, despite having been featured in *Drum* magazine, were not widely documented in South Africa. Essay writing was followed by developing magazine covers designed to capture themes related to these individuals. The text- and visual-based modes enabled students to deploy historical media archives using fashion and dress to communicate narratives of alternative fashion histories and imaginaries. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to analyse students' impressions of the magazine, the individuals they researched and the overall project. In some instances, students expressed the view that incorporating this part of South African history into fashion curricula can be uncomfortable but that addressing history in its fullness is necessary to achieve decolonial imperatives and shifts. For these reasons, this study contributes to the decolonial fashion discourse by showing how infusing context-specific examples in teaching and learning offers options for renewing, stretching, and decentring the teaching of fashion theory and history.

Keywords: Decolonial fashion discourse, *Drum* magazine, Fashion history, Fashion theory

Fashion curricula and the decolonial fashion discourse: A reflexive introduction

What do we, fashion scholars and lecturers of fashion theory and history, owe current students in the fashion education system? Does renewing, stretching and decentring our understanding of fashion in the African context play a role in teaching fashion theory and history? Fanon (1952/2008) concludes his book, Black Skin White Masks, with a final prayer: 'O my body, make of me always a man who questions!' (p. 181). Our self-imposed questions are layered with the tone of this simple yet poignant prayer. As taught to us, the content of fashion theory and history was informative but largely encompassed examples far removed from our context. The exclusion of locally situated particularities, implicitly and explicitly, situates Africa as devoid of any fashion or dress history. By implication, silencing this history from fashion education devalues its significance and the potential it holds in designing context-specific curricula. Slade and Jansen (2020) point out that reconstructing an understanding of fashion entails 'recursively revis[ing] our understandings and our histories one piece at a time' (p. 813). Assuming our transitional position (from students to lecturers), do we then teach fashion as we were taught, supporting the hegemonic power of Euro-Americanism? Or do we shift this hegemony by expanding teaching that incorporates context-specific examples?

We designed a cross-institutional teaching and research project, the *Drum* magazine project, to renew fashion curricula in a manner that better values South African history. The *Drum* magazine project was a decolonial exercise to introduce an element of context-specificity in our teaching. The student project was implemented in two fashion departments of two universities based in Durban and Johannesburg. For clarity on nomenclature, as opposed to the widely used terms 'fashion colleges' or 'fashion schools', both universities discussed in this article refer to their fashion divisions as 'departments'. We remain true to this usage and apply the term 'fashion departments' throughout this article.

As a student project of the fashion programme, it was incorporated into fashion theory and history modules. The project included *Drum* magazine content as the tools through which fashion theory and history might be taught in the context of South African fashion education. Some questions guided our project development process. These were: Does *Drum* magazine, with its history in South African visual culture, belong to the corpus of fashion curricula? If *Drum* magazine does belong to the curricula, how might it, through some of its content, renew, stretch and decentre how fashion theory and history are taught?

Revaluing and incorporating *Drum* magazine content involved sourcing alternative archives and renewing fashion imaginaries to show the plurality of epistemologies in the university space. Grosfoguel (2013) proposes the need to 'bring epistemic diversity to the canon of thought to create a pluri-verse of meanings and concepts' (p. 89). We viewed revaluing and incorporating *Drum* content as one way of decolonising university knowledge structures. This article focuses on how we renewed, stretched and decentred our teaching of fashion history and theory. Our work contributes to the decolonial fashion discourse and shows how context specificity in fashion education might contribute to attaining decolonial imperatives and shifts.

Theorising the decolonial fashion discourse

We begin with a comprehensive view of the concept to start a discussion about decoloniality, specifically in fashion. We understand decoloniality to entail confronting and opposing the coloniality of knowledge creation being exerted by the Western canon and its inferiorising of non-Western societies' ways of being, doing and knowledge creation (Adams et al., 2018; Grosfoguel, 2013; Maldonado-Torres, 2007). To confront and oppose such practices, Maldonado-Torres (2007) suggested a decolonial turn, which is about 'making visible the invisible and about analysing the mechanisms that produce such invisibility or distorted visibility in light of a large stock of ideas' (p. p. 261"

Decoloniality has recently attracted attention in the fashion discipline through specially themed journal issues, conferences and research projects. Examples include the *International Journal of Fashion Studies* (Cheang et al., 2022), *Design and Culture* (Schultz et al., 2018), and *Fashion Theory* (Slade & Jansen, 2020). The 2017 Design Education Forum of Southern Africa conference was themed 'Decolonise!' (Giloi & Botes, 2017) in response to South Africa's 2015 student protests (Fees Must Fall and Rhodes Must Fall). ZoneModa organised a conference in 2023 under the theme 'Fashion in 3D: Decolonizing, Deconstructing and Decentring'. UAL's London College of Fashion has been conducting a research project called 'Decolonising Fashion and Textiles' led by Francesco Mazzarella. With an ever-expanding focus on the notion of fashion, Jansen (2020) stated that the decolonial fashion discourse framework:

> "[*P]roposes a radical redefinition of fashion by delinking it from modernity—the very core of its constitution—and therefore from coloniality by redefining it as a multitude of possibilities—in and*

> *outside of modernity—rather than a normative framework falsely claiming universality. It critiques the denial and erasure of a diversity of ways to fashioning the body due to unequal global power relations based on modern-colonial order, the Euro–American canon of normativity and the exploitation and abuse of culture, human life and Earth*" (p. 817)

While the word decoloniality may not have been included in prior studies, the discourse on non-European fashion systems has been ongoing for years within fashion studies; see Mustafa (2001), Rabine (2002), Allman (2004), Gott and Loughran (2010), and Rovine (2015). Nevertheless, the inclusion of decoloniality in fashion discourse has seen a significant growth in diversifying and showing how fashion is understood.

Decoloniality, the fashion curriculum and fashion history are the focus of studies by Gaugele and Titton (2019), Cheang and Suterwalla (2020) and Ahmed (2022). Cheang and Suterwalla (2020) and Ahmed (2022) warn against superficially revisiting and replacing fashion students' reading lists as a decolonial educational practice. Cheang and Suterwalla (2020) instead promote 'making the space for experimentation and recognising the emotional costs involved in new developments are all part of designing decolonial pedagogies, in a continuous rethinking of what knowledge is and what learning looks like' (p. 881). In contrast, Ahmed (2022, pp. 11-12) writes about imagining and undertaking new non-European teaching and learning methods that engage with local knowledge. Gaugele and Titton (2019) observe the need for a 'revision of fashion history and globalisation of fashion and dress histories, inspired by postcolonialism and world history' (p. 120.

Drum magazine has enjoyed much attention as representative of a particular era in South Africa. Its pages have visually and textually recorded dress and fashion styles in the South African context. Nevertheless, from our search, *Drum* magazine has largely been excluded from local fashion curricula. Fashion history forms part of fashion education; therefore, it is crucial to diversify the telling of fashion history, and the incorporation of *Drum* magazine in our study played this role. Furthermore, appreciating and valorising *Drum* magazine and its place in South Africa develops and renews pedagogical practices using locally relevant resources.

What is *Drum* magazine?

Drum magazine was founded by Robert Crisp and Jim Bailey and first published in March 1951 as *African Drum*. It emerged just three years after the inception of administrative apartheid. In its earlier issues, *Drum* had a low circulation and failed to attract a sizeable black readership. The reason for the failure was because *African Drum*, at the time, presented the African as 'rural, tribal, Edenic, unspoiled, exotic' (Guldimann, 2019, p. 261), a white person's fantasy of what Africa was – the kind of material the targeted black urban reader was uninterested in. The magazine was transformed after the newly appointed editor-in-chief, Anthony Sampson, and Henry 'Mr. *Drum'* Nxumalo researched a potential *Drum* reader and their attempt to determine the sort of material that that individual might be interested in reading. Their research drastically changed the look, image, approach and subsequently, name of the publication – from *African Drum* to simply *Drum*.

Fleming and Falola (2005) wrote that the magazine went from its paternalistic writing and printing of '"know yourself" stories to articles on crime syndicates, American styled jazz music, *shebeen* life, and other happenings in Cape Town, Durban and on the Reef' (pp. 136-137). Its coverage and exposé of specific issues were of interest to its readership, which saw a significant increase in circulation. So large was its circulation

that *Drum* started publishing East and West African issues distributed to Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Tanganyika and the Central African Federation. By 1956, *Drum* had become the largest-selling magazine on the continent.

The magazine's photography of cover girls was another contributing factor that increased its visibility, popularity and consumption. Nigerian and Ghanaian readers were unfamiliar with Sophiatown and District Six (reported about in the magazine) and consumed *Drum* primarily 'to find out about South African news and to gawk at the magazine's cover girls' (Fleming & Falola, 2005, p. 141). The cover imagery was used to articulate and express black urban cosmopolitanism. Through images, the urban black population fashioned an identity and a worldview 'contrary to that envisioned for them by either the white government or the older black elite' (Allen, 2008, p. 22).

With its rich history, *Drum* has served as a fount of inspiration in South African visual culture. The early 2000s saw the emergence of some fashion designers who contributed to the development of South Africa's fashion industry. Amongst these is the lifestyle brand Stoned Cherrie, established in 2000. In 2001, the brand collaborated with Bailey's African History Archives (BAHA), the digital and physical space that houses thirty years of *Drum* magazine's archives, when the magazine was under Bailey's control. The collaboration saw what would emerge as Stoned Cherrie's classic item, the *Drum* t-shirt, which incorporated some iconic covers. *Drum* covers continue to emerge in visual culture. In 2021, Mercy Thokozane Minah, a multidisciplinary artist, re-imagined and re-interpreted some *Drum* covers by re-painting them as commentary about queer existence and body positivity. These two examples indicate how *Drum* magazine continues to be used in the arts and, by extension, fashion to communicate social issues. It is a result of such a history and background that we re-inscribed *Drum* into the public imagination by infusing it in our modules as a resource to renew, stretch and decentre our teaching of fashion history and theory.

Research context

Our methods entailed visual and textual analysis of 1950s and 1960s *Drum* magazine content. These were accessed from those kept at BAHA in Johannesburg. To ensure compliance with research ethics, we sought ethical clearance for the study from our respective institutions. Once approved, we provided detailed explanations of the study to the students through information letters with accompanying consent forms for signing. By agreeing, the students consented to attend lectures, write essays, develop a magazine cover and participate in semi-structured interviews.

The *Drum* magazine project started with a two-part lecture, focusing first on South Africa's 1950s and 1960s social and political environment through *Drum* reports that were linked to certain apartheid legislation. The second part of the lecture focused on fashion between the 1950s and 1960s as featured in the *Drum* archives. The students were also introduced to two seminal readings: Ford's (2015) *Liberated Threads: Black Women, Style and the Global Politics of Soul* and Tulloch's (2016) *The Birth of Cool: Style Narratives of the African Diaspora*. An argument that could be levelled against the project is its use of two seminal readings penned by fashion writers from other locales. We chose these readings because they speak directly to *Drum,* and we appreciated how the texts linked the magazine to fashion. Showing the value of diasporic discourse for African studies, in this instance, African fashion and dress history. Ford (2015) wrote that "*Drum* … was adamant about making the style accessible to ordinary people. This emphasis on democratising fashion demonstrates how central issues of social consciousness and black liberation were to the politics of style' (p. 166).

Following the lecture, the students were required to work in groups and use an allocated folder with a *Drum* archival image and readings related to an individual featured in *Drum* magazine during the 1950s and 1960s. Using the folder content, the students wrote a biographical essay about their allocated individual. Lindsay (2017) sees potential in biographies to understand history. Thus, our inclusion of biographical essays introduced a focus on an individual to understand a portion of South African history through an individual.

The information gleaned from the essay-writing exercise was used to style and visually communicate a contemporary look through a re-imagined *Drum* magazine cover. The cover needed to be informed by (a) students' findings about their allocated individual and (b) the *Drum* magazine photograph of that individual included in their folders. Each magazine cover needed to be accompanied by a design statement through which the students explained the concept behind it. To support this task, we prepared a secondary folder with a resource package that included a magazine cover template, specially selected fonts and page texturing images in case students wanted to age the final photograph by giving it a nostalgic effect akin to 1950s and 1960s *Drum* covers. We then created an instructional video in which we demonstrated applying these functions using Adobe Photoshop and Adobe Illustrator. In some instances, the students used themselves as models; in other cases, they asked friends and family members to model. The biographical essays and magazine covers were then publicly exhibited at university galleries in both Johannesburg and Durban.

Biographical essays as narratives of alternative histories and fashion imaginaries

Cheang and Suterwalla (2020) wrote about deepening teachers' and students' intellectual curiosity and manifesting 'greater cultural sensitivity to redress the many social inequalities embedded in histories' (p. 881). Inequalities manifest when there is an imbalance in whose history gets told. We concur with de Greef (2020, p. 914), who propounded filling the public imagination by 'writing of forgotten and disavowed' histories. We understand the writing of disavowed histories to be about finding alternative archives, implemented as a critical expansion of imaginaries in the fashion context (Gaugele & Titton, 2019, p. 25). Before viewing the archives, we associated *Drum* magazine with individuals like jazz vocalists Miriam Makeba and Dolly Rathebe, as well as activist Steve Biko. Their photographs were featured in iconic *Drum* covers and some well-known issues. Indeed, we showed the students some of these celebrated imageries. These individuals and their contributions to South Africa remain inscribed in public memory. Although we were careful not to take away from the students' contributions, we promoted a deliberate exercise of expanding the number of individuals with whom *Drum* magazine may be affiliated.

Lindsay (2017) argued that 'history is made by a wider range of people than literate elites, and that historical forces and ordinary people act reciprocally on one another' (p. 15). Therefore, we introduced the students to individuals whose stories and lives had not been widely captured and circulated, yet whose participation had some impact on South African society. These individuals included Dottie Tiyo, Doreen Madombo, Patricia Jobodwana, Viccie 'Busi' Mhlongo, Amaranee Naidoo, Constance Molefe, Khabi Mngoma, Sewsunker Sewgolam, Sonny Pillay, Gertie Williams, Jean Hart and Hazel Futa. These individuals were associated with music (Mhlongo, Masuka, Mngoma, Pillay and Hart), sports (Molefe, Naidoo and Sewgolam), film (Futa, Tiyo and Madombo), education (Jobodwana) and the queer community (Williams). While Sewgolam, Mngoma, Dorothy Masuka and Williams have been the subjects of a biography, a PhD study, journal articles and a book chapter, respectively, the lives of the rest were minimally documented,

often in texts that focused on a different subject altogether. Furthermore, where the lives of these individuals were recorded, the information was excerpted from *Drum* magazine (i.e., Jobodwana, Williams and Molefe), meaning that there was a regurgitation of information.

Despite this minimal information, some students showed creativity, inventiveness and a willingness to learn about their subjects. For instance, because of her romantic relationship with Can Themba and the attention this relationship stirred in 1950s South Africa, the student group that wrote Hart's essay relied on a scholarly article about Themba and his short story, *Crepuscule*, to find information on Hart. Set in 1950s Sophiatown, *Crepuscule* tells the story of a relationship between a black man and white woman. The short story was included in Themba's book, *The Will to Die* (1972). Still unsatisfied with the information they found, the group read this article closely, even going through the reference list. The reference list led them to Hart's interview posted on YouTube. The discovery of the interview provided the students with much-needed information, which resulted in a multi-themed essay.

Hart's tweed skirt and polo-neck were analysed through the frame of the kofifi style. Kofifi is another name for Sophiatown, and when linked with the word style, it pays homage to fashion that echoes the style heritage associated with 1950s Sophiatown. The students' writing included topics on the African American jazz movement, the 1950s multiculturalism of Sophiatown and the criminalisation of interracial relationships in South Africa at the time. The linkages in the students' essays show that 'one cannot capture the whole past, but we have access to remnants of it held in archives' (Tulloch, 2016, p. 179).

Archives can, however, also bring forth troubling questions. The information available on some individuals only captured celebratory moments published in *Drum* magazine. The students had remaining nagging questions about their assigned individuals since they could not find further information on their subjects. These included the absence of events in their lives after *Drum's* publication. Eismann (2019, p. 66) pointed out that postcolonial archives disturb the very notion of the archive by opening questions of 'what constitutes an archive? What is in it? Who put it there?'. This quality of postcolonial archives in the context of the *Drum* Magazine Project was the students' self-imposed question of 'What happened to her?' raised while writing Jobodwana's essay. The frustration continued to be articulated in the essay's mood, an excerpt from which we present below:

"Patricia Jobodwana made headlines across Africa after appearing in an evocative photograph in Drum, Africa's most widely circulated magazine. She is shown working hard in Fort Hare's science laboratory. A second photograph shows her sitting at a piano with friends at Fort Hare's women's hostel. Drum was described as "the youngest African undergraduate ever." She may have been South Africa's youngest undergraduate of any race, having enrolled at Fort Hare University College at the age of 14. She was from Cape Town, and after finishing, she planned to study medicine... and here, sadly, the popular record of Patricia Jobodwana's life appears to end. Her name does not appear in any of Fort Hare's student records. She appears to have vanished from history as quickly as she had arrived because she was a very young black woman living in a patriarchal and apartheid-era society. Jobodwana evidently finished both her primary and secondary education exceptionally early because she could now be compared to educational prodigies like Nigerian-British Esther Okade, who in 2015 became the youngest mathematics undergraduate in the UK at the age of 10."

Image 1: Screenshot of students' essay on Patricia Jobodwana. Credit: K. Mchunu.

One of the students in this group expressed frustration in the interview:

> *"She was the first black woman undergraduate student at Fort Hare doing medicine. I just wished that I had more information on her because she sounds like a very important woman. I just wish,*

maybe, her children. I just want a little bit more". (9 September 2022, interview)

The students' analysis of Jobodwana through the lens of the scientific laboratory coat and its symbolic meaning led them to study her and the participation of other black girls and women in STEM fields (i.e. Esther Okade).

The student-penned Sewgolam essay used his wearing of the golfing uniform to present a complex and nuanced essay that married topics of poverty, oppression, lack of access, assimilation, culture and achievement. The discovery of his death in his early 40s as a pauper with a non-existent golfing career left the students disturbed. However, this group refused to leave Sewgolam's life story with a sad ending. The Johannesburg-based student group searched on social media platforms and discovered Rajen Sewgolam, Sewsunker Sewgolam's son, who got into and continues playing golf, a sport his father introduced to him. The Durban-based student group gained access to and used the *Papwa Sewgolum Golf Course* in Durban as a site to photograph their magazine cover as a homage to Sewgolam (discussed later in the article).

These instances demonstrate how life is recorded and can sometimes destabilise expectations and the linearity of life's beginning and end. *Drum* magazine did not promise to record Jobodwana's, Sewgolam's or any other individuals' lives in this way. However, we understand students' inclusion of Oskade and Sewgolam in their writings as an attempt to show that time 'is a fluid concept, and the terms past, present and future are not necessarily linear' (Eismann, 2020, p. 68). These inclusions also indicate making linkages to answer questions that archives sometimes fail to answer.

There were moments when *Drum* magazine archives proved to be frustrating and presented questions that held the potential to make students angry at the apartheid regime and its design of a system and conditions that rendered black identities as belonging to a doomed future. Writing about the Afrofuturistic universe, Eismann (2019,) states that it is a self-fashioned universe that entails 'alternative histories, geographies, and identities, members of the African diaspora imagine themselves … unbound by the chains of slavery and racism' (pp. 67-68). The students excavated stories from the past and analysed the clothing by considering the contexts in which these garbs were worn. Through this method, they crafted alternative imaginaries that saw their subjects beyond the bounds of apartheid.

The essay-writing exercise showed a text-based technique of narrating visibility, alternative imaginaries, and futurity and joining the decolonial fashion discourse through teaching and learning. The second part of the project showed the marrying of text-based and visual types – the biography-informed magazine covers.

Imaging alternative fashion histories and imaginaries: Student magazine covers

Tulloch (2016) views fashion photography as a method to communicate ideas, make social commentary and tell stories, further adding that 'whether that [story] is truth or fiction, nonetheless there is an attempt to make a point' (pp. 178-179). This idea about fashion photography was informative for the project since the students needed to communicate a message through imaging. Gaugele and Titton (2019) assert that 'fashion media—from fashion magazines to blogs—are important hubs for the dissemination of representations and collective narratives on gender, race, class, body, identity, and sexuality; therefore, they carry the potential for a decolonising transformation from within the fashion system' (p. 27). These magazine covers emphasised the point of teaching fashion theory and history through imaging alternative histories and fashion imaginaries.

Image 2: Hazel Futa-informed students' photograph. Photographer: RemyShoots (2022).

Students' creativity, demonstrated during the essay writing, was also shown in the magazine covers. For example, the Hazel Futa-informed photograph (Image 2) used ballet elements to capture delicate femininities the group believed Futa embodied. Their tutu-like ballet skirt was made of downloaded 1950s and 1960s *Drum* magazine covers the group printed in black and white, rolled up to form a swirling curl on the hem and tucked into an elasticated waistband.

A commonality across many of the students' covers was a strong leaning toward the symbolic meaning of every element in a photograph. Examples include the Constance Molefe- and Sewsunker Sewgolum-informed photographs.

The Constance Molefe-informed photograph (Image 3) was taken in one of the sports fields of the Johannesburg-based university. The students were drawn to Molefe's white tennis attire and her plaited hair, which they understood as the Benny and Betty hairstyle. Benny and Betty is a type of plait hairstyle done mainly by black girls during the apartheid period. The name of the hairstyle derives from a book of the same title, particularly its main characters. The book was introduced as an English-learning text as part of *Bantu* education. Some people continue doing the hairstyle in contemporary times. Students read Molefe's firm grip on her tennis racket and the smile behind it as symbolic of the:

> *"[H]ope that she had during the era that she was in. With reference to the oppression that hindered many dreams in the 50s and 60s, the model stands behind a rusty chain-link fence. Although she is behind this fence, which obscures her view of the future, she maintains a cheerful smile and firmly holds onto her tennis racket. In our opinion, the firm grip that she has on the racket speaks to how Constance held onto her dreams."* (Student design statement, 2022)

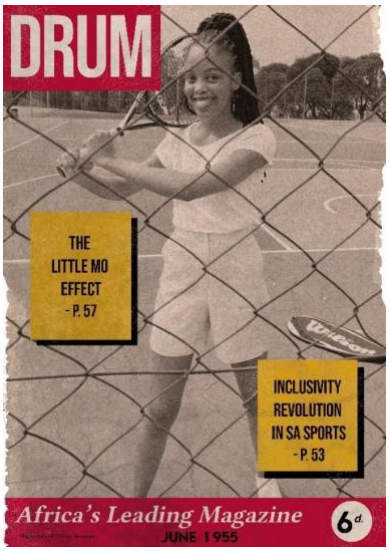
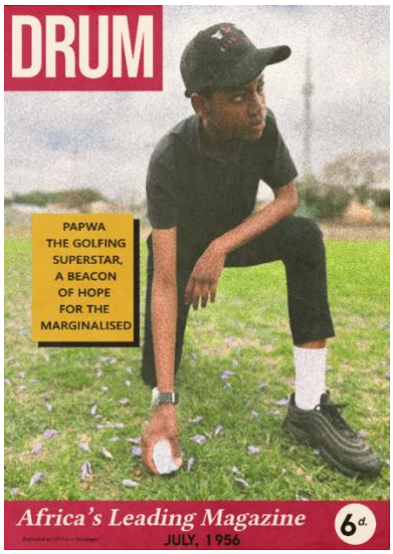


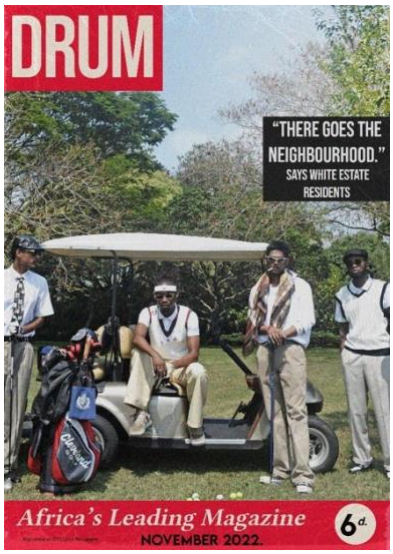
Image 3: Constance Molefe-informed students' photograph. Photographer, Nawa, L. (2022).

The golf ball (made from crumpled paper), flower petals, green field and black clothes were well-considered elements in the Sewgolam-informed photograph (Image 4). The golf ball referenced a makeshift golf club that Sewgolam's father made for him growing up. The confetti-style flower petals scattered on the grass symbolise the peak of his golfing career and referenced an event in which Sewgolam wore a garland around his neck to celebrate after winning the Dutch Open (a story covered in *Drum* magazine). Similarly, their inclusion of the green field has literal and figurative meanings. The literal connotation is the golf course's grass field, which is also 'a metaphorical grass being greener on the other side' (Student design statement, 2022).

The Durban-based Sewgolam group also highlighted his golfing career through their magazine cover focusing on racial tensions (Image 5). The students' styling choices and magazine cover creative direction are a homage to the image of Sewgolam on the golf course with his 'entourage'. The inclusion of the title '"There goes the neighbourhood" says white residents' is a reference to post-apartheid societal views of young men of colour. The group explained the significance of the cover story:

> *"'There goes the neighbourhood.' What does this mean? This is an exclamation after a negative change affects someone's neighbourhood, such as someone undesirable moving in (Privette 2021). To the golfing community at the time, we can assume that he [Sewgolum] was seen as someone 'undesirable' moving into this prestigious sport, in his story he was looked down upon due to the colour of his skin."* (Student design statement, 2022)





Images 4 and 5: Sewsunker' Papwa' Sewgolum-informed students' photographs. Photographers from left: Pondo, Y. (2022) and Moolman, J. (2022).

In a 1950s *Drum* photograph of Sonny Pillay, he wears a white shirt and cardigan shot with his slightly angled face. Students took the white shirt element worn underneath a denim jacket to 'strongly mimic the focal point of the referenced photograph and bring out the same soft and clean aesthetic' (Student design statement, 2022). The students used their findings about Pillay's immigration, first to the UK and later to the USA, to inform the inclusion of the face mask in their magazine cover (Image 6). The group wrote that:

> " ...*the mask is muted and hidden even though in the foreground, which resembles how Sonny appears facially concealed right in front of the viewer. This can be seen as a commentary on how Mr Pillay, as a black artist, was censored by the apartheid regime. Drum magazine deserves its critical acclamation for being able to promote silenced creatives and untold stories* ..." (Student design statement, 2022)

A limited and limiting engagement with *Drum* magazine archives, such as reliance on Google searches solely, could have resulted in teaching fashion theory and history through the widely circulated narrative of Sophiatown and its kofifi style. Such reliance could have restricted the magazine's wide range of stories. Avoiding teaching solely through the Sophiatown canon allowed for the 'recognition of a plurality of epistemologies concerning fashioning the body [and] to revalue a diversity that has been rendered invisible, erased, discriminated and de-futured' (Jansen, 2020, p. 817). We ultimately argue that accessing these wide-ranging stories allowed us to renew, stretch, and decentre fashion education.

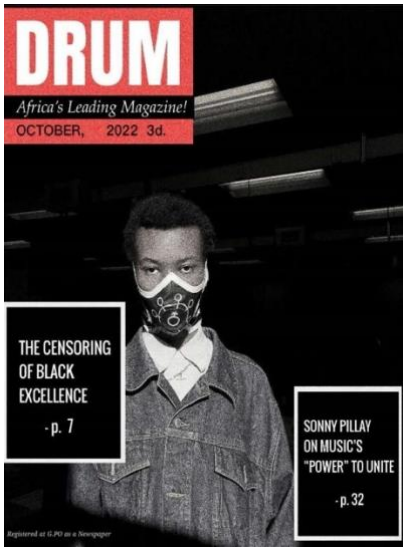


Image 6: Sonny Pillay -informed students' photograph. Photographer, Makubele, H. (2022).

The students' interpretations of *Drum's* historical photographs ranged from queer politics, diverse forms of femininities and expressions of black excellence, among others, showing the students' expanding narratives that formed new meanings. Additionally, their exploration of these themes coincided, to some extent, with the vast scale and plurality of this historically significant magazine in covering a diverse range of individuals. The records were sometimes fragmented, and their residues led to more questions than answers. However, the students formed alternative histories and imaginaries through imagination, creativity, writing and imaging.

Conclusion

We asked ourselves whether *Drum* magazine, with its history in South African visual culture, belongs to the corpus of fashion curricula. We recognise that *Drum* magazine may not be considered a fashion magazine by global standards, but it is essential to question the context in which we focused on *Drum.* Decoloniality values 'a multitude of possibilities' (Jansen, 2020, p. 817) and by implication appreciates different perspectives. In this sense, *Drum* magazine's significant role in South African visual culture and its contribution to existing knowledge in this field is undeniable. The *Drum* magazine project was a space to celebrate and validate this contribution by the magazine. Given that we considered fashion as context-sensitive and -specific, this project also expanded and challenged notions of what can be considered a fashion magazine.

Fanon (1952/2008) wrote that 'every human problem must be considered from the standpoint of time. Ideally, the present will always contribute to the building of the future. And this future is not the future of the cosmos but rather the future of my century, my country, my existence' (pp. 5-6). While Fanon's quote is about time, it also addresses aspects of identity and context. This statement urges us to go back to questions of what we think we owe fashion students existing in the fashion education system and our endeavour to renew and decentre the teaching of fashion theory and history. As South African fashion lecturers, we cannot speak to another geography or context. We aimed to speak to our specific reality and expand teaching by using context-specific resources. As we questioned whether we should teach fashion as we were taught, we grappled with how to view the future of fashion education. We cannot project how we see the future of teaching fashion theory and history, but we know that we cannot wait for the future to solve its problems.

We acknowledge that this project had its limitations and did not cover the comprehensive fashion history of South Africa. Expanding beyond the 1950s and 1960s as periods can be considered for future research, with a more fashion-focused approach as an alternative to the biographical lens that this project adopted. We also reflected on the students' question of 'What happened to her?' and how it speaks to the limitation of relying on only one archival source like *Drum* magazine. South Africa's past events and, by extension, its fashion histories, have been covered in multiple sources. To ease the answering of such questions, future studies could look at the combined use of multiple archival resources to record people's histories as broadly as possible.

The scope of the decolonial fashion discourse is too large to be fulfilled by an undergraduate assignment like the *Drum* magazine project. However, if we are subsumed and intimidated by the scope of an extensive exercise, contributions (no matter how large or small) to the process will never be recorded or started. If the decolonial imperatives and shifts are to be seriously addressed, our incorporation of archives and alternative histories, as chronicled in *Drum* magazine, addressed these imperatives in the now. Our task was to join the decolonial fashion discourse, and we believed in the role of education in this conversation. Nevertheless, the journey in decoloniality and fashion is ongoing. As we conclude this first phase of the *Drum* magazine project, we enter a new one with a set of new questions expressed in a Fanonian way.

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