

# The waning of socio-political relevance in the graphic design associated with popular alternative music among Afrikaans-speaking youths

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Graphic design often influences and reflects the subcultures of society. This was evident in graphic design associated with popular music during the 1960s and 1970s which captured the spirit of its time. The album covers of the Beatles and the Sex Pistols are some examples of design that captured the essence of their music and culture. A similar trend occurred in South Africa with the band Fokofpolisiekar in 2003 where the band's visuals represented the music and youth culture at the time. This spawned an awakening in South African graphic design associated with music and has led to a miasma of unique graphic design styles. The designs were originally representative of youth culture as well as socio-politically relevant but have since reached a point where their purpose is to attract attention through simulated relevance. This study reports on an analysis of 1101 design artefacts associated with popular alternative South African music and the identification of fifteen distinct styles of music-related graphic design. The study indicated that the collection of design styles, although varied in their aesthetics, share many similar roots and approaches and forms part of a subculture that in its own right captures the spirit of our time.

**Key words:** popular music, album covers, South African design, counterculture, design styles

## **Die afname van die sosio-politieke relevansie met betrekking tot die grafiese ontwerp wat met gewilde populêre alternatiewe musiek onder Afrikaanssprekende jeugdige vereenselwig word**

Grafiese ontwerp beïnvloed en weerspieël dikwels die subkulture binne die samelewing. Dit was duidelik in die grafiese ontwerp geassosieer met populêre musiek gedurende die 1960's en 1970's wat die gees van die tyd weergegee het. Die plaatomslae van die Beatles en die Sex Pistols is voorbeelde wat hiervan spreek. 'n Soortgelyke tendens het in 2003 in Suid-Afrika plaasgevind met die groep Fokofpolisiekar. Dit het 'n ontwaking gestig binne Suid-Afrikaanse grafiese ontwerp geassosieer met populêre musiek en het sedertdien aanleiding gegee tot 'n miasma van unieke grafiese ontwerpstyle. Dié ontwerpe was oorspronklik beide verteenwoordigend van jeugkultuur asook sosiaal-polities relevant, maar het intussen daarop aangekom dat die doel is om aandag te trek met behulp van gesimuleerde relevansie. Die onderhawige studie lewer verslag van 'n ontleding van 1101 ontwerpstukke geassosieer met populêre alternatiewe Suid-Afrikaanse musiek en 'n identifisering van vyftien onderskeibare musiekverwante grafiese ontwerpstyle. Die studie het aangedui dat alhoewel die versameling van ontwerpstyle gevarieerd is sover dit hul estetiese waarde aangaan, hulle soortgelyke ontstaanbronne en benaderings deel en deel vorm van 'n subkultuur wat op sigself die gees van ons tyd weergee.

**Slutelwoorde:** Populêre musiek, Plaatomslae, Suid-Afrikaanse ontwerp, Teenkultuur, Ontwerpstyle

Counter culture is often synonymous with music as well as the visual media thereof and thus vicariously synonymous with socio-political commentary. Artistic mediums like concert posters have been around for centuries and album art as we know it today can trace its lineage back to 1939 when Alex Steinweiss (1917-2011) invented the 33½ rpm Long-Play cover (Heller & Fili 2006: 267; Heller 2011). Representative music packaging, however, dates back to 1896 with engraved wax cylinders played on a phonograph. These wax cylinders were sold in cylindrical brown packaging and the labels were merely used to brand the recordings in

reference to their producer and content (Jones & Sorger 1999: 70-72). Most Long-Play albums (or LPs) were initially also sold in brown covers, with the covers merely affording protection, but it was Steinweiss' approach that gave designers the square canvas that has since become canon. It was not until twenty years after Steinweiss' approach to the design of album covers that album and poster art were used to encapsulate a certain culture's zeitgeist as effectively as the cathartic 1960s.

The 1960s were a tumultuous time in the western world. With anti-war and cultural protests occurring in the United States and the advent of the hippie subculture revolving around free love and a virtually ubiquitous receptiveness to drug use occurring in the US, the United Kingdom and Europe. The spirit of this uncertain time was being sonically captured by musicians like the Grateful Dead, Big Brother and Quicksilver with their rock protest songs and visually by designers like Stanley Mouse through album covers and concert posters. The concert posters became the face of this psychedelic movement taking place in the US and spread a visual representation thereof throughout Europe and the UK. The movement originated out of the Haight-Ashbury, a district of San Francisco, with concerts taking place at the Fillmore Auditorium and the Avalon Ballroom (Moist 2010: 1244). The concert posters conveyed the essence of the movement even more successfully than the later recorded LPs that did not as aptly capture the aura of these bands' live shows. Mickey Hart, drummer of the Grateful Dead, remarked: "the posters looked like what we were playing [...They] [*sic*] didn't just announce the concerts, they resonated with the styles of the times and described visually what the Grateful Dead, Big Brother, Quicksilver and the Airplane were doing at the Fillmore and the Avalon the following nights" (Moist 2010: 1245).

The posters often incorporated found imagery and in some cases focused heavily on visual representations of experiences resulting from the use of Lysergic Acid Diethylamide (LSD), colloquially referred to as "acid trips". The posters captured the transient, dreamlike state of "good trips" as well as the nightmarish and scary state of "bad trips". The designers of the posters, for the most part, ignored legibility of information and focused on a purely visceral semiotic representation. The design of the posters was not handled by advertising agencies or by highly trained professionals, but by the product of this counterculture: artists and designers within the community (Moist 2010: 1244-1246).

At the time of the Haight-Ashbury explosion in the US, bands like the Beatles in the UK made use of art school friends to design their album covers, revolutionising album design with covers like *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* and the self-titled album often referred to as "The White Album" (McGuire 2005: 22-28; Inglis 2001: 89). This symbiotic relationship between musician and designer was akin to the same relationship found in the Haight-Ashbury community in the US. During this time of cultural revolution in the US and UK, South Africa was at the height of Apartheid. With the banning of the African National Congress (ANC) and the imposition of some archaic values upon the Afrikaner populace, it seemed too much to believe that any counterculture may emerge from the strife. Though this was the case among Afrikaans-speaking South Africans, the English community had their own counterculture in the form of the rock and roll obsessed "Ducktails" that seemed a South African revival of the "Greasers" found in the USA in the 1950s (Grundlingh 2004: 488).

During the 1970s in the UK, the Sex Pistols epitomised the graphic representation of the punk movement through their album covers designed by graphic artist and anarchist Jamie Reid (Mahoney 2001). The band realised the need for an effective means of visual representation to the extent that their frontman, Johnny Rotten, claimed that "if people bought the records for the

music, this thing would have died a death long ago” (Jones & Sorger 1999: 68). Reid captured the visceral nature of the visual aesthetic through use of ransom note lettering, fluorescent colours and pop-barbs which made it possible for one to “... almost hear the song when you saw the sleeve” (Nickas 1998). At this time punk was introduced in South Africa through the underground live shows of virtually unknown bands and musicians (or at least unknown to adherents of mainstream culture) like Suck and Wild Youth (Maas 2012). These, however, were overshadowed in the Afrikaans communities by labels like *Springbok Records* who pandered to the masses with pop hits and friendly, inviting record sleeves often displaying pin-up girls and simple, popular designs.

The late 1980s saw the introduction of the post-punk, despondent grunge music genre. It originated in Seattle, Washington, with bands like Alice in Chains and Nirvana and encapsulated the, then dominant, apathetic “burnout” generation (Marin 1992). The popular grunge design style that remains to this day was pioneered by graphic designer David Carson (Carson 2010; Heller & Fili 2006: 149). The style is a graphic amalgam of alternative beach and skateboarding culture and was first widely implemented during the mid 1980s in the form of *Beach Culture* magazine and later *Ray Gun* magazine in the early 1990s (Heller & Fili 2006: 149, 264). Although the design style and music genre developed at around the same time and reflected the same culture, the original grunge bands did not incorporate the design style into their album covers. During the late 1980s, Afrikaans rock and the *Voëlvry* movement emerged out of the Black Sun theatre in Yeoville, Johannesburg (Grundlingh 2004: 486). The air was rife with dissent and a “radical non-acceptance of Afrikaner nationalist ideology” (Jury 1996: 1) was born among the Afrikaner youth. A group of mainly young, Afrikaans (and a few English) men led the musical rebellion which culminated in the nationwide *Voëlvry* tour of 1989 (Pienaar 2012: 5). *Voëlvry* was the corpulent mother of Afrikaner countercultures. They covered nearly all the bases. From anti-Apartheid to anti-government mandated military service (Grundlingh 2004: 490). Their songs, monikers, clothing and onstage performances surreptitiously screamed of dissent with ironic re-appropriations of old Afrikaner symbols like the motorised “ossewa” used for travel between venues (Hopkins 2006: 6-14).

During the 1990s and early 2000s Afrikaans rock diminished greatly, leaving nothing to contest the mainstream Afrikaans pop industry. Among the post-*Voëlvry* Afrikaner generation, too young to have experienced Apartheid and the subsequent rebellion first hand and too old to have grown up unaware of its effects, Afrikaans punk rock was unheard of. There was a sense that Afrikaans was only meant for “sokkie”, a style of music and dance unique to Southern Africa and popular mostly with Afrikaners, and anything bordering on an alternative genre had to be in English (Little 2008). During the early 2000s the most successful Afrikaans musicians were Steve Hofmeyr, whose then latest album had sold over 150 000 copies, Theuns Jordaan, whose albums had sold over 240 000 copies, and Kurt Darren and Juanita du Plessis, all practising genres far removed from punk rock (Haskins 2004). The visuals displayed on these artists’ record covers were entirely used as a marketing tool. Jan Solms, one of the designers interviewed during this study, had been hired to design an album cover for a popular Afrikaans pop singer. According to him, the brief stipulated that at least 75% of the cover’s real estate should comprise of a photograph of the singer (Solms 2012).

In 2003 the Afrikaans punk band Fokofpolisiekar rose to prominence. Fokofpolisiekar did not differ immensely from the English punk bands of the 1970s and the Afrikaans rock bands of the 1980s in terms of content and approach (Kahn 2009: 6-8). Although this was the case, the band still sparked vastly polar media interest and thus gained widespread popularity. The main differences between Fokofpolisiekar and its rock predecessors are its well polished punk

sound and its lyrics focusing more on apathy and the state of being in modern South Africa, yet still flooded with angst and political commentary. The lyrics and cultural standing of the band have been admired by fellow musicians and graphic artists including Chris Chameleon and Peet Pienaar (Little 2008). Another defining factor of the band was their early attention to detail concerning graphic design and their strong will to convey a professional image (Little 2008), much like the rock and punk musicians in the US and UK during the 1960s and 1970s. Their visual aesthetic was developed by Matthew Edwards, a graphic designer and friend of the band who was treated as an additional member of the group (Klopper 2011: 59&79). Early examples of their artwork incorporated ironic implementation of old Afrikaner artefacts like the *Jeugsang-bundel*.

There is a wealth of information to be gained from this section of human history. Graphic designer and journalist Stephen Heller compiled analyses of a few music-related as well as other design styles in two books (Heller & Fili 2006; Heller & Chwast 2008). A few articles and dissertations have been written on album covers (mostly on rock music of the 1960s), rock posters and the history of both (Jones & Sorger 1999; Inglis 2001; McGuire 2005; Moist 2010) and exhibits on 1960s rock posters have been held that garnered some academic attention (Boyd-Smith 2010). However, no scholarly record of South African music-related graphic design exists.

In all the above-mentioned cases of analyses in the field of music-related graphic design, the analysts' focus seems to be on either the artistic form, the semiotic content or the history of the analysed style and designers who incorporate it. Where the focus was on the artistic form, the analysis may be said to have followed guidelines set out by genre theory which, as a whole, essentially suggests that anything may be classified according to any intrinsic and extrinsic criteria (Chandler 2000: 1-2). This is a very broad interpretation of genre and there are of course various ways to go about classifying works, at least six according to Newsom (2010). Genre theory is most readily applied to classification in literary works (Chandler 2000, Biber & Conrad 2009, Newsom 2010) and when used in reference to graphic art often focuses on medium rather than content or style. Thus, as the study aimed to classify design styles according to inherent stylistic elements whilst using the suggestion of a simple model of genre theory, the focus was primarily on the artistic form of the designs as was seen in the work by Heller and Fili (2006) and Heller and Chwast (2008).

The aim of this study was to analyse and classify design styles associated with selected South African music genres, determine the inspirational factors behind these styles and explore some of the socio-political and cultural implications thereof. The music genres selected were punk, rock, metal, electro, rap and their subgenres. These genres were selected based on both the saturation and availability of designs associated with them and their popularity among Afrikaans-speaking youths. In addition to the classification and exploration of these styles, the study aimed to discover if music-related graphics in South Africa still holds the socio-political value of the early Fokofpolisiekar visuals and if the symbiotic relationship between designer and musician found with Fokofpolisiekar is responsible for the rise in interest and quality in music-related design in South Africa.

## **The methodology**

This study followed a qualitative approach and utilised summative and directed content analysis and interview techniques. The aim of the interviews was to discover the origins of the analysed graphic design styles, to possibly plot their development and to determine the involvement of

Fokofpolisiekar and Matthew Edwards in the increased awareness and practice of music-related graphic design in South Africa. To most successfully achieve this, qualitative, semi-personalised interviews were carried out in relaxed, informal settings. The subjects of the interviews were prominent designers of some of the analysed artworks as well as well-known figures in the music industry. Some of the questions differed depending on the professions and possible unique insights of the individual subjects.

The designers interviewed were Stuart Ponton, Brent Swart, MJ du Preez, Arno Kruger, Jan Solms, Rohan Estebeth, Merwe Marchand le Roux, Nathan Fourie, Louis Minnaar, André Pereira, Brendon Groenewald, Gerhard van Wyk and Philip Erasmus. The prominent figures in the music and entertainment industry interviewed include Henk van der Schyf, Johan Auriacombe, Deon Maas and Hunter Kennedy. The interviews revealed that at least nine of the designers were into skateboarding and involved in high school/post-school rock/punk bands. All the designers and other persons interviewed agreed that the briefs and meetings concerning music-related graphic design were highly informal and open and granted the designers a creative freedom lacking in more corporate work. The designers also agreed that before designing anything for a client, they would listen to their music first to both draw inspiration from it and frame a visual representation. In some cases the formulation of the visual representation is also aided by consulting past work done for the client as well as designs relating to the client's specific music genre. None of the designers felt that they were ever implored to conform to certain norms and although they accounted for the proper target market, still felt free and enjoyed the work they had thus far undertaken for the musicians concerned. They would often work harder for less money when designing for musicians because of this creative freedom. All but two of the designers were aware of Matt Edwards' work for Fokofpolisiekar and all agreed that the work, along with the music, had at the very least some effect on the current rise in popularity and quality of music-related graphic design in South Africa. Among the less convinced, Johan Auriacombe believes that although Fokofpolisiekar and Matt Edwards had a profound effect on the music and design community among Afrikaans-speaking people, this symbiotic approach to music and visuals had been around since the early to mid 1990s, practised by bands like The Narrow and ATFN who both had designers as members of their bands (Auriacombe 2012).

The content analysis focused on the artistic form whilst keeping in mind the background information gathered from the interviews to demystify any possible commentary or semiotic properties found within the designs. One thousand one hundred and one design artefacts were collected from public domains, band-related websites and the designers themselves. The method used to analyse and classify the designs was similar to the process used by Roberts and Pettigrew (2007). An approach rooted in genre theory, enabled the development of descriptive names for the classification through references to popular culture and historic designs. The analysis identified fifteen main design styles. A description and illustrated examples of these design styles along with the etymology behind their naming are subsequently presented below.

## Classic punk

The name derives from the graphic design style pioneered by Jaime Reid during the 1970s. This style is described as Classic Punk instead of merely Punk as to avoid confusion arising from the three subgenres it has produced. Much like the work of graphic designer Jaime Reid, Classic Punk has above all a “do-it-yourself” air to it. Newspaper clippings, torn edges, ransom note lettering, seemingly unplanned layout, uncouth content and loose-handed scribbled line work all contribute to the rebellious and angst-ridden wafts that permeate from this style. Though this is a relatively old and well-established style, the three subgenres that have emerged recently appear to contribute greatly to its overall popularity. The colour usage seems to be divided between either black and white or shockingly colourful with lots of neon greens and pinks. It does not, however, reach the cartoon-like level of line and colour usage found in Candy Punk and contains more photo collage elements than would be found in the other punk subgenres. This style was used by Matt Edwards in the original visual campaign for the band Fokofpolisiekar. Two examples of this style are given below.



Figure 1 (left)

Simply Dead – Emoticon Breakdown album cover by Arno Kruger  
(source: <http://www.arnokruger.com/2012/05/simply-dead-album-artwork/>).

Figure 2 (right)

VHS event poster by Ben Rausch  
(source: <http://www.socialcontract.co.za/2010/12/>).

## Candy punk

As with Classic Punk, this name likewise derives from 1960s punk. It is, however, a more colourful and overall friendly variation, hence its description as Candy Punk. This design style is as rough and messy as Classic Punk, but makes use of many bright colours with mostly family-friendly subject matter. Candy Punk is very cartoon-like and often purposefully silly. There are usually characters present built from loose and seemingly faulty child-like line work without apparent attempts at shading or any other form of simulated depth (except for cartoonish perspective). Designers who have used this style include MJ du Preez, Michael dos Ramos and Ben Rausch.



Figure 3 (left)

Pelussje concert poster by MJ du Preez

(source: <http://10and5.com/2011/06/14/social-contracts-poster-picks-23/>).

Figure 4 (right)

The Plastics concert poster by Ben Rausch

(source: <http://www.socialcontract.co.za/2011/08/>).

## Sophistipunk

A compound noun derived from “Sophisticated” and “Punk”, the name of this style is an indication of the lack of severe crudeness found in Classic and Candy Punk. There is a rough “do-it-yourself” sense to this style as with Classic Punk, though it is flanked by a greater apparent attention to detail. The loose pen and ink style of illustration is still predominant with a more realistic sense of depth granted through the use of shading techniques. The loose pen and ink style is not found throughout, though, and is not a prerequisite for a design to qualify. The design only needs to have the overall feeling of punk softened by a greater sense of attention to detail and a more apparently professional finish. The content of these designs –as with most of the designs analysed – has no direct bearing on the style itself, though it does give the impression to be much more thoughtful and thought-provoking than the arguably blunt anger found in Classic Punk. Designers who have used this style include Michael Dos Ramos, Adam Hill, Merwe Marchand le Roux and Arno Kruger.



Figure 5 (left)

The Sleepers concert poster by Adam Hill

(source: <http://10and5.com/2011/10/11/social-contracts-poster-picks-39/>)

Figure 6 (right)

Die Heuwels Fantasties T-shirt by Arno Kruger

(source: <http://www.arnokruger.com/category/design/>)

## Wire punk 3-D

This style derives its name from the wire mesh style of line work similar to but more messy (or in some cases more controlled) than Candy and Sophistipunk and from anaglyph 3-D imaging because of the cyan and red overlays similar to this found in the analysed designs. The only prerequisite for this style is that red and cyan copies of the same image are laid over each other in the same fashion as anaglyph 3-D imaging. Designers who have used this style include André Pereira, Jaco Haasbroek, MJ du Preez, Doug Gass and Brent Swart.



Figure 7 (left)

The Plastics concert poster by André Pereira  
(source: <http://10and5.com/2012/05/23/featured-andre-pereira/>)

Figure 8 (right)

Ondier Kom! remix EP cover by Brent Swart  
(source: <http://10and5.com/2012/05/08/featured-new-work-from-brentblack-studios/>)

## Sick 'n creamy

The name is a perversion of the often spoke phrase “thick and creamy” in a reference to ice cream, milkshakes or mashed potatoes. This style is most often typographic in nature with seemingly smelly, furry, stubbly, infected, shiny, wet, sticky and squishy lettering. It also often incorporates clouds, teardrop-like droplets and spiky shapes. Any design with an abundance of overly disgusting content that may be described by using the above-mentioned adjectives qualifies. Designers who have used this style include Jean Lombard, Hanno van Zyl and Andrew Ringrose.





Figure 9 (left)

Jack Parow concert poster by Hanno van Zyl  
 (source: <http://www.hannovanzy.com/jackparow.html>)



Figure 10 (right)

The Assembly event poster by Andrew Ringrose  
 (source: <http://www.residentadvisor.net/event.aspx?83254>)

## Fancy clip art

The name of this style is a direct reference to the clip art used in Microsoft Office suites. It was chosen because of a similarity in vector-based line work and shading with sometimes greater detail and arguably less boring themes, hence the name Fancy Clip Art. The most notable aspects and in fact only prerequisites for this style is that it contains vector graphics with spiky or stripy shading, similar to that found in Microsoft Clip Art and certain comic books. If a design exerts an overall comic book feel (modern or retro), that would also qualify. Designers who have used this style include Jade Klara, Simon Berndt, Michael Dos Ramos and Kronk.



Figure 11 (left)

Day of the Dead event poster by One Horse Town  
 (source: <http://10and5.com/2011/10/25/social-contracts-poster-picks-41/>)



Figure 12 (right)

Debut & Experiments event poster by Kronk  
 (source: <http://www.socialcontract.co.za/2012/02/14/kronk-andrew-ringrose-adriaan-louw-and-graham-kennedy-for-the-assembly/>)

## 8-Bit theatre

The name is a reference to the comic and flash animation series of the same name (authored by Brian Clevinger and available from [www.nuklearpower.com](http://www.nuklearpower.com) since 2001) because of the similar use of 8-bit sprite characters and penny arcade paraphernalia. Designs in this style comprise mostly of 8-bit pixel art but sometimes only contain non-direct references to arcade games. Thus, any pixel art or pixel art-themed designs qualify. Designers who have used this style include André Pereira, Andrew Ringrose and Philip Erasmus.

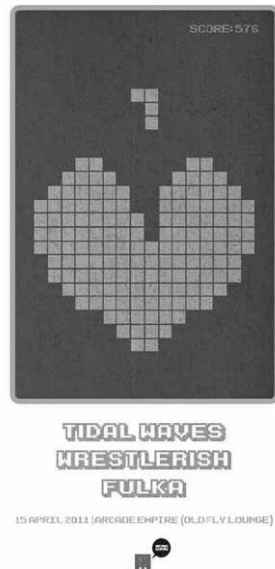


Figure 13 (left)

Tidal Waves concert poster by André Pereira  
(source: <http://www.socialcontract.co.za/2011/04/>)

Figure 14 (right)

YS!MM X Beach Party event poster by Karl Schuschenk  
(source: <http://www.coroflot.com/karlschuschenk/FlyerPoster-Design>)

## Supercamp

The word Supercamp is an amalgam of the name of the British rock band Supertramp and the word camp, referring to television shows and movies that are wilfully saturated with tackiness or, if you will, cheesiness, like the original live action Batman series that ran from 1966 to 1968. The original name for this style was Cheap Rag in reference to ads and article pictures found in low-priced magazines. The most notable trait these designs have in common is that they look purposefully outdated and tacky to a comedic effect. They often contain photographs with either bad or supremely cheesy lighting and techniques adding to an overtly ironic flavour. Designers who have used this style include Stuart Ponton, Ben Rausch, Philip Erasmus and Arno Kruger.



Figure 15 (left)

Die Heuwels Fantasties - Alles wat mal is album cover by Philip Erasmus  
 (source: <http://lwmag.co.za/die-heuwels-fantasties-alles-wat-mal-is>)



Figure 16 (Right)

Bliksem! event poster by Ben Rausch  
 (source: <http://www.socialcontract.co.za/2011/08/>)

## Cut and paste

The original name of this style was Cardboard Cut Out in reference to the similarities between the designs and cardboard cut-out pictures made for scrapbooking. Because of the slightly knotty ring to Cardboard Cut Out, the name was changed to Cut and Paste. As the name suggests, the designs resemble art projects that were assembled through the cutting and pasting of paper shapes. The shapes are usually vector images with paper textures and drop shadows applied. There are varieties of the style, however, that incorporate photographs blended with vector images. Though sometimes similar to collages found with Classic Punk, Cut and Paste has a definite scrapbook or stick-puppet feel. Designers who have used this style include MJ du Preez and Arno Kruger.



Figure 17 (left)

Halloween event poster by MJ du Preez  
 (source <http://10and5.com/2011/10/28/win-tickets-to-halloween-the-haunting-of-city-hall-from-your-friends/>)

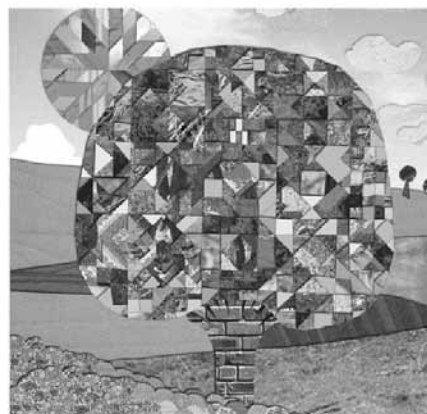


Figure 18 (right)

Die Heuwels Fantasties - Lekker Luister Liedjies vir die Lang Pad lyrics card illustration by Arno Kruger  
 (source <http://www.arnokruger.com/2011/08/die-heuwels-deluxe-edition/>)

## Hard candy

The name was chosen because of the colour and overall appearance of the designs resembling hard candy. Illustrations done in this style consist of images built up out of flat, rounded and angular shapes, often with white sheens around the edges. Bright, candy colours are frequently used but oftentimes designs will incorporate large sections of black with small accents of colour (pinks, greens, blues and reds). Many elements found in indigenous Mexican art are present (skulls, flowers and barbs). Hard Candy also often incorporates elements found in Mickey Mouse (see below), albeit much flatter. Designs may also include wallpaper-like patterns in the background. Designers who have used this style include Peet Pienaar, Matt Edwards and Johann Botha.



Figure 19 (left)

Discotheque event poster by Andrew Ringrose  
(source: <http://www.socialcontract.co.za/2011/01/>)

Figure 20 (right)

Oppikoppi Smoorverlief promotional art by Matt Edwards  
(source: <http://www.behance.net/gallery/Oppikoppi-Smoorverlief-Campaign/1087503>)

## Mickey mouse

The name of this style is a reference to old Disney cartoons. The designs analysed are stylistically similar to old Walt Disney and, to a certain degree, Tex Avery cartoons with the same general feel. Users of this style often incorporate characters and regular, stylistically relevant objects. The characters are spindly and contorted, teardrop-shaped, round-bottomed with black oval eyes and a squeaky-clean rubber-like shininess. The stylistic objects may include crossbones, spaghetti/liquorice arms and legs, xxx booze bottles, skeletons, top hats, fat lips and striped white gloves. The colours used for the characters and surroundings are usually limited to black and white (occasionally with a substitute colour for white), though there are examples of full-colour use of this style. Designers incorporating this style sometimes blend it with other styles (commonly Classic Punk) and do not generally rely on it alone for all their work as users of Mickey Mouse Plus seem to do. Designers and design collectives who have made use of this style include I am Shikari, Michael Dos Ramos, Merwe Marchand le Roux and MJ du Preez.



Figure 21 (left)

aKING T-shirt by Merwe Marchand le Roux

(source: <http://www.marchand.co.za/64831/515088/work/aking-t-shirt>)

Figure 22 (right)

aKING concert poster by Michael Dos Ramos

(source: <http://10and5.com/2011/04/26/social-contracts-poster-picks-16/>)

## Mickey mouse plus

As with Mickey Mouse, the name of this style is likewise a reference to old Disney cartoons, but because it seems to be an evolved version with its own intrinsic traits not found in Mickey Mouse, the style was labelled as Mickey Mouse Plus. Like Mickey Mouse, this style features characters with long spindly limbs with the main difference being texture and noticeable variety in characters. There is an omnipresent use of stripy shading and texturing resulting in an almost wooden feel. In many cases the limbs are also much more elongated than the ones found in Mickey Mouse and for the most part, the stylistic objects found in Mickey Mouse are absent. There are no strict rules for colour usage as anything seems to go. This style has been used by designers and design collectives such as Gerhard van Wyk, Brent Swart, Louis Minnaar, Christi du Toit and Says Who.

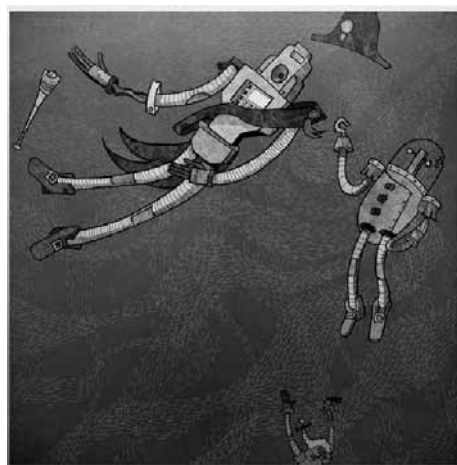


Figure 23 (Left)

Rub-A-Dub concert poster by Christi du Toit

(source: <http://10and5.com/2012/05/08/social-contracts-poster-picks-63/>)

Figure 24 (Right)

Vinyl Junkie exhibit record cover by Gerhard van Wyk

(source: <http://10and5.com/2010/10/25/featured-gerhard-van-wyk/>)

## Pseudo surrealism

The design style referred to as Pseudo Surrealism is a reference to the surrealist movement and surrealist science fiction films of the 1920s to 1970s like *Metropolis* and *Fantastic Planet*. The surrealist elements present in the style are nonetheless merely rhetorical and mostly devoid of hidden metaphors and other meanings commonly associated with the art movement, hence the use of the qualifier “pseudo”. This style often places geometric planes and dreamscape-esque figures on top of vapid landscapes and in blank *voidscapes*. One often gets the sense of a bleak, Orwellian future when looking at these designs. The artworks are mostly devoid of character illustrations (and even photographs of the performers) and relies more on psychedelic mysticism for familiarity. Because it is not truly character-based, the landscapes and *voidscapes* become the main vessel with dots of character scattered throughout. Some photography may nonetheless sometimes be present. Common visual cues may include prisms, conical shapes, triangles, pyramids, geometric planes, dreamscapes, psychedelic imagery, mysticism, dark distinct shading (much like the shading found in paintings by Salvador Dali). This style may be seen as a modern equivalent of the LSD-inspired, or “trip-inspired”, psychedelic rock posters of the 1960s, but with a more mathematical approach. Designers who have used this style include Merwe Marchand le Roux, Louis Minnaar, Adele van Heerden, Adam Hill, Bruno Morphet, Christopher Bisset and Baden Moir.



Figure 25 (left)

The Sleepers concert poster by Adam Hill  
(source: <http://www.socialcontract.co.za/2011/08/>)

Figure 26 (right)

Moses Metro Man – Konstellasies album cover by MJ du Preez  
(source: <http://www.behance.net/gallery/Moses-Metro-Man/2683865>)

## Macabre

As the name suggests, this style incorporates eerie, obscure, uncanny and scary imagery and themes. Usually dark colours with black and white overtones are used to create the effect of a psychologically thrilling horror movie-esque feel. The style can range from horror movie-like to tribal, cannibalistic levels of discomfort and scariness. Designers who have used this style include Johann Botha, Simon Berndt, Adam Hill and Louis Minnaar.

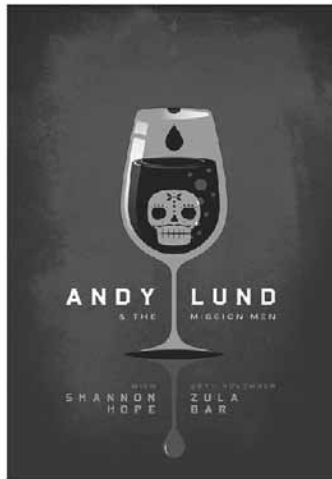


Figure 27 (left)

Andy Lund & the Mission Men concert poster by Adam Hill  
 (source: <http://www.socialcontract.co.za/2011/06/22/adam-hill-studio-visit/>)

Figure 28 (right)

Lark – Vampire single cover by Louis Minnaar  
 (source: [http://www.louisminnaar.com/?page\\_id=89](http://www.louisminnaar.com/?page_id=89))

## Arthouse

The name of this style derives from its pseudo-artistic and seemingly pretentious nature. Designs of this style often contain overexposed, washed out colour photographs (generally flash photography) of apparently disinterested subjects with occasional Photoshop filters and added textures. The filters and effects present in these designs are comparable to those found in the quick photo editing software Instagram. The photographs are also similar to those often found in *Vice* magazine. Designers who have used this style include Louis Minnaar and MJ du Preez.



Figure 29 (left)

Richard the Third concert poster by MJ du Preez  
 (source: <http://www.socialcontract.co.za/2011/06/01/1-5-june-2011/>)

Figure 30 (right)

Yesterday's Pupil – Formative Years album cover by Louis Minnaar  
 (source: [http://www.louisminnaar.com/?page\\_id=87](http://www.louisminnaar.com/?page_id=87))

## Conclusion

In accordance with the musicians of the 1960s and 1970s who felt that their music and their collective zeitgeist were encapsulated in their representative visual media brought forth by art school friends, the South African designers today rely on the music itself to inspire their music-related designs. There are, however, no wholly independent ideas or intentional symbolism found in the designs. The different flavours of the different artists may be identified through their unique styles or unique (yet seemingly unaware) interpretations of the classified styles. Some designers, like Merwe Marchand le Roux, may sneak in a signature graphic or two (Marchand often uses his trademark crossbones visible in Figure 21) into their designs but other than that, no additional commentary from the designer is present. These are not art school friends fresh out of college trying to push buttons, these are professional, business-oriented designers who know their target market and product. In some ways even better than the musicians themselves.

In the recent documentary *Punk in Africa* (Maas 2012), Prof. Andries Bezuidenhoud was quoted saying “After Irony comes fuck you”. In response one might say that after “fuck you” comes conformity. Countercultures peter out or the causes resolve themselves. We are left with misfit pieces of dissent and all that is left is conformity as popular culture assimilates counterculture. As you move further away from dissent and irony and “fuck you” and closer to conformity, the artwork loses its secularity, it enters the realm of non-corporeal archetypes, distant remnants of something someone felt once as a direct result of something that actually happened. Now we have fragments of distantly relevant simulacra with very good finishing and mass appeal.

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