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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the dynamic intersection of branding, product design, and cultural heritage in Trinidad and Tobago, illuminating how these elements collectively shape and reflect and preserve the nation's cultural identity. Through an analytical lens grounded in cultural studies and design theory, the research delves into the historical and sociocultural evolution of Trinidad and Tobago, tracing the impact of various cultural influxes from the colonial period to contemporary times on branding and product design.

Central to this exploration are case studies of prominent local designers Marlon Darbeau and Ayrid Chandler, whose work epitomizes the fusion of cultural heritage with modern design principles. Darbeau's contributions are particularly noted for their narrative depth, integrating traditional craftsmanship with contemporary aesthetics to tell compelling stories of cultural identity and continuity. Similarly, Chandler's strategic branding initiatives, such as the Caribbean Film Mart and Database (CFM+Db) project, demonstrate how design can significantly enhance cultural visibility and foster professional networking within the Caribbean cinema community, thus supporting cultural preservation and global recognition.

By examining the works of Darbeau and Chandler, this study highlights the critical role of design as a tool for cultural dialogue and identity formation, showcasing how Trinidadian designers navigate the challenges of globalization while maintaining cultural authenticity. The findings underscore the potential of design not only to reflect cultural heritage but also to actively participate in its sustainable development and preservation.

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INTRODUCTION

Rationale

This study delves into a crucial, yet often overlooked area at the crossroads of branding, product design, and cultural heritage in Trinidad and Tobago. This country, brimming with rich traditions and artistic flair, faces the challenge of keeping its cultural heritage alive in a world that's rapidly globalizing. This research highlights how branding and product design are key in preserving and promoting this heritage.

Despite a growing awareness of the significance of branding and design in cultural and economic contexts, there's a noticeable lack of in-depth research on how these aspects can protect and celebrate the cultural identity of Trinidad and Tobago. This thesis aims to fill this void by thoroughly documenting and analyzing how creative design and strategic branding can effectively represent a culture.

Choosing Trinidad and Tobago as this study's focus offers a fresh perspective in the wider discussion on cultural preservation and commercialization. It explores how branding and product design can transcend their commercial roles, becoming vital in sustaining culture and representing heritage, especially in an era where globalization poses both risks and opportunities for cultural expression.

Furthermore, this thesis contributes to the debate on cultural commodification and its impact, investigating the fine line between commercial success and maintaining cultural authenticity. This is valuable for a range of audiences, including policymakers, designers, cultural workers, and academics.

In conclusion, this thesis not only addresses a significant gap in academic research but also acts as a practical guide for using branding and design in the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage. It promotes a strategic approach where cultural heritage is not only safeguarded and celebrated but also effectively positioned in the global market, securing its survival and appreciation for future generations.

Thesis Statement

This thesis explores the pivotal role of branding and product design in preserving and promoting the rich cultural heritage of Trinidad and Tobago, arguing that through innovative design and strategic branding, the unique traditions and artistic expressions of the country can be effectively safeguarded and celebrated in the local and global marketplace.

Parameters

This research investigates the intricate relationship between branding, product design, and cultural heritage, with defined parameters in terms of its time frame, geographical setting, thematic concentration, and focus on specific individuals. Chronologically, it zeroes in on the most recent two decades, aiming to analyze the most pertinent and contemporary trends and practices. Geographically, the study is centered on Trinidad and Tobago, providing an extensive examination of this nation's cultural dynamics within the wider Caribbean region. Thematically, the thesis is dedicated to understanding the social effects of cultural heritage in the realms of branding and product design, with a particular emphasis on aspects such as identity, community

participation, and cultural representation. Regarding individual contributors, the research notably features prominent figures in this field. Marlon Darbeau, an esteemed artist and designer from Trinidad and Tobago, is spotlighted for his integration of cultural heritage with modern design and branding techniques.

Furthermore, the thesis incorporates an analysis of Ayrid Chandler, a notable expert in branding, whose work and insights significantly influence the way cultural heritage shapes branding strategies. By exploring the approaches and contributions of both Darbeau and Chandler, this study aims to provide a thorough insight into the personal and professional efforts that facilitate the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage in an era of globalization and commercialization. This specific focus enables a detailed exploration of how branding and design can be utilized for cultural sustainability while recognizing these examples as part of a larger, regional effort.

Objectives

This research embarks on an in-depth exploration of the intersection between cultural heritage, branding, and product design in Trinidad and Tobago, centring particularly on the contributions of Marlon Darbeau and Ayrid Chandler. The study is committed to uncovering and understanding the influential roles these key individuals have played in shaping the nation's cultural landscape. A significant aspect of this investigation involves analyzing how Darbeau and Chandler have employed linguistic elements and symbolism in their work, aiming to unravel the impact of these elements on Trinbagonian society and its portrayal on a global platform.

Moreover, the thesis intends to evaluate the broader repercussions of these branding and design strategies within the context of Trinidad and Tobago's cultural heritage. This includes examining how these strategies have moulded public perception and cultural identity, and their efficacy in sustaining traditional cultural practices. A specific focus is given to analyzing Marlon Darbeau's contributions in using design to enhance and promote the country's cultural heritage, examining the ways his work has helped to deepen the understanding and appreciation of Trinidad and Tobago's cultural identity.

Simultaneously, the thesis also scrutinizes the role of Ayrid Chandler in the realm of branding, probing into how her expertise has revolutionized the branding field in the country and its consequent effect on cultural heritage preservation and promotion.

The anticipated outcome of this thesis is a rich, nuanced understanding of how branding and design intersect with cultural heritage. This research is not just aimed at enriching academic knowledge but also seeks to offer valuable insights to cultural practitioners and policymakers. It is expected to have a far-reaching impact, shaping future approaches to cultural preservation and branding. This study addresses a notable gap in existing literature, paving the way for future research and aims to create a lasting impact that underscores the critical importance of integrating cultural heritage into branding and design, particularly in the context of a globalizing world.

Chapter Outline

This thesis consists of four chapters. Chapter 1, entitled "Cultural Tapestry: The Evolution of Branding and Design in Trinidad and Tobago," introduces the historical and cultural context, setting the stage for understanding the current state of branding and product design in the nation.

Chapter 2, titled "Frameworks and Methodologies: Analyzing Cultural Intersection," details the theoretical underpinnings and research methodologies used in this study, offering a lens through which to examine the convergence of branding, design, and cultural heritage.

Chapter 3, named "Marlon Darbeau: Product Design as Cultural Narrative," provides a detailed analysis of Darbeau's work, exploring how his designs serve as a narrative medium for Trinidad and Tobago's cultural heritage.

Finally, Chapter 4, "Ayrid Chandler: Branding the Cultural Identity," focuses on Chandler's role in the branding sphere, evaluating how her strategies have influenced the perception and preservation of the nation's cultural heritage in the face of globalization.

Methodology

This thesis adopts a qualitative research approach, focusing on the case studies of Marlon Darbeau and Ayrid Chandler. These persons were chosen for their significant contributions to branding and product design in Trinidad and Tobago and their influence on the preservation of cultural heritage.

Data Collection

Primary Documentary Sources:

Marlon Darbeau's Portfolio and TED Talk: Analysis of Marlon Darbeau's design work and his TED talk. This includes a critical review of his projects like 'Verb', 'Peera', and his contributions to the design community in Trinidad and Tobago.

Ayrid Chandler's Design Portfolio: Examination of Ayrid Chandler's branding and design projects, including her work on the Caribbean Film Mart and Database, and her design firm Ayrīd by Design.

Secondary Documentary Sources:

Academic and industry publications that discuss branding, product design, and cultural heritage in the Caribbean context. These will offer theoretical and contextual background to the primary data.

Primary Material Sources:

Analysis of tangible design artifacts, such as logos, product designs, and branding materials created by Darbeau and Chandler.

Data Utilization

Case Study Analysis:

Detailed case studies of Darbeau and Chandler, focusing on how their work integrates and preserves Trinidad and Tobago's cultural heritage through branding and product design.

Thematic Analysis:

Identification and analysis of recurring themes in their work, such as the use of local cultural elements, the impact of their work on the local community, and the global outreach of their designs.

Research Approach

Qualitative Content Analysis:

In-depth analysis of interviews, portfolios, and design artifacts to understand the cultural and symbolic meanings in Darbeau and Chandler's work.

Analysis of Marlon Darbeau's TED talk to gain insights into his design philosophy and approach to integrating cultural heritage into his work.

Comparative Analysis:

Comparing and contrasting the approaches of Darbeau and Chandler to identify unique strategies and commonalities in preserving cultural heritage through design.

Contextual Analysis:

Understanding the broader socio-cultural and economic context of Trinidad and Tobago and how it influences the work of these designers.

Literature Review

This literature review brings together varied sources to examine the roles of Marlon Darbeau and Ayrid Chandler in branding and product design, with a focus on how they contribute to preserving Trinidad and Tobago's cultural heritage.

Marlon Darbeau's Approach and Impact

Darbeau's method, detailed in a Design Week interview, is a fusion of traditional cultural elements with modern design. His projects, such as 'Verb' and 'Peera', are prime examples of his philosophy of 'designing through making,' showcasing a shift in design practices within the local context. As explored in his profile from the Phyllis M. Taylor Center for Social Innovation and Design Thinking, Darbeau's shift from graphic to tangible design mediums highlights the physical representation of cultural motifs, linking them strongly to contemporary identity. His

TED Talk on TEDxPortofSpain further delves into this theme, illustrating the deep connection between his design work and the cultural heritage of Trinidad and Tobago.

Ayrid Chandler's Role in Branding and Design

Chandler's professional and personal profiles, along with her work at Ayrid by Design, emphasize a modern approach to branding that intertwines closely with local culture. Her commitment to branding and identity design illustrates her deep understanding of design's role in cultural expression and preservation. The Design Week article on Trinidad and Tobago's design scene underscores Chandler's influence in nurturing the local design community and her dedication to advancing design education. Her role in the Caribbean Film Mart and Database (CFM+Db) project highlights the impact of branding in promoting cultural sectors like film, thereby aiding in the preservation of cultural heritage.

Summary of Findings

This literature review uncovers a vibrant interplay between age-old cultural traditions and contemporary design approaches in Trinidad and Tobago. Darbeau's creations exemplify how cultural symbols can be incorporated into modern design, while Chandler's work demonstrates the use of design as a strategic tool in both cultural and commercial spheres. Both designers place a strong emphasis on the incorporation of local cultural insights into their work, showing that effective branding and product design are deeply embedded in cultural narratives and identity.

This collection of insights forms a narrative around the role of design in the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage in the Caribbean, particularly in Trinidad and Tobago. These findings lay the groundwork for the thesis, highlighting the importance of branding and product design as essential instruments for cultural preservation and expression in the context of globalization.

CHAPTER ONE: The Evolution of Branding and Design in Trinidad and Tobago: A Cultural Journey

Aiming to unveil the historical and cultural evolution of Trinidad and Tobago, this chapter offers a lens through which to view the development of branding and product design in the nation. This journey, from the early days of its diverse origins to the contemporary era of cultural synthesis, sets the context for understanding the intricate relationship between the nation's cultural heritage and its manifestation in design and branding.

The cultural fabric of Trinidad and Tobago was woven with threads of various origins during the colonial era. The introduction of African slaves and the subsequent immigration of labourers from China, Portugal, and India brought diverse cultural practices, significantly influencing the country's societal makeup (Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago). These varied cultural influences, over time, created a unique identity that is evident in the nation's design and branding today. Slavery and its aftermath played a pivotal role in shaping the cultural identity of Trinidad and Tobago. African and Indian cultural practices merged with influences from French and Spanish colonizers and birthed new cultural expressions. Notably, the Calypso art form and Trinidad and Tobago Carnival are direct descendants of this cultural amalgamation, embodying a mix of African, Indian, French, and Spanish traditions (Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago).

The early decades of the 20th century were marked by a monumental shift from a predominantly sugar-based economy to one driven by oil. This transition was not merely economic; it catalyzed profound changes in the societal fabric of Trinidad and Tobago. The burgeoning oil industry brought about urbanization, drawing people from rural areas into the cities in search of work and a better life. This migration was a crucible of change, fostering a melting pot of cultures, ideas, and aspirations that began to challenge the colonial status quo.

Urbanization also led to increased educational opportunities and exposure to global political and social ideologies. The influx of ideas from abroad, coupled with the local populace's growing awareness of global independence movements, sowed the seeds of nationalism and a desire for self-governance. The path towards independence was paved with resistance against colonial rule. Notable events such as the Water Riots of 1903 and the Butler Riots were emblematic of the people's growing discontent with colonial oppression and economic exploitation. These uprisings were not isolated incidents but part of a larger tapestry of resistance that highlighted the inequities of colonial rule and the yearning for self-determination and dignity.

The Water Riots, triggered by water shortages and the monopolization of water resources by colonial authorities, were a critical moment of collective action. Similarly, the Butler Riots of 1937, led by labour leader Tubal Uriah "Buzz" Butler, was a watershed in the labour movement, igniting widespread strikes and protests that laid the groundwork for the labour rights and political activism that would follow. The establishment of US military bases in 1941 further complicated the cultural and social landscape of Trinidad and Tobago. While the bases were

primarily a strategic move during World War II, their presence introduced American cultural elements into Trinidadian society. The influx of American goods, music, and media had a profound impact on local culture, influencing everything from fashion and food to music and entertainment. This American influence was met with both fascination and apprehension, as it presented a challenge to local cultural traditions even as it contributed to the globalizing influence on the island's cultural identity.

In the post-independence era, Trinidad and Tobago embarked on a journey of self-discovery, embracing its multifaceted cultural identity shaped by centuries of history. This period of consolidation was not just political but deeply cultural, influencing every aspect of society, including the burgeoning field of design. The diverse population, with its rich tapestry of African and Indian heritage, along with influences from indigenous, European, Middle Eastern, and Asian settlers, became the bedrock of a unique design ethos that is distinctly Trinidadian and Tobagonian.

The design landscape of Trinidad and Tobago post-independence became a vibrant reflection of its cultural diversity. Designers, artists, and craftsmen drew inspiration from the array of religious practices, cultural traditions, and the nation's colourful festivals, infusing their work with the symbols, motifs, and narratives of this rich heritage. The influence of Diwali, with its intricate patterns and motifs, Eid's elegant calligraphy, and the dynamic vibrancy of Carnival, can be seen in everything from fashion design and jewellery to graphic design and architecture. This

cultural fusion has led to a distinctive aesthetic that marries colour, pattern, and symbolism in innovative ways, distinguishing Trinidad and Tobago's design output on the global stage.

The national cultural calendar, a reflection of the island's diverse society, plays a significant role in shaping design practices. Each religious, ethnic, and secular holiday offers an opportunity for celebration and representation, of themes deeply ingrained in the local design ethos. For instance, Carnival, an annual festival that precedes Lent, has inspired a range of design disciplines, from costume design and float decoration to event branding and promotional materials. These designs capture the essence of Carnival's history and its significance as a symbol of freedom and cultural expression, showcasing the creative prowess and innovation of Trinidad and Tobago's designers.

In the post-independence context, design in Trinidad and Tobago has also emerged as a powerful tool for cultural preservation. Designers consciously incorporate traditional crafts, materials, and techniques into contemporary works, ensuring that the nation's cultural heritage is maintained and celebrated. For example, the traditional art of wire-bending in Carnival costumes or the use of indigenous materials in furniture design not only keeps these traditions alive but also reinterprets them for new audiences. Through such endeavours, design acts as a bridge between generations, allowing for a dialogue between the past and the present.

As Trinidad and Tobago's designers continue to explore and celebrate their cultural identity, they face the dual challenge of maintaining authenticity while appealing to a global market. The unique blend of cultures presents an opportunity to stand out in the crowded global design landscape, but it also requires careful navigation to ensure that cultural representations are

respectful and genuine. The success of Trinidadian and Tobagonian designers on the international stage, from fashion to graphic design, speaks to their ability to meet these challenges, offering designs that are at once locally resonant and globally appealing.

Globalization poses both challenges and opportunities for Trinidadian designers. The global market opens doors for international recognition but also risks diluting our unique cultural identity. In my journey, understanding how to balance global appeal with authentic Trinbagonian essence has been crucial. This delicate dance between maintaining cultural authenticity while appealing to a global audience has shaped my approach to design, striving to create work that resonates both locally and internationally.

The historical and cultural journey of Trinidad and Tobago is a testament to its rich and diverse heritage. From the indigenous tribes to the impacts of colonization and slavery, each era contributed to the formation of a unique cultural identity. This backdrop is crucial for understanding the current state of branding and product design in Trinidad and Tobago, where contemporary practices are deeply rooted in this historical and cultural tapestry. Design experts like Marlon Darbeau and Ayrid Chandler emerged, steering our creative energies towards designs that speak to our heritage while embracing modernity. Their work not only inspires me but also offers a blueprint for integrating our diverse cultural narratives into contemporary design.

Traversing the evolution of branding and design in Trinidad and Tobago reveals a story of resilience, creativity, and cultural pride. As I continue my studies, I am reminded of the power of

design not just to beautify or sell but to tell our nation's story, preserve our heritage, and carve our place in the global tapestry. This exploration is not just academic for me; it's a personal journey to discover how I, too, can contribute to our ongoing narrative through design

CHAPTER TWO: Frameworks and Methodologies: Analyzing Cultural Intersection

In exploring the intricate dance between branding, design, and cultural heritage in Trinidad and Tobago, it is imperative to anchor this investigation in robust theoretical frameworks and methodological approaches. This chapter outlines the conceptual underpinnings that guide our analysis, drawing upon interdisciplinary fields that include cultural studies, design theory, and branding principles. By examining these domains through a lens specifically focused on Trinidad and Tobago, I aim to uncover how design and branding not only reflect but also shape cultural identity.

Theoretical Frameworks - Cultural Studies and Design Intersectionality

The exploration of cultural identity in design necessitates an understanding of the historical, social, and cultural contexts from which these identities emerge. Hall's concept of identity being a 'production' which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation (Hall, 1997), is particularly relevant to the Trinibagonian context. Trinidad and Tobago's history is marked by colonization, migration, and the convergence of diverse cultural groups, each contributing to the nation's identity. The role of design in this context becomes a powerful medium through which these identities are both represented and negotiated.

Design in Trinidad and Tobago can be viewed as a cultural practice that reflects and shapes the nation's identity. Through the lens of cultural studies, design transcends its traditional boundaries of aesthetics and functionality, becoming a means of cultural expression and dialogue. The incorporation of indigenous symbols, African motifs, and Indian patterns into design practices serves not only to preserve these cultures but also to communicate them to wider audiences, both locally and internationally.

The semiotics of design in Trinidad and Tobago offers a rich field for analysis. Drawing from Barthes' 1977 theory of semiotics, we can decode the cultural symbols used in branding and product design as texts that carry specific meanings and connotations [Barthes, R. (1977). *Image-Music-Text*. Fontana Press]. For example, the use of the hummingbird, a national symbol, in branding, can be seen as signifying the nation's resilience and beauty. Similarly, the recurring motifs of the carnival in various designs do more than celebrate a national festival; they signify a complex history of resistance, liberation, and cultural synthesis.

In the context of globalization, Trinidad and Tobago's design practices are also spaces where global and local identities are negotiated. This negotiation is evident in the ways local designers incorporate global design trends while infusing them with distinctly Trinidadian elements. This synthesis reflects what Hall describes as the "global postmodern", where identities are formed and transformed under the conditions of globalization [Hall, S. (1996). *Questions of Cultural Identity*. Sage].

Analysis and Interpretation - Synthesizing Cultural Narratives in Design

In the course of this study, my analysis hinges on the interplay between theoretical insights and the empirical data gathered, particularly focusing on how cultural narratives are articulated through branding and design. Stuart Hall's conceptualization of identity as a production always in process helps frame my examination of Trinidad and Tobago's design practices. This theoretical backdrop is instrumental in deciphering how design and branding not only reflect but actively participate in the shaping of cultural identities.

The qualitative content analysis of logos, packaging, and advertising campaigns reveals a consistent integration of cultural motifs—such as the hummingbird and carnival symbols—that are emblematic of Trinidad and Tobago's heritage. These design elements serve as more than mere aesthetic enhancements; they function as semiotic vehicles that convey profound cultural narratives to local and global audiences. For instance, the incorporation of steelpan icons and vivid carnival colors into tourism brochures strategically communicates a narrative of vibrant cultural life that attracts international tourists while reaffirming a sense of pride and identity among locals.

Case Study Insights

The case studies of local designers like Marlon Darbeau and Ayrid Chandler provide deeper insights into the personal and creative processes that underlie cultural representation in design.

Analyzing Darbeau's and Chandler's work, I observe how traditional elements are skillfully woven into contemporary design pieces, thus negotiating the preservation of heritage with modern aesthetic demands. This not only supports Hall's ideas on the fluidity of cultural identity but also highlights the designer's role in molding those identities within the societal fabric.

Ethnographic Contributions

Complementing the structured approaches of content analysis and case studies, my ethnographic fieldwork within the design community offers a richer, more nuanced understanding of the socio-cultural dynamics that influence design practices. Engaging directly with designers and participating in design-centric events allows me to witness and document the lived experiences of cultural expression and identity negotiation. These interactions reveal how designers consciously navigate the complex waters of globalization, often blending global trends with local traditions to create designs that resonate on multiple levels.

Navigating Global Influences

A significant part of my analysis involves understanding how Trinidadian designers and brands navigate global influences. This includes examining the strategies employed to maintain cultural authenticity while achieving global appeal. Through interviews and discussions, I uncover a common theme: the strategic use of culturally resonant design elements as a means to differentiate and elevate the appeal of Trinidadian products in a competitive global market. This strategy not only preserves cultural integrity but also leverages it as a unique selling proposition.

In completing this chapter, I have established a robust foundation for understanding the intricate relationship between branding, design, and cultural heritage in Trinidad and Tobago. By integrating cultural studies, design theory, and semiotics, I have outlined a comprehensive framework that illuminates how these elements not only reflect but actively shape cultural identities.

CHAPTER THREE: Marlon Darbeau: Product Design as Cultural Narrative

As I embarked on the journey to explore the intersection of design and cultural heritage in Trinidad and Tobago for my thesis, Marlon Darbeau's work immediately stood out as a beacon of innovation and cultural expression. This wasn't just a professional interest; it felt personal, resonating with my own experiences and aspirations as someone deeply connected to Trinidad and Tobago's rich cultural fabric. Darbeau, through his multifaceted design practice, transcends the traditional boundaries of product design and graphic arts, engaging with a narrative form of creation that is as deeply rooted in our nation's heritage as it is engaged with the global dialogue on design and identity.

In a world that feels increasingly homogenized by globalization, the significance of preserving cultural uniqueness becomes paramount, and designers like Darbeau play a crucial role in this process. His work does not simply solve design problems; it tells stories, provokes thought, and evokes a profound sense of belonging and community. To me, Darbeau's creations are more than just objects; they are vibrant intersections where the past meets the present, tradition greets innovation, and the local beautifully intersects with the global.

By intertwining the narrative of Darbeau's background, his career milestones, and his philosophical approach to design with a detailed analysis of his key projects, I seek not only to understand the impact of his work but also to honour it. Darbeau's journey is a powerful

testament to the role of design as a transformative tool, capable of engaging with cultural contexts and narratives in a way that shapes our collective identity.

Growing up in a household where craftsmanship and artistry were not merely occupations but a way of life, Darbeau was surrounded by the rhythms of creation from an early age. This environment, rich in tradition and creativity, laid the foundational stones of what would become a remarkable journey in design. As a student deeply interested in how cultural narratives can be woven into design, Darbeau's transition from graphic design to the more tangible realms of product design, sculpture, and installation art provided me with a blueprint for understanding the multidimensional nature of design. Through his work, Darbeau articulates a dialogue with materials, forms, and cultural stories, creating objects and spaces that transcend their functional roles to become narratives of Trinidad and Tobago's rich cultural heritage.

Notable projects that punctuated Darbeau's career have not only captured the imagination of local audiences but have also drawn international attention, solidifying his reputation as an innovator and cultural storyteller. His work, characterized by a deep respect for craftsmanship intertwined with modern design principles, acts as a bridge connecting the rich traditions of Trinidad and Tobago with the broader narratives of contemporary design. For me, as a design student, these projects served as powerful examples of how design can be leveraged to tell compelling stories, engage with community heritage, and foster a deeper appreciation for the cultural context within which we create.

Studying Marlon Darbeau’s work, I came to understand that design is not merely about the creation of objects or visuals but about engaging in a deeper conversation with the world around us. Darbeau’s journey from a graphic designer to a multidisciplinary creative force exemplifies the transformative potential of design when it is applied with intentionality, curiosity, and a deep-rooted connection to cultural heritage. His approach to design—viewing it as a medium for storytelling and cultural exploration—has profoundly influenced my perspective on design and its possibilities.



Figure 1.1

Image of Peera by Marlon Darbeau

Source; designweek.co.uk

"Peera"

The first time I encountered Marlon Darbeau's "Peera," it was more than an encounter with a piece of furniture; it was an introduction to a philosophy. "Peera," with its sleek, modern design seamlessly integrating functionality with cultural narrative, became a source of inspiration for me. Its design, which reimagines the traditional wooden bench found in many Trinidadian homes, spoke to me of the possibility of bridging the past with the present through design. The process of its creation, combining digital fabrication with handcrafting techniques, illustrated the harmony that can exist between innovation and tradition. As a student, this pushed me to think about how technologies can be leveraged to celebrate cultural heritage rather than erode it.

The bench, for Darbeau, was not just a functional object but a medium to explore the concepts of support and community intrinsic to Trinidadian culture. This reinterpretation made me appreciate the depths to which objects in our everyday lives are imbued with cultural significance and history, and how design can bring these aspects to the forefront, encouraging a dialogue between the user and their cultural identity.

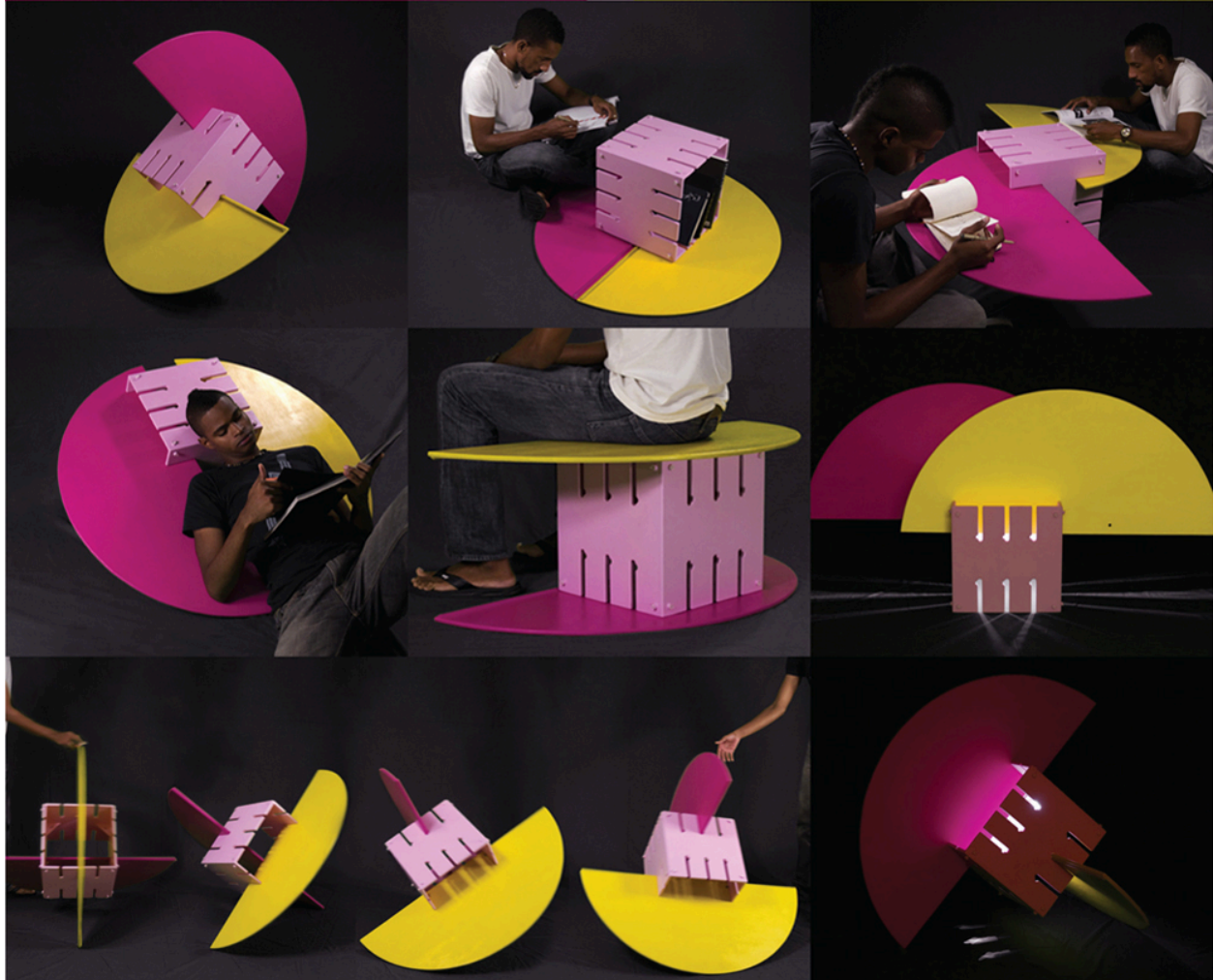


Figure 1.2

Image of Verb by Marlon Darbeau

Source; designweek.co.uk

Delving into "Verb"

"Verb," a project by Darbeau that captures the essence of action through three-dimensional forms, further expanded my understanding of the communicative potential of design. Each piece within this series is more than a mere object; it's an invitation to interact, reflect, and engage with

the essence of the action it represents. This project revealed to me the dynamism of language and the power of design to encapsulate and express actions in a tangible form.

Darbeau's exploration of the communicative possibilities within design demonstrated through "Verb," challenged me to think beyond the visual aesthetics of an object to its conceptual underpinnings. It prompted me to consider how my designs could not only communicate but also engage users in a deeper, more meaningful way. The project stands as a testament to the idea that design can transcend its functional limitations to become a conduit for engaging with the world more mindfully and intentionally.

Reflecting on the Impact

Studying these projects by Marlon Darbeau has profoundly influenced my approach to design. "Peera" and "Verb" serve as benchmarks of how design can be deeply rooted in cultural narratives while pushing the boundaries of innovation and creativity. These works have taught me that every line drawn, every material chosen, and every form created carries with it the potential to tell a story, evoke a memory, or inspire a new way of seeing.

Darbeau's commitment to integrating Trinidadian cultural heritage into his designs while embracing modern techniques and technologies has inspired me to approach my work with a similar reverence for the cultural stories that shape us. As I continue my journey in design, the lessons learned from Darbeau's work remain central to my philosophy: that design is not just

about creating objects but about crafting narratives, building connections, and celebrating the richness of our cultural landscapes.

Darbeau's work, which transcends the conventional realms of functionality to emerge as profound cultural statements, urges us, the upcoming generation of designers, to reevaluate our understanding of design's role in society. His projects—each a meticulously crafted artefact that narrates the rich tapestry of our island's heritage—serve as a compelling manifesto for the potential of design to act as a guardian of cultural memory and an advocate for its evolution and appreciation.

This journey through Darbeau's portfolio has profoundly influenced how I perceive the relationship between design and culture. It has instilled in me a deep-seated appreciation for the subtle intricacies of cultural representation within design and a recognition of the responsibility that comes with creating a space that bridges generations and geographies. The lessons gleaned from Darbeau's approach—his reverence for material, commitment to craftsmanship, and dedication to embedding cultural narratives within his work—have become foundational pillars in my design ethos. They have encouraged me to pursue a practice that is not only innovative and forward-thinking but also deeply rooted in the cultural and historical context of my surroundings.

As I look to the future of my design journey, I am emboldened by the example set by Marlon Darbeau. His work exemplifies the profound impact design can have on cultural preservation and narrative construction. Darbeau's projects remind us that design is a dialogue—a conversation

that spans time, connecting us to our ancestors, engaging with our contemporaries, and leaving a legacy for those who follow. It is this conversation that I aspire to contribute to, drawing upon the rich well of culture and history that defines us, to create designs that not only resonate in the present but will inspire and inform future generations.

CHAPTER FOUR: Ayrīd Chandler: Branding the Cultural Identity

In the vibrant tapestry of Trinidad and Tobago's design landscape, Ayrīd Chandler stands out as a beacon of innovation and cultural stewardship. Through her work at Ayrīd by Design, Chandler has played a pivotal role in shaping the local design scene, demonstrating how branding can serve as a powerful tool for cultural expression and preservation. This chapter delves into her contributions to branding and design, examining her influence on the cultural sectors and her dedication to promoting Trinidadian identity through her projects.

Ayrīd Chandler's design philosophy merges modern branding techniques with a deep respect for cultural heritage, creating a distinctive style that resonates within and beyond Trinidad and Tobago. Her approach is characterized by a commitment to capturing the essence of local culture while meeting the challenges of global market dynamics. This balance is crucial in her work, where she uses design as a platform to tell stories, celebrate identity, and foster community ties.

Chandler's work is notable for its seamless integration of cultural elements into contemporary design. Whether it's through the use of indigenous patterns in branding materials or the incorporation of local narratives into visual identities, her designs reflect a deep-rooted appreciation for Trinidad and Tobago's diverse heritage. This approach not only strengthens local identity but also enhances the global appeal of the brands she works with, providing them with a unique position in a competitive market.

Promoting Cultural Heritage through Design



Figure 2.1

Image of Pelau flyer by Ayrid Chandler

Source; ayridbydesign.com

Pelau

Ayrid Chandler's partnership with Chantel "Bugs" Garcia of Bugs Chanty Innovations highlights a significant aspect of her work ethos—collaboration. The conference name, "Pelau," is not just a title but a strategic choice that embeds deep cultural significance into the event's branding. Pelau, a traditional Trinidadian dish known for its rich mix of ingredients, serves as a metaphor for the conference's theme "Many Ingredients, One Pot: Journey to Diversification." Chandler's ability to weave cultural elements into her designs ensures that the branding does more than decorate the event—it communicates the essence of the gathering. The choice of Pelau as a central theme suggests a celebration of diversity and unity, reflecting Chandler's noted commitment to culturally resonant design. Her approach involved creating visual elements that evoke the richness and variety of the dish while maintaining visual coherence, a challenge she adeptly navigates by balancing complexity and simplicity.



Figure 2.2

Image of Chilli Bibbi logo by Ayrid Chandler

Source; ayridbydesign.com



Figure 2.3

Image of Chilli Bibbi brand material by Ayrid Chandler

Source; ayridbydesign.com

Chilli Bibi

Chilli Bibi was pop-up restaurant celebrating all things local. The name "Chilli Bibi" itself is evocative of local Trinidadian culture, reminiscent of a childhood treat known for its simplicity and delight. Chandler's decision to draw inspiration from her memories of buying chilibibbi in a cone made of gazette paper is a testament to her ability to translate personal experiences into professional outputs. This approach not only infuses the brand with authenticity but also ensures it resonates with the local audience, who may share similar memories. By avoiding a literal interpretation of the name, Chandler instead captures the essence of the experience, which is a sophisticated way to approach branding that appeals to both nostalgia and modernity.

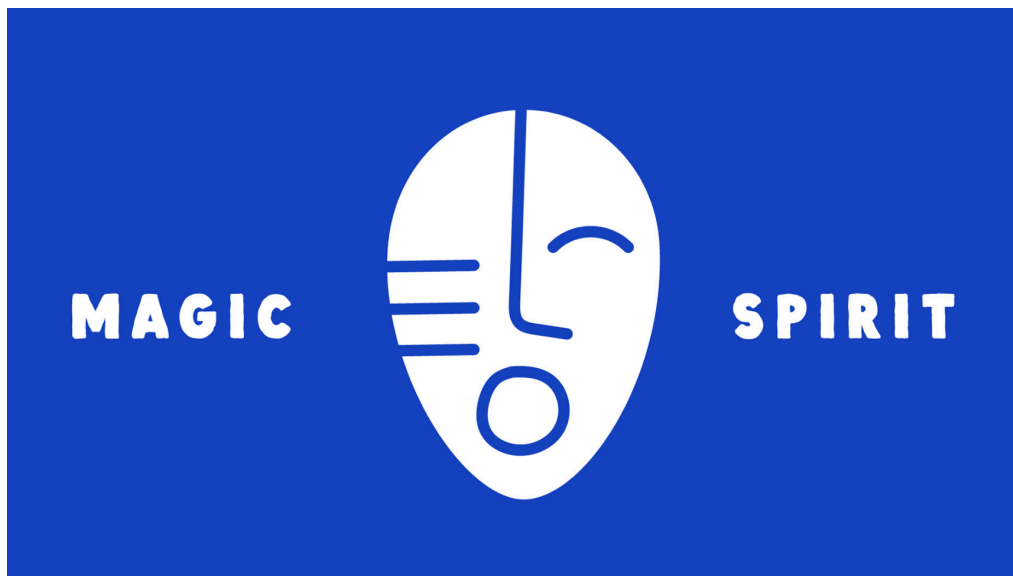


Figure 2.4

Image of Mas Logo by Ayrid Chandler

Source; ayridbydesign.com



Figure 2.5

Image of Mas Logo by Ayrid Chandler

Source; ayridbydesign.com

Mas Project

The event, "MAS," aimed to capture the essence of Carnival while being adaptable for different future uses, demanding a logo that was not only immediately impactful but also enduringly relevant. The chosen logo's simplicity belies its deep symbolic resonance with Trinidad and Tobago's cultural and historical elements. The blue in the logo not only references the blue soap used post-J'ouvert, a key event of Carnival, but also connects to the blue devils of the traditional Carnival characters, adding layers of cultural symbolism associated with cleansing and protection (maljo). Mask Design: The three stripes on the mask are emblematic of several trinities relevant to the local culture and spirituality: the musical pillars of Carnival (Kaiso, Pan, Mas), the Holy Trinity in a religious context, and the national symbol of the Trinity Hills.

Additionally, the number three's significance in Yoruba traditions—highlighting the African roots and historical connections of the Carnival—further enriches the logo's cultural depth.



Figure 2.6
Image of CFM+Db brand material by Ayrid Chandler
Source; ayridbydesign.com

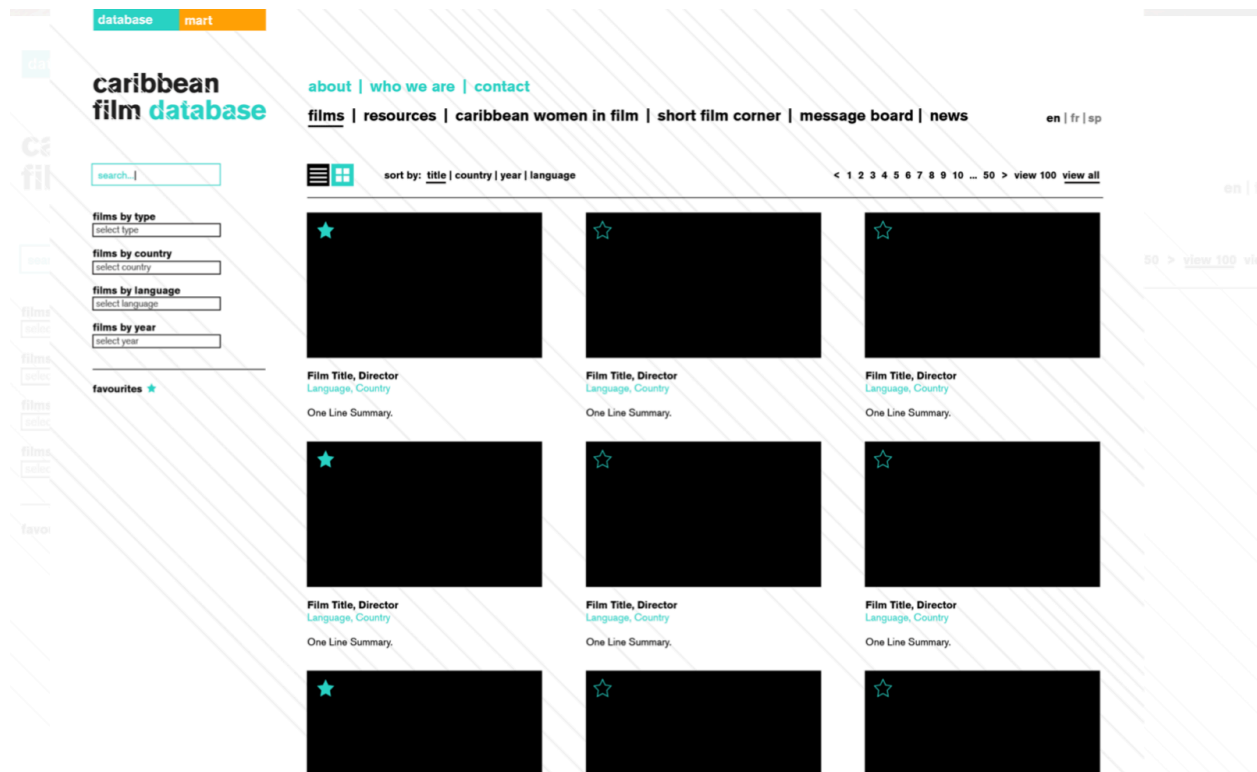


Figure 2.7

Image of CFM+Db database by Ayrid Chandler

Source; ayridbydesign.com

CFM+Db project

Ayrid Chandler's work on the Caribbean Film Mart and Database (CFM+Db) project exemplifies her commitment to using design to promote cultural visibility and professional networking within the Caribbean cinema community. Through strategic branding and user-friendly design, Chandler has created a platform that not only showcases Caribbean filmmakers but also enhances their access to global audiences and industry stakeholders. This initiative not only supports the region's creative talents by providing a central database for their work but also plays a crucial role in broadening the understanding and appreciation of Caribbean cultural narratives,

thereby fostering opportunities for investment and collaboration in Caribbean cinema. Her nuanced approach in balancing aesthetic appeal with cultural significance showcases her expertise in branding, contributing significantly to the sustainability and global outreach of the Caribbean film industry.

Apart from her direct design work, Chandler's role as a part-time lecturer at the University of West Indies St. Augustine extends her impact on cultural preservation through education. By educating the next generation of designers, she embeds a deep appreciation and understanding of how design intertwines with cultural heritage. Her teachings likely encourage students to explore and incorporate local cultural elements in their work, ensuring the longevity and evolution of Trinidad and Tobago's cultural identity through fresh, innovative perspectives. Her mentorship of aspiring designers and her active participation in the local design community have made significant contributions to the cultural landscape of Trinidad and Tobago. By mentoring young talent, Chandler ensures that the future of Trinidadian design is vibrant and well-rooted in its cultural context.

The impact of Ayrid Chandler's work on Trinidad and Tobago's cultural preservation and identity is profound. Through her innovative design and branding strategies, she has successfully promoted cultural heritage in ways that resonate with both local and international audiences. Chandler's projects illustrate how effectively targeted branding strategies can enhance cultural visibility and appreciation, thus contributing to the preservation of intangible cultural heritage. Her work with the CFM+Db project is particularly illustrative of how design can play a crucial

role in cultural advocacy. Her influence extends beyond her projects into the broader realm of cultural policy and practice, where her insights and methodologies help shape discussions on sustainable cultural development and the role of design in public life.

Ayrid Chandler's role in branding and design in Trinidad and Tobago highlights the profound capability of design to act as a mediator of cultural identity and preservation. Her work not only enhances the aesthetic and commercial value of the projects she engages with but also plays a crucial role in narrating and preserving the cultural stories of Trinidad and Tobago. As this thesis continues to explore the intersections of branding, design, and cultural heritage, Chandler's contributions stand as a testament to the power of thoughtful design in cultural expression and preservation.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, we have discussed the profound relationship between branding, design, and cultural heritage within the vibrant context of Trinidad and Tobago. Through a comprehensive examination of historical influences, cultural evolution, and the impactful work of contemporary designers, this study has highlighted the integral role that design plays in narrating, preserving, and celebrating the nation's rich cultural identity.

The journey began with an in-depth analysis of Trinidad and Tobago's colonial past and its progression to a culturally diverse society. This historical context set the stage for understanding how the fusion of African, Indian, European, and indigenous influences has crafted a unique cultural identity that is vividly expressed through the country's design and branding practices. We observed how local festivals like Carnival and Diwali, along with a myriad of other cultural manifestations, serve not only as inspiration for creative expression but also as platforms for innovative design that communicates the essence of Trinidad and Tobago to the world.

Central to our discussion were the contributions of Marlon Darbeau and Ayrid Chandler, whose works epitomize the synthesis of cultural depth and contemporary design practice. Darbeau's approach to design as a narrative medium and Chandler's strategic use of branding to promote cultural narratives effectively illustrate the dynamic ways in which Trinidadian designers utilize their craft to foster a dialogue between the island's historical legacies and its current cultural dynamics. Their projects underscore the potential of design to function as a tool for cultural

dialogue and identity formation, bridging the past with the present while fostering a continuum of cultural expression that resonates both locally and globally.

Furthermore, this thesis has not only highlighted individual accomplishments but also pointed to the broader implications of design in the arenas of cultural preservation and innovation. Through the lens of cultural studies and design intersectionality, we analyzed how Trinidad and Tobago's designers navigate the complexities of a globalized market while maintaining a firm grasp on authenticity and cultural integrity. The strategic integration of culturally resonant elements into design and branding not only differentiates Trinidadian products but also elevates their appeal on a global stage, demonstrating the universal power and relevance of culturally infused design.

In conclusion, the exploration within these chapters affirms the thesis that design in Trinidad and Tobago is a robust form of cultural engagement that extends beyond aesthetic appeal. It is a critical medium for cultural preservation, a catalyst for educational growth, and a significant contributor to the economic sector through its influence on tourism and international recognition. Designers like Darbeau and Chandler are not just creators; they are cultural ambassadors who play a pivotal role in shaping the narrative of Trinidad and Tobago's identity. This thesis not only contributes to academic discourse but also serves as a call to action for current and future designers to continue exploring, preserving, and narrating the rich cultural heritage of Trinidad and Tobago through the powerful medium of design.

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APPENDIX A



Image of Dishout by Marlon Darbeau

Source; designweek.co.uk

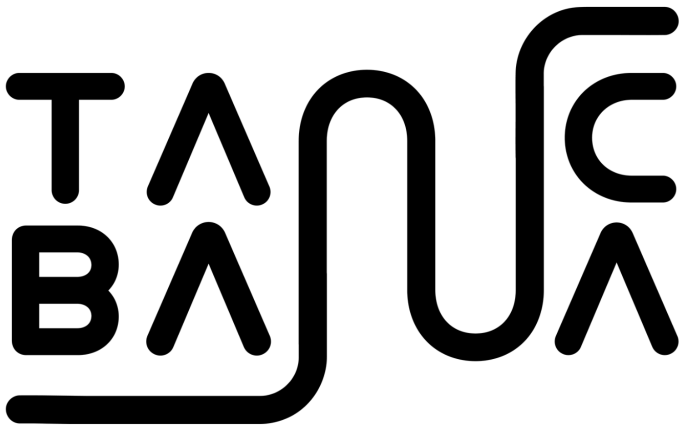


Image of Tabanca App Logo by Ayrid Chandler

Source; ayridbydesign.com

APPENDIX B



Image of album cover design for soca artiste yago by Ayrid Chandler

Source; ayridbydesign.com



Image of album cover design for soca band Freetown Collective by Ayrid Chandler

Source; ayridbydesign.com

APPENDIX C



Image of album cover design for soca band Freetown Collective by Ayrid Chandler

Source; ayridbydesign.com



Image of logo design for Red Cross Children's Carnival 2019 by Ayrid Chandler

Source; ayridbydesign.com

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