

**MAIDo**



**Hochschule Anhalt**  
Anhalt University of Applied Sciences

/ **MAIDo**

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Printed by Grafische Werkstatt der Hochschule Anhalt



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# Introduction

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The aim of this thesis project is to understand how people interact with daily objects. Focusing in the role of culture and how can it influence our thoughts towards an specific object.

This aim led me to understand the way in which we relate ourselves to objects in general. As result of this analysis. Three main topics came as relevant to solve this inquiry. Being culture the main topic under the three of them. Feelings and personal attachments the second one and finally functionality as the third one. Each one of this aspects can be analyze individually, but they can not be separated, they are correlated and affected by each other.

The first matter of research in this document is culture, and how does it work as a general term. Later the relationship between culture and representation will be further analyze in order to establish the main rules on how culture can be expressed through objects. Reflecting in the members of an

specific community. With those common rules material culture will help us to understand how that depiction of culture can be unfolded. Finally, the introduction of function and form will finally end the puzzle on how to fully understand objects as representations of culture.

To have a better understanding on how people react in fact to those foreign objects, three experiments were conducted. Each of them were oriented towards different purposes. The first one was orientated to be a groupal experience. That intended to build a common picture, of the object that was presented in the exercise. The second one was done individually to each one of the participants. This time the goal was to get hints specifically about the interviewee's cultures. Finally the third one was also conducted individually and intended to be more personal. The realization of these experiments lead to the conceptualization of the design proposal. The proposal respond to the insights and to the goals that were established in the first part of this document. Aiming to work (as the same that culture does) as a representation of the cultures presented in the MAID (Master of Arts in Integrated Design) from the Hochschule Anhalt (Anhalt university of applied sciences).





# /Context

Everyday we are in contact with objects, they are a touchpoint to every part of our lives. From the comfortable pillows that we use to sleep on, the tools we use to cook to the mouse that controls our computer. All of these objects have an impact in our everyday life, and in those little interactions we can find certain hints that tell us about the people that use them, their beliefs, their thoughts and the attitudes towards their community and society.

When you are part of a culture, those messages and attitudes are somehow clear to you since they have been presented to you since you were a child. Each person shares specific codes that allow communication within her or his culture. e. g For a colombian a flat hand touching a neck means “you are doomed”. But what happen with those codes when you insert them in other cultures? Clearly they are susceptible to change. This project explores the field of “unknown” meanings, and inquires into how and why are this codes manifested in particular objects.

## / Motivation

Being an international student in Germany has overwhelmed me with pictures of cultures that I have never seen before. In all the 24 years that I lived in Colombia only in limited occasions had I the opportunity to encounter with people of other parts of the world. Since joining MAID, the knowledge I have acquired thanks to those cultural exchanges has been rewarding. As a result of this, I have gained more knowledge in the past year, than in several years before.

As an industrial designer I have been always interested in how people interact with objects. And as long as I have interacted with my classmates I have realized, that we all have different visions and ways to interact with those objects. These thoughts have guided me to choose this as the topic for my thesis. Aiming to understand a little bit more how the people whom I interact with picture and interpret the world that surrounds them.

## /Metodology

At the beginning of this project, my goal was to focus on the effect that material culture has on people. Therefore I immerse in in extensive reading and research that would help me understood the big topic that is culture and material culture. I understood that each culture has its own coded languages, each one of them with their own meanings. Out of those results I comprehended that I need to take into account the many cultures that surrounds me. Due to this I develop three experiments based on three different interviews that later on would enlighten me on the goals of my project. When the research part was finished. I started to bring ideas and generate brainstorm in order to solve the goals that were previously established. Ideation and conceptualization led me to a coherent brief. Finally I start prototyping and putting the final touch to my final design proposal proposal.



# /Research

## Research goals

In order to have a logical and organized research, certain goals were developed in order to guide my inquiry. The research goals were not always as linear as it is presented below. It was also the result of my first approach to the subject so it was constantly modified to obtain better results of my research. Building a strong and accurate approach to the subject.

What is culture and how is it related to what we own ?

How is culture represented ?

How can we get insights about a culture through objects ?

How is culture related to design ?



# /What is culture?

## The definition of culture

The Cambridge dictionary defines culture as “the way of life, especially the general customs and beliefs, of a particular group of people at a particular time” (Dictionary, 2017). The Oxford dictionary provides a similar definition “The arts and other manifestations of human intellectual achievement regarded collectively.” (Oxford dictionaries | English, 2017) As can be inferred from this short definition of culture. Culture can be understood as all the expressions that represent a certain group of individuals in a specific period of time. Those expressions, can be manifested into intellectual or physical outcomes (that are also transmitted through generations) that appeal to each member of the collective. The general assumption is that each member of that collective share those meanings with everyone in the same culture. They understand the world almost in the same way, because they have been imprinted with a certain number of cultural codes since they were kids. Rapaille (The cultural code: An ingenious way to understand why people around the world live and buy as they do, 2006, cited in “Berger, 2009, 82”) brings insight on how culture is transmitted to younger generations with his theory of cultural codes.

For Rapaille, we all as part of a culture have been imprinted with cultural codes. Those cultural codes are learnt since we are kids and eventually these codes will configure how we behave towards the community we are in. That behaviour will also be manifested in the attitudes that will be taken towards food, artifacts and generally every single thing you purchase or own. When the relationship between the cultural codes and the imprints is clearly understood. It will give valuable insights when it comes to analyse a culture. More importantly will give clues on why people behave and believe in things the way they do.

When you are part of a culture you are basically a symbol or a stereotype of that specific culture. That means that we are consciously (or) not communicating to others what our culture is through diverse messages and we use specific languages to spread those messages.

# / Language and representation

For Robert Hall culture is about shared meanings. Those meanings are manifested through our use of things, what we say, think and feel about them. This leads to a shared vision of the world by people of the same community. Somehow they share the same language and is by this specific language that we can somehow make sense of things. A proper communication of meanings comes with a clear understanding of the language that the other person is trying to “speak” Hall (2008).

He clarifies that language doesn't have to be understood as its linguistic form. It is not a matter of speaking Spanish, Portuguese or English. It is a matter of finding a way in which both parts in the communication process can understand themselves clearly. Through language we find the method to represent what we think and feel about certain topic. Even if it is through the analysis of music (through notes and sounds) or images (through images in a frame).

**“These elements- sounds, words, notes, gestures, expressions, clothes - are part of our natural and material world; but their importance for language is not what they are but what they do, their function. They construct meaning and transmit it. They signify. They don't have any clear meaning themselves. Rather, they are the vehicles or media which carry meaning because they operate as symbols, which stands for or represent (i.e symbolize) the meanings we wish to communicate.”**  
(Hall, 2008)

To put into perspective. Objects work also as symbols of representation of ourselves and as it was displayed in this section, our cultures. Objects and artifacts is one of the most authentic mediums in which beliefs and ideas are portrayed. The theory in material culture helps to understand how are

those messages put into objects, and how to analyze them in order to get valuable information, about the cultures that produced and develop them.





“Material culture is the study through artifacts of the beliefs, values, ideas, attitudes and assumptions of a particular community or society at a given time” (Prown, 1982)

## / Material culture

As we can see in this definition from Jules David Prown Material culture uses the different artifacts present in a culture to understand them and create judgements about how that cultures use to think and behave. Basically get a hint of their vision of life. Material culture established its field of work in the realm of objects and artifacts. Both understand as entities develop by humans from the scratch till the last stage of their development ( Objects: Reluctant Witnesses to the Past, 2006, cited in “ Berger, 2009, 16). Or in a more simpler meaning “Relatively simple objects showing human workmanship” (Berger, 2009). The main assumption in material culture is that artifacts modified or create within a certain culture will manifest the way of thinking of that society.

## Relevance of Material Culture

When you think of material culture, it is not a subject that comes easily to the mind. It is mainly because material culture is used by huge disciplines such as art history, sociology or anthropology, then the work of material culture is sometimes invisible. As Prown (1982) explains “it is a means rather than an end, a discipline rather than a field” But as it has been expressed before, material culture can tell things that maybe haven’t been expressed in written language, been written language the principal record of the past. On the other hand this written records had to be carried by people who were literate. In the past and even this days it is hard that all the population of the globe have access to write and read (Meaningfull Things and appropriate Myths: The Artifact’s place in the american studies,1977, cited in “Prown,1982”) . This circumstance becomes an opportunity to material culture, since it can study and generate assumptions around the thinking of the people who were not part of the elite. In fact the roots of material culture goes to the study of vernacular objects. Vernacular objects understood as folk art that were created by common people and expresses the cultural changes of a given time (Xroads. Virginia.

edu, 2017). This “stamps” of civilization can be manifested in value(Prown,1982 ), this value can be given through the materials that were used to create the object (materials such as gold can give significant clues about the importance of the object) and also by the value that the maker and also the “reader” of the artifact is in it. Value can also being expressed by aesthetic value, spiritual and finally attitudes towards other people. The presence of artifacts in our daily lives give them the aspect to express each characteristic and thoughts that we have towards the environment they are involved in. They keep indeed a personal and collective record of meanings. Eventually objects can be reliable spectators of history apart from the well known studies about fine art and architecture.

This intrinsic meanings are deeply rooted in the form of the object. The style that is permeated through that form is the main key to bring together the pieces that conform an specific cultural vision. And that will allow to understand better the changes and variations of a certain community.

# /Funtion

## The importance of function

When we think about the spectrum of the elements of study of the material culture it becomes clear that it is a huge amount of elements that can be covered by that definition. Berger explains that although complex artifacts (such as machines, airplanes, cars) can be analyzed as part of the material culture. They are more difficult to analyze, since they are made by thousands of smaller artifacts. Then how is it possible to classify the whole universe of artifacts that have been and that are produced every day?. Prown (1982) drafted a method to classify them: By function. As follows:

### Art

-  
*(paintings, drawings, prints, sculpture, photography)*

### Diversions

-  
*(books, toys, games, meals, theatrical performances)*

### Adornment

-  
*(jewelry clothing, hairstyles, cosmetics, tattooing, other alternations of the body)*

### Modifications of the landscape

-  
*(architecture, town planning, agriculture, mining)*

### Applied arts

-  
*(furniture, furnishing, receptacles)*

### Devices

-  
*(machines, vehicles, scientific instruments, musical instruments, implements)*

This analysis developed by Prown intends to classify the artifacts by their Functionality. From the more aesthetic, to the more functional. For the purposes of this thesis I will focus on the category of applied arts. The domain of applied arts bring an advantage over all the other classifications that were presented before, and it is its closeness to the people in terms of scale and function. They are not as big as a building or as exclusive as a piece of art. They are in constant contact with their users, therefore it is easier in these objects to identify their function.

But why is the function so important in the analysis of an object? Basically function is the first door to understand an object, in order to find those hidden messages that have been trying to understand along this paper. From a material culture view. The relationship between function and form will reveal the style of the particular artifact that is being studied. In style, are represented many of the cultural values of a society. As Prown (1982) references "...the fundamental values of a society are often unexpressed because they are taken for granted. As a result they are manifest in style rather than in content".

“...while style refers to a distinctive manner or mode of which, whether consciously intended or not, bears a relationship with other objects marked in their form by similar qualities..” (Prown, 1980)

## Form, function and style

One statement that has been present throughout this book. Is the capability of artifacts to share knowledge and cultural codes. Tell us also in a non verbal language, facts about our history that somehow we just take for granted. We can assume that every time a person used his criteria in order to modify an artifact or build a building it was under certain beliefs of that specific period of time, those alterations serve as the medium to communicate or express an unconscious statement (Prown, 1980). As it was mentioned before, all those statements that unconsciously configure the object, will be drawn in the shape of style. But style is not the only main factor present in the configuration of artifacts. Form and function determine how much of a style can be include in one object.

Function and form, each of them are correlated, they are present in all of the artifacts and depending on the object this two factors mutate. When an artifact has been originated in a certain way, a certain imprint has been given

to that object. That imprint is relevant for the specific time in which the object was conceptualized and eventually made. The imprint is materialized in the form of an specific style. That imprint is present in every artifact, but when Function plays a major role in the object, style can be sometimes eclipsed. That is due the fact that in highly specialized artifacts such as tools or machines the form is driven by function, and so style have short space or none to influence to the object (Prown, 1980). In such specific cases *complexity* in highly specialized objects cloud the understanding of the function regarding an artifact (e.g a measurement tool used in topography) and they can not be fully “understood” unless that specific language is completely understood by the user. Thus for a complete analysis of an artifact it is important (in most of the cases) that the involvement between function and form inside the objects is balanced. When form and function goes hand in hand it is a common rule that the function can be smoothly deducted. Dailyobjects are a good example of that fact because their

language and their representation is widely spread throughout a society or culture.

To summarize, style hangs from the function, it is the one that determines the influence of style in a certain piece of art or architecture. Prown (1980) gives an example of this in an analysis of chairs. He argues that the functional level in chairs is not that complex “to hold the human body in a sitting position” the archetype of what a chair should have it is pretty clear throughout the years. But the thing about chairs is that its form varies according to the time and place it has been made. These modifications are not made in the essential parts of the chair they are all constituted from the same parts (a seat, a structure that holds the seat and a back support) rather these modifications are all made in style. Style in the case of chairs is an independent factor, that is detached from form. A Charles Ray Eames chair has a specific well-known style and it was pretty much scattered through all the XX century, it has its own

characteristics that differs for example from a chair made by the Bauhaus even though that they were somehow contemporary. These judgements can be easily made due to the ease that implies to analyse a piece of art or architecture, because the assessments can be made instantaneously to the moment you see it.

As we have seen the concept of function is a great tool to initiate an analysis about a certain artifact based on the interactions between form and function. That can lead to an easier understanding of the artifact as a whole and can guide the thoughts about what an object attempts to display. The theory of sociology also uses the function of objects. Aiming to understand their influence in one's community

# / Sociology

The studies in sociology are based on the interactions between human beings and its institutions. Institutions understood as patterns (Sociology: A biographical approach, 1972, cited in “Berger, 2009, 50) that control the behaviour of the individuals in a society, between each other and the community they are involve in. This institutions can be visualized in spheres of society such family, class, gender or religion. As a result, this dichotomy is portrayed in the develop of two different beings as it was conceptualized by Emile Durkheim (1915) we develop two individualities. One is purely personal which is related to its development based of what it has inherited from its closest institutions and one social being that is reflected by its actions within the society. “In so far as he belongs to society, the individual transcends himself, both when he thinks and when he acts.”(The elementary forms of religious life,1915, Cited in “Berger, 2009,52”) . As a result of this, we as active members of an specific society will be always part of that cycle. Being objects also part of the cycle it is convenient to include them in the sociological studies. As Berger assert “... We can say the sam thing about artifacts : They are in society and society is reflected in them.”(Berger,2009)





# /Functionalism

Aiming to study artifacts from a sociological perspective. Functionalism gives hints on how to sociologically analyze objects. Functionalists understand the institutions of society as a system. In which all of its elements are correlated. Studies in functionalism intent to classify each of the institutions according to its relevance towards the society. That relevance can be measured by the role that those institutions play in the balance and conservation of the society. If its role is high then it is “functional”, when an institution plays a negative role in the conservation of the society it is contemplated as “dysfunctional”. Finally, a “non-functional” institution is the one who doesn’t have a clear role in the society. functionalists also distinguish between two kinds of functions (Berger ,2009). Manifest functions and Latent functions. Manifest functions are the ones who are clearly visible to the artifact, on the other hand. Latent functions are the ones that are not intended to the object.

We can put these two concepts in a quick example. Think of a set of headphones. The manifest function of the headphones is to amplify the sound that comes from an specific device (mp3, cellphone, ipod). The latent function can vary from generate specific feelings with the music to remember

the person that gifted you the device. Additional to this two concepts, functionalist analyses each sub-system of the society under 6 aspects that can be applicable to objects (Berger,2009).

**Functional:** Helps maintain the entity

**Dysfunctional:** Helps destabilize the entity

**Non-functional:** Plays no role in the entity

**Functional alternative:** Substitutes for original function

**Manifest function:** Obvious, stated reason for using something

**Latent Function:** Unconscious factors involved in using something

This aspects can be apply to our previous example :

**Functional :** Play music

**Dysfunctional :** Distracts people

**Non-functional:** n/a

**Functional alternative:** Radio

**Manifest function:** Amplify music

**Latent function:** Generate feelings

As it can be seen, functionalism gives valid tools to understand better the role of a certain object and its relation with the user. More importantly it gives an easy method on how to generate easy and specialized judgements about an artifact.

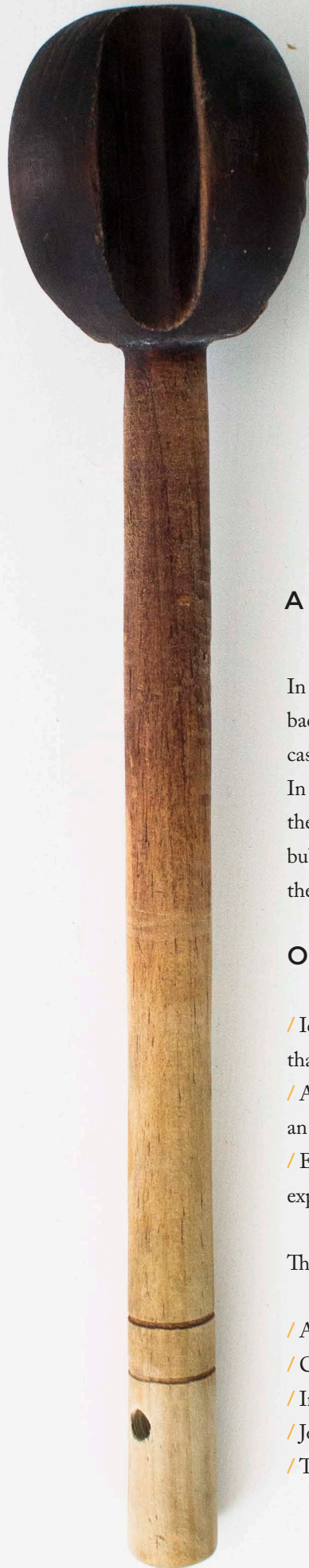
With that being said for the aim of this thesis, they will be appropriate when it comes to have accessibility and to draw conclusions from them.

Emotions and feelings.  
Everything that is  
displayed or shown in  
an object was **driven**  
**by intention** and that  
intention is eventually  
generated for the  
influence of our feelings  
and thoughts.

## /Literature Conclusions

The first chapter of this book aimed to understand what is culture and how does it reflect on the daily objects that we own or buy. Throughout the text 3 particular aspects stand out of the others. Culture as being the main topic of research, followed by function as the most helpful aspect displayed in artifacts that will let you us to understand how artifacts represent meanings. And finally one concept that has been omnipresent in the text, but not mentioned perse. Emotions and feelings. Everything that is displayed or shown in an object was driven by intention and that intention is eventually generated for the influence of our feelings and thoughts.

The second part of this work will be based on my personal research and my own journey attempting to understand all the cultures that are part of the MAID program, identifying what makes them unique and special. To achieve that goal I develop three different experiments. In each of them, participants would be confronted to artifacts that are part of other cultures. It is through their opinions and thought to those objects, that I pursuit to find and understand those “cultural codes” that have been explain along this document.



## /Experiment 1

### A groupal attempt

In the first experiment five people from five different cultural backgrounds, were exposed to an object foreign to them. In this case the object presented was a colombian chocolate grinder. In colombia we used to make hot chocolate. The purpose of the grinder is (besides helping melt the chocolate) to create bubbles on top of the chocolate, enhancing the experience of the consumer.

### Objective

- / Identify how people behave and tries to understand objects that are not part of their culture.
- / Analyze if people can generate cultural appropriation towards an object in a fast way.
- / Examine the different mutation that can come out from the experiment.

The cultures that were part of the experiments were :

- / Argentina
- / Costa Rica
- / Indonesia
- / Jordan
- / Turkey

The experiment was divided into 3 main parts :

In the first part of the experiment the object was presented without any information about it. It was asked to the participants to associate that object (By form) to something similar into their cultures. Also two questions were formulated: What was the object made for ? and In which kind of ritual do you think it is involved?.

In the second part of the experiment, the main function and the ritual was revealed to the assistants. As a next step participants were asked to associate the object to something similar in their cultures. This time not by appearance but by meaning.

As third task. Participants were asked to generate changes in the object either by form or meaning in order for it (the grinder) to fit or be part of each participant's culture.

## Conclusions

### / First Part of the experiment

Most of the participants find it difficult to relate the grinder to something they have in their cultures. Most of them associated it with something that fit the archetype of the object. In this case the object that fit the archetype was a drumstick. Some of them specific from their own regions, as the participant from argentina associated with a "Palillo bombo legüero".

None of them had an idea of what the object was, except from one of the Participant from indonesia (That heard of it in a previous conversation). Two of the participants that came from the same region (costa rica and argentina) couldn't guess what the object was about

### / Second part of the experiment

After revealing the function and the ritual of the object. Most of the people associated the object with the category of "kitchen tool" therefore the participants of Jordan and Costa Rica associated the object with something related to bakery.

The participant from Argentina was the most accurate with the relation. He associate the object by function. With a mortar drumstick. Used to grind the herbs to make the traditional argentinian beverage "mate"

Both the turkish and indonesian assistants associated the object by context (The grinder needs a pot to make the chocolate) so they bring to the table, a special turkish coffee pot. and a oven that is used in indonesia to cook special meals

### / Last part of the experiment

In the third part of the experiment most of the participants simply went back to the first part of the experiment and suggest that the object should change to the one they described in the first part of the experiment.

The participants, from Jordan, Costa Rica and Indonesia found new functions to the grinder. In jordan the grinder could be used to produce mleehie a special type of yogurt. In Costa rica it will be used as an artifact to stir lemonade finally in Indonesia it will be use to cut meat in a different way. As it can be inferred from the last conclusion. The best mutation to the grinder would be the "Jordan" version as its function and ritual are the closest to the original ones.





## /General Conclusion

In a general view all of the participant led their thoughts based on the form of the object. The archetype of the object plays a huge roll in the decision making for the participants due that all of their first choices had to do with something similar to the form of the object. Basically most of them change the head of the object and replace it for something they know. The second stage of the experiment was a little bit confusing, it took more time for them to understand it but the answers were more diverse than in the first part. The participant from Argentina stick to the form and suggested something similar in form.

Finally the third part of the experiment didn't go as well as planned. As it was mentioned the Argentinian mutation went back to the suggestion that was given at the first part of the project. Same happened to the turkish mutation. There was not really a significant change in the new artifacts that were intended to be created. Also in the whole making of the experiment, there was the feeling that some of the answers were somehow biased by the person that were next to each participant. in the sense that the answers were very similar. Specially in the first and third part of the experiment.



## /Experiment 2

### A personal view.

With the experience of the first experiment I change the methodology from group interviews to personal interviews. Aiming to get a more personal unbiased response to my questions.

The core of the experiment will remain the same - understand how people react when being confronted to a foreign object. In order to understand the cultural codes imprinted on them.- This second time participant would not be expose only to one object but four. Each of them with a different function and meaning (The artifacts will be described below)

### The procedure was the same as in the first experiment :

**First:** Each one of the four objects will be introduced to the Participants: Participants will have to describe if they have something that looks similar to the objects that are being presented. Also they will have to guess what is the function and the ritual the objects are involve in.

**Second:** The function and the meaning of the object will be revealed. When revealed participants will be asked to again associate the artifact, to something into their cultures. As before this time based by the function and meaning explained before.

**Third :** Finally, participants were asked to identify which one of the objects will be more easily applied to their culture and why, also what should change in the configuration of the object.

This time the spectrum of nationalities was bigger than in the first experiment:

- / Philippines
- / Italy
- / India
- / Costa Rica
- / Colombia
- / South Africa
- / Germany
- / Tunisia



## Analysis of the artifacts

### Colombian Aguardiente cup

*(shown physically)*

The colombian aguardiente cup is a small cup used to drink shots of the colombian “Aguardiente”. A liquor made out of anis. It is used in festivals, and normally people carried around their necks (it has a small rope).

### Analysis

The general findings about this object is that it was either a souvenir, due all the hints (Colombian flag and stamp with the name of the country) that the object was giving. Or it was designed to carry something. Again the form of the object suggested that it has an space where something was supposed to be carried. People also build an analogy with the form of the object. Most of the people agreed that it was the depiction of a barril, therefore it should contain some kind of liquor.

After explaining the function and meaning of the object. It was easy for the participants to relate the object to their culture.

In fact these was one of the objects that participants thought would fit better in their cultures, since most of the countries have their own “drinking culture”. Variations of the object

would depend on each country traditions. The italian version of the cup will be larger, and would be for wine. People in India are not used to drink shots, therefore the shape should be bigger but still slim.

Participants that indicate that this artifact would fit in their culture mostly suggest that the main requirement for being part of the culture (besides the previously mentioned) should be changing the colors of the colombian flag, and put colors representative to their cultures.



## Hungarian Lace Bobbins

*(shown in pictures)*

The Hungarian lace bobbins were used in the 19th century and they were used to design garments for women. Although the practice of bobbin lace is not particular of the Hungarian society, the way in which they personalized each one of those bobbins gave new meanings to those artifacts and reconstructed them into something particular to their culture.

## Analysis

As formal analysis one can say that most of the participants related the object to a lock. Basically because of the last part that is hanging from the large-main part. None of the participants was close to resolve what was it for. When the function of the object was revealed, the association to the cultures was also low. Mainly because even though most of the countries have specific traditions towards the making of fabrics. They didn't associate them to practice in their countries. Also very few people said it will fit into their culture. Mostly because of the presence of a more standardized artifact. The needles that can be easily find in every corner of our cities, therefore participant did not show real interest to potentially incorporate in their cultures.



## Japanese Princess Daruma Doll

*(shown in pictures)*

The princess daruma toy is the depiction of the Buddha of zen (the main figure of buddhism in japan) it is used to teach the story of the Buddha. Who was in a cave meditating. Eventually because of the lack of use in his legs and arms. He ended up losing them, in the story the Buddha managed to stay still against all adversities. In japan the little toy is used by parents to teach children the importance of perseverance and to never give up. Also because of its shape, it is designed in a way which it doesn't fall, it always comes back to the first position. This feature is also used to learn the capability of reinventing one's self against all misfortunes.

### Analysis

This was the most stereotyped object of the four object presented to the participants. Considering that almost all of them associated them with the matrioskas characteristic of the Russian culture. So the majority of the people linked the daruma doll to

a souvenir or a collectible artifact. When shown, the function of the object reveal that the feature of coming back is present in some of the cultures. In the German culture they are called "stehaufmädchen" and in the Costa Rican is called "Porfiados". By form and function there was not an obstacle to associate the object. The main difficulty became at the moment to connect the meaning of the object. Most of the participants relate it to religion, So in the Costa Rican version the daruma would have the face of Jesus the same would happen in the Philippine version.

The subject of country identification was present also in this artifact. People that join the daruma into their culture. Often suggest that the red traditional color of the daruma should be changed by the colors of their flag. Or that it should assume the form of a matrioska.



## Brazilian Carranca

*(shown in pictures)*

The carranca was a figure used in the Brazilian culture by fishermen. They will put the figure on the shores of rivers in order to protect them and keep the bad spirits away. Sometimes it was used also in the entrance of Brazilian houses with the same intention.

## Analysis

In terms of form the function of the carranca was easily deduced by the plurality of the participants. Similar images are used among the cultures to represent or to keep bad spirits away. In that order of ideas most of the people could easily relate the artifact to something in their culture. Also the translation to their cultures was relatively easy since most of the participants identified strong cultural figures that could represent “keeping bad spirits away”. For the first time in my journey through experiments the cultural identification through colors and flags was not mentioned, instead it was replaced by a more “pure” and unknown vision of their culture.



## /General Conclusion

Unfortunately sometimes in the experiment felt that something was missing to complete a full understanding of each one of the artifacts. We are 3d oriented individuals, the analysis of an object can not be complete unless we can feel it. Through the dimension of our senses

Most of the answers presented in this experiment were stereotyped. It was evidence in the way people interact with the daruma doll. Those stereotypes were shown mostly as cultural identification with signs such as flags or colors. They (the stereotypes) seemed as the first images that came out of the participants, maybe as a mechanism to make easier sense of their cultures.

The experience gained with the carranca is that, there is other cultural codes that are not in the surface such as “stereotypes”. But these are codes that are rooted even more in each of the participants, and that have to do with a more personal background inside their culture.



South African K...  
British - influence

2


4

5

6


# /Experiment 3

## A personal approach

With the insights of the previous two experiments. The third experiment was developed in order to get a more close and personal view of the cultures of the participants of this final experiment. For this final part of my inquiry. I decided to focus only on 3 cultures. The Costa Rican, the Indian culture and finally the colombian culture. This decision was taken based on the quantity of members of each of those cultures whom I can take more reliable data from.

In this Experiment the questions will be focus on the personal view of culture from each one of the participants. Differently from the past two experiments, in this experiment interviewees will have to attach feelings and emotions to certain objects in different spaces, at a different times.

As first step participants will be asked to define their culture in five adjectives. The first ones that comes into their minds. Following, those five adjectives previously established should be linked with five objects that the participant remembers from their childhood house or grandmother's house. Thirdly I asked the participants to relate again those five adjectives to five objects. But this time to objects present in their last room right before coming to germany. Next questions are if they brought one of those objects here to Dessau and if that specific object remind them of their home. If not which object that they have here remind them most of their culture.

## Objectives

- / From a personal approach, get in touch with the cultural codes of each one of my interviewees.
- / Have a solid base on how to compare those more personal cultural values, to the stereotypes that were given in the second experiment.
- / Identify a common vision of culture through all of those little visions that are going to be displayed in the experiment. Analyze the differences between stereotypes from the second experiment to the third one

The conclusions and result of this last inquiry are shown in the next section of this document. Conceptualization. They configure mostly (along with the previous conclusions) the results and the aesthtic of my design proposal.





DATE	TIME	LOCATION	ACTIVITY	STATUS



# **/Conceptua- lization**

## /Brief

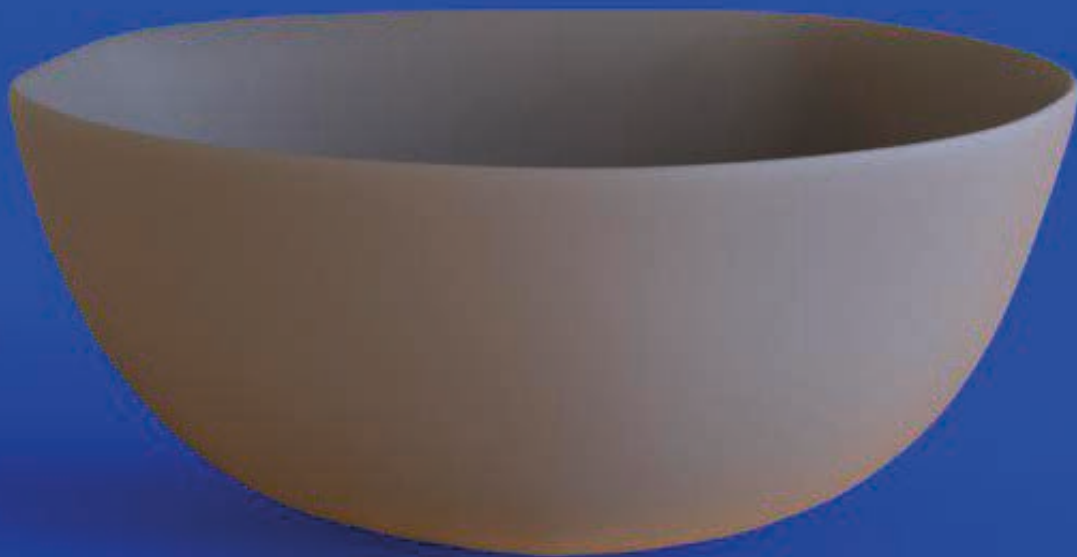
The past two parts inside this paper (Research and interviews) guide me to understand how the people in the MAID transmit and feel about their culture. Throughout this process I manage to identify certain cultural codes that were expressed and transmitted by my focus group.

I intend to develop a tool, that allows me to represent what I have learn and what I found about cultures along this process. This tool aims to be a representation of what the culture of MAID is: A mixture of stereotypes and actual facts, with multiple options configuration.



## /Design Concept

One general conclusion was achieved at the end of the research and interview phase of this project. There are two ways to communicate your culture. One that is stereotyped oriented that is basically driven by our thoughts about nationality and our attachment to it. This vision of culture could be understood as superficial. In the way that it emerges as a first thought when being asked about our culture. The second one is related to our development as human beings, therefore is more attached with our experiences and to our closest institutions (family, friends, subcultures). Contrary to the stereotypes, for this one to emerge, it could need more effort. It can be said that it is an “idealized” version of your culture, since it is in touch with your deepest attachments to it.



# /The Maid's Doll (MAIDo)

To develop the form of the maid doll three requirements were taken into account. The first one is the shape of the daruma doll. Since it was the most stereotyped artifact in the experiments that I developed. As the second one I will develop an stereotyped image of each of the cultures in which I focused on: Costa Rican, Colombian and Indian based on the data that I collected from the experiments. And finally in the third one, I will attempt to create that “idealize” version of the culture.

## Dolls configuration

Each doll will have three parts, each of them demountable in order to represent 3 different concepts.

## Stereotyped doll

**Upper :** This part of the object intends to give a face to the culture. I was portrayed from the results of the experiments.

**Middle :** In the middle are represented those national codes of each one of the cultures that were a constant in all the answers provided by the interviews

**Lower :** In this part images which are commonly associated with the culture are portrayed.

## “Idealize” doll

**Upper :** As in the stereotyped doll in this part there will be a “face” to the culture, in this case one that has actual relevance inside the culture.

**Middle:** The middle is reserved for authentic cultural representations. That have actual and real meaning to the people of the culture

**Lower:** Since severe of the answers were material-orientated. This section is reserved for those expressions.

The whole idea behind the two dolls and its feature of being demountable. Is that those dolls can be mixed. As it was observed in my research the image of culture that we build in our minds from another person, is a mix between those two. At first sight we have a previous model of what a certain culture should be, from what we have experienced or seen about that culture. And then it is what the member of the culture wants to transmit to us. Those two visions are mixed together, and they build the whole picture of Culture in our minds.

As it was mentioned before, all those dolls intend also to build an image chaotic or not of what is the MAID program. And attempts to represent what for me and for a lot of us in the master was to integrate into a group of people with such cultural differences. As the same that happened with the dolls we should deconstruct our cultures into pieces so then others could understand us.

**/ MAIDo**  
**India**



**/ MAIDo**

**Costa Rica**



PRAYIDA

**/ MAIDo**  
**Colombia**







**/Conclusions**



## Conclusions

The research and experiments made in this project, showed that we are all culturally coded. Those codes manifest consciously or not, How have we been raised according to our backgrounds. My research guide me through deepest analysis of how objects/artifacts express things that we don't even realize about ourselves. Based only by its relation between function and form. The main goal behind this project to put it into simple words, was to learn more about my classmates, and try understand them better. Even though that we have been learning from each others since almost one year and a half.

As it was Examined, the system of representation of culture can vary from culture to culture and it can be dictated by numerous factors; being language the most crucial one. A language that can be understood by each member that is trying to be part of the "conversation". An analogy can be derived from my experience in MAID. At first we came all with several pieces of language that only certain members of the group could fully understand. After time passed we started developing our own languages, with our own words, sounds, behaviours and even beliefs. We were all participants on the creation of a

new language. that probably change our style in clothes or even the food we bought. That doesn't mean we have lost our "home" cultures. As it has been seen in the experiments. People are clearly identified with their cultures of origin. But each one of us give a piece of our own culture to build the big picture that MAid is in our heads.

As mentioned before my design proposal is my method on how to represent those cultures (The MAID culture and our own ones). Of course this is guided and biased by what I have lived and experienced here throughout the master. Probably my vision of the cultures that I am putting into these doll are not going to be common from everybody. Although I aimed to develop a very conscious and structured process, I can not deny that as everyone else I have a background. A background that have been with me since i was young. I, as everyone else, have my own cultural codes. Probably through this dolls I am not only sharing stereotyped and idealized versions of certain culture, but I am also sharing my own.

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# /Acknowledgments

I will like to thank all the people that were involved in the development of this project. First of all to my advisors Sandra Giegler and Carmen Luippold for their support and advices along this whole process of ups and downs. To my friends, Andrea Cuellar, Pablo Porta, Laura Hidalgo, Clara Rego, Anna Clark, Héctor Vargas and Daniela Chavarriaga. Who bring huge amount of wisdoms in times of doubt. Also to all the people in the MAID programm who attend to my experiments, without them this project wouldn't be what it is



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Adrian Ramos

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Submission Date: 22 of June 2017

