THE HUMAN HEART OF LEADERSHIP

An anthology of poems written by the Executive Leadership Group of the University of Johannesburg and illustrated by staff and students from the Graphic Design Department in the Faculty of Art, Design & Architecture

Edited by Professor Federico Freschi with a foreword by Professor Letlhokwa Mpedi, Vice-Chancellor & Principal of the University of Johannesburg

Contents

Foreword 7

Introduction: The Human Heart of Leadership 9

1 | Origins and Foundations 13

Song 14

Whenua 16

My Twin Sister 18

Relationships, my Family Tree 20

This Day: (26 July) 22

My Family 24

They Who Matter (to Me) 26

2 | The Inner Life of Leadership 29

Present 30

Silence 32

Breathe 34

A Ballad of Me (with apologies to all the poets) 36

Embracing Solitude to have Valuable Connections 38

A Labour of Love 40

It REALLY is okay 42

Grateful 44

3 | Journeys and Horizons 47

Life and Times of an Endurance Runner 48

Traversing new landscapes and horizons (An ode to travel) 50

My Refuge 52

What Matters to Me 54

Life 56

Contents (continued)

A Life Not Lived is a Wasted Resource 58
Old Oily One = Coelacanth or Old Oily One = Death 60
4 | Relationships and Connection 63
The Angry Child 64
Academic Sisterhood 66
What gives me Meaning 68
Education 70
Your Graduation 72
A Moment of Reflection 74
5 | Leadership and Legacy 77
Leadership 78
IT’s Silent Voice 80
A Sturdy Wall 82
My Everyday 84
The Orange Army 86

The Human Heart of Leadership
University of Johannesburg
Auckland Park Kingsway Campus
PO Box 524
Auckland Park
2006
https://ujpress.uj.ac.za/

Compilation © University of Johannesburg 2025
Published Edition © University of Johannesburg 2025
First published 2025

Proofreading: Federico Freschi
Design and Layout: Christa van Zyl
Cover design: Christa van Zyl
Illustrations by Christa van Zyl, Neil Badenhorst, Zinhle Zulu, Ilhaam Khan, Reshma Maharajh, Deirdre Pretorius, Laaiqah Rahimtula, Alyssa Dayanand, Thapelo Kanjane, Danai Goto, Samantha Rance, Sukainah Sallie and Yannick van Dorp
Typeset in 10 on 12 pt Aldine401 BT by Christa van Zyl
Produced by UJ Press

Table of Contents

Foreword 3

Introduction: The Human Heart of Leadership 5

1 | Origins and Foundations 9
Song 10
Whenua 12
My Twin Sister 14
Relationships, my Family Tree 16
This Day: (26 July) 18
My Family 20
They Who Matter (to Me) 22

2 | The Inner Life of Leadership 25
Present 26
Silence 28
Breathe 30
A Ballad of Me (with apologies to all the poets) 32
Embracing Solitude to have Valuable Connections 34
A Labour of Love 36
It REALLY is okay 38
Grateful 40

3 | Journeys and Horizons 43
Life and Times of an Endurance Runner 44
Traversing new landscapes and horizons (An ode to travel) 46
My Refuge 48
What Matters to Me 50
Life 52
A Life Not Lived is a Wasted Resource 54
Old Oily One = Coelacanth or Old Oily One = Death 56

4 | Relationships and Connection 59
The Angry Child 60
Academic Sisterhood 62
What gives me Meaning 64
Education 66

Your Graduation 68
A Moment of Reflection 70

5 | Leadership and Legacy 73
Leadership 74
IT's Silent Voice 76
A Sturdy Wall 78
My Everyday 80
The Orange Army 82

Foreword

Professor Letlhokwa Mpedi
Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of Johannesburg

In a world undergoing seismic changes, we are fast seeing the value and impact of merging creativity, innovation and leadership. In July 2024, over the course of a couple of days, the University of Johannesburg's (UJ) Executive Leadership Group (ELG) convened at the scenic Kloofzicht Lodge in the Cradle of Humankind. Gazing at the tranquil backdrop of the foothills of the Zwartkops Mountains, we pondered difficult questions about higher education and leadership. These two days together were intended to ensure that this high aspiration from the UJ Strategic plan became a lived reality, but we also knew we needed to rethink some traditional and, frankly, outdated ideas about leadership.

It was in the lead-up to this breakaway session that we agreed that day one would focus on how 'I' can perform at the highest level and day two on how 'we' perform at the highest level. This shift would require a fundamental recalibration of our thinking. We appropriately asked the team: What would it be like to bring all parts of ourselves to the table – body, heart, mind and soul in a coherence that activates 'whole-self intelligence'? We then asked: What would it be like to create a culture of deep, authentic, high-impact presence together?

In contemplating these powerful questions, we asked the ELG team to dig deep down and compose poems. The resulting poems are as much a response to these very questions as they are reflections on the state of the world, higher education and leadership. This was an exercise in stepping out of our comfort zone as leaders. It represented innovation in practice. As we phrased it at the time, it meant disrupting the chronically imbalanced ways of thinking and functioning that have become the norm in so many organisational cultures, where 'doing' eclipses 'being,' and hyper-rational, analytical thinking relegates feeling, sensing, intuiting and the transpersonal to the outer fringes of life.

The great poet Robert Frost once said, "Poetry is when an emotion has found its thought and the thought has found words."

And so, this anthology has emerged as an answer to these overarching questions that sought to reconceptualise our ideas around leadership. It was instead an impressive feat to see these formidable managers and academics, often so rigid in their writing, really take to this task. The result is a collection of insightful, often quite raw and impactful ideas that not only speak to the essence of leadership but really provide a glimpse into the UJ ELG team.

It is perhaps in the words of John F. Kennedy that we really grasp the value of this contribution: "When power leads man toward arrogance, poetry reminds him of his limitations. When power narrows the area of man's concern, poetry reminds him of the richness and diversity of existence. When power corrupts, poetry cleanses."

This work has thus emerged as a fundamental reimagining of leadership approaches – in an era desperately crying out for strong leaders. It is a stark reminder that creativity and innovation belong at the fore of our leadership journeys.

Introduction: The Human Heart of Leadership

Professor Federico Freschi
Executive Dean | Faculty of Art, Design & Architecture

The Human Heart of Leadership is an anthology of poems written by members of the University of Johannesburg's Executive Leadership Group as it was constituted in July 2024. As some members of the ELG were serving in acting executive roles at the time of writing and others have since retired or moved on, some authors may no longer hold those positions or may no longer be employed by the University of Johannesburg. Nonetheless, even if they are no longer members of the ELG, at the time when these poems were written they were actively thinking and operating within the space of executive leadership.

As members of the highest level of leadership in the institution, individuals in the ELG are more often associated with strategic plans, performance targets and institutional responsibility than with personal reflection and poetic expression Yet, through these poems – at times intensely intimate and courageous – a surprisingly different picture emerges: one of vulnerability, introspection, connection and care. From 'A Sturdy Wall' through 'Silence' to 'A Labour of Love' and 'My Family', these titles trace a compelling arc – from the structured demands of duty and protection, to the deeply personal terrain of solitude, endurance, relationships, place and identity. In addition to the perhaps more obvious themes of leadership, work and duty that run through some of the poems, themes of belonging, gratitude, resilience and hope recur, suggesting that behind every decision made by executives lies a deep well of lived experience, human values and quiet aspiration.

The anthology has been structured around thematic groupings that reflect both the personal and professional concepts that inform the poems. The first group, 'Origins and Reflections,' explores early experiences, family, place and the formation of identity. Informed by the personal experiences of the authors – stories of childhood, family bonds, identity and belonging – these poems reveal the ways in which personal history continues to shape professional purpose. Through memories of home, the warmth of kinship and reflections on place, the authors remind us that leadership is always grounded in the experiences that formed us and the places from which we come.

In the second group, 'The Inner Life of Leadership,' the poems turn inward, reflecting a deep engagement with the emotional and psychological landscape of those who lead. Through meditations on solitude, stillness, vulnerability and resilience, this section reveals that inner strength is not born of detachment, but of the courage to feel, reflect and be fully present.

The third section, 'Journeys and Horizons' captures notions of growth, exploration and personal development, charting both literal and metaphorical journeys – across geographies, through time and into the unknown. Whether running through pre-dawn streets or diving into deep ocean caves, the poets invite us to embrace the thrill of discovery and the determination to keep moving forward. The poems in this section speak to leadership shaped by motion, transformation and lifelong learning.

Section four, 'Relationships and Connection', focuses on interpersonal bonds, mentoring and emotional support and remind us that leadership is never a solitary pursuit. Rather, it is nurtured through connection, sustained by care and enriched by family and community. This section pays tribute to the colleagues, students, mentors and loved ones who sustain the leaders and make the task of leadership meaningful.

The final section, 'Leadership and Legacy' engages directly with leadership, vision, values and institutional commitment. Turning its gaze outward, toward the responsibilities and possibilities of leadership itself, the poems in this section articulate vision, values and the tensions of holding a position of influence. They acknowledge both the burden and the privilege of leadership and affirm its potential to inspire, protect, innovate and serve.

To complement the poems, a series of original illustrations were created by staff and BA Honours students from the Department of Graphic Design at the Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture (FADA). Working with a variety of materials, including collage, painting, digital design and inks, each illustrator responded creatively to the themes and emotions embedded in the poetry, lending a compelling visual dimension to the anthology. In keeping with UJ's strategic focus on 4IR, Head of Department Christa van Zyl and Professor Deirdre Pretorius, who are both researching AI in design, created some images using AI prompts and refining their designs in Photoshop afterwards.

Striking and eclectic, the illustrations both accompany and extend they poems, offering interpretive layers that evoke, question and amplify the written narratives. In doing so, they demonstrate the power of interdisciplinary collaboration and underscore FADA's ongoing commitment to creativity, responsiveness and meaningful engagement.

In a time when leadership is often driven and judged by hard metrics and non-negotiable outcomes, this anthology serves as a powerful reminder that effective leadership is, at its core, human-centred. It is shaped by memory and meaning, by moments of stillness and surges of inspiration, by the complexities of personal relationships and the long reach of formative experiences. Whether writing of a twin sister, a silent moment, a favourite song, or the spirit of an institution, the authors reveal the interconnectedness of their inner and professional lives.

Together, the words and images in this anthology offer a rich, multifaceted portrait of the Executive Leadership Group of the university – one that is as thoughtful as it is courageous, and as human as it is visionary. They invite us to rethink leadership not just as a position of authority, but as a continual act of presence, humility and empathy. In bearing witness to the hopes, fears, and joys of those who lead the institution, we see not just their responsibilities but also their humanity. And it is in this human heart of leadership that their true strength lies.

1 | Origins and Foundations

Song

Vast heavy flint flecked with pink
Dips and streaks across a textured plain,
Smooth it, mix it, dab and think,
Hot dust in the throat conjured again.

Strokes and daubs join to stretch ahead,
Edged with sun-tinted rocks and bleached lines of grass,
A remembered road with hints of red
Emerges from the colour to reimagine a journey past.

I paint the sound of the woodland kingfisher,
The smell of elephant dung.
I feel serene, at peace, richer
The paint blending to form an image that is sung.

Dr Denyse Webbstock
Senior Director | Institutional Planning, Evaluation & Monitoring

Illustration: Zinhle Zulu, Lecturer, UJ Department of Graphic Design

Whenua

The thought came unbidden
Urgent
Summoned by the pervasive damp of an Otago summer's evening
The lush green scent of farm and loam redolent on the chill air
Awoken by conversations that day of whenua, whare and whakapapa –
Land, place, placenta, ancestors, home
Where, who, why and how we are
And where we return to.

The words came unbidden
Powerful
Upsetting the quotidian comfort of weekday television
Shattering the safe domesticity of snug sofa and soporific felines
Too urgent to wait for the end of the sentence uttered by the flickering actor on the screen
Too important to dwell in the companionable silence belying things always left unsaid:

If I should die
Promise me you won't bury me here
Promise me you'll take me back
Promise me
Promise me

For my soul will know no peace in this calm, cool, green quiet.

Unshriven, unrequited, haunted it will yearn
For the brilliant brittle dryness of a Highveld winter
the savage splendour of a Highveld thunderstorm
the smog-soaked sunsets behind the Hillbrow tower

For the popping purple October carpet of fallen jacaranda blossoms
the clamouring cacophony of taxis and traffic
the daily gift of easy smiles unbidden and unearned

For the tawdry splendid glamour of a city of greed and guilt and generosity.

Where, who, why and how I am
Where I must return to

Home.

Professor Federico Freschi
Executive Dean | Faculty of Art, Design & Architecture

Illustration: Christa van Zyl, Lecturer, UJ Department of Graphic Design

twin
sister

Illustration: Neil Badenhorst, Lecturer, UJ Department of Graphic Design

My Twin Sister

M is for…my safe space (because that is what she has always been).
Y is for… "you're not seeing double, don't worry!" (our standard response to quizzical looks).

T is for…the trillions of rands we have saved by wearing each other's clothes.
W is for… the womb – our first home together.
I is for… the intellectual academic that she is (something I have always admired).
N is for… the new places we have travelled to, and will travel to, together.

S is for… the support she has always provided me.
I is for the irritating way that she knows all my faults, but loves me unconditionally.
S is for… the sorrows we have shared and survived together.
T is for… "two for one special!" (we hear it all the time).
E is for… Elvis Presley – our favourite singer.
R is for… the richness of our life's journey together, as twins.

Professor Victoria Graham
Senior Director | Strategic Initiatives & Administration

Relationships, my Family Tree

Relationships – my family tree,
This is what matters most to me.
I don't have children of my own,
But my five nieces and nephews make me feel at home.
My brothers, whose career talents of building and graphic design,
Match their humour and love of cooking – potjie recipes are divine!
Shaun and Nduduzo, my 'adopted UJ sons',
We visit, share lunch and talk of times to come.
I miss the kindest person I have known in so long,
Uncle Jimmy, we called him 'Bean' after a 1950s song.
I miss my dad, who despite his strict metallurgist brain,
Would make us laugh … 5 November … sparklers … the rain.
My safest space – my mom, my twin sister and myself,
These are the family pictures atop my mental shelf.

Professor Suzy Graham
Senior Director | Academic Development & Support

Illustration: Alyssa Dayanand, Honours 2024, UJ Department of Graphic Design

This Day: (26 July)

Thirty-three days is just over a month
But you and I have been together for over 33 years
It really does not feel like it has been years, but just days

We still have so much to learn
To learn together
What a blessing it has been
For this Day
It was punctuated by the birth of our son two years later

We can never forget what the Lord has done for us
His goodness and mercy shall follow us for the days of our lives
We shall ask for the next 33 this day

Professor Daniel Mashao
Executive Dean | Faculty of Engineering & the Built Environment

Illustration: Christa van Zyl, Lecturer, UJ Department of Graphic Design

1991.07.
26
33

Illustration: Christa van Zyl, Lecturer, UJ Department of Graphic Design

My Family

In the fabric of my existence, family weaves the strands.
A circle of love, where we all hold hands.
My mom, my husband, the pillars of grace,
In their wisdom and care, I find my safe place.

Four children, my joys, three sons and a daughter,
Each one a blessing, as life's gentle laughter.
A guiding light as if from above,
Their hearts filled with wisdom and endless love.

Three grandchildren, the twins and their kin,
Their laughter, a symphony where life begins.
A boy, a girl, and their little sister,
Their smiles fill my heart, making life so much richer.

My son-in-law, with his kindness and might,
Brings warmth and peace in the darkest night.
A family bound not just by blood, but by love,
A gift from the heavens, a blessing from above.

When anger or sadness clouds my way,
I think of them, and the clouds fade away.
For they are my purpose, my reason to strive,
In their presence, I truly come alive.

I pray for their health, their safety, their cheer,
In every moment, I hold them dear.
For in their smiles, their love, I see,
The true essence of life, the joy it can be.

Through life's ups and downs, together we stand,
A bond unbreakable, a love so grand.
My family, my anchor, my heart's true song,
With them by my side, I'll always belong.

Professor Annah Moteetee
Executive Dean | Faculty of Science

They Who Matter (to Me)

When Coach Nicholas said
Homework: a poem you shall write!
My initial thought was
Wait … did I hear right???

Fortunately, the solution formed quickly
As the 'wise' Dominic Toretto oft says: "it's about family!"

So, for the rest of this poem
I shall make mention of three:
My nephew and niece, ages five and one
And a rescue pup behaving most mischievously

My nephew insisting I wear his favourite Iron Man gear during role-playing
My niece stuffing my face with her food while eating
My pup constantly reminding me of parks that need a-walking

The way their moods shift
When I arrive (or get home)
Is so heartwarming
That I am crestfallen when they are left alone

From this trio
I have learnt to truly make time
And not just to be there, but to be THERE
And present. Anchored. For me and mine

Shakespeare, Frost – this was not
But given the time … this is all I've got
In my defence, I did not use ChatGPT
So, thank you, for listening to me

Professor Wai Sze Leung
Senior Director | UJ Postgraduate School

Illustration: Sukainah Sallie, Honours 2024, UJ Department of Graphic Design

2 | The Inner Life of Leadership

Illustration: Neil Badenhorst, Lecturer, UJ Department of Graphic Design

Present

Softly, gently
I feel my body
I become grounded
I become rooted, centered,
In the place I need to be.
Light flows into me
Into every part of me.

I am Awakened.
I know, I see, I feel.

I am Present.

Present to give
Present to receive
Present to Be.

Professor Maria Frahm-Arp
Executive Director | Library and Information Centre

Illustration: Christa van Zyl, Lecturer, UJ Department of Graphic Design

Silence

Silence the noise in my head
Silence the noise in the world
The World is a noisy and constantly humming place
Yearning for a Blank Canvas where my thoughts take flight with no limits
No sounds, no World to see, nothing just Silence
Just Stillness, deeply embracing me

Silence the noise in my head
Silence the noise in the world
A peaceful refuge for the mind Silence
In the pause, the world's true art
Silence, my sacred space, where my healing whispers to the heart

Silence the noise in my head
Silence the noise in the world
In the Silent depth where spirits reflect
Silence a refuge from life's stormy rough sea
In stillness deep, the soul finds rest, a sacred space divinely blessed
Quietude, a silent plea for Silence

Nomsa Mahlangu
Senior Director | Sport

Breathe

I lie still, I breathe, I listen
I repeat
I want to understand
What this all means
It cannot all be coincidence

I lie still, I breathe, I listen
I repeat
What is the meaning of all this?
One day it will come

For now,
Slow down and pay attention
To what matters the most:

Be kind
Do better

Nolwazi Mamorare
Chief Financial Officer

Illustration: Ilhaam Khan, Lecturer, UJ Department of Graphic Design

A Poem a Poem-Where do I Start-Without using a flip chart-Clutters of words fill
Soon maybe an unused prop - Yellow oft turned pages read - with seasonal tingles it is paper-My Words waft
Now I am the old curiosity shop
Midst darknesses and light - Living can be an ugly
Perhaps to play at the sea with my trousers pallied.
Now like Vapour - I found my passion - I found
Maybe I must tak
Palmate

Illustration: Laaiqah Rahimtula, Honours 2024, UJ Department of Graphic Design

A Ballad of Me (with apologies to all the poets)

A poem a poem
Where do I start?
Without using a flipchart.
Clutters of words fill paper
My words waft now like vapour.

I found my passion
I found my dreams
I found the way to weave more dreams.
Midst darknesses and light
Living can be an ugly fright.

Now I am the old curiosity shop (apologies to Dickens)
Soon maybe an unused prop
Yellowed oft turned pages read
With seasonal tinges, it is a spread
The idea of ideas continues humming
Maybe I must take up drumming.
I grow old I grow old
Perhaps to play at the sea with my trousers rolled. (Apologies to T S Eliot)

Professor Kirti Menon
Senior Director | Teaching Excellence

Embracing Solitude to have Valuable Connections

I value people.
AND People are important to me.

BUT, for my own sanity and my ability to continue, I treasure and fiercely guard my solitude.

During the week, I truly enjoy engaging with you.
I enjoy our conversations, and value even difficult conversations.
I enjoy listening to you.
I enjoy laughing with you.
I enjoy learning from you.
Your presence enriches my days and brings joy to my work.
Our interactions are meaningful and inspire me to grow.
I appreciate you.

BUT at the end of that week, I need solitude.
I need limited human contact.
I need to speak to myself.
I need to do mundane tasks.
And even when I work, I need to NOT engage in conversation.
I need this time to reflect and recharge.
It's my way of finding balance.

See, I am an introvert. A highly functional introvert.
And while I function very comfortably engaging and being surrounded by others,
I need my solitude to recharge and continue.

This is important to me.

You may not understand this need and behaviour.
Maybe you cannot relate.
But by embracing my solitude, I can be my best self for you each week …
Because you are important to me.

Professor Sehaam Khan
Deputy Vice-Chancellor | Academic

Illustration: Sukainah Sallie, Honours 2024, UJ Department of Graphic Design

A Labour of Love

A labour of love
A topic that matters, a topic of heart and mind
A love of being, and a love letter to self

A love of being
A heart that beats, sometimes fast, sometimes slow
A letter to self about life, loss and challenge

A labour of love
A topic that matters, a love of being and doing
A love of self, and the work of mind and heart

A true labour of love

Professor Ylva Rodny-Gumede
Senior Director | Global Engagement

It REALLY is okay

It is okay for me to feel angry

It is okay for me to feel misunderstood

It is okay for me to feel disappointed

It is okay for me to feel overwhelmed

It is okay for me to feel exhausted

How I feel does not define who I truly am

I am amazing

I am strong

I am resilient

I am dependable

It REALLY is okay that I am all these things!

Dr Ndivhuwo Luruli
Executive Director | Research Development & Support

Illustration: Christa van Zyl, Lecturer, UJ Department of Graphic Design

Grateful

Impossible decisions at a difficult time
Do I have a choice; can I really choose?
At every step of the way, someone helped me
Someone offered me a meal
Someone stood next to me in my darkest moment
Someone gave me a chance; someone believed in me
Hard work, determination, a will to succeed
Now, important to do the same for someone else
Now, pay it forward for someone else.

Professor Bettine Jansen van Vuuren
Registrar

Illustration: Christa van Zyl, Lecturer, UJ Department of Graphic Design with Bing AI assistance

3 | Journeys and Horizons

Life and Times of an Endurance Runner

I wake up at 4 am, getting ready for the road,
leaving behind family and a comfortable bed.
Running the streets along the frozen grass.
Why the torture? What are you chasing? they ask …
Running can unleash your potential you didn't know about
As I listen to the sound of my feet hitting the road,
I find rhythm, and I get into the mode
When I run, I'm always switched on
Runners find it easy to understand their inner being
That sweat becomes a symbol of all my goals
Runners' threshold for pain and difficulties is extremely high

Mzwakhe Matukane
Senior Director | Revenue Administration

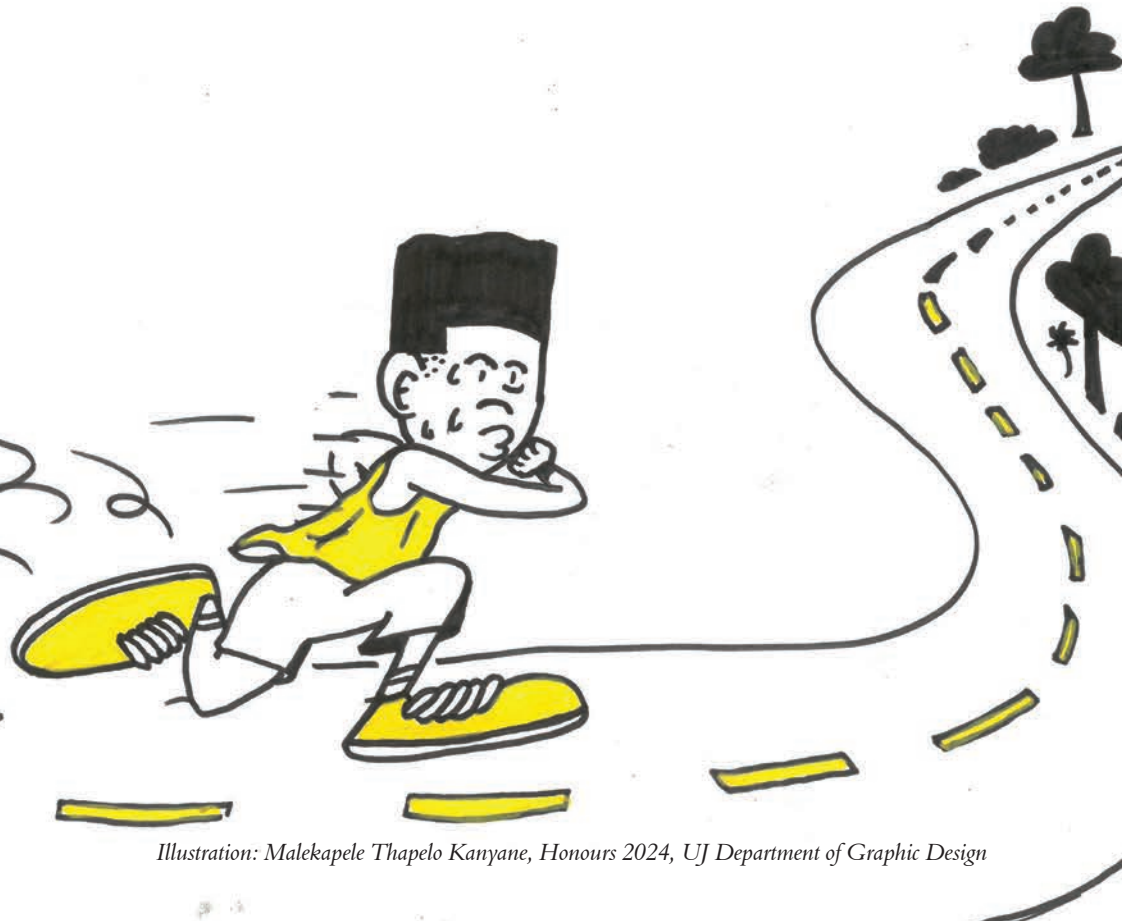


Illustration: Malekapele Thapelo Kanyane, Honours 2024, UJ Department of Graphic Design

Traversing new landscapes and horizons
(An ode to travel)

To traverse new landscapes and horizons, both outer and inner
Is to embrace anew the world and the self.

In Norway, beneath snowcapped peaks
Breathtaking waterfalls cascade
Nature's raw power against serene beauty
Here, I feel my spirit expand
Reflecting vibrancy and tranquillity.

In Siena, in the summer sun
Licking my fingers smeared with chocolate ice cream melting
At the Piazza del Campo
Laughter fills the air, infusing my soul
With joy and delight
A reminder of life's simple pleasures.

Berlin speaks to me of history's weight
At the Kaiser Wilhelm Gedächtniskirche
I witness destruction and resurrection
Hope for the future next to scars of the past
A testament to resilience
In the blue light of the church
I find reflections of my own battles and renewals.

Iceland offers a dance of giants
Whales frolicking in the frigid sea
Grace and power in perfect harmony
A reflection of life's duality
Where playfulness and strength coexist
Guiding me to find balance within.

Along the Rhine
A glass of wine in hand
I glide through time and tradition
The river's flow a metaphor for my journey
Constant and evolving
Each sip a celebration of the present moment.

In Oslo's Vigeland Park
I stand in awe of Gustav Vigeland's lifework
Sculptures capturing every aspect of human existence
From birth to death
From joy to sorrow
A visual opus of the human condition
A reminder of our shared journey.

These experiences, etched in my memory
Are fragments of a greater whole
Each one broadening my horizons
Each one a step in traversing new inner landscapes.

For this, I am profoundly grateful
For the privilege to wander
To witness, and to grow.

Professor Sarah Gravett
Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor | Research & Innovation

Illustration: Laaiqah Rahimtula, Honours 2024, UJ Department of Graphic Design

Illustration: Neil Badenhorst, Lecturer, UJ Department of Graphic Design

My Refuge

Universal language, transcending borders
Coded in black and white
Structure, pitch, rhythm, texture
Limitless potential
Unlocked into phrases of sound and silence
Soaring melodies, resonant harmonies
Serene me-time, immersive us-time
Transcending me and us
Kaleidoscope of the should
Receptacle and vehicle of emotions
Transformational force
Music: my refuge, my life's song

Professor Kathleen van der Linde
Acting Executive Dean | Faculty of Law

What Matters to Me

What matters to me is life
Life is a house full of love
A house with smiling faces
Life is a village of family
A land of friendly faces
Life is a child that grows and never stops
And countless moments of excitement and wonder

What matters to me is life
Life is a world of unspoiled nature
And an environment that natures
Life is when nothing becomes something
And a fruitful passion
Life is a stranger's kindness
A wanderer's heart that feels for another

What matters to me is life
Life is a heart that beats on time
And feet that run to love
Life is eternal memories we share
And unforgettable moments we long for

Life is a heart after its God
What matters to me is life

Dr Mpoti Ralephata
Chief Operating Officer

Illustration: Zinhle Zulu, Lecturer, UJ Department of Graphic Design

Life

Life matters in one's "life",
Health, good health matter to me in life,
Being happy and energic matter to me,
Being me, emotional sometimes and ecstatic matter to me,
The joy of life, the joy of spiritual life matter to me,
The sense of waking up, heading and facing to my day matter to me,
This (it) fulfills me in life,
It brings to me joy and an aesthetic feeling,
It makes me feel great in life,
Being alive always makes me listen to my inner being,
Listen to my inner being to check what my senses say.

Life is like lonely runner alone at dusk, listening to his footsteps,
The steps that would make him feel as if there is a companion along,
Life fills me with strength to live and to dwell on my inner being,
It is a raising to my being,
Life is good and it enhances my being,
It is blessing that I am alive, happy and being me,
Let me live today as if there no tomorrow,

It is life, live it.
It is life, enjoy it.
It is life, celebrate, it.
It is life, nurture it.
It is life, take care of it.

Dr Joe Manyaka
Senior Director | Facilities Management

Illustration: Laaiqah Rahimtulla, Honours 2024, UJ Department of Graphic Design

Illustration: Laaiqah Rahimtulla, Honours 2024, UJ Department of Graphic Design

A Life Not Lived is a Wasted Resource

Live, live, for you were created to live.
Live, for your life has a purpose.
Live to impact the lives of others, positively or negatively, make your mark.
Live and experience all the emotions life offers - Live in joy, live in anger, live through sadness, and live through sorrow.
Live for life is short; it comes and goes.
From birth to life, there's a dash – that dash represents your life.
Live life fully, for it needs to be lived.
Live to touch the lives of others.
Live purposefully for a life not lived is a wasted resource.

Tokoza Kwinana
Executive Director | Human Capital Management

Old Oily One = Coelacanth or Old Oily One = Death

Under the hot African sun
bobbing on the Indian Ocean
3, 2, 1, Go

Splash

From: turquoise to blue to grey to black; and
From: seafloor to seamount to sea cave

70 fathoms deep

Big bright green eyes glistening in torchlight

Aaah,
……Old Oily one

3, 2, 1 … too soon…. but… Go

From: black to grey to blue to turquoise

Dries Pretorius
General Counsel

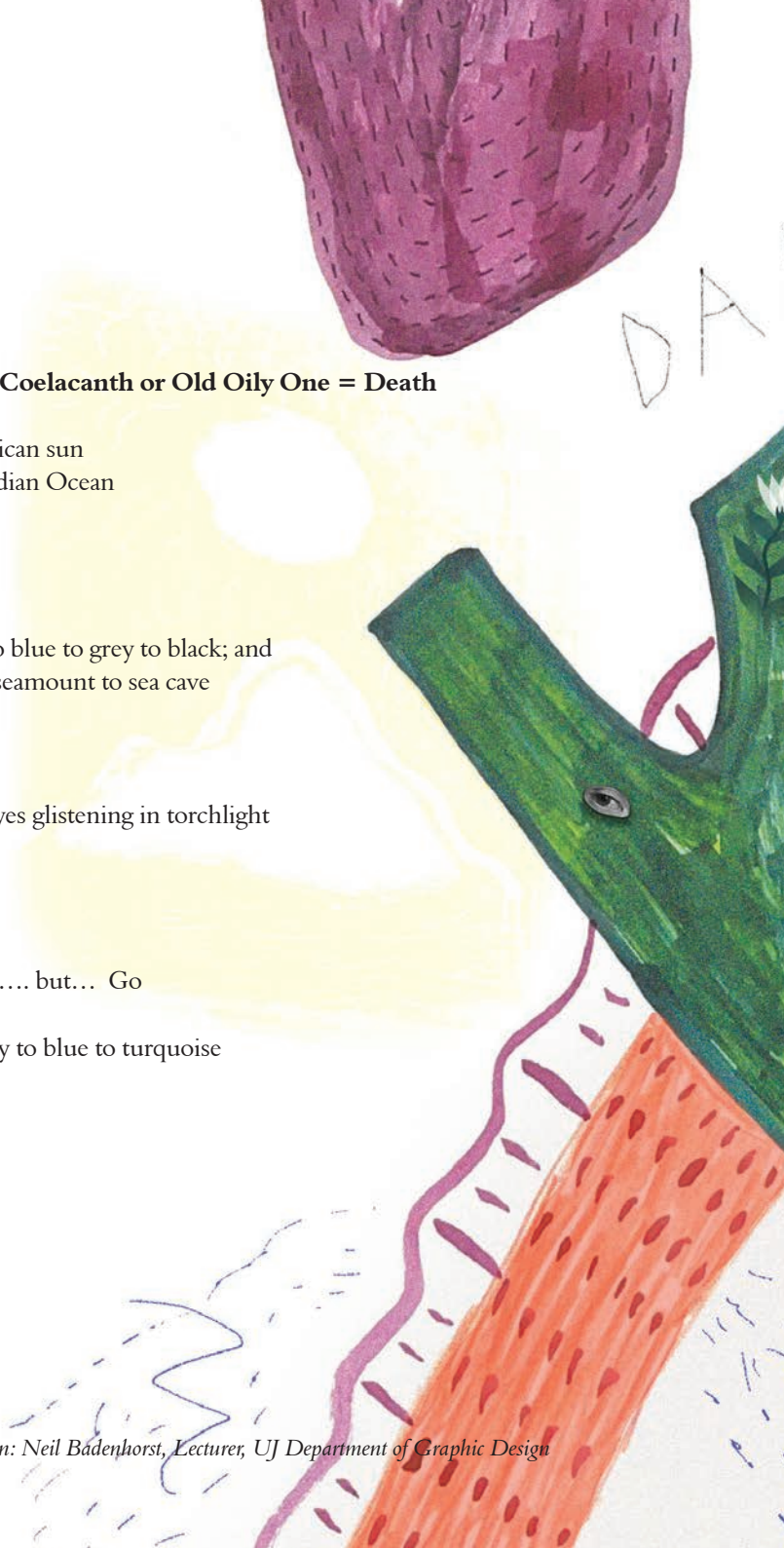


Illustration: Neil Badenhorst, Lecturer, UJ Department of Graphic Design

4 | Relationships and Connection

The Angry Child

Meandering the violent streets
The child is angry.

Fleeing the flooded shack
The child is sad.

Freezing in the collapsing classroom fearing the latrine toilet
The child is anxious.

Finding no joy the child is a stranger in his own country
The child is angry.

Who is going to do the right thing
To make sure the child's life is fulfilling?

It is up to us to end this despair.
It will have to be us to make the squalor disappear.

We have no choice because the child belong to all of us.

Dr Randall Carolissen
Dean | Johannesburg Business School

Illustration: Samantha Rance, Honours 2024, UJ Department of Graphic Design

Academic Sisterhood

A long and winding road ...
Who will show the way?
Managing tensions of work, family, career and community ...
Who will resolve?
Navigating a world of hidden practices ...
Who will clarify?
Overcoming patriarchy ...
Who will break the structures?
Ascending the leadership ladder ...
Who will hold it steady?

One strong fearless woman will ... Guiding, holding, caring. A buffer against the onslaught.

Lifting up her academic sisters until there are many more!

Professor Nadine Petersen
Executive Dean | Faculty of Education

Illustration: Dr Reshma Maharajh, Senior Lecturer, UJ Department of Graphic Design, AI-assisted

Illustration: Dr Reshma Maharajh, Senior Lecturer, UJ Department of Graphic Design

What gives me Meaning

I might not be a poet
I might not be a person that masters big words
But I know what gives me purpose in life:
    Being honest, sincere and living a life of meaning
    Caring for my loved ones, my friends, colleagues and students
    But also those crossing my path whom I do not know
    Making a difference in people's lives and helping others to be
    Is the greatest gift I can give
And I am so lucky and blessed – being in academia and UJ is a life to be
At the great University of Johannesburg

Professor Benjamin Marx
Acting Executive Dean | College of Business & Economics

Education

If you were a person
I would like to have a conversation with you face to face
But since you're not
Let me say this:
Thank you.
Thank you to the possibilities of learning;
Thank you to the possibilities of gaining knowledge;
Thank you to the possibilities of teaching others;
Thank you to the wealth of wisdom.
I am grateful to you
Thank you to the possibilities
I am open to possibilities.

Professor Annie Temane
Executive Dean | Health Sciences

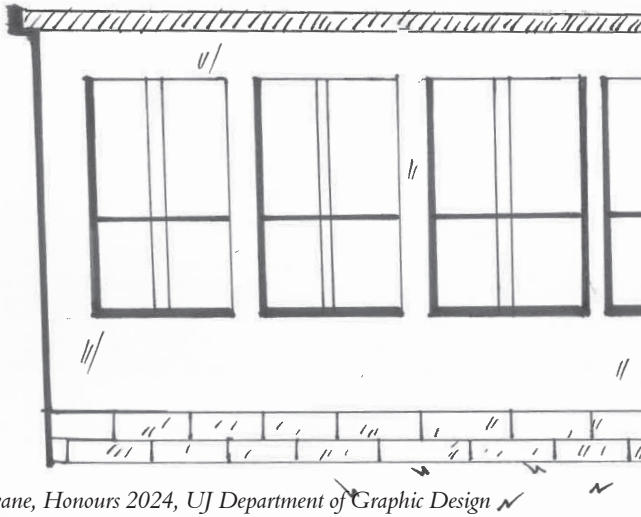


Illustration: Malekapele Thapelo Kanyane, Honours 2024, UJ Department of Graphic Design

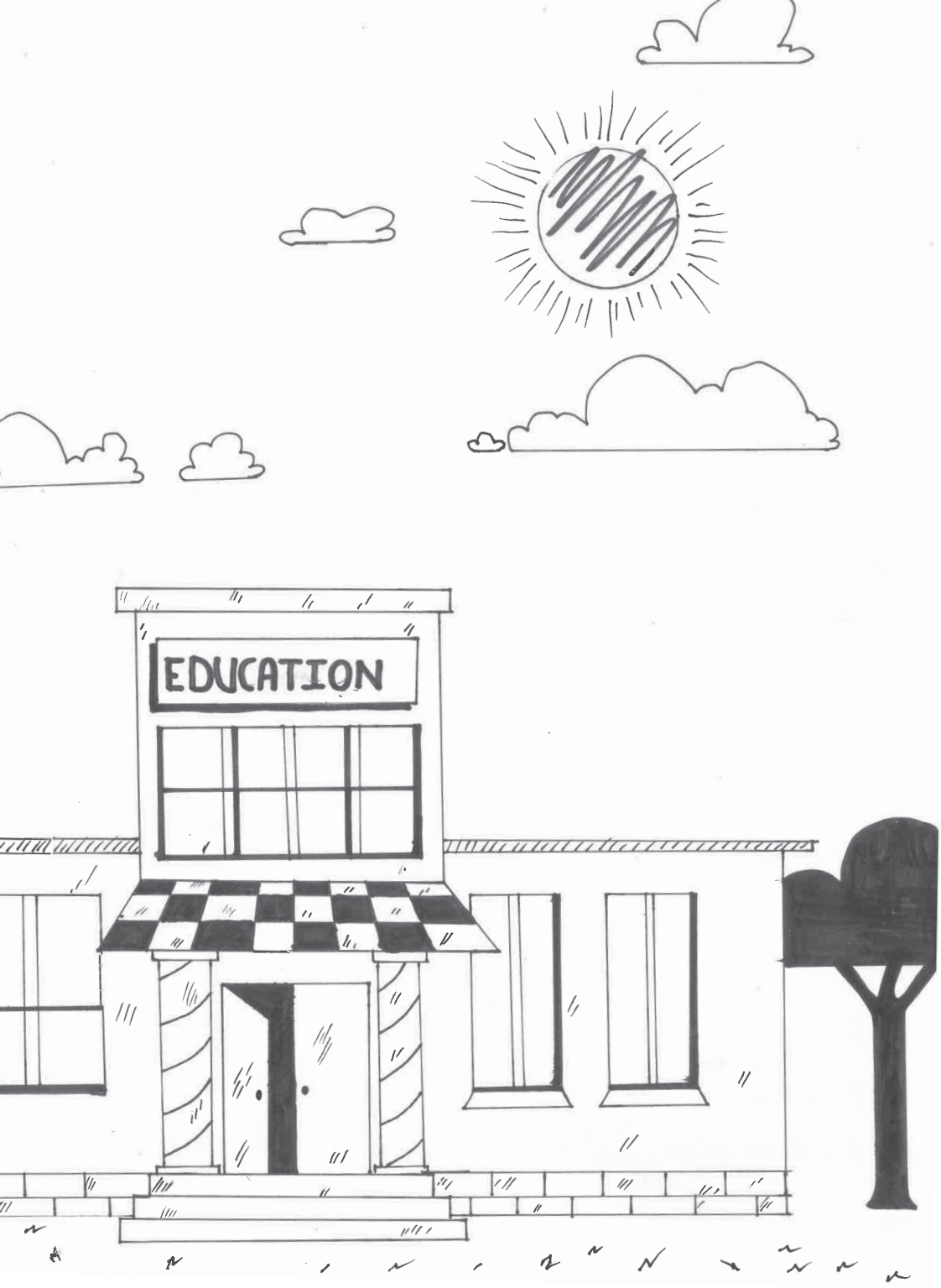
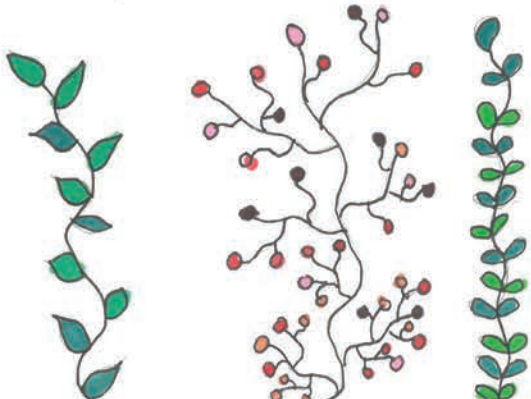

EDUCATION

Illustration: Samantha Rance, Honours 2024, UJ Department of Graphic Design

Your Graduation
(For my students)

In gown and cap you stand with pride and joy
A journey shared brought this about
Through hard work and persistence you explored
With guiding hands I saw you grow
Moments of doubt became wings to soar
In your success I find my own pride and joy.

Professor Sarah Gravett
Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor | Research & Innovation



A Moment of Reflection

I cannot begin to express my excitement at the prospect of being coached.
The day finally came and oh my, did it deliver!

There he was, starting with DOING & BEING for peak performance.

I got it, the proximity of being and doing would get us closer to peak performance!

I could not believe, learning that I have been very proactive at the expense of being reflective.

You can imagine my excitement at the affirmation that a walk and even exercise or sleeping on it generates solutions.

Being uber-doers, extremely busy, I wanted this for the love of my life too.

The call went: Love, we are going to be intentional about our reflective time…!

Kenny Nkwana
Executive Director | Facilities Management

Illustration: Dr Reshma Maharajh, Senior Lecturer, UJ Department of Graphic Design, AI-assisted

5 | Leadership and Legacy

Leadership

Leaders,
Those who are perched at the top and yet expected to be part of the people
Be humble, they say
Don't blow your horn,
Speak softly and carry a big stick.

Yet, a little bird whispers in your ear:
'Familiarity breeds contempt'!

Have a vision,
See far, wide, and beyond!
Set a tone,
Be a good example
Like Martin Luther King, Jr:
You must climb a mountain and see the promised land!

See deep, do a deep dive

It is lonely up there!
Always think of those who supported you and you moved up
Because you may need them on your way down, they warn you!

What is the leader to do?
Which messages should they listen to?

Leaders should listen to the whispers and the loud bangs of humanity

Professor Bongani Ngqulunga
Senior Executive Director

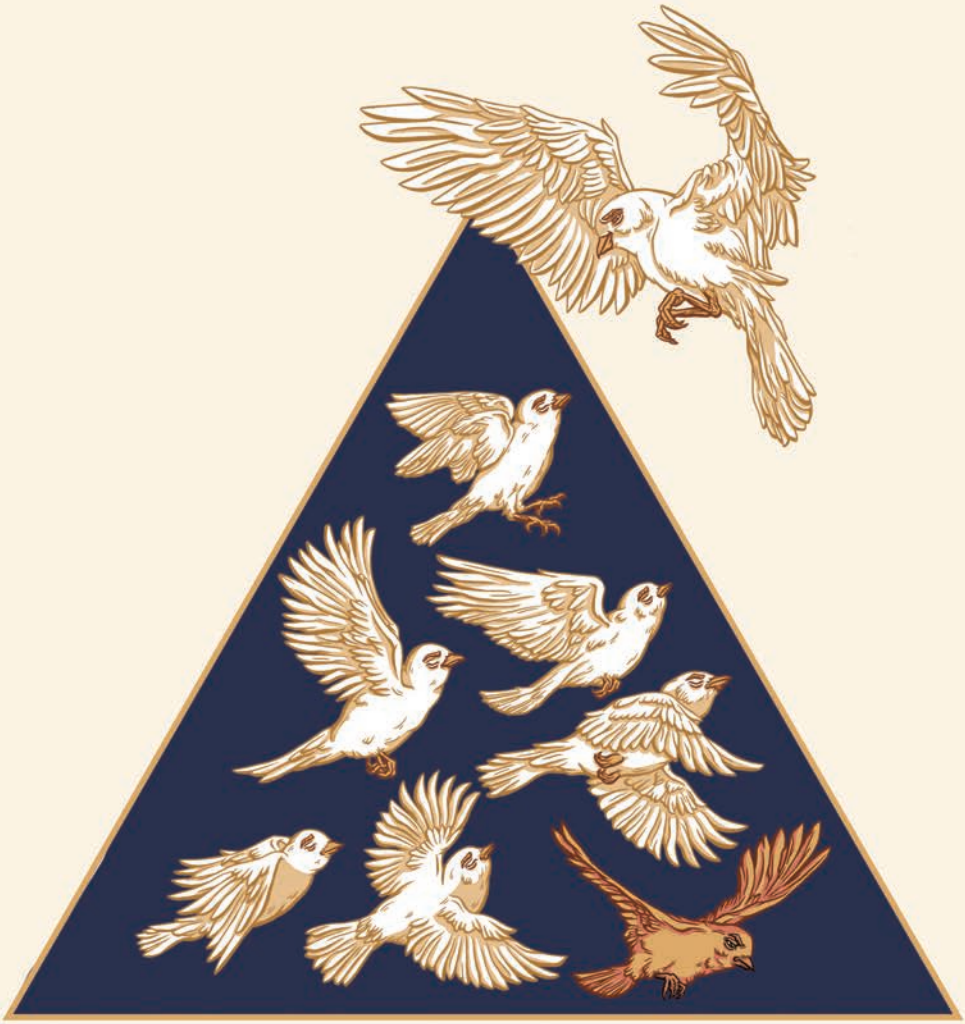


Illustration: Zinhle Zulu, Lecturer, UJ Department of Graphic Design

IT's Silent Voice

An IT manager stands, a silent whisperer.
Where switches hum and servers whirr,
In data's kingdom stands a knight so bright,
Firewalls guarding realms of code, both day and night.

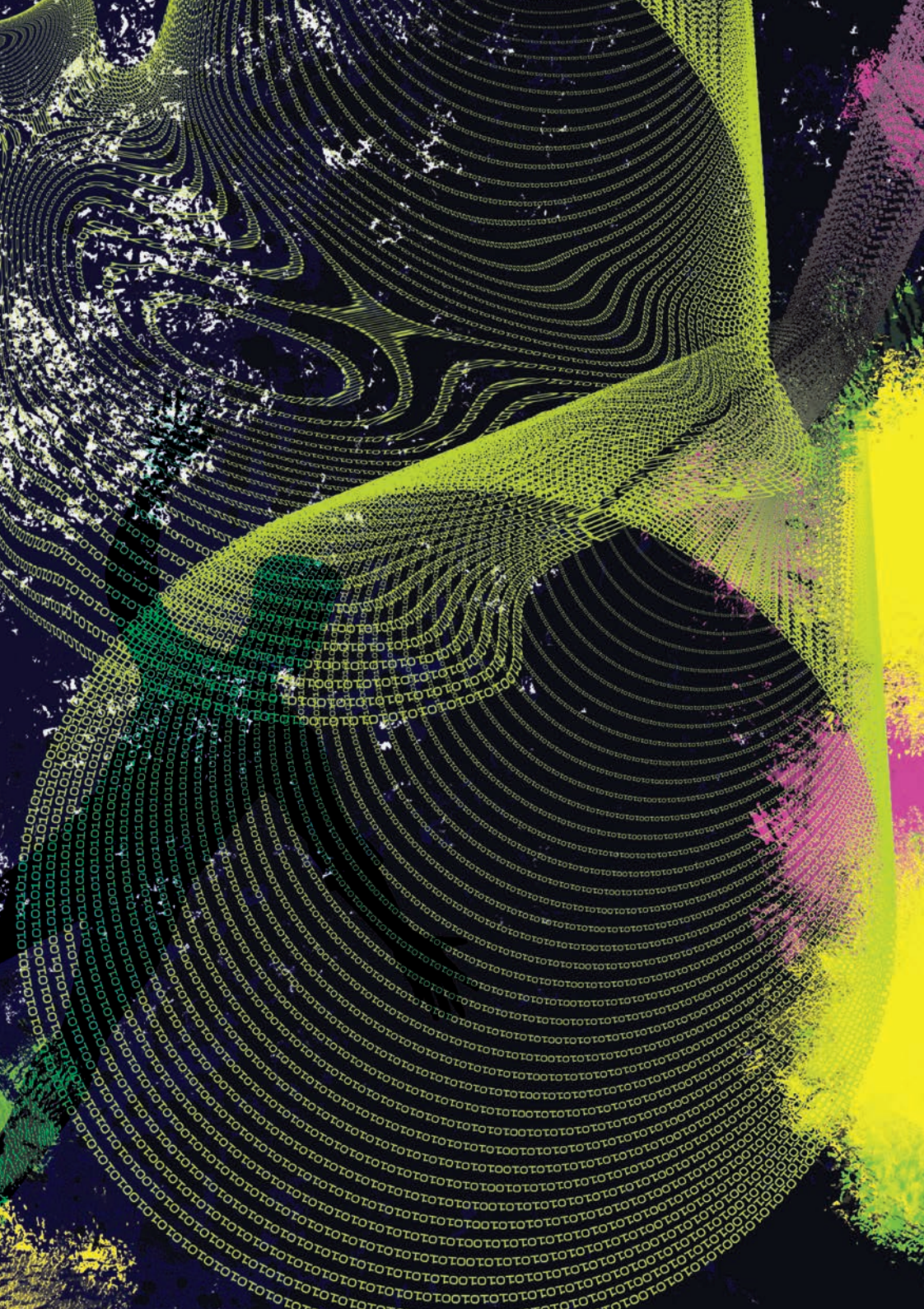
I navigate the paths of digital haze.
Through tangled wires and code's sophisticated maze,
Here, the heartbeats sync with binary beat,
Creating harmony, a rhythm so sweet.

From guarding secrets to managing the load,
I tread a fine line, a secure, steady road.
In this digital age, where data is gold,
An IT manager's role is vital and bold.

Innovation explodes from minds and machines,
A creation of potential, in empires unknown.
In this merging of life and digital art,
Technology and humans are never far apart.

Chelma Sliep
Acting Chief Information Officer

Illustration: Ilhaam Khan, Lecturer, UJ Department of Graphic Design



A Sturdy Wall

In a city where danger lurks, there we stand, a sturdy wall.
Guardians of the young and bright, shielding their dreams day and night.

With wisdom deep and hearts sincere, we guide and we teach, always near.
We become parents, brothers and sisters, where they stay,
A guiding light in every way.

My vision is clear, inspiring and encouraging, dispelling fear.
Passion strong and duty true, to our students, old and new.

In perilous streets we will hold the line,
Empowering the youth and letting their spirits shine.

Through every trial, our care is shown.
Though we are firm, our love is known.

Andre Arendse
Senior Director | Protection Services

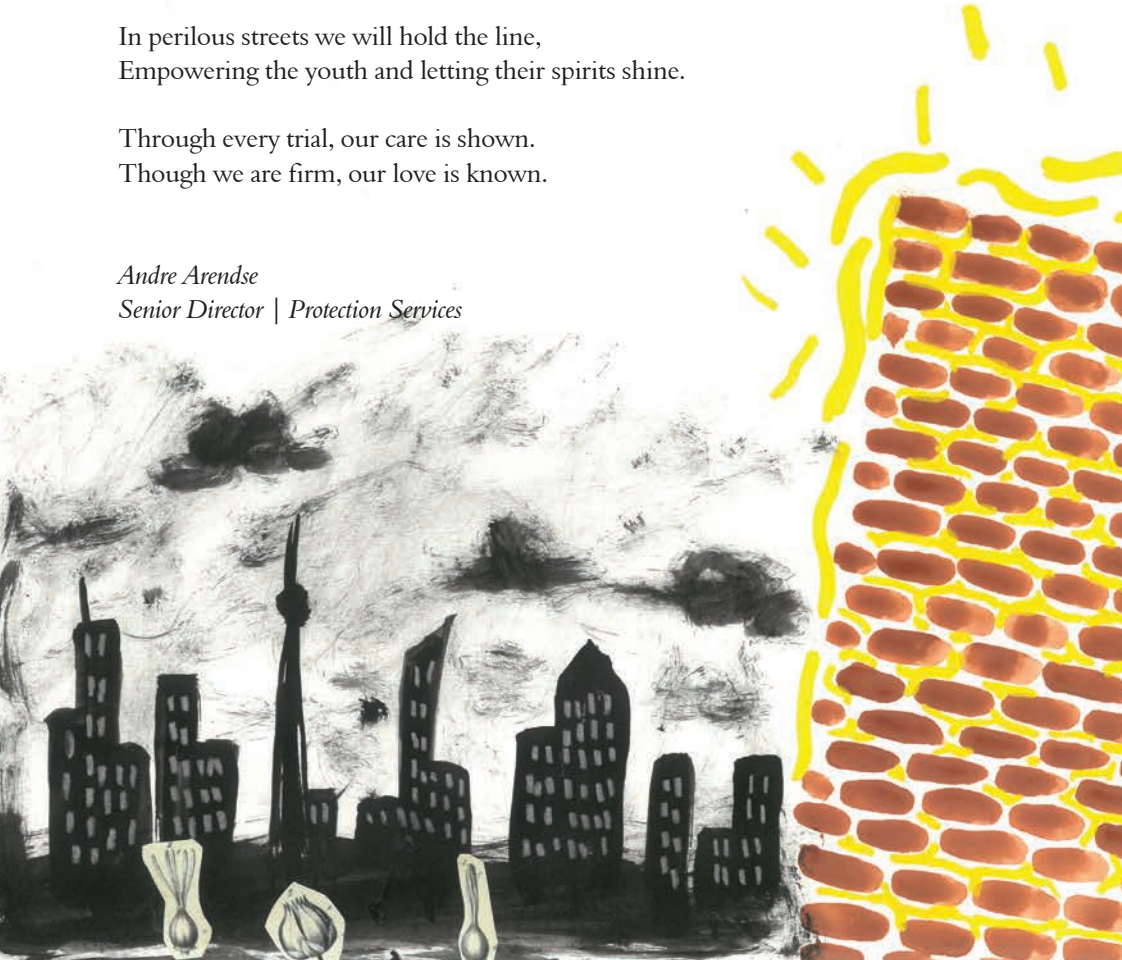


Illustration: Laaiqah Rahimtulla, Honours 2024, UJ Department of Graphic Design

My Everyday

My work is my purpose and my passion
Educator, manager, supervisor
Very little time for messing around
Very little time for missing deadlines

Within the day-to-day is a drive to be radically spirited
To initiate
To instigate
To innovate

My work is my purpose and my passion
Breathe in, breathe out
How do you feel at this moment?
What inspires and moves you?

My work is my purpose and my passion
It makes me whole
It fills me with joy
I am grounded

Professor Kammila Naidoo
Executive Dean | Faculty of Humanities

Illustration: Zinhle Zulu, Lecturer, UJ Department of Graphic Design

Illustration: Professor Deirdre Pretorius, UJ Department of Graphic Design. assisted by Midjourney AI

The Orange Army

We're the Orange Army,
Our blood is Orange,
UJ,
All the way!

We're marching forwards,
Backwards, never,
All the way,
UJ!

We're not afraid of the future,
'Cause we're designing it,
UJ,
All the way!

Our future, Reimagined,
All the way,
UJ!

Professor Letlhokwa Mpedi
Vice-Chancellor & Principal