

OpenCo on SA's storytelling skills

 By Ann Nurock

13 May 2016

In this exclusive interview I speak to Rob Rutherford, ECD, as well as Darren Borrino, CD and Sheldon Stewart, art director at OpenCo. They took home [Bronze, Silver and Gold Pencils](#) at the One Show Awards on Wednesday, 11 May in New York City for their print and design work for client Apartheid Museum. They elaborated on the importance of telling deeper, layered stories in advertising.



OpenCo's Rob Rutherford, Darren Borrino and Sheldon Stewart

Nurock: it's an absolute pleasure to be chatting to you. Apartheid Museum, tell me about the genesis of this campaign.

OpenCo: It's a long time in the making. The relationship with Apartheid Museum, between the owner of our agency Louis Gavin and his previous agency, TBWA\Gavin\Reddy and the museum itself goes back to the beginning of the museum, which launched about 15 years ago and TBWA\Gavin\Reddy did the launch campaign for that. So it's a very longstanding relationship on a personal level, and when we started at OpenCo it was immediately a project that we wanted to get involved in and a brand that we wanted to re-energise. We needed to find a way to make the Apartheid Museum relevant in present day South Africa and find a way to show that it's still a relevant destination. We had this really interesting insight that we hit upon. We'd been talking to the museum and when we struck on it, this symmetry between some of the things that happened in the apartheid era and some of the things that are happening now, post-apartheid, was the seed for a campaign that was all about showing what we can learn from the apartheid era as it's still relevant today and still gives us context in understanding what's going on here and now. It shows why you should go to the Apartheid Museum so that you can make sense of what's going on in South Africa today.

Nurock: The three of you are in New York to collect your awards. What are your views on the work you've seen being awarded?

OpenCo: What's amazing is that South African work has stood out to be very strong and there seems to be lots of depth in the work of these days. Often when you look at work that features maybe at Cannes it's very easy to get, but when you look at the One Show and even at the D&AD, there's more depth to it and an actual story behind the face of the work and that's really nice to see. Especially as we move towards a more digital era, where it's not so much just a very quick 'get', like we're used to doing in South Africa with print and outdoor, it seems South Africa is getting used to telling a deeper story with different layers.

Nurock: But do you think we in South Africa are really up there with digital, mobile and social media work?

OpenCo: In terms of storytelling, South Africa probably has the richest stories to tell. We have a slightly better understanding of experiential, so while we might not quite be there in terms of having the platforms out there to tell the stories on, we definitely have the stories that need to be told. That may be where we are lacking. We are lacking on the development side, and because we don't have the best quality internet, poor internet speeds and bandwidth, there isn't this 'immersion' that you get in the States and in Europe. I think that has an impact on the way we use those media, and we can definitely be better. But I think to the point that we know how to tell stories, the moment we can get the technological and development side up-and-running, we'll be able to go toe-to-toe with the best in the world. Just for the moment we are lagging a little bit, and I think that's borne out particularly when you think of Cannes, where we haven't yet won a Cyber Lion. It's just a matter of time though, and we'll get there.

Nurock: You're in New York for the next few days, what are your plans now that you've collected your awards?

OpenCo: We're going to try to have the best time, spending the least possible amount of money. The exchange rate is killing us! What's amazing, coming from South Africa, where we have such a diverse set of skills, to a bigger market, where people are more specialised in each different sector, is that it makes you feel that you can do anything. You talk to some of the people here and everybody's quite siloed. So to come to New York and talk to people, it's clear we have a vast understanding of all the disciplines through typography, through digital, through outdoor and concept too. So it's a great opportunity for us, being from TBWA to go into the TBWA/Chiat/Day New York office, to sit down with Chris Garbutt – which we have done and we'll have another chat with him – he's a fantastic creative and it's great to have him back in the TBWA fold, and for us to be able to chat to him is an amazing opportunity, a privilege. He's filled us in on the things that are happening in our network, and from a vantage point of South Africa, it's a really exciting time for TBWA. With TBWA/Chiat/Day New York, and New York being the centre point of it, the new hub and to hear all his exciting plans and give him an idea of what's going on in South Africa is an amazing opportunity that we don't normally get. So to come over for the One Show, pick up some awards and plug into our network on a much higher level is exactly what inspires us. We can take that back to South Africa and hopefully do amazing things with this experience.

Nurock: Thank you guys and congratulations again on your amazing achievement tonight – bronze, silver and gold is no mean feat.

One Show Creative Week runs from 9 to 13 May 2016. Click through to our [One Show awards](#) special section and watch for live coverage of the One Show Creative Week from me, roving reporter, [Ann Nurock](#).

For more:

- Bizcommunity search: [One Show](#)
- Google news search: [One Show](#)

- Twitter search: [One Show Creative Week](#)
- Official site: <https://www.oneclub.org/>

ABOUT ANN NUROCK

Ann is a Partner at Relationship Audits and Management, a global consultancy that measures and optimizes client /agency relationships. Her proprietary Radar tool is used by 30 corporates globally and as a result she interacts with over 80 agencies of all disciplines. Ann spent 25 years plus in the advertising industry as CEO of Grey Advertising South Africa, and head of the Africa region followed by President and CEO of Grey Canada. Contact details: ann.nurock@relationshipaudits.com | Twitter @Annnurock

- #BizTrends2023: Memories not clicks, the impact of 'short termism' - 31 Jan 2023
- Mentorship programme for the advertising industry - 27 May 2021
- #CannesLions2019: CNNs Julia Chatterley on talking pride, *Out of the Shadows* - 25 Jun 2019
- #OneShow2019: Double diversity, diversity of skill and diversity of self - 13 May 2019
- #OneShow2019: Put people at the centre, appreciate creativity and innovate - 10 May 2019

[View my profile and articles...](#)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>