

Lessons in cool

 By [Terry Levin](#)

3 Mar 2017

Having attended over a decade of Design Indaba conferences, I can attest to the fact that the standard of speakers and the relevance of topics hardly ever wavers from excellent, however, the second day of the 21st Design Indaba might be remembered for having showcased one of the coolest speaker lineups ever...

Too cool for school

For example, Stuart Forrest, CEO of local outfit [Triggerfish Animation Studios](#) has worked with the Oscar-winning producer of *A Close Shave*, *Chicken Run* and *Stickman*, and other accolades. Up against global competition such as *Shaun the Sheep*, *Stickman*, produced by the studio in SA, last year won the award for Best TV Animation in the world! Their recent release of the Roald Dahl classic *Revolting Rhymes* aired on BBC in December 2016 and made its South African premier at Design Indaba. Unarguably cool.

Forrest points out the importance of animation as the best medium possible that will help people learn to live together in a shared future, by being able to provide different cultural viewpoints to kids at the youngest age.

Pretty cool!

On the power of the media to promote alternative world views, UCT film student [Jabu Nadia Newman](#), enlightens us as to the Bechdel test, a gender equality benchmark related to the active presence of women in fiction and films, met apparently by only about half of all films made! This serves as some of the inspiration for the five feisty feminist characters, who make up Newman's eye-opening and pretty cool web drama series *The Foxy Five*.

Also eye-opening was Cape Town born, Robin Rhode who somehow manages to fuse animalistic bushman, angry gangster rituals and accomplished street murals into public art performances, which impress not only the citizens of Berlin where he resides but audiences of the solo and group exhibitions in which he had participated around the world.

Achingly cool

The project called [5000times](#) presented by Dutch designer Isabelle Mager investigates the repetitive low tech tasks done by individuals in a day at Foxconn Technology Group, which ensure the passage of the beloved Apple devices to market.

Capturing her data from engineers, not investigative journalism, reveals one person might apply the 2,160 drops of solder or 4,000 pieces of component tape per day.

Mager's strange looking sculptures prove to be visual data, physical representations of the height of the stacks of tape, solder and foil that represent how often each task will be done by one person in a day, questioning the costs that would be incurred by automation or robots. She finishes the exercise by calculating that if the current end price of an iPhone 6+ were to increase by \$11 per unit, the wages of each of the 225 workers who touch the product during its production process might be doubled.

"The Creators of Cool"

Artists and filmmakers [Lernert & Sander's](#) claim as "The Creators of Cool", is sanctioned by their presentation entitled *Copy Cats*. The upshot - many of the projects of this double Dutch act are so cool, that they have been plagiarised.



Concepts so original as to be seemingly inimitable, such a melting chocolate bunnies with household appliances, making a perfect suit of clothing for a hand, for a Brioni handmade suits TV ad or a music video of the coolest cat in the entire world, have been blatantly ripped off, sometimes by big brands. Their case studies showing the original work against the poor copycat version earned them a riotous Indaba ovation.

The rebirth of cool

Nairobi-based musician, producer and [DJ Blinky Bill](#) aka Bill Sellanga, is a philso-funkster, part of the new guard of Afro-futurists, leading the way to new visions of African pop culture as depicted in his unique animated African visuals and tunes, with super high cool factor.

A rockstar of cool

Rainbow-haired [Kate Moross](#) demonstrates the pure power of creativity. Her prolific output both as an individual and via the team of collaborators at her five-year old London-based [Studio Moross](#) has created its own design ecosystem with an outpouring of illustration and typography across the full gamut of graphics, magazines, album covers, animation, filmmaking, murals and music. Highlights include an invitation to Houston to build a 30m animation rig for One Direction's world tour, videos for legend Mary J. Blige, a 15-song set with Brit band Disclosure and creating the stage interface for the MTV VMA NYC awards on Madison Square Garden upon which none other than Puff Daddy and Kanye themselves performed.



General global cooling

Left to his own devices, Winy Maas could probably eliminate global warming single-handedly. In a series of books one of which is entitled *The Green Dream*, he questions why green building is so slow and so ugly, how come when we have technology and science to utilise microbial and solar catcher ideas can we not just get the green issue out of the way so we can take up more productive conversations. His work with porosity and transparency promise to transform the current spatially unproductive and unsustainable tower-and-suburb models we have to endure, to greater social and environmental benefit, moving from egoism to collectivism. An example is Market Hall, an integrated communal urban place of food, leisure, living and parking that has ensured "even Rotterdam is now a tourist destination".

Having given Cape Town's skyline the once over and pronounced the Bokaap its best feature, he proposes building colourful rooftops and gardens on all of Cape Town's buildings as seen in his own landmark Didden Village project in Rotterdam.

The afternoon culminated in an address by designer and Airbnb founder Joe Gebbia. Could the 21st Design Indaba get any cooler than that?



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