

African influence on Hollywood films

In the wake of the success of the *Black Panther* movie which opened globally last week, *CNN Marketplace Africa* this week examines Africa's ever-increasing influence in Hollywood.



Cape Town Film Studios.

Marketplace Africa hears how this ranges from inspiring the costume designs for the latest Marvel Cinematic Universe film, *Black Panther*, to accommodating large-scale productions which are filming in South Africa.

Host Eleni Giokos reports from Cape Town where she meets Oscar-nominated costume designer, Ruth Carter, who has sought to embrace the colour and dynamism of Africa in the plans for her latest project, *Black Panther*.

Carter explains to Giokos why she turned to the continent for inspiration: “The *Black Panther* is from Wakanda, which is a fictitious land in the centre of Africa. It honours the African culture for Africans and African Americans, and shows how they have not stripped it down but how they have kept it intact.”

Previously nominated at the Academy Awards for designing costumes for both Spike Lee’s *Malcom X* and Steven Spielberg’s *Amistad*, CNN hears how finding a balance between an Afro-futuristic nation whilst staying true to African culture was a challenge.

When asked whether Hollywood is appropriating or celebrating African culture, Carter tells the programme had shoppers in Ghana and other parts of the continent that were actually buying directly from the people who are selling goods to support their families. That to me is the best way, to not appropriate, but to give back.”

Marketplace Africa learns that Carter collaborated with local buyers, taking in inspiration from Ethiopia down to Kenya and Zululand, going beyond the traditional tourist spots in the search of authenticity. Whilst no pieces were used in the movie, the costume design team carefully crafted replicas using a \$3 million budget, with many of the materials used also sourced from Africa.

Cape Town film mecca

In the same show, Giokos reports from Cape Town Film Studios, which is bringing blockbuster production to South Africa. Spread over 200 hectares of land, Cape Town Film Studios was founded in 2003, with current CEO Nico Dekker joining the company in 2008.

He explains the initial challenges he faced to *Marketplace Africa*: “In a survey we did, 95% of the people in our film industry said it will never work. I immediately implemented my vision, my ideas... “You must aim at world class once off in a lifetime facility. Something that will make people from across the world say: ‘You won't believe when you go to Africa, you won't believe what you're going to see there’.”

With a long-term view required, Dekker states that the studio is a high-end investment, and he credits the production of *Black Sails* as a key turning point for the company. Dekker tells Giokos: “It was the first high end show to come to Africa for a long-term basis. Very risky, but it worked you know...?”

“It was really tough because you got one shot. You've got enormously nervous shareholders. You've got enormously nervous international partners. Nobody's done that before.”

To date, productions which have used the studios have employed about 70,000 people and with an investment of about \$250 million.

Marketplace Africa asked where Cape Town Film Studios is looking to expand next. Dekker explains: “We see where things are going. My dreams are not dreams that you can always fulfil. But if I can have it my way I would transform the studio to the kind of Universal Studios for Africa.”

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