

## South African creativity shines in Europe

South African locals Ryan Wolters and Will van der Merwe are making waves in Europe. The creative duo recently competed in the Cannes Young Lions Awards. As freelancers, they began entering creative advertising competitions and immediately knew they were on to something.

“At the very first competition we entered (JongeHonden) we won Gold,” says Vega School alumnus Wolters.



Van der Merwe and Wolters

Not long after, they were short-listed for an ADCN Lamp award. On the back of these two quick victories, the dynamic pair was handpicked to compete for the honour of representing the Netherlands at Cannes for a Young Lions award.

“We were one of the few teams who didn’t have a big agency behind us, so we felt a bit intimidated going in and I think people thought we’re a bit weird. South Africans tend to stand out in a crowd in Europe.

### SA life inspires creativity

“However, having lived in South Africa is inspirational for creativity, compared to Europe, where everything in life works so predictably, as a result you don’t see as much raw creativity around you on a daily basis.”

Wolters credits his training at Vega School as the factor that sets their ideas apart from everyone else’s. Though both had

a fascination with everything creative, both coincidentally had become strategists. Wolters explains that being in the European 'ad-scene' put a commercial edge to their interests. They both quickly learned that becoming a creator is more important than being a creative. "You have to be familiar with it all, when you continually get asked, 'What else can you show me besides your portfolio,'" says van der Merwe.

"The word 'creativity' has somehow become synonymous with 'innovation' to us in the West: creativity means creating something new. In contrast, in Asia it's rather: what can we learn from the past, and what can we improve on?" continues Wolters. "As a result, the two creatives are now playing with the idea of taking campaigns from 20 years ago and bringing them back in a better way.

Van der Merwe adds, "Two heads are better than one; always. Creative teams do not have to consist of an art director and a copywriter. Advertising executives are crazier than you are, so stop pretending to be responsible around them. Collaborate the hell out of your career, become a creator, not a creative."

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