

Gunning for creative diversity on Nkanyezi Masango's Blackboard

 By Leigh Andrews

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Nkanyezi Masango, now creative director at King James Group, is a true champion for excellence in creativity among youth. Here's what he'll be looking for as the only SA juror on the One Club's Young Guns board.

Masango has been selected as the only South African juror for Young Guns 15. It's a jury set to rigorously review a body of work and in doing so, identify the next generation of creative leaders under the age of 30.



One Club Young Guns 15 jury selected

22 Jun 2017



Established by the Art Directors Club in 1996, this is the first year Young Guns is part of The One Club for Creativity. It's an interesting mix of young creatives on the jury, with Masango commenting that: "It's an honour to be on a jury that represents such diverse disciplines. I'm hoping to connect with people from different backgrounds like fashion design, animation and technology."

Masango was also the only South African to crack the ADC jury nod last year.



Meet ADC 2015 jury's SA CD

Leigh Andrews 12 Jan 2016



Here, Masango shares his personal career strategy, why it's so important to honour young creatives and celebrate that youthful enthusiasm as well as how his own Blackboard initiative aims to better diversify the SA creative field.

■ **When we [chatted after Loeries 2016](#), you were still at Y&R. Talk us through your SA career moves.**

My career strategy is very simple: learn from the best. For the last six years I've been learning from Graham Lang at Y&R. Then I recently joined King James, where I get to learn from Alistair King and the great talents at the agency. Hopefully I'll reach a point where I'm as good as all these guys!

- ***You also spent a stint of your early career in Hong Kong, where you worked on Adidas for the Beijing Olympics. Share a few of your top memories of the experience and the impact on your current career.***

Working on a global campaign, for a global brand, to promote an epic event that happens once every four years is a rare opportunity. But the problem is that a project of that scale will have a lot of stakeholders. This was precisely the case with Beijing Olympics.

Every job had to get signed off by Adidas in Germany and pretty much every office in our network was working on the campaign. It was like *The Hunger Games*, everyone wanted to get in on a brief. I managed to hustle my way onto one of the TV jobs, which got produced through the Shanghai office. It was a fun experience and I was proud to get work made, but I much prefer dealing with less politics!

- ***You're also paying it forward in Blackboard – explain the importance of mentorship and how Blackboard in particular aims to better diversify the SA creative field.*** Lack of diversity in the creative field is rooted in poor education. Creativity is not encouraged in township government schools, which are predominantly black. Kids in these high schools right now don't have a clue about these things called advertising, filmmaking and animation. To make matters worse, the private colleges that we look to for talent are not doing much to market the industry to these kids.



Masango with his students from Blackboard,

So if we don't expose them to creativity as a career, we will be facing the same issue 10 years from now, with an unrepresentative industry and graduates of the same demographic coming out of creative institutions. That's why I decided to form Blackboard. It's an initiative that simply exposes township school kids to creativity. We target students who haven't decided what subjects to take. So that when they do decide what to focus on, they're making a more informed decision. And if they happen to pursue a creative career, we can find a way to integrate them into the industry. But the first step is exposure.

- ***Definitely. That touches (again) on the fact that lack of racial and gender equality is a hot industry topic locally – what are your thoughts then on age diversity?***

I think both locally and globally, race and gender diversity need the most urgent attention right now, much more than age diversity. Ultimately, we should strive to be representative of the society we live in, which is made of multi-racial men and women of varying age groups.

- ***Explain your involvement in One Club's Young Guns – how and why the Awards resonate with you, and what you're going to be focused on in selecting the overall winners.*** Award shows typically celebrate work that has been produced in the last 12 months – great ideas that represent the best of now. Young Guns celebrates potential, the possibilities of tomorrow. I find that exciting. We're not judging one ad here and another campaign there. It's about identifying a body of work that is not just ground-breaking by today's standards, but also excites us about what's to come.

■ **Why is it so important to honour young creatives and celebrate that youthful enthusiasm?** Creativity is the most powerful business weapon and it's a tool that can solve most of the world's problems. Honouring young creatives helps protect the future of our industry and quite frankly, the future of humanity.

I couldn't put it any better myself. [Click here](#) to follow Masango on Twitter, [here](#) for his Instagram profile and [here](#) to enter Young Guns 15 – entries close on 31 July.

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

Leigh Andrews AKA the #MilkshakeQueen, is former Editor-in-Chief: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com, with a passion for issues of diversity, inclusion and equality, and of course, gourmet food and drinks! She can be reached on Twitter at @Leigh_Andrews.

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