

# Ashraf Majiet, creative director at Superunion Cape Town

 By [Jessica Tennant](#)

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The longevity of great iconic brands is what Ashraf Majiet, creative director at Superunion Cape Town, finds most intriguing about his job. The idea that the logos and identities we create will likely outlast us and inspire future generations of creatives is what guides his work and keeps him inspired.

Majiet joined Superunion Cape Town a year ago, only three months prior to the lockdown. He says the remote working dynamic has actually allowed him to bond and collaborate with the global team on a new level. "I actually feel we've all gotten a lot closer to each other during this time. It is not just with my immediate team in Cape Town but also with the Johannesburg team and even the rest of the teams in our global network. We meet up quite often, and I find that we've all embraced a very collaborative and flexible way of working that I hope we will continue long after lockdown and Covid."

Here, he tells us that what's really behind his mask is a "pretty respectable beard", but also someone who's gone through something like this lockdown before. "2019 was the year I found out I had cancer. This forced me to slow my life down a bit and take a break from the fast-paced advertising life I was leading. Chemo weakened my immune system forcing me to be at home for months with little contact. I worked from home, got back to doing some of the things I am quite passionate about and spent time on myself. So, in a way, it was kind of a practice run of our lockdown now."



Ashraf Majjet, creative director at Superunion

And he goes on to tell us that his role as creative director involves so much more than just logo design and corporate stationery and why it's an exciting time for branding...

■ **Ashraf, tell us about your role as creative director at Superunion, Cape Town?**

As creative director at a branding agency, I work on and help build the visual world representing the brands we work with and, ultimately, the brands that millions of people love. Today, this job involves so much more than just logo design and corporate stationery. We live in a time where brands have to live across so many varying platforms, from physical spaces to digital and social channels. It's an exciting time for branding because things are changing fast, and we're having to adapt, learn and create new solutions. I love not always having all the answers. I love learning new things every day. It's a huge relief as a creative director to know that you don't have to have all the answers.

■ **You've led creative on many iconic local and international brands. You created the identity for the Zeitz Mocaa and just last year, worked on the Pep brand refresh. Tell us more about your experience and any career highlights to date.**

I've spent most of my 17-year career as both an art director and a designer. It gave me a chance to create a well-rounded portfolio. I had an opportunity to create ad campaigns and pure design work. Working on and seeing people interact with

the Zeitz Mocaa brand identity gave me a real sense of joy and purpose. I want to create iconic African brands that we're all proud of.

From Zeitz Mocaa to Pep, every branding story has a unique set of challenges. The answer usually lies right there in those unique challenges. Embracing every challenge helps reveal the truly unique branding idea. Every job has a tailor-made solution, and the more we know about the brand's situation, the better the fit.

A simple example, Pep has over 4,350 stores, whereas the Zeitz Mocaa has only one location. That in itself creates a unique scenario to solve. As creatives, we have to become mini experts in various topics from fashion retail to contemporary art.

■ ***You say the longevity of great iconic brands is what you find most intriguing about your job. What guides your work and keeps you inspired?***

The changing world around us most inspires me. It forces us always to be students, stay inquisitive, and find new ways of doing things. It also means that our work never becomes too formulaic and boring.

■ ***How has the pandemic and subsequent national lockdowns affected your work?***

We've been surprisingly busy.

“ The pandemic and lockdowns of varying levels have created a lot of uncertainty, leaving brands feeling unsure about what will happen in the next three months, so brands are instead looking at the long term. This is the sweet spot for branding, as everything we do is built to last beyond right now ”

■ ***Growing up, what did you want to be?***

I've always loved cars growing up. So naturally, my first choice as a career path was to be a car designer. This was something you had to study overseas, so it was just a little out of reach back then.

■ ***You ended up studying graphic design. Where did you expect your career to take you and how does this measure up to your current reality?***

When I completed my studies, I felt confused about which company to approach for a job. I also didn't know the difference between art direction and design. This realisation opened up the door to adland for me, where I've spent a large part of my career. I've recently come full circle to a more design-focused branding agency in Superunion.

■ ***What is your 'secret' to success?***

I measure my success based on how much I'm enjoying what I do. We all spend most of our lives at work, so it needs to be something you love doing and spending so much time on. Once you find that passion, the awards, recognition, promotions,

and things that people sometimes believe represent success will come naturally.

### ■ **What do you love most about the creative industry?**

It's an incredibly flexible industry that keeps reinventing itself and its use to companies. In a simple example, advertising focused primarily on print, radio, and TV and shifted almost entirely to digital.

Creativity is a truly human skill that machines can't replace. With AI fast becoming a reality, it seems like a great industry to be in.

### ■ **What's your typical workday routine?**

Every day is different for a creative, however, a typical day starts with a scrum session with the Superunion team. The rest of the day is filled up with creative reviews, client meetings, briefing sessions, catch-ups with the creatives or once a month with the global teams, and then my favourite, listening to podcasts like *How I built this* or *Articles of interest* while I work. If I'm lucky, the day ends with a little reward like spending time drawing on my iPad or starting with a nice little workout at the gym.

### ■ **When you're not busy working, what do you do? How do you socialise these days?**

I'm spending a lot more time connecting with family and siblings during this time. I'm doing a bit of everything from PS4 with my daughter or online with friends to short 4x4 drives. Online gaming is something I've picked up again during lockdown because it's such a great way to catch up with friends.

### ■ **What are you reading/listening to/watching at the moment?**

I'm listening to *How I built this* and *The Joe Rogan* experience podcasts while I work. I binge-watched *Vikings* a few months ago, and I love the *Snowpiercer* series right now.

### ■ **What's the first thing you plan to do when things go back to normal?**

I'd love to travel again. I think I miss this the most. It's also the one thing that still feels a bit out of reach right now, even if we are technically allowed to fly.

### ■ **2021 is here! Any new year's resolutions?**

2021 will be the year of balance for me. I'm always getting into new hobbies, so I'm focusing on being more consistent with what I'm already doing this year.

## ABOUT JESSICA TENNANT

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