

Grant Sithole joins Avatar as joint ECD

 By Jessica Tennant

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It was announced earlier this week that Grant Sithole, a former creative partner at Bakone, has been appointed to join Avatar as joint ECD alongside Brett Wild.

“We have built Avatar on the premise that, to be respected internationally, we need to be preferred locally,” says CCO Veli Ngubane. “We were lucky enough to bring on internationally awarded ECD, Brett Wild, earlier this year, and now we have Grant, who, as joint ECD, will help drive Avatar forward creatively.”



Avatar joint ECDs Brett Wild and Grant Sithole.

Sithole says he chose Avatar, over potentially joining an established global agency, because it felt right. “Veli and Zibusiso [Mkhwanazi] have done a great job of laying down an inspiring foundation that’s hard to not want to be a part of. The timing is right. I spent the majority of my life at a big agency [FCB Africa] and this is an opportunity to grow with an agency group of the future.”

Here, he shares more about the contribution he hopes to make to the ad world while there and what he’s most looking forward to in the new year...



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How do you feel about working closely with Brett Wild, as joint ECDs?

I’m excited! I respect the contribution Brett has made both locally and internationally. I love the new positioning of ‘ideas that move people’ that the guys have been driving. He only joined in May this year, so together we will be driving this vision and work, and hopefully contribute to the greater creative community in South Africa together. 2018 promises to be dope. I’m also drawn to the ‘great’ ambition of a local home-grown agency going global.



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▣ **What do you hope to contribute to the ad world, while at Avatar?**

I love how Veli speaks about trading on excellence and authenticity, two things close to my heart. That, coupled with giving ourselves permission to be fantastical and weird. I hope to drive this conversation wholeheartedly and I feel that the SA ad world has been ready.

▣ **What do you love most about being a creative/your career?**

Invention. I love that every day we are given an opportunity to create things, words, mindsets and feelings from everything around us.

▣ **You've worked on some huge brands. Which brand have you enjoyed working on most, and why? And/or which piece of work are you most proud of and why?**

This is a tough one because I'm proud of different pieces of work and my relationships with some of the country's most-loved brands for different reasons. I've created comedic, inspirational, thought-provoking, crazy, game-changing and even not-so-great work.



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▣ **What are you currently reading/watching/listening to for work? And/or where do you draw your inspiration from?**

At any given time, I'm reading about all types of things simultaneously. Right now, I'm still trying give Harper Lee's *Go Set a Watchman* a chance, *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* by K. Sello Duiker (for the 50th time) and *IQ* by Joe Ide.

I listen to most music but the R&B is strong within me, so I'm always on 112, Jagged Edge, Luther and some of the newer stuff that doesn't quite fall into the classic definition of the genre, like Jesse Boykins and Travis Scott. Right alongside the occasional Taylor Swift, Miley, 2Pac and Mobb Deep.

▣ **What has been your most noteworthy learning in the space?**

You have to do you. It's important to keep learning from your surroundings but you have to do you. Otherwise, you get frustrated and irritated by a game that's mostly a lot of fun.

▣ **In the release, it says that Avatar has put a stake in the ground about 2018 being about award-winning work. What**

is your view on agencies participating in award shows?

“ I always say that awards are to advertising what Haute Couture is to fashion. Just because you've seen a dress made out of condoms on the runway doesn't mean we are all going to start wearing grape-flavoured latex to meetings. ”

The design excellence that comes from that space has an influence on what the polyester dresses you see at your local store will look like.

The advertising/design/communication work we see in those highly competitive spaces only makes us better.

Of course, like with anything, there are some people who have what might look like an unhealthy relationship with awards, but that doesn't make the awards the enemy. Each to their own I guess.



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What industry trends do you predict for 2018?

The idea is not going to go out of fashion. Digital is a medium like print and radio, so we are always going to want to know what your idea is. Good, honest work that has been given the love of craft always has an energy.

What are you looking forward to most?

Everything! The new clients, the new squad, the possibilities.

ABOUT JESSICA TENNANT

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