

Buitendach, Singiswa win Sikuvile Journalism Award for presentation of *Financial Mail* covers

By [Jessica Tennant](#)

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Sarah Buitendach and Vuyo Singiswa of Tiso Blackstar Group recently won a Standard Bank Sikuvile Journalism Award in the Presentation category for the 2016 *Financial Mail* covers they worked on together.



All the Standard Bank Sikuvile Journalism Awards 2017 winners!

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Here, a conversation around what this recognition means to them and what the design process entailed...

Buitendach: I just think it's so great that our visual teams did so well (our cartoonist and photographers also won). I think traditionally our industry hasn't been so focused on design and I hope this shows that is changing.

Singiswa: Ask me again after I've recovered... I can't feel my legs.

Describe the design.

Singiswa: Sarah was actually very instrumental in helping me see the light. You get stuck in your ways and can't see beyond. She helps elevate you beyond that place, kicking and screaming.

Buitendach: Thanks V! I think we try and make our covers punchy, newsworthy and fun. I don't think we take ourselves too seriously and we like to riff off contemporary pop culture, design movements, movie posters, design movements and songs. We even went through a stage of having song lyric coverlines. Go figure.



What did the process entail?

Singiswa: Waiting for ideas to fall from heavens, trying out ideas, arguments over what works. I can't remember exactly but it was a long process.

Buitendach: Exactly what Vuyo said. And he is extremely long-suffering and kind and puts up with a lot of me or the team saying, 'So V, I was thinking, how about if we try this?'

Singiswa: 'Lol' yes and rolling my eyes... There are other designers, subs, readers, writers, editors, Sarah and so forth, so

you never quite suffer alone. In the end you get out only what you've put in.

■ **What led you to your career in design?**

Singiswa: I love magazines and newspapers.

Buitendach: Me too! I grew up in a family that consumed an awful lot of media. They still do. I started out in design and décor journalism as a writer but was always involved in visual stuff as well. Working on news brands is my favourite though.

■ **What do you love most about it?**

Buitendach: Our team is fantastic. They are really inspiring to work with. And I love that aha moment, when you're talking about a story or a cover and a cool idea just solidifies. That happened with our Brexit cover (one of the winning entries). We were talking about the drama in England as it unfolded and suddenly we were like, 'lets face it, Britain just got punked... So what if we use the most iconic British punk album (from the Sex Pistols) and reference it on our cover?'

Singiswa: That magic she's talking about...

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

Singiswa: I think for me its mostly patience, letting go of my ego, actually understanding the meaning of teamwork, and that you're never too old to learn. It's a tough lesson but one I'm still trying very hard to put into practice.

Buitendach: That journalists (the writing kind) can really benefit from design and visual training. It certainly helped me in my writing and editing career and I'm sure it would benefit others too.

■ **What trends do you predict for the industry in 2018?**

Singiswa: Yoh, you're asking me about trends! I'm not a design guru, lol!

Buitendach: Geez, I'm not sure either. I feel like no one really knows what's actually going to work in this world of uncertainty. One minute it's free online content, next paywalling works. Then everyone is obsessed with long-form storytelling, then it's infographics that are the golden child. Next minute, advertorials are the magic bullet. Beyond excellent content never going out of fashion, who actually knows?

■ **What are you currently reading/listening to for work?**

Buitendach: I read magazines for design inspiration. Mostly *Vogue*, *Esquire*, *Bon Appétit* and some Aussie décor titles. Books and podcasts are mostly not about work stuff at all.

Singiswa: Nothing specific but I think graphic design is everywhere if you look properly.

■ **Tell us something about yourself not generally known.**

Buitendach: I can recognise a song in about four notes. I think I'd win *Noot vir Noot* if I knew more Afrikaans songs.



Sarah Buitendach and Vuyo Singiswa

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