The power of humour with SA All-Star Hayden Metcalfe

By Emily Stander

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On 2 June, Suhana Gordhan and the Duke Group hosted the fourth South African Portfolio Night at the agency's Cape Town office. 40 students from various advertising and creativity colleges in Cape Town attended and met with 11 local creative directors, with two All-Stars announced.

Image supplied: SA All-Star Hayden Metcalfe

Graphic design student at Stellenbosch Academy, Hayden Metcalfe, was one of the All-Stars. After an interesting journey that started in film school and sound engineering, Metcalfe found his passion in graphic design with the support of his family.

We spoke with him to find out more about his work, the Virtual Bootcamp and what he hopes the future holds for him…

▦ Congratulations on being selected as a South African All-Star! How are you feeling about it?

It feels so bizarre. You really don't know if you're good at something until winning something like this tells you.

I honestly didn't see the win coming because my style is eccentric, and I had worried that I was too niche to get a job. The industry has far more focus on concept and originality than I realised, which is great.

▦ Tell us a bit more about yourself.

I have always had a passion for entertaining but often lacked the confidence to speak up. The confidence finally kicked in during my 20s while living in a student house with 30 people.

Whenever I enter a room, I am thinking of ways to make people laugh because as long as everyone around me is included and happy, I'm happy. What I didn't realise about myself immediately was that I had always had a very critical eye for

design. For years, this amounted to nothing more than pointing out disgusting fonts while walking the isles of my local Checkers. Only at the age of 26 did I finally learn that I could put this critical eye to use in the form of graphic design.

Behind the scenes with SA All-Star Lisa Black

Emily Stander 2 Aug 2022

⠿ *You've had a significant journey to graphic design - could you tell us how you ended up here?*

I love lots of different things so it took a lot longer to find my niche. I started out life wanting to be an actor, or musician, or film director, or, or, or … but anytime I actually tried anything it didn't feel right, or I didn't succeed.

When I finally found design, very unexpectedly, it felt like a culmination of so many things that I loved. The processes of writing music and design are insanely similar and it was right under my nose for so long without me realising it. Now, I often use it as a way to entertain or create narratives with hidden details.

⠿ *Could you tell us more about the work you did for Portfolio night?*

The Portfolio Night worked like a speed dating session where you would have to present several projects in 15 minutes. I unknowingly had way more slides than was expected so I ended up having to speak at almost double the speed!

The projects I chose to include best represented how my brain works. I like to look for weird patterns, connections or solutions to design puzzles of course humour was a running theme throughout.

⠿ *What are you hoping to gain from the Virtual Bootcamp?*

Honesty and constructive criticism are extremely important to me, which was the mindset I took going into the Portfolio Night. I will be doing the same for the Bootcamp because I really do want to learn as much as I can about design principles and gain more skills on how to effectively communicate ideas to people.

I am also hoping to learn even more about the possibilities within graphic design. I have a feeling that there are limitless options in which I could take it but I need to be exposed to more directions. Art direction and copywriting are also of interest to me so I would love to learn more about those fields too.

⠿ *What kind of impact are you hoping to make with your work?*

My biggest goal would be to lighten the emotional load of people's lives through humour.

Humour has a dramatically underrated power to encourage nuance and social change. I would also love to create stories and solutions through design to reconcile communities that are disconnected from each other. My motivations have always been very purpose-based, most likely because I am a Zillennial, but also because we live in a world that is more open to voicing opinions about its issues.

⠿ *What are your plans for the future?*

My plans are simply to keep going. I have big dreams that incorporate writing, music, film and design but I would like to see how I can build a future for myself that allows me to experiment in multiple areas of design between them. I could see myself moving across the world to try new and exciting things.

What is also exciting, is the possibility of new, unforeseen spheres of design that might be invented in the future, as technology is changing more and more every day. Maybe I'll be responsible for inventing a new field of work. I would love to see smartphones with glasses-free 3D screens or binaural earphones that let you move through instruments in your favourite song by taking a step.

ABOUT EMILY STANDER

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