

Delna Sethna, Ogilvy Africa's new chief creative officer

By  Emily Stander

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In May, Ogilvy announced the appointment of its new chief creative officer for Africa, Delna Sethna, officially starting with the agency this month in Nairobi, Kenya.



Image supplied: Delna Sethna, Ogilvy's new chief creative officer

With more than 20 years of experience, Sethna is going to Ogilvy from Red Fuse Communications, where she served as executive creative director and - among other accolades such as Cannes and D&AD awards - is where she successfully relaunched the Palmolive brand to the Indian market.

We spoke with her to find out more about her move to a new country, her work and her thoughts on the creative industry...

Tell us a bit more about yourself and your work

I've been privileged to work with some exceptional people early on in my career. Cyrus Oshidar (who later went on to head MTV India) is this mercurial genius who taught me to believe that there was always another and another and another creative solution to be had for the same problem; so you never have to lose any steam with every subsequent round of presentation.

What I have discovered in my experience over the years is that the creative process is best served when the 'approver' is looking to build and not tear down - and this applies equally to clients as to agency folk. To keep the architectural metaphor going, the deeper you dig (for insights) the higher you will soar (with ideas).



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■ ***How are you feeling about starting as Ogilvy Africa's chief creative officer?***

Proud. Scared. Excited. In equal measure.

Proud to be one of the few women who get to lead a mandate such as this.

Scared about moving to a new country, scared to watch my son head off to university in the UK, scared about what I don't know about the African markets, but most of all scared that I might let people down - that's the one I'll work on the hardest; winning the trust of my team, the respect of my peers and the confidence of our clients.

At the same time, I am excited about most of these things as well. I am eager to see what I can learn about African markets.

■ ***Could you tell us more about some accolades and achievements that make you proud?***

Making it to a list of 50 Influential Women in India - a country with 1.3 billion people - for two years in a row makes me believe I might be doing something right.

I've tried to pay it forward by joining bodies like the Collective and by mentoring young women in the WPP system through the Stella program.

For me, these contributions will always trump any I've been recognised for by a jury of my peers.

But what I am proudest of by far, is to be a mother - because there's nothing I can be prouder of than my son.



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■ ***What do you feel can be achieved in the African creative space that hasn't been recognised yet?***

What I recognise are the similarities between India and Africa. The multi-cultural people, the colonial past, the ambition, the drive, the haves and the have nots - there are too many to list.

What I look forward to is applying what I know to what I will learn, about Africa. And in the process perhaps come up with solutions that will come to be well recognised.

▣ ***What advice do you have to share with the future generation of women like you?***

I believe women need to stop thinking of themselves as women in the business and see how they can become the best version of a writer, art director, account executive, creative director, managing director, a chairperson.

Demand equal pay - something my generation, me included, failed to do.

Lift each other up. Ensure that women don't have to choose between a career and a family, support them to speak up for themselves, and show them that they don't have to curb a natural nurturing instinct for a predatory one.

And most importantly, like the matriarchs in the elephant herd, be thick-skinned!

ABOUT EMILY STANDER

Freelancer specialising in games and entertainment | My first loves are writing, music and video games

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