

Top 5 key take-outs from Design Indaba 2019

 By [Monare Matema](#)

6 Mar 2019

Last week I had the privilege of being sent by my CEO, Sylvester Chauke, to represent my agency (DNA Brand Architects) at Design Indaba. I was joined by a group of incredible young, black creatives including Nandi Dlepu popularly known as Mamakashaka, acclaimed emerging photographer Cedrick Nzaka of Everyday People's Stories, musician and TV producer Morena Sefatsa and Yanga Yaya, an eclectic Cape Town-based singer and songwriter who along with me got to experience the conference for the first time. The experience was nothing short of incredible and over 3 days we got to shape our thinking, especially with regards to the creative industry in South Africa and beyond.



Young creatives from left - Cedric Nzaka, Nandi Dlepu, Morena Sefatsa and Yanga Yaya at the 2019 Design Indaba.

The Design Indaba is an internationally acclaimed conference that takes place every year in Cape Town where creatives and designers from all over the world descend on the Artscape to set the standard for creative excellence, innovative entrepreneurship and lateral solutions-based thinking on global design and social challenges.

This year's conference had some incredible speakers from all over the world and I couldn't help but be inspired by the radical ideas they shared. They really challenged my conventional understanding of what design and creativity actually is. It's not just limited to the careers we are exposed to, it's so much broader and it opened my eyes to a new level of thinking that I hope will inspire you to think big!

Below are my 5-key take-outs that from this year's conference:

1. Sustainable ideas win

Sustainability was a running theme from conference speakers whose ideas had incredible ideas in the fields of architecture, product design, health and even burial. My standout was a young product designer Mirjam de Bruijn who found that almost all of our liquid cosmetics and household products contain about 80% water - which we transport and package while millions of people do not have access to clean water at home. She designed a system where the product, the 20%, can be bought in capsule form and prepared using water from the consumer's home using a reusable bottle.

Architect Dong-Ping Wong also presented his visionary thinking of how he thinks cities of the future will look like. Together with Off White fashion designer Virgil Abloh, they designed a city on stage in 15 minutes with ground up structures that included public spaces such as parks snaking up skyscrapers that literally reclaimed the skies for the people.

2. Challenging Stereotypes is key

The world has advanced quite far in challenging long held stereotypes relating to race and gender however being at the conference made me realise that we still have a long way to go. My standout in this subject was Kenyan filmmaker Wanuri Kaihu who recounted the many ways African peoples have always practised rituals of joy through the ages that included tales of dragons and mermaids.



#DesignIndaba2019: We need to believe in African mermaids

Louise Marsland 4 Mar 2019



This most likely inspired her next work around which sought to challenge stereotypical relationships in her outstanding film *Rafiki* which chronicles the love between two women. She ended off with a heartfelt plea to attendees to support films from creators who are non-white, female, binary and diverse. Check out the trailer for *Rafiki*:

Another outstanding speaker was Nigerian fashion designer Adebayo Oke-Lawal who is the founder of Nigerian fashion brand Orange Culture. He gave an impassioned speech that centred around how he is using fashion to challenge the toxic ideas around masculinity. In a groundbreaking on-stage presentation, we got to see his incredible collection of clothes that challenge the idea of what a man can and cannot wear.

3. Meaningful work matters

Advertising legend David Droga gave an incredible presentation on why doing meaningful work matters.



#DesignIndaba2019: Droga: Make advertising that people give a shit about

Terry Levin 4 Mar 2019



#DesignIndaba2019: "Find the emotional connection in a pure, authentic way" - David Droga

Ann Nurock 4 Mar 2019



“It takes the same amount of energy to do something great as it does to justify something mediocre, so why the hell not make something great?” said Droga. This indeed was a powerful antidote that challenged me as a professional working within marketing and brand communications to think about the work I have done and why it’s important for me to fight for work that matters. Check out some of the amazing work that Droga is championing at his agency Droga5 below:

4. Representation matters

In as much as the conference has made inroads over the years in having a representative panel of speakers that included African creatives like Wanuri Kaihu, Kagiso Lediga and Adebayo Oke-Lawal and a lot of female speakers at this year's conference, the truth is that there is still a long way to go.



#DesignIndaba2019: Kagiso Lediga on storytelling in entertainment

Angie White 1 Mar 2019



#DesignIndaba2019: Human myth vs AI machine

Terry Levin 4 Mar 2019



I was struck by the lack of young, black and female creatives attending the conference. This probably has a lot to do with access, but more than anything it's a matter of representation. There needs to be a lot more done in ensuring that young, black and diverse people have access to the main event.

I was personally thrilled that the Design Indaba gave us the opportunity to bring young, black creatives to share in the experience and I look forward to seeing more young people from diverse backgrounds shaping the agenda and the future of creativity and design as the conference celebrates its 25th anniversary in the coming year.

5. Collaboration

Lastly, I strongly believe that there is an opportunity for collaboration from established and emerging creatives with the Design Indaba.

It's only through working together that we can use the power of design and creativity to shape ideas that are going to provide sustainable solutions for the future. I look forward to seeing more and more projects that will be collaborative efforts between the Design Indaba and various stakeholders to make a lasting change through the power of ideas.

For more:

www.designindaba.com

ABOUT MONARE MATEMA

Monare Matema is an Associate Architect at Marketing and brand consultancy DNA Brand Architects. He describes himself as the voice of the millennial in the boardroom and has a passion for ideas that have the power to change the world. His work has won him notable accolades including Best Up and coming PR professional at the 2018 PRISM Awards, an IABC Gold Quill in communication management in 2018 he currently serves as a Young Judge for the PRISM Awards 2019.

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