

# Trillion Dollars worth of publicity for TBWA

 By [Herman Manson: @marklives](#)

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The [Trillion Dollar](#) campaign created by TBWA\Hunt\Lascaris Johannesburg for *The Zimbabwean* newspaper has brought the agency a seemingly endless trove of industry awards. The New York office of TBWA did the math and now considers the campaign the most awarded in advertising history, and the agency the top awarded agency this past year.



So far it has won the Black Pencil for Design at the D&ADs, the first-ever ADC Black Cube for best-in-show in advertising by the Art Directors Club (ADC) as well as three Golds, nine Cannes Lions including the Outdoor Grand Prix and five Gold Lions at the 2009 Cannes Lions International Advertising Festival, two Grand Clios (plus another six trophies), two Gold Andy awards from the 2010 International Andy Awards, four Gold Pencils at the 2010 One Show, and the Grand Prix and a Gold at the Loeries, as well as a Gold Apex. I'm not even mentioning the Bronzes and Silvers.

## Only one still counting

Tony Koenderman puts the total award tally at 63 awards since Cannes Lions. He might be the only one still counting.

ADC president Doug Jaeger explains that the campaign was recognised for the controversial statement it makes through the use of legal tender as the background for its messages. "It's not often that professionals from our field get the opportunity to look upon work that so clearly communicates its message, not only from the lyrics in the advertisement but the actual idea," says Jaeger.

"And this is clearly an idea that challenges its audience to think differently about its surroundings, the value of paper, currency and the governments that surround them."

"It's no mean feat to turn a symbol of oppression into a campaign for freedom of speech," adds Paul Brazier, D&AD president and ECD, AMV.BBDO. "But TBWA\Hunt\Lascaris have done exactly that with Trillion Dollar. It's such a simple idea, but it feels really fresh. That's what makes work like this stand out. The really breakthrough ideas are based on something very very simple. A lesson for all of us."

## "Something we could all learn from"

"One point of difference for South African agencies, I find, is the ingenious ideas they have to come up with to get noticed without a huge media spend. They have to stay relevant to the product or cause and still punch way above their weight. Again, something we could all learn from."

What is clear is that TBWA\Hunt\Lascaris MD Gavin Heron could not have bought this much publicity for all the Zim dollars he could possibly stuff in the trunk of his car. His agency has been featured in news wires, business papers and various industry publications across the globe.

Heron agrees that the perception of South African creativity has always been high internationally but adds that winning the Black Pencil takes the country onto the forefront of the (advertising) world.

"In terms of SA agencies this [the awards] puts the agency into a historic position," says Heron. "No SA agency has ever won a Black Pencil. For 2010, yes, TBWA\Hunt\Lascaris is in a league of its own. Probably the most awarded agency in the last 12 months in the world."

## Mightily overshadowed

Other South African award winners have been mightily overshadowed by the success of this campaign. Ogilvy won 10 out of the 22 awards at the APEX Awards this year, including a Grand Prix and one Gold Award for its KFC 'Finger Lickin' Great' campaign. But it's Trillion Dollar that dominates the trade headlines.

So what do competitors make of all this? They graciously accept TBWA's award dominance while reminding the industry that one (hugely successful) campaign doesn't place an agency in a league of its own.

"On a creative level, I think it is wonderful for the local advertising industry to have a billboard execution sweeping the global awards boards and providing ongoing proof of our world-class talent," says Mike Abel, chief executive partner at M&C Saatchi Abel.

"I don't think that there has been any doubt globally about our ability to perform at this level for two or more decades, with guys like [the late] Robyn Putter, John Hunt, Brian Searle-Tripp, Willie Sonnenberg, Graham Warsop and Tony Granger etc doing incredible, world-beating work from here. I guess it simply sustains and nourishes an existing perception... It is a further and timely endorsement."

## League of its own?

Abel doesn't believe that the campaign has put TBWA into a league of its own, though: "It simply says these guys came up with an amazing opportunistic idea for a billboard that has been lavishly awarded. It may say more about award competitions than the intrinsic value of their entries."

His sentiment is echoed by Alistair King, group creative director of King James, who says there is no doubt in his mind that the Trillion Dollar Campaign is the most awarded campaign in ad history - just because it appeared in so many mediums, and pretty much won the big prize in all of them.

"Its success has been so ridiculously over the top that TBWA Joburg is definitely very, very, very far out in front awards-wise among the South African agencies - I suspect that the whole South African ad industry combined probably still won't add up to the tally of that single agency this year - but one big campaign doesn't put an agency in a league of its own," he says.

King argues that consistent wins over a number of years over a number of accounts has always been the minimum requirement for an agency to be considered a dominant creative player. Still, he agrees that TBWA "have given themselves

a damn good start." King says he is sure the campaign and accompanying awards will give the agency "a plutonium size bolt of energy so we may well be witnessing the start of a new chapter for TBWA SA".

## Seeded notion worldwide

Jaeger agrees the creative community in South Africa has always been recognised for its high calibre of work but argues that TBWA\Hunt\Lascaris has especially seeded this notion worldwide.

"As the world gets smaller through technologies like Skype, LinkedIn, Google Docs, etc, we'd hope to see more global work coming from that region," says Jaeger.

"In the short time that the TBWA\H\L team was in NYC, we were able to celebrate and bring together ideas on how we could connect creatives in SA to the community here in NYC and around the world. Stay tuned for more."

Can TBWA\Hunt\Lascaris continue with its winning run past this campaign or will it have to settle for hunkering down and getting down to business as usual amid the continuing domestic and global economic uncertainties? As we await the answer, the applause remains deafening.

• *The 57th [Cannes Lions](#) International Advertising Festival kicks off on 20 June 2010, running until 26 June. Let's see what happens in the new 12-month awards cycle... - managing ed*

## ABOUT HERMAN MANSON: @MARKLIVES

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