

# Lisa Black, an illustrator to watch

 By [Karabo Ledwaba](#)

12 Apr 2023

Lisa Black embodies what is a rising star in the creative industry. The young illustrator graduated from the Red & Yellow Creative School of Business where she was a top performer. In December she was named an AdFocus Awards Student of the Year finalist.



Lisa Black is an intern illustrator who was one of the top students at Red & Yellow Creative School of Business. Source: Supplied.

### ■ *Tell me a little bit about Lisa Black*

I'm initially from the Helderberg Basin; I moved around quite a lot as a child and spent a large chunk of my childhood in the West Coast as well. I'm 22 now and have spent the last three years living in Cape Town. Before that I spent a bit of time abroad in Spain with my mom's side of the family, working as a receptionist and saving as much as possible for when I would return to go to university.

### ■ *What did you specialise in and why?*

I specialised in illustration, but have a love for art direction as well. I'm forever grateful to have been introduced to illustration during my studies, because before that time, it was a career path I had never considered and barely knew anything about. I experienced it to be such an effective and fun way to communicate my ideas with the world.

I found a new voice through illustration, and a new purpose as well when I started to see how people would interact with my work and the potential it had to make an impact. At the end of the day, illustration is that thing that lights my soul on fire. I'm a crafter and creator at heart and the act of illustrating brings me a sense of fulfilment.

### ■ *What do you enjoy most about being a creative?*

Like many other creatives, being in this field feels more like a need than a want: it is what feeds my soul and fires my heart. When I am not being creative, I feel like I am not being my best self. But this is a double-edged sword, because when your work is your passion and your driving force, it very easily consumes you in ways that are not always good.



A self portrait by Lisa Black.

Beyond this actualisation through creativity, I get great enjoyment from the sense of reaching other people and communicating with them on a deeper level. I have always found that the creative fields have an ability to engage people who would not normally engage with each other.

I find there is a power in illustration to be understood, to make people understand and to invoke emotions regarding events, issues and conditions that can not only bring us together, but also solve great problems. This sense of making people feel seen and creating spaces for important conversations is of great importance to me.

### ▣ ***What have been the highlights of your career/studying so far?***

One of my earliest highlights was the first time I created something that resonated with other people. That first time you see the excitement in someone else's eyes that shows you that they feel seen or understood through something you have created is very powerful. This was a first year project that in my third year of studying went on to be published in an anthology of creative work titled *Is my Queer Body not Strong Enough?*, edited by Dr Layla Cassim. Being featured in such a powerful collection of stories was another highlight and honour.

Furthermore, receiving awards such as Pendorings and the title of South Africa's All Star were great highlights during my studies that helped me see the power of creativity to reach others.

### ▣ ***What have been the challenges you have faced?***

One of the most frustrating and recurring challenges of my creative career has been creative block and a sense of burnout. There is nothing more disheartening than the days or weeks or sometimes months where it feels like you simply cannot solve a problem or create anything.



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With time I learnt that this is really just a part of the process. Creativity is not a sacred talent bestowed on a select few of us, nor is it something that can be forced. It took me a very long time to understand that sometimes answers present themselves through rest, or a change of scenery and sometimes through systematic work (research, midmaps, sketching).

### ▣ ***Are you employed yet, where and what do you do?***

I'm currently working as an intern at Studio Kronk in Cape Town, where I am delighted to be able to learn from and work for some of the most talented illustrators and designers.

### ▣ ***Who are the people in the industry who inspire you?***

As cheesy as it may be, during my studies at Red and Yellow, my lecturers were some of the most inspiring people to me. Their love for their craft and dedication to their work gave me a great sense of who I was and who I want to be.

Beyond that, Maria Corte, Oliver Jeffers, Felicia Chiao and Alice Bloomfield are some illustrators who inspired me to go into the industry many years ago and who I continue to draw inspiration from today. I must also add that every day I feel like I am meeting and being inspired by new illustrators. There is so much beautiful work being done out there and I feel truly blessed to be able to live in a city that harbours so many incredible creatives.

### ▣ ***What are your future goals?***

My future goals seem to change with every passing day. I have a million different ideas of what I want to accomplish in my

lifetime and even more ideas of how I want to do that. An underlying theme in everything is that I want to use my skills and passions to make a difference to whatever degree I can. I love facilitating important conversations and allowing voices to be not only heard, but more importantly understood.

It would be amazing to one day have my own studio and the means to run my own projects (I've been toying with the idea of creating some picture books for a while), but for now, I'm just looking for a place where I can contribute to something that makes me feel a sense of accomplishment and warmth at the end of the day.

### ■ ***What do you want to positively add to the industry?***

I believe that representation is so important and so I would love to add a sense of authenticity and inclusivity to the industry. I don't think that these things are particularly lacking, but it would be amazing to bring even more to the table. I would also love to contribute towards a culture of kindness, sharing and helping each other as creatives. There is so much beauty in the ways that creative people can learn from each other and how those skills can evolve from person to person.

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## ABOUT KARABO LEDWABA

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