

Marching to an African beat



By [Edward Herridge](#)

6 Apr 2021

The strong and bold rhythm of Africa is the emotive marching drum that has followed humanity from its cradle at the southern end of the continent to its rise in dominance over this world. It is a rhythm that beats within the breast of us all, it is the steady rhythm of the heart, the emotive catalyst of creation that elevated our species from primate to dominion.



Photo by Askar Abayev © from [Pexels](#)

It is not per chance that the most mysterious and potent of civilisations in history have found purchase on African soil. The best known of these, and historically most recent, is the ancient Egyptian dynasty of the Pharaoh, but archaeological evidence exist of other far more ancient, advanced civilisations that existed on African soil.

Earth's heart beats in the chest of Africa. It is a relentless emotional engine that has driven us to explore and create. It is what has impelled our species to leave our African shores and populate the most remote corners and continents of the world. As the aeons passed humanity changed and adapted to new environments.

Features, skin tones, cultures and civilisations flowed into a multitude of variations but the beat that reverberates within all of our chests is still the echo of the African drum. This is why the allure of Africa remains and why the inevitable cycle of history will one day again see Africa rise to global prominence. It is inevitable. Africa is the last truly fertile bastion of this world and its natural resources are vast and abundant while its people remain vibrant, vital, creative and resilient. The only way for Africa is up.

This instinctual driving force is what makes Africa's contemporary creative scene a dynamic and innovative mixing pot of conceptual diversity that profoundly explores the continent's socio-economic challenges in juxtaposition to its people's rich cultural traditions which are deeply rooted within the historic foundations of our civilisation.



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This is not only exemplified by Africa's artists but has also been planted in the rich dark soil of its commercially focused creative fields such as advertising. Here Africa's steady evocative rhythm drives its creatives to greater elevations of innovation. The best example of this was evidenced at the height of the global Covid-19 pandemic where the importance of creative solutions to business problems rose to relevance in the face of a global pandemic.

Providing real world value

We at Grey advertising South Africa are proud to be counted amongst the leaders of African agencies who managed to bridge the gap of social distancing and help salve the isolation of lockdown. We managed this feat with creative solutions that provided real world value to both our clients and our people.

Thanks to the imagination of our talented people we managed to continue growing a brand such as Savanna with the Savanna Comedy Bar initiative by offering employment to local comedians during a time when live gigs were impossible and social connection by simply letting us all laugh together again.

If one thinks about African creativity in the context of advertising, we are talking about the re-imagining of the continent, or rather remembering Africa as it once was, and then painting this dream in broad strokes on to the canvas provided to us by the modern world.

At Grey SA we take innovation and the cultural vibrancy of African creativity and re-imagine it to not only create value for our clients but also value for society. It's not just about selling stuff any more. In today's rapidly developing modern world the exponential ascendance of technology has left most confused and anxious as machines and computers continue to take over tasks once considered the sole domain of human mind and labour.

In this climate creativity is needed more than ever to imagine new realities that are better suited to the human heart. Our challenge is to elevate creativity's value to the same level as that of other disciplines such as finance, engineering, technology and manufacturing.



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Creativity and imagination

We, who work in advertising, do after all sell creativity. That is the sum total of our output and arguably probably one of the most valuable human commodities available on this planet. Had it not been for creativity humans would simply not exist today. It's how we learned to predict the unpredictable future after all. It's a simple thing to catch a ball because one does not need a lot of imagination to do so.

It is however a completely different matter to predict the curving trajectory of tomorrow, the day after and the months follow. This is where the brave dreams of Africa comes in. It's about knowing the unknown to survive the unseen dangers lurking within the shadows and simultaneously creating a better future from nothing but sheer imagination and will. This is the imagination we sell.

The rare sort that can build better futures in the face of adversity. Admittedly creativity is not a science, it is an art, but it is still an intellectual human quality that allows us to think the unthinkable and create the uncreatable, how else did we learn to fly?

This is what we offer. We craft creative solutions but best of all, we only sell the original and not the print, we sell African creativity and we give you our hearts to certify the purchase.

ABOUT EDWARD HERRIDGE

Edward matriculated in 1992 after which he performed military service and began his working career in printing by studying electronic origination at the South African Printing College. Edward eventually became an account executive for Oakes and Associates at Investec Bank. He then migrated into advertising and became brand manager for Ronin Grain Management Solutions. Edward departed Ronin GMS to pursue his own interest before finding employment at Grey advertising as a finishing artist, re-toucher, motion graphic and digital designer.

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