

Brandt Botes, CD of design at Old Friend Young Talent

 By Jessica Tennant

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This week, we go behind the mask with Brandt Botes, creative director of design at Old Friend Young Talent...



"With my name, it was inevitable I'd work with brands. Also, I'm smiling. I promise"

■ So tell us, what's really behind your mask (literally and/or figuratively speaking).

A dad of twin three-year-olds who's more tired than he should be on returning from holiday. And someone who is cautiously optimistic of what 2021 will serve up in light of the year we've had.

■ Where are you locked down?

Newlands, Cape Town – spending my days between working from home and our office in Claremont.

■ How are you finding working from home or physical distancing at the office / how has your way of working changed?

Teams calls are exhausting. I think I speak for everyone. We over communicate in order to keep on the same page, body language and a room is hard to read, nuance is lost and meetings tend to take longer (can everyone see my screen / you're on mute / etc). Generally we've worked harder and more focussed in lockdown than before – and we've also produced some of our best work in the last year under unusual circumstances.

■ Describe a typical workday, if such a thing exists.

We keep a strict routine. Not only for the twins, but also for our own sanity. We don't get enough sleep but wake up early and have breakfast together. Coffee is critical. More often than not, I will work from the office. Our work day starts with a team status. Once everyone knows what they need to achieve for the day, I get into reviews, brainstorming and meetings (quite a few of these).

I also need to carve out time to do my own work in between. I get home after 5pm and get into the evening routine that takes us to about 8/9pm. Then it's back to the computer if duty calls. It's a full day.

■ ***How do you maintain a good rapport with your team mates/clients?***

Regular check-ins and status calls are critical. And also being human - humour is a very important part of our culture and I try to shoot the breeze every morning before we get into business mode. Also, one on one time with your team members are super important.

■ ***How do you socialise these days?***

I expend a lot of energy during my work day and really enjoy not having to socialise that much. While people see me as an extrovert, I really like to not hear the sound of my own voice. I have a close group of friends, and we stay in touch/check in on each other regularly.

■ ***What do you do to keep fit/healthy and/or sane (physically/mentally)?***

We try and do as much with the twins as possible over weekends and get them and ourselves out of the house in some form or way. Other than that, walking in Newlands Forest and the mountain always clears my head.

■ ***What new apps would we find if we scrolled through your phone?***

The Drink Water Reminder + Tracker & Procreate (iPad)

■ ***Share your favourite Covid-19/lockdown-related meme/gif with us.***

The Disappointed Fan. I feel he sums up the way we feel about 2020. Love the origin vid as well.



■ ***What is the first thing you plan to do when the lockdown lifts?***

Hug people

■ ***Describe your career and if/how the pandemic/lockdown has affected its course.***

This year has seen a sea of change in the way we approach and do business. How we communicate, connect and consume information. But at the core of it all is still ideas. One of my favourite clients said to me that design will always be relevant, as it's about solving problems irrespective of what they are. We have certainly moved into motion and animation as an output a lot more, and I'm really enjoying the opportunities and challenges it brings.

■ ***Any companies/brands that you feel have responded particularly well to the crisis and/or Covid-19-related campaigns that stand out to you, and why?***

This clip did the round in the middle of lockdown. For me it underscores our shared anxiety, isolation and need for reassurance. A lot of brands come across as insincere and consumers were quick to call them out on it.

This also stood out for me though.

■ ***What are you working on right now?***

I work with a wonderful team who consistently deliver world-class work. We've been working on the [Galaxy&Co brand launch](#) over the last few months, an update of the Franchhoek Beer Company's brand identity and packaging, myTFG identity roll-out, a craft gin pack design and launch, and design and animation for a five-part documentary series called Sneakers x Guns.

■ ***What does the 'new normal' look like to you?***

Small teams doing big things on a global platform

■ ***What are some of the buzzwords floating around at the moment, and some of the catchphrases you utter yourself?***

“Can you see my screen”, “You’re on mute”, “Where’s my mask”

■ ***What advice would you give to other industry folk during this time?***

Churchill said – if you’re going through hell, keep going. Times are tough – be kind to yourself and those around you, drink water, walk in nature and practice gratefulness. Be brave enough to suck at something new.

ABOUT JESSICA TENNANT

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