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The Global-Local Future

A Q&A With Saatchi & Saatchi Design Expert Derek Lockwood

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New Zealand-based Derek Lockwood is in charge of design for Publicis Groupe's Saatchi & Saatchi. As such he has a different take on the future of global creativity. Here he talks to AdAge about it.



Derek Lockwood

Ad Age: How has the recession affected creativity?

Mr. Lockwood: The impact is huge. It places a great deal more pressure on creative effectiveness. While recessions are certainly the time to turn to creativity for innovative solutions beyond the obvious or the traditional, the difficulty is that the propensity for risk is considerably lower. This, of course, in and of itself can create conflict -- how do you choose the right creative solution when traveling down the unknown road.

As difficult as it is to accept, the answers more likely lay at either end of a spectrum. At one end is the fast, quick-fire solutions that can be tested in the market, adapted and changed as consumers respond, and at the other -- where fortune favors the brave -- is the amazingly audacious big ideas, the highly engaging creative solutions, that have never been done before but will likely create immense impact and connectivity.

The challenge is in accepting that playing it safe just simply doesn't work in tough times. Those who try to tread carefully, who overly research or formulate their ideas, opting for the previously safe territory will be lost. Consumers are clearly seeking out new value from their experiences discounting the unnecessary, the average, and the bland, hence in recessionary times there will be little room for mediocrity in the mix. So be brave or be fast. Just don't be average.

Ad Age: What work -- that you're not affiliated with -- has most impressed you in the past year or so?

Mr. Lockwood: The Beijing Olympics. The buildings -- the Bird's Nest and the Water Cube are some of the most inspired and complex architectural challenges created this decade. The opening ceremony was unsurpassed for inspiration, co-ordination, scale, and passion. Not too mention budget. We are unlikely to see another like it again. For sheer creative brilliance and commitment to detail, you have to rate it one of the best creative events ever.

Ad Age: In terms of creativity, what region or country or city are you most impressed with and why?

Mr. Lockwood I always love Milan, perhaps because of the brilliance that is always presented at the furniture fair -- undoubtedly one of the best design events on the planet.

But my pick is South America, which is producing some of the most inspired design and communications around. The work is always emotionally engaging; they have great empathy and frequently adopt very fresh graphic styling and original design. Truly a region that believes in breaking the paradigm.

Brazil and Argentina particularly are constantly punching above their weight and deservedly so.

Ad Age: What campaign should clean up at Cannes this year?

Mr. Lockwood: I think we will see a greater emphasis on ideas that engage the audience in new ways. Consumers want to be involved, to participate, to feel like they are a part of a campaign or an event, not simply being preached to.

In this regard you have to love the T-Mobile "Dance," [which took place] in Liverpool station, London. It was contagious, audacious and beautifully executed. Not flash, just real. If you didn't get to experience it firsthand, those who had seen it surely wanted to share it. Hence it scored massively on the "have you seen this" meter.

For more traditional work, I rate the Scrabble campaign. Love the design, its intelligence, its style and engagement.

Ad Age: In an era of GPS and microtargeting, what's the future of the global campaign?

Mr. Lockwood: I think the big issue facing global campaigns is one of intimacy.

While there will no doubt always be room for highly engaging, emotionally rich global concepts -- you just have to look to the Susan Boyle phenomenon to see that -- the challenge facing global campaigns is how to deliver the local personalization and intimacy that consumers are now seeking from their brand relationships. This is particularly true in retailing, which is becoming less and less about products and more and more about experiences.

While consumers love to feel they are part of something bigger than themselves, and global concepts help us feel we can manage the world we live in, the value we are seeking from consumption is changing. The days of the large corporation preaching to the masses, with rolled-out precision, is coming to an end.

The future is about global-local. Not a new concept but one that now truly needs to be delivered. Global concepts that deliver local relevance, knowledge, intimacy and connectivity are going to win. The same I suspect will also be true for global brand communications, the template-style formulaic communications that deliver aesthetic familiarity but fail on intimacy are unlikely to move consumers the way they want to be moved.

Hence finding ways to deliver a more personalized, participatory and engaging, locally relevant experience that is part of a bigger community will be critical.