

Rethinking creative advertising solutions with Odette van der Haar

 By [Emily Stander](#)

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The Gerety Awards, which were held in early September this year, looks at advertising through the lens of women in the industry. With the aim to set a benchmark for creative communications, Gerety Awards also has an all-female jury. We spoke with Odette van der Haar, who was on the Grand Jury, and an Adland veteran.



Odette van der Haar

From the beginning of her career, Van der Haar has had a passion for lobbying for race and gender equality. However, she finds that these issues are still prevalent. "It's scary. I see it as an entrepreneur, that we have to play the good cop, bad cop, between my partner and I," she said. "If he needs a female in the room, we have to read the room and we have to do what we need to do in order to get our foot in the door. Sometimes it's very disheartening because we just want to do good work."

Being able to employ people, earn a decent living, and playing their part in the South African economy are some of the things which Van der Haar holds important in her general work. Alleviating poverty and contributing to gender equality are key motivators in this regard. "It's really difficult if you're a person of colour, male or female, to get your foot in the door," she said. "It's even more difficult if you're a female to be seen as a real contributor to business, and not just as a lady."

The Gerety Awards

The Gerety Awards looks to avoid the circumstances that women often find themselves in in the workplace, and actively seeks their point of view when making decisions for their award ceremony.

For Van der Haar, the only reason she wanted to participate in the judging process was that Gerety Awards hosts an all-female jury. “You think, this is going to take quite a chunk of my time, what is meaningful about this?” she said. “In Adland, awards are really not meaningful, most of the time. A lot of work is created for the purpose of getting an award. Not for the purpose of actually selling a product.”



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Van der Haar continued to say that a lot of the time, work that you see is really resonating and beautiful - but sometimes the budget for this kind of work does not exist. As such, it's imperative to know how to use creativity to your advantage.

“It takes a different kind of thinking, a different kind of approach,” Van der Haar said. This was the kind of thinking she looked for in the winning work for Gerety Awards.

The idea is to draw inspiration from places you might not expect it to rise - as Van der Haar expressed with a recent project she did with a client. The inspiration for this particular project came from her late mother-in-law, who has a dressmaking business on the side. “Initially I thought, that's bizarre,” she said when talking about the client, who wanted an advertisement for taking out loans amidst Covid-19. “How are we going to tell people to take a loan? Who are the kinds of people that would need a loan during lockdown?”. Van der Haar said there was no research, just thinking - a basic level of common sense, which brought together a successful campaign at the end of the day.

Wisdom to impart

The idea behind successful, award-winning work can often be taken as something which needs a large budget, or a large team, to make a reality. But this is not necessarily true - all it takes is some creative thinking.



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But what about issues with race and gender in the advertising industry?

Look out for part 2, in which Van der Haar will unpack issues of race and gender in the advertising industry, and how she has worked to make advertising a better space for marginalised groups.

ABOUT EMILY STANDER

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