

Design wizardry and magic on display at the Red & Yellow Graduate Showcase

 By Leigh Andrews

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It's little wonder that Red & Yellow School of Magic and Logic's MD, Diane Charton's advice on what it takes to succeed as a creative is so sought after, with this year's graduating class walking away with scores of wins at all the big awards.

Drizzly grey days bring with them a sense of expectation, especially when the day in question is when you first visit the Red & Yellow School of Magic and Logic in Salt River. Doesn't that name make it seem like I took a trip to Hogwarts?

Well a trip to Hogwarts is what I got, with the Red & Yellow Graduate Showcase, taking place on 27 November 2014, a truly special event that highlighted the emerging talent of the graduating class. There were no sloppy seconds here, with all the work displaying polished ideas and a great grasp of creativity. What made the showcase even more special was that it coincided with the school's 20th anniversary and lots of award-nominated and -winning work was on display.



As a result, school co-founders Allan Raaff and Brian Searle-Tripp, as well as Roger and Bob of legendary local advertising agency [Rightford, Searle-Tripp & Makin](#), were in attendance to share some industry wisdom and sign more copies of the book.

Gotz on the guts to succeed in this industry

Keynote speaker Chris Gotz, Chief Creative Officer of Ogilvy & Mather, was part of the first Red & Yellow class of 1994. He kicked off by stating that 20 years ago he arrived in what was essentially a dolled up warehouse in Gardens as part of first class and didn't know what to expect, which was fantastic. The owners knew how to run an ad agency so they did that instead of running Red & Yellow as a school, and Gotz feels this is still evident today as the portfolios that come to Ogilvy from Red & Yellow are head and shoulders above others. Gotz said you build up an amazing body of work here based on very exacting standards, even if you weren't part of the infamous 'Rooftop Club', so named as they would run starkers on the roof - enough said!

Gotz ended by mentioning two things to remember. One is to look up at the real world and your balance stimulus, don't keep your focus down on your screen or you'll miss all that actually matters. The other point is to avoid describing yourself as 'well rounded', as angles rip through bullsh*t, so everyone in the industry should rather dedicate their self to work that succeeds in being spiky and interesting. Remember that the toughest part isn't in coming up with ideas but rather having the guts to defend them.

I also chatted to Diane Charton at the event. Charton is currently MD of the school and says one of her main focus areas has been looking at how to move the whole business forward, integrating what was Quirk Education and the bones of Red & Yellow into one business. It now offers the full extent of what young creatives need, from online professional development to a full-time school environment. Charton shares that it was actually easy to get started as despite Quirk Education having a digital skill-focus, they essentially had the same learning- and outcomes-based philosophy from the start, of providing the industry with work-ready graduates, so bringing the two together made sense.



Diane Charton

Simulated real-world briefs, real-world award results

On display was a collection of work over the students' three years, mostly from their final year. But that's where the work similarity ends, as the length of time each piece of work took to create differs, and some was worked on concurrently, like embarking on a digital project while fine-tuning their art direction skill. This means we saw a smorgasbord of the students' portfolios, covering the spectrum of copywriting, graphic design, art direction and more, as well as their personal selection of their best work. There was just so much to look at, with the main room filled with cross-over pieces. Charton explains they simulated an agency environment at the school, with the students working on real-world briefs for real-world clients.

And has this work been awarded in the real-world? Has it ever. Charton explains that the school enters all the big local award shows like the *Loeries* and *Pendorings* on the students' behalf. It has truly been a year for celebration. In this regard, with three students up for Cape Town portfolio night and student Grethe Meissner winning, which meant she got to compete in New York as the Red & Yellow school and overall Cape Town representative, with a further two D&D nominees competing in London. This year also saw 18 *Loerie* finalists, of which the school had four winners, with a second-year student winning a WDC book cover design challenge, and Bob won the lifetime achievement award, with another student winning the AdFocus Student of the Year Award. All proof that the small graduating class did very well for itself.

The secret to being successful, no matter what you specialise in

In closing, Charton offered some advice to youngsters hoping to break into the industry. It's the same advice she gives

everyone, she explains, as she believes all you need to do well in your chosen career, whatever it may be that you choose to do, is to do it with passion and commitment. You have to be excited about change as this industry thrives on it, and it's essential to have an interest in what actually motivates people. Mix this all together and you have the winning formula for a successful career, provided you also throw in ample hard work.

It's a fiercely competitive industry, but extremely rewarding, as evident in the award-winning work of the students of Red & Yellow School of Magic and Logic's latest graduating class.

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