

SummerTime lets female creativity shine



By Leigh Andrews

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The lyrics go "Summer time, and the livin' is easy", and that happy, relaxed vibe is exactly what you're left with after chatting to SummerTime strategic design studio's founders, Sandhya Singh and Raksha Mahabeer, who clearly love what they do. Here's why.

"The information age in late-2016 sees 'modern' retro styles being favoured with the use of illustrations and designers becoming really smart about combining retro and contemporary design styles. This means colours are becoming more bold and bright with negative space designs featuring as well as interesting combinations of typography for a more dramatic effect, be it through the manipulation of size or colour. Custom designs and illustrations are shining as well with a more abstract, minimalist style in general."



SummerTime

It's a quote you'd only get from vibrant creatives. These in particular draw inspiration from the personalities of those South African heroes who wanted to tell the world a story about colours. To them, white represents an open canvas for creativity to take flight, with black the indelible impressions you leave on the canvas and together they create images that are rainbow-coloured with imagination. That's the essence of SummerTime, but their design philosophy's about more than just about creating pretty pictures.

As branding specialists, they know that the most successful brands are those that are meaningful, memorable and consistent. They wanted their own business to be exactly these things, and explain that the name SummerTime is an emotive one: they wanted a business name that would give clients a feeling of ease and relaxation (see, I was right!) "For us, the energy behind Summer represents that," they say.

Female design flavour

Making them the ultimate #WomensMonth interviewees, both have the sunny personalities you'd expect from such Summer-minded folk, as well as a positive outlook on business in SA based on their aim to elevate mundane creativity to the sublime. Something I didn't expect is that they go by the quirky nicknames of 'The Art' and 'The Beat' respectively. Not your typical job titles, they just don't do conventional job titles and feel these encompassing titles speak perfectly to what they do, both in the business and in life.

When they finished school, many of their peers were leaving SA. "We did so too, to experience a bit of the world. Our travels reiterated for us what a special continent we live in and how wide open it is with opportunities. We love SA and we love Africa. We want our country and our continent to thrive and we believe that we can contribute to this by ensuring the success of the job creators – the SMMEs. We want to see local production grow and unemployment and poverty being alleviated. We are using our creative talents and love for design to help these businesses to success. "



The Art and The Beat with someone who may seem familiar...

And that's exactly what they do. Speaking of female-specific job challenges, they say, "Being nurturers at heart, it can be challenging finding a sense of balance. At the start, your business requires your attention 24/7 – like a newborn. Finding your unique rhythm is what it's all about. Writing your own definition of success and finding your own sense of balance."

Beyond BEE status: the art and the beat of business

While they started with the simple vision back in 2007 to make high-level professional services available to small businesses in helping to profile themselves and stand out from the crowd, the ever-increasing focus on small business and entrepreneurship led them to expand their offering in line with what those SMMEs are lacking: a Masterful sales and marketing toolkit that's "well branded, well written, well designed", to present a professional persona and brand proposition with the confidence to go out into an often very crowded marketplace and stand out.

That's of utmost importance to them as SA is alive with opportunities for entrepreneurs. They explain, "The B-BBEE act has opened up so much for SMMEs especially under the Enterprise and Supplier Development pillar. We are a 100% black female-owned business and find more and more businesses proactively contacting us based on our BEE status." This has allowed them to showcase SummerTime's creative talents beyond BEE status. They say the spirit of *ubuntu* is still beating strong in our country and that entrepreneurs are open to connecting, engaging and contributing to each other's success, whether through information-sharing, collaborations or more formal partnerships.

While there are many formal business incubators, support organisations and the like providing training, it's through mentorship and access to network opportunities that entrepreneurs will be best encouraged and supported to be their best – no matter the season.

For more on SummerTime, follow [@Sandhya_TheArt](#) and [@Raksha_TheBeat](#) on Twitter.

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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