

#DesignMonth with... Sarah Mitchell

This week, we find out what's really going on behind the selfie with Sarah Mitchell - junior designer at Gorilla, former Vega School of Brand Leadership Durban Campus student, and student of the year at the 2015 Financial Mail Annual AdFocus Awards.



This is not a layout mistake. Mitchell says: "I look much more Asian upside down."

1. Where do you live, work and play?

Mitchell: I live in Durban, work at a digital agency called Gorilla and play wherever the beers may be.

2. What's your claim to fame?

Mitchell: Recently, I won student of the year at the [AdFocus Awards](#).

3. Describe your career so far.

Mitchell: Things are going slowly. It's only a few weeks I've been employed in an office space. I've had time to ease in from my internship, which is really nice.

But I must admit I miss being able to see my vegetable garden from my desk at home.

4. Tell us a few of your favourite things.

Mitchell: I love all sorts of things, from gardening to gaming, to writing to manically organising everything I own. I have a problem with being a minimalist but also wanting to collect all my favourite things. At the moment, I'm very into indie comics and cacti. I love recycling things to use as pot plants for succulents. I also have a small problem with Superbalist sales. Free delivery and half price, guys. It's too much.

5. What do you love about your industry?

Mitchell: It's dynamic and people are very open to new ideas. The industry thrives on change, latching on to new technology and innovation. It's an interesting environment to be in because you're always learning new things.

6. Describe your average workday, if such a thing exists.

Mitchell: If I'm not glued to the screen when I get to work in the morning, I'm in meetings or having brainstorm sessions. Luckily there haven't been any long nights for me yet, but I know they will soon roll on in.

7. What are the tools of your trade?

Mitchell: A kind of creative logic, problem-solving skills and an understanding of the Adobe suite. You also need to be comfortable sharing your ideas during discussions, which I've learned quickly. Thankfully.

Having been a student at Vega School of Brand Leadership, which is a brand of The Independent Institute of Education (TIIIE), I was exposed to a lot of agency-like activities and simulations, so I came into my job more prepared than most.

8. Who is getting it right in your industry?

Mitchell: I think global brands like Coca-Cola are definitely doing good things. They're using the massive power they hold to do better things for people and the planet. Whether it's connecting families or finding new ways to use waste, they're trying to make Coke more than a brand. They're recognising their own negative effect on the environment and trying to turn it into something positive. It seems sincere.

Although very different and not exactly advertising, I also love what Lush does. They are so ethical. They don't believe they should be labelled "an ethical brand" because all brands should simply operate the way they do by virtue of being human. They really give a damn about what they do and how it affects the planet.

9. What are you working on right now?

Mitchell: A variety of things: campaign ideas, key visuals and your average daily social media posts. In my spare time (lol) I work on my comics.

10. Tell us some of the buzzwords floating around in your industry at the moment, and some of the catchphrases you utter yourself.

Mitchell: "It's 2016, why don't you have Snapchat?" I hear that a lot in the office. With a digital agency, you're always looking for cool new innovation in social media, apps and other digital devices – which means endless acronyms you have to Google after meetings.

I think advertisers are trying to be more human in a lot of their work. People no longer want to be sold something with no value, especially in a world where you can turn to the internet to find out the authenticity of anything you want. It's lovely to see brands doing it for the good of others and not just for pure manipulation/profit. Of course, at the end of the day, it's up to the company. Often a beautiful idea is pitched and outright commercialised. It's awful to watch a great idea be diluted to suit the client.

I vaguely remember reading a speech by the guy responsible for the "Never Say No to the Panda" adverts.

He was at the Loeries last year. I remember he said something like... The company is paying you, so give them what they need not what they want. As an agency, you are offering a service built on years of experience and creative talent. You have the ability to create something they cannot. Therefore you get to dictate what's good for them.

11. Where and when do you have your best ideas?

Mitchell: Conversations often set off a reaction with me. Not small talk about the weather, genuine discussion. Especially from people whose backgrounds I have little understanding of.

Once I've formed an idea, I work best alone. Especially at home. My family has always had dinner together at the table. We often talk politics and the way of the world. I think it's a great habit I've had instilled in me.

12. What's your secret talent/party trick?

Mitchell: I have double-jointed thumbs.

13. Are you a technophobe or a technophile?

Mitchell: Neither, I'm somewhere in the middle. Some devices seem ridiculous and wasteful to me. I definitely hate the planned obsolescence ingrained in most big brands nowadays. It bugs me that nothing lasts for more than a few brief years then you're really forced to buy a new product. I loved the idea of [Phone Bloks](#) as a means to resolve that issue. That's where I think technology is great: When it actually helps.

We live in a world where we can 3D-print limbs and spinal columns. A lot of current developments were pretty much science fiction a decade or two ago. I'm still not sure if that makes the future look fantastic or frightening.

14. What would we find if we scrolled through your phone?

Mitchell: Insufficient memory space. Definitely no selfies. Mostly visual references, Instagram screenshots and terrible memes from friends. Many, many unread emails from Superbalist and Takealot.

15. What advice would you give to newbies hoping to crack into the industry?

Mitchell: Don't be arrogant. *Vasbyť*. Be patient. You've got a lot to learn.

You can read more about the Mitchell by [clicking here](#), and interact with her through the following social media accounts:

[Portfolio](#)

[Behance](#)

[Tumblr](#)

[LinkedIn](#)

*Interviewed by [Leigh Andrews](#)

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

Leigh Andrews AKA the #MilkshakeQueen, is former Editor-in-Chief: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com, with a passion for issues of inclusion, belonging, and of course, gourmet and drinks! Now follow her travel adventures on YouTube @MidlifeMeander. View my profile and articles...

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