

Havas bids farewell to Welsh, promotes O'Connor and Sethebe to joint ECDs

 By [Jessica Tennant](#)

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Havas Johannesburg has announced chief creative officer Eoin Welsh's resignation, and the promotion of Fiona O'Connor and Tumi Sethebe as joint executive creative directors, effective 2 January 2018.

Welsh will be leaving the agency group at the end of 2017 to pursue passion projects, the agency said.

“I'm leaving because I want to get back to what I do best, which is help make the best possible work. I want to have less of a management role and dedicate my energy far more to the work itself. So it's a personal decision to take on a role that would be more fulfilling for me – nothing to do with Havas as an agency at all, which I leave with considerable sadness, but also content in the knowledge that Fiona and Tumi are more than capable of taking up the lead role and guiding the agency to new heights.”



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3 Feb 2017



Lynn Madeley, CEO of Havas Southern Africa, says, “We are grateful for everything Eoin has done for the Group and we will certainly miss him. His departure gives us the opportunity to flatten our structure further and become even more focused on being future-fit.

“Our people are at the core of our business and as such, we looked inside the organisation for talent that would take our agency to the next level. Tumi and Fiona have proven themselves with their incredible work ethic and are well deserving of this promotion. I'm particularly excited to see them leading the creative team and I'm positive that their different perspectives will lend our work the right amount of tension needed to maintain and continue asserting our excellence.”



Fiona O'Connor and Tumi Sethebe

O'Connor says she's grateful for the recognition that both Sethebe and she have been given. “It's an exciting time to lead brands through this maze that is the consumer landscape and it demands a new kind of clever from us as custodians. Two heads are certainly better than one and I believe that Tumi and I have both the smarts and the grit needed to lead our

creative team to success.

Sethebe agrees: “It’s an honour to be appointed along with Fiona, whom I have incredible respect for. This is a huge moment for us, the business and our clients, as it represents a new chapter that will redefine how we navigate and stay on course doing great work for our clients in this ever-changing world that we live in, characterised by a consumer that is moving at an incredible pace and purpose. I am a serial collaborator and so I am very excited about what Fiona and I will achieve given our very diverse backgrounds, experiences and points of view.”

Here, they share more about why they’re looking forward to working together and how they plan to make 2018 the best year ever...

■ ***How do you feel about working together?***

O’Connor: I am delighted and honoured to be one half of this pair. I love working with Tumi and I respect him enormously. We make a good (read: amazing) team because while we have different backgrounds, fundamentally, we think the same way. Also, he’s a really nice guy.

Sethebe: I am so excited to be working with Fiona because she is a talented creative, with a wealth of experience. I always call her my partner in crime. Based on our very diverse backgrounds, I think we will bring an interesting edge to the agency group in Southern Africa.

■ ***What do you hope to contribute to the ad world, in your positions as joint ECDs while at Havas?***

O’Connor: The industry is changing all the time and we want to contribute to the change. It’s an exciting time to be working on brands. Also, deep down, all creatives, whether junior or senior, really just want to do great work. We want to do amazing work that supports our clients’ business and touches the average man in the street. Oh, and have fun along the way.

Sethebe: Creating great work that is relevant, compelling and memorable. For me, advertising is about the gift of discovery and the dizzying scale of change in our consumer and business landscapes makes that discovery all the more exciting.

■ ***What do you love most about being a creative?***

O’Connor: We really have the best job in the world. Honestly. We literally do something different every day. Not a lot of people can say that.

Sethebe: I love the idea that you can start with a blank piece of paper and end at making a change in someone’s life. I love that our output, when done right, is not just about pushing sales for our clients but it is about influencing behaviour change and adding meaning to people’s lives.

■ ***Which brand have you enjoyed working on most, and why? Or which piece of work are you most proud of and why?***

O'Connor: This is like asking which of my children I prefer! I work on a lot of brands at the same time, and am immensely proud of what we put out for them. The work I am most proud of is always the work that has been pushed and pulled and tweaked and stretched so it ends up in its most unexpected place. That makes me happy.



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Havas Johannesburg 22 Apr 2014



Sethebe: I am with Fiona on this – I have loved working with all our clients because the variety of brands we have delivers a much-needed dynamism to our day-to-day lives. Literally. So they have all been great. One that stands out is Samson – a truly South African brand that I grew up around and working on it was an absolute privilege. I also loved the She Loves Beer and the opportunity it presented to push the envelope and change people's perceptions around women and beer.

What are you currently reading/watching/listening to for work?

O'Connor: Everything I read or watch is never "for work" and more just to make me more interested and knowledgeable about everything around me. I read pretty much everything I can get my hands on all the time: from an article on recent football transfers, to books on 'how to make the perfect peanut butter cookie' to, well, the latest Bizcommunity piece. Absolutely everything's relevant. I will most definitely be watching *The Last Jedi* the minute it comes out this week. Very important for work, lol.

Sethebe: I consume all content because I am a content creator, and inspiration can be anywhere. That being said, I have just finished listening to the book *Peak Performance* by Brad Stulberg and Steve Magness, and I am currently reading *Radical Candor* by Kim Scott. I have been truly inspired by the post-album-launch content that's from Jay Z's 4:44. It's kept me glued to Tidal on my little screen.

What has been your most noteworthy learning in the space?

O'Connor: Not everything is worth dying on your sword/pen/paintbrush for. But some things definitely are. I have learnt that there are fights that need to be fought and that you never ever give up if you believe in something.

Sethebe: As a serial collaborator, I believe you cannot do it alone.

What industry trends do you predict for 2018?

O'Connor: I think if we as an industry really, really, really get to know the people we are talking to more intimately, we will know how to talk to them better. I think there will be even more demand for this to happen from both brands and from consumers.

Sethebe: I think we will see more digitally-led creative solutions that will engage consumers effectively. The first screen will dominate even more than we have known it to. I always say, when people walk into meetings, they have their mobile devices, not TV screens, and we will see more content centred for that device. Augmented reality provides a fantastic means to push boundaries in the way we curate content, and in the way consumers engage with it. We will definitely see more of that.

And to add on to Fiona's point, we will see an increased urgency in mining real-time consumer insights, and those who answer that will truly be game-changers. I am not talking about big data because that is an exhausted conversation; I am talking about nuanced insights that zero in on people's lived experiences and build more empathy. This will be the easiest way to escape advertising on single stories, aka, stereotypes.

What are you looking forward to most?

O'Connor: Working with my partner to make 2018 the best year ever. I am seriously excited. Come on Tumi, let's do it!

Sethebe: After all is said and done, it's all about doing great work that supports our clients' business, and equally important, that challenges and changes society. I am looking forward to being a catalyst in the entire process.



Eoin Welsh

Now for some last words from Welsh...

■ **What's next?**

Welsh: Next is to be ECD of FCB 1886. Lol.

■ **Comment on your time at Havas: the experience you've gained; your contribution to the industry while there; some memorable moments.**

Welsh: It's been a fantastic time – the ups and downs come with the territory and keep life from ever being dull. I've worked with some great people on some great brands and learned a huge amount both about the business and myself. There are way too many memories and moments to do justice to here, but suffice to say they run the gamut from the sublime – getting to judge at Cannes, to the ridiculous – tequila-fuelled Bane from Batman impressions, attempted through the Bane mask the Havasians got me for my 50th birthday.

■ **Last words?**

Welsh: Havas rocks.



Havas Worldwide South Africa welcomes Eoin Welsh as new ECD

Havas Johannesburg 11 Jun 2013



More about Fiona O'Connor

O'Connor started her career in 1997 as an art director at Ogilvy & Mather and in an upward growth trajectory, has worked with various agencies that include Lowe Bull and Leo Burnett, on various local and international brands. Her portfolio of experience includes brands within the FMCG category like Crosse + Blackwell, Kit Kat, Sprite, Axe, Sunlight, Veet, Durex and Harpic; and quick service restaurant brands like KFC and Chicken Licken. She has also worked with leading automotive brands including Peugeot, Volvo, Fiat and Mercedes Benz and leading financial services houses like Nedbank, Sasfin and RMB, to mention a few.

More about Tumi Sethebe

Sethebe began his career in 2001 as an art director and over the years has worked on household brands such as SABC, DStv, Wimpy, Standard Bank, MTN, Tiger Brands, Castle Lite, South African Airways, and international brands such as Land Rover, BMW and Miller Genuine Draft. He started off his career at Young & Rubicam and over the years has worked with TBWA\Hunt\Lascaris, Metropolitan, and before he came to Havas, was creative director at Ogilvy Cape Town.



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