

Anybody fancy building a dangerous cathedral?



By [Damon Stapleton](#)

16 Jan 2019

There is a story about three men who spent their lives quarrying rocks. When asked what they were doing, one replied, "Breaking rocks." The second said, "Earning a living." The third said, "Building a cathedral."



Image © [Damon's Brain](#)

Perception. In advertising, it is often aimed or focused at the client or the project we are working on. We are always looking outward. It is very seldom that we have a clear point of view about ourselves.

“ I remember once being told by a friend the main reason ad agencies make such bad ads about themselves is because an eye finds it very difficult to look at itself. This lack of depth and understanding is never more obvious than at the beginning of the year, when people in the industry are asked what is important for the year ahead. ”

The answers I read were in a trade mag and what struck me was how similar the answers were.

Almost everybody answered that creativity was the way forward. Initially that made me happy, but then I got this weird feeling of dread. Really? These people all passionately believe in creativity? Half these people wouldn't know what creativity was if it kicked them in the nuts.

It was like some publicist had told them that creativity was the right answer. It was like they were going through the motions in a glitter-less pantomime. They had made 'creativity' just a word. And what's worse, they had made it sound boring and unimportant.

This year, it felt like these people were treading water in a pool of corporate correctness. They were waiting for something. Doing only what was required. There was no danger or audaciousness. It felt like they had no confidence or point of view.



In defence of the often maligned creative

Damon Stapleton 19 Oct 2016



There have been many that have said advertising needs to get its confidence back. The question is always, how?

Before I answer that, let's look at the industry landscape. In the last six months, some of the greatest advertising agencies that have ever been have disappeared. Poof. Gone forever. Insert Kodak story.

Now, did they disappear because of what we all say is the most important thing in advertising –creativity? No. Perhaps the work got worse in the end, but I can promise you it wasn't because the creatives didn't try. I know, I spoke to them.



Do you speak creativity?

Damon Stapleton 13 Jun 2018



These agencies disappeared because people cared about the wrong things. These agencies disappeared because they became boring. These agencies disappeared because they stopped having a point of view.

And, creativity became just a word. It stopped meaning anything. When that happens, no process, delivery mechanism or structure can save you. The centre cannot hold because you have nothing of value anymore. There is nothing to sell.

To answer the original question, confidence in our industry has always come from doing, not talking. That will never change. Turning creativity into a verb. Making sh!t. Astounding the world. Doing what has never been done.



What do you want creativity to do?

Damon Stapleton 22 Aug 2018



Doing what others won't or can't. Being brave and trying very hard to create a little magic. Doing will give us our confidence and, in turn, begin to change the way we see ourselves.

2019 is not the year where we have the luxury of simply going through the motions. We cannot give the same boring answers. We need to remember what we are capable of. We need to fight. We have to believe in creativity again. It cannot just be a word. We have to make it mean something. There is no other way.

As an industry, we need to remember that our confidence has always come from building dangerous cathedrals.

"We don't see things as they are, we see them as we are." – Anais Nin

ABOUT DAMON STAPLETON

Damon is regional chief creative officer for DDB in New Zealand and Australia. Before that, ECD at Saatchi and Saatchi Australia, before that, group ECD of TBWA Hunt Lascaris and global ECD of Standard Bank. He has won over 500 awards internationally, including a D&AD Black Pencil, Cannes Grand Prix, Grand Clio, ADC Black Cube and most effective ad in the world by Warc 100. Damon is now regional chief creative officer for DDB in New Zealand and Australia...

- A line is a dot that went for a walk - 30 Dec 2021
- WTF is creativity anyway? - 23 Dec 2021
- Starting again. Sometimes nothing is the gift - 16 Dec 2021
- Why does emotion matter? - 9 Dec 2021
- Relax, reality comes later - 2 Dec 2021

[View my profile and articles...](#)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>