

Top student nominee: Raquel Ribeiro

 By [Juanita Pienaar](#)

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Raquel Ribeiro, a communication design student at the University of Johannesburg, was recently announced as one of three finalists in the student category of the 2017 AdFocus Awards. I caught up with Ribeiro and her lecturer Christa van Zyl to find out what they're expecting from the gala evening taking place on Wednesday, 22 November 2017...



Raquel Ribeiro (on the right) and a friend at this year's Loerie Awards.



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Ribeiro shares that being recognised for her work means that it has been seen by some of the best creatives in the industry – she entered her Behance portfolio, which consisted of 10 pieces of work that she has done over the last two years, which included branding, advertising, typography, wayfinding, packaging, poster design and game design projects.

Ribeiro says one of her favourite pieces is the exhibition she created for her third year, entitled, 'Get Tatt'd'. "I decided to take a new approach to traditional portfolios, designing and distributing temporary tattoos to show off my work. The viewers were prompted to apply a temporary tattoo to their skin and then scan it with the suggested app in order to watch my designs come to life. Each tattoo linked to a gif of one of my portfolio pieces, along with a link to my Behance portfolio. The exhibition was set up to evoke the look and feel of a tattoo parlour with a hand-lettered vinyl sign."

For her, winning would be a stepping stone in the right direction and at just the right time, too. She says that if she wins, it will be a week before she finishes her honours degree and ventures into the industry.

Pushed creative boundaries with proactive ideas

Currently, Ribeiro says she's inspired by Shepard Fairey's new exhibition 'Damaged' and she's also reading his book, *Mayday*. "It helps that I have one of his posters in my room too that I stare up at whenever I need inspiration. Travelling has also hugely inspired my designs. I had the opportunity to travel around Europe last year with my sister and the architecture and artwork seen in each country, especially Budapest and Berlin, was a sensory overload. Not to mention

the food, the food was particularly inspiring!”

She says that she also had the opportunity to freelance at Bain and Bunkell during her studies and that Bain and Bunkell’s senior creative team has been a huge influence on her development as a designer. “They’ve constantly pushed my creative boundaries and inspired me with their proactive ideas. As far as outside influences go, I’m always on the lookout for new projects from Swedish agency, Snask. I love their clean and striking designs. Their rockstar vibe is pretty cool too.”

Breath of fresh air

Christa van Zyl, Ribeiro’s lecturer, says it has been a great honour for the University of Johannesburg’s Department of Graphic Design to be nominated. “It is wonderful to be recognised for our commitment to teaching our students and to affirm that a public institution, with less affluent students and smaller marketing budgets, can compete just as well on a national level as private institutions. Our tuition may be half the cost of a private design school, but the quality and talent of our students and graduates remain of an excellent standard.”

Van Zyl says that Raquel’s work combines playfulness with an innovative use of technology and other mediums, as well as a meticulous eye for detail and crafting. “Through her design thinking skills, she has managed to see and create innovative design solutions for all her projects. In the words of a judge at our Behance portfolio review night held in May, ‘Raquel is a breath of fresh air in the industry, willing to work as hard as it takes to achieve her goals.’”



Christa van Zyl, lecturer, Communication Design (Department of Graphic Design) at the University of Johannesburg.

Van Zyl adds that awards are sometimes incorrectly used as a barometer for an institution’s quality of teaching, even though the cost of entering can exclude many. However, as the AdFocus Awards clearly state, most awards should be about the student and their future. “Having a highly respected award as part of a student’s achievements during their studies signals to employers that you do not just have what it takes, but also signifies that you have the potential to become a thought leader in the industry.”

ABOUT JUANITA PIENAAR

Juanita is the editor of the marketing & media portal on the Bizcommunity website. She is also a contributing writer.

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