

Icograda appoints new African rep

At the biennial general assembly of the International Council of Communication Design (Icograda), held in Taiwan last week, the council elected Switch ECD [Gaby de Abreu](#) as Africa's new representative on its executive board. He was nominated for this role in his capacity as representative of the [Brand Design Council of South Africa](#), which has now been incorporated within the new [Brand Council of SA](#) (BCSA) .



Gaby de Abreu

De Abreu acknowledges the significant responsibility it brings with it. "As the Council's African representative, my goal for the next 24 months will be to promote the vital role of design across the continent. I will also be partnering with various organisations and individuals to create a more unified voice for African graphic designers and visual communicators."

With design contributing to most industries in some way, he says the time has come to raise the profile of the sector. "We need to start important conversations about design about how it can and should be making a real contribution to Africa through sustainable job creation and the development of meaningful solutions for society and commerce. We then need to translate these conversations into tangible actions, ensuring that corresponding development takes place at a grassroots level."

Building on success

De Abreu maintains that the continent got a taste of what design can enable last year in the run-up to and during the 2010 FIFA World Cup. "As part of the company team that designed both the logo and the official poster, it's a year I will never forget. In working on the MTN global account during this period, we were also given the opportunity to challenge perceptions of Africa and unite people across the continent behind its teams. While our work formed part of a much larger scale global campaign, design acted as the springboard for many of these ideas and programmes. The World Cup allowed Africa to challenge beliefs and demonstrate its potential. This is something Icograda needs to continue to facilitate through the Council's work on the continent."

With Cape Town recently being announced the [World Design Capital](#) for 2014, he believes that the continent can once again showcase its talent to the rest of the world, "It is critical that we use opportunities such as this as catalysts for development and to drive awareness and uptake of our profession."

Networking African design

He is to use his position on the board to stimulate the continent's design industries. His first objective will be to create a networking platform for conversations about the role and future of design in Africa. "This will allow us to discuss challenges and opportunities and share skills, expertise and knowledge. It will also ensure that we work to create a far more inclusive African design industry and promote its role in contributing to various sectors of the economy."

With eight of the world's ten fastest-growing economies on the continent, he believes a united design industry is vital in terms of meeting certain needs of new investors: "As more international investors turn their attention to Africa's frontier markets, we need to be able to cater for this demand and the additional business it will bring. New investment also often means new products and offerings. As such, design and branding will have a critical role to play in telling these stories. We have to be able to deliver these services ourselves - and not find ourselves 'importing' them."

"As Icograda, we must partner with a representative sample of African designers and empower them to meet both local demand and this new source of international business."

By using Icograda to create a single and united voice for design in Africa, he is confident that the organisation can unleash the potential of the continent's industry. "I'm looking forward to partnering with agencies across Africa to build on the work of my predecessors and draw global attention to the talent we have right here on our doorstep."

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