

Red & Yellow's 'wizard' Carina Bonse on life beyond AdFocus Student of the Year

 By Leigh Andrews

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Starting out in any industry can be tough, which is why winning an award while still studying - being crowned the AdFocus 'Student of the year', no less - is such a boon. Here's how Red & Yellow's Carina Bonse is taking this in her stride as we get ready for 2017.



Bonse

Bonse says she was absolutely shocked when her name was called out as the FM AdFocus student of the year a few weeks ago. "I was with the two other talented finalists, [Carel Pretorius](#) and [Michelle van Sittert](#), [both of the Stellenbosch Academy of Design & Photography] and was certain one of them would take it. Michelle had to push me out of my chair," she confirms.

While Bonse may have been surprised, industry stalwarts weren't. She's already made a name for herself with a handful of [Pendorings](#) and [Loeries](#) under her belt, before officially starting her advertising career, for work on projects like 'See [The World The Garmin Way](#)', '[Swimming In It - Cause Campaign](#)' and '[Drill Sergeant](#)'.

Ever humble, she's quick to point out that she didn't do it alone, having had some awesome copywriters, art directors and lecturers over the last three years at Red & Yellow.



Bonse with [fellow Red & Yellow creative talent](#) Gabi van Nekerck on the Loeries red carpet earlier this year.

Bonse says some of her work is quite personal, so: "It's strange to have people looking at something that's come from the

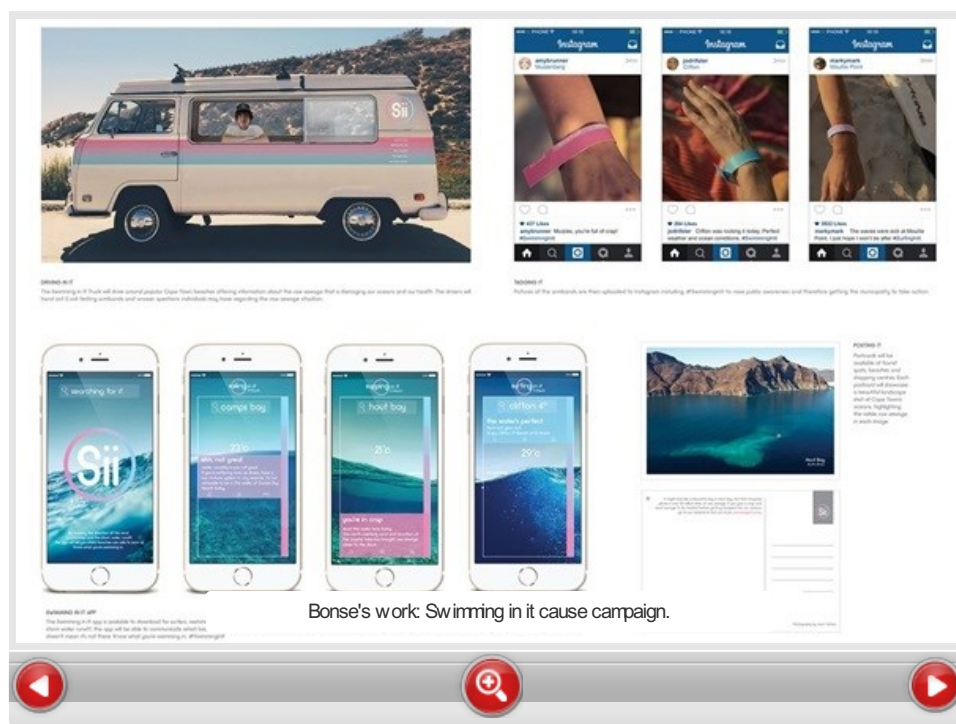
heart or your crazy brain. But it's also great when people see that and go 'hey, that's cool'."

From creating cocktails to work that makes a difference

Perhaps part of her ability to tap into those ideas that resonate with others is that she was a 'late bloomer' as an advertising student; it's working in a bar frequented by local creatives that finally convinced her to study the creative arts. She had been wanting to study for a while, and found managing bars was always fun, but also hard work and long hours. So while she met and worked with a lot of interesting people there, she needed something more, because at the end of the day she had nothing physical to show for the work she had put in, apart from a few cocktail creations, and needed that to change. As to how she ended up at Red & Yellow, Bonse almost elected to study part-time through correspondence, but got some good advice from an art director who said "when it comes to studying creatively, it's best to have lecturers and people around to guide you and to bounce ideas off." So she went around to Red & Yellow, immediately felt like it was the place to be, and dived in.

She 'dived in' so well that Red & Yellow has nicknamed Bonse 'The Wizard' for her seemingly magical ability to push her work further than anyone else. Letting us in on a few secrets of how she does so, Bonse says she doesn't know about magic, but does know that if you don't put in the time you're not going to get your desired outcome. Some of those things take quite a lot of time and you have to be patient. For example, she's been hands-on in taking her own photos and made boxes and books for her projects, which she says helps in the vision of what you want to create. "Through trial and error, making your own stuff also teaches you how to do things, not just drop it off and hope somebody else will get it right for you," she explains. Key to getting that right lies in making 'to do' lists, and then making some more 'to do' lists because, "You often misjudge how long things are going to take. If you have everything you need to do written out, it's easier to move forward, especially when you are working in a group." That way, you know exactly what's expected of you and what you have to do to get it done.

She's also a firm believer in sticking to your guns when someone doubts you. So if you think you can pull it off, go for it, but always be willing to learn, as everyone has a story and can teach you things you didn't know, and always be willing to help them in return.



But we've all been there: There's nothing worse than experiencing creative block when a deadline looms. Bonse overcomes this on tougher briefs by not thinking about the problem too hard. "I find if you spitball silly ideas with the team, something someone says might not be right but will spark an idea in your head and you can expand the idea from there." She also

does some of her best thinking when she's trying to fall asleep, so finds it helps to have her phone close by to take notes when that happens.

Going forward, Bonse responds to my question of 'What are you most looking forward to when you project forward a few decades' by saying she'd really like to do things that make a difference. For example, she found working and doing the research on the 'Swimming in it' campaign really eye opening and says it felt great to come up with a solution for a subject that people were finding hard to relate to. There are so many people that want to make a difference, but don't have the platform or solutions to do so.

Here's to all the good things to come from Bonse as she enters the creative space! [Click here](#) for more from Bonse on winning Student of the year, [here](#) for more on the FM AdFocus Awards 2016, and [here](#) for Bonse's views on gender equality in the industry. She says, "If you want something badly enough, you will make it happen!" You can also follow her latest creative concepts through her [Behance](#) portfolio.

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

Leigh Andrews AKA the #MilkshakeQueen, is former Editor-in-Chief: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com, with a passion for issues of diversity, inclusion and equality, and of course, gourmet food and drinks! She can be reached on Twitter at @Leigh_Andrews.

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